



Challenges Encountered by Academicians in International Students' Education: Turkey Case*

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ABSTRACT

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Purpose: Turkey offers higher education opportunities to an increasing number of international students. However, academicians have encountered some problems while teaching international students. The aim of this study is to identify the problems encountered by academicians in the education of international students and to recommend solutions to the problems.

Method: This research was conducted with the qualitative research method. The study group consists of 16 academicians having international students in their classrooms. The data were collected through a semi-structured interview form. These data were analyzed with inductive content analysis.

Findings: According to the findings, academicians have experienced various problems such as language barrier, asking for favours/tolerance, not achieving the learning outcomes, not participating in classes, systemic challenges, and extra workload. However, the inclusion of international students in higher education has benefits like learning about different educational systems, familiarizing themselves with different cultures, internationalization of universities and transfer of educational knowledge and experience.

Implications for Research and Practice: This study was limited to views of academicians working at state universities. This study is believed to be helpful for practitioners as it offers concrete solution recommendations. It is suggested that a Turkish proficiency certificate should be asked for the enrollment of international students. Also, a support unit for the academicians should be established to consult whenever they have difficulty in the education process of international students.

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Introduction

The developments in information and communication technologies in the context of globalization have brought internationalization movements together recently. Internationalization movements have affected higher education especially among educational organizations and these effects were reflected in the policies of the country. As in other countries, Turkey has had internationalization taking its place among the key strategies addressed in higher education. The internationalization efforts of Turkey in higher education are predominantly based on the four principles (turkiyeburslari.gov.tr): Academic and economic development, social and cultural interaction, development of political and diplomatic relations and solidarity. Accordingly, the universities have begun to place more and more emphasis on the mobility of students and academicians. In the last decade, the number of international students at universities in Turkey has increased by 75% (turkiyeburslari.gov.tr). Since the 2013-2014 academic year, the change in the number of international students has been shown in Figure 1.

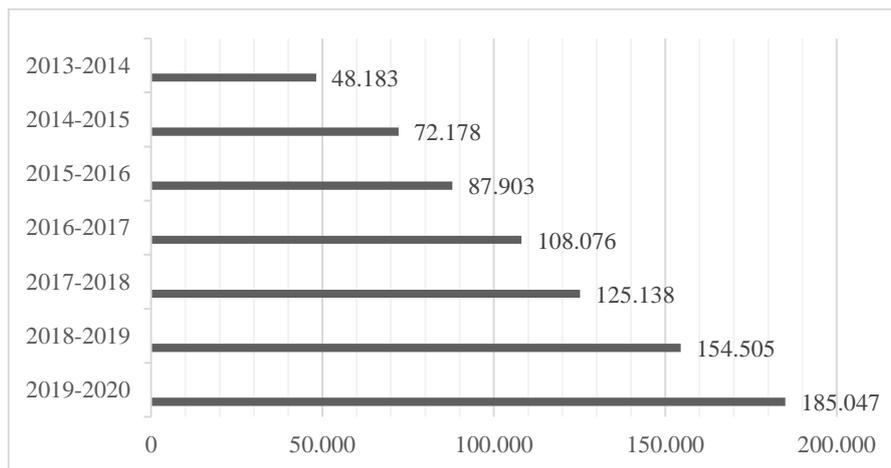


Figure 1. The number of International Students in Higher Education in Turkey Between 2013 and 2020 Years

Source: Higher Education Council [HEC] (2020)

As shown in Figure 1, the number of international students studying at universities in Turkey has increased over the years. Since the 2013-2014 academic year, the number of international students has been almost quadrupled. According to the 2019-2020 academic year statistics, there are 185.047 international students in total who are studying in Turkish universities (HEC, 2020). The distribution of international students by continents is shown in Table 1.

Table 1.

In 2019-2020 Academic Year the Number of International Students by Gender

| <i>Continents/Number of students</i> | <i>Female</i> | <i>Male</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|
| Asia ^d | 44.997 | 87.253 | 132.250 |
| Africa ^c | 5.886 | 13.774 | 19.660 |
| Europe ^a | 10.396 | 9.180 | 19.576 |
| America ^b | 426 | 484 | 910 |
| Australia ^e | 41 | 58 | 99 |

a. Germany-Albania-Austria-Belarus-Belgium-Bosnia-Herzegovina-Britain-Bulgaria-Czechia-Denmark-Estonia-Croatia-Spain-Sweden-Switzerland-Italy-Finland-France-Netherlands-Montenegro-Kosovo-Hungary-Macedonia-Norway-Portugal- Romania-Serbia-Ukraine-Greece

b. The United States-Canada-Argentina-Mexico-Brazil-Colombia-Cuba-Chile

c. Algeria-Eritrea-Ethiopia-Morocco-Cameroon-Kenya-Congo-Egypt-Mauritania-Mozambique-Nepal-Niger-Nigeria-Central Africa-Rwanda-Somalia-Tunisia-Uganda-Zambia-Zimbabwe

d. Afghanistan-Azerbaijan-Bangladesh-China-Indonesia-Armenia-Palestine-Georgia-Iraq-Iran-Kazakhstan-Kyrgyzstan-South Korea-TRNC-Lebanon-Mongolia-Uzbekistan-Pakistan-Russia-Sudan-Syria-Turkmenistan-Jordan-Yemen

e. Australia-New Zealand-Vanuatu-Fiji-Solomon Islands

Source: HEC (2020)

As shown in Table 1, Asia has become at the forefront according to the distribution of international students studying at the university in Turkey. Then Africa, Europe, America and Australia come respectively. According to Table 1, Turkey attracts international students the most from Asia, Africa and Europe. This distribution results from such factors as Turkey's geographical position, history, and political relations. Besides, Turkey provides international students with housing, health insurance, Turkish language courses, tuition and scholarship. Out of 17.000, international students have got scholarships. Apart from Turkish citizens and individuals who have lost Turkish citizenship, students, researchers and academicians can apply for Turkey scholarships. In 2019, 145.700 international students from 167 countries of the world applied for this scholarship (ytb.gov.tr). Undergraduate students are paid 800 Turkish Liras (TL), postgraduate ones are paid 1.100 TL to 1.600 TL. By 2023 Turkey has planned to host about 200.000 international students (turkiyeburslari.gov.tr). Therefore, there is a significant number of international students receiving services at universities in Turkey. However, Turkey's performance is quite low at offering attractive opportunities to international students with a 0.6% share (Gür et al., 2012). Therefore, it is important to identify and address the problems in the field of attracting international students to universities.

The concept of internationalization is not a new term and has been in use for centuries, particularly in political science and governmental relations. However, the concept has had increased popularity in education since the early 1980s (Knight, 2008). The internationalization in higher education is a process of integrating the international or intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service

functions of a university (Jibeen & Khan, 2015). The internationalization of higher education is useful for maintaining and developing science and learning with dynamic academic changes and growing the social and economic capacity in developing countries. Furthermore, the positive aspects of internationalization can be listed as improved academic quality, growth of internationally focused students and employees and national, and international citizenship for students and employees coming from less developed countries. For developed countries, on the other hand, it has potential benefits, such as generating income and acquiring brain power (Jibeen & Khan, 2015). There are six key indicators of internationalization in higher education: Teichler (2017) lists them as follows:

- Worldwide/cross-border information transfer (books, other media, etc.),
- Physical mobility between countries (students, academic and administrative staff, etc.),
- International cooperation and communication (between countries, higher education institutions, etc.),
- International training and research (comparative approaches, intercultural learning, etc.),
- International similarity (convergence, globalization, Europeanization, etc.),
- International credibility ("world-class universities", "international quality", etc.).

As seen, the breadth of information transfer, students and staff mobility, international cooperation and research, international similarity and institutional credibility are the important criteria in the internationalization of higher education. However, one of the most important indicators of internationalization in higher education is student mobility. Student mobility refers to the idea of the migration of students and academic staff to another country to receive education or a degree in a particular discipline, which is perhaps the oldest and most common internationalization movement of higher education (Codina et al., 2013). International students lead to diversity in classes and campuses and contribute to the movement of internationalization (Jin & Schneider, 2019; Wu et al., 2015). It may therefore, be suggested that student mobility has an important role in the internationalization of higher education institutions.

The literature mentions several effective results of international student mobility. Student mobility plays an important role in the process of cultural transfer and recognition and conversation of cultural ties (Sasa, 2018). Rowan-Kenyon and Niehaus (2011) summarize the results of international mobility as follows by compiling the results of various studies:

- Developing a higher level of adaptability, tolerance and empathy for other cultures,

- Improving the ability to communicate with people from other countries, especially non-English speaker people,
- Providing a global and intercultural perspective and improving the knowledge and interest in such matters,
- Ensuring cultural relativity and solidarity,
- Understanding the political, social and economic problems of the host countries more comprehensively, and
- Creating a positive impact on the psychosocial development of students, especially their self-confidence and personal independence.

As seen, international mobility allows students to communicate with people from different cultures and familiarize themselves with various cultures, easily adapt to different cultures, thus becoming more tolerant to different cultures, gain an intercultural perspective and become more interested in global events. Also, it has a positive impact on the psychosocial development of students. Furthermore, studying abroad plays an important role on not only the psychosocial skills of students but also, according to Jones (2013), the development of students' intercultural competence and employability skills. Accordingly, Jones has stated that studying abroad helps students improve their intercultural competence skills such as confidence, risk-taking, patience, sensitivity, open-mindedness and creativity, as well as the development of employability skills such as teamwork, problem-solving, networking, conflict management and decision making.

According to Barrioluengo and Flisi (2017), international students also contribute to the local economy as they pay tuition fees and their cost of living. Graduate and doctorate students, on the other hand, contribute to the research and development work in the host country, initially as students and later as potential researchers and highly qualified experts. In the long term, these students can also contribute to knowledge creation and economic performance, integrating into the local labor market, as well as creating business networks with their own country. Wu, Garza and Guzman (2015) also suggest that international students represent the creation of major economic and international relations for universities. Based on this information, student mobility can be said to provide significant benefits to both students and higher education institutions, hence the countries. Therefore, it is natural to have an increasing volume of student mobility in higher education. Indeed, according to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics data, the international student population was 1.1 million in 1980, 1.3 million in 1990 and reached 3.4 million in 2019. This volume is expected to reach eight million by 2020 (Chien & Kot, 2012).

Many factors affect student mobility. These include inter alia, students' educational expenses and foreign language competency, higher education institutions' academic achievement, and visa procedures (Levent & Karaevli, 2013). Also, some of the most important factors that make students attend higher education in a country are the university's image and success ranking, opportunities of access to education, the

quality of employment expectations from the education offered (Chien & Kot, 2012). The students studying abroad at good universities have listed push factors as high-quality education or internship opportunities, finding a better job, scholarship opportunities, feeling of injustice and insecurity. On the other hand, Turkey's pull factors in attracting international students from Balkan and Turkic republics can be listed as historical ties, similar traditions or culture, religious factors, and social interaction. Furthermore, scholarship opportunities with health insurance, food, and accommodation, the recognition of Turkey especially in economics, politics, and tourism, quality of education, the reputation of prominent universities, and language of instruction and hospitality in Turkey can be added as pull factors (Kondakçı, Çalışkan, Bulut Şahin, Yılık and Demir, 2016).

International students in higher education face various problems during the education process. However, in this process, just like students, academicians are likely to encounter certain problems. For, education is an interactive process between students and academicians. The interaction in this process is of close interest to both groups. Therefore, the experience and views of academicians, as well as those of students, are equally important in the education process. However, the studies conducted in Turkey appear to explore the problems encountered by international students in the education process, primarily in terms of students (Beltekin & Radmard, 2013; Enterieva & Sezgin, 2016; Kiroğlu, Kesten & Elma, 2010; Sasa, 2018). Thereunder, the study by Erişti, Polat and Erdem (2018) was conducted from the perspective of academicians, and was, however, only limited to the problems encountered by international students in learning a foreign language. Therefore, the present study is more comprehensive, investigating the challenges encountered by academicians concerning international students in more depth. Within this scope, this study aims to investigate the challenges encountered by academicians in Turkey in the education of international students at universities and recommend solutions to these problems. For this purpose, answers to the following questions were sought:

According to academicians' views;

1. What are the challenges encountered by academicians while teaching international students?
2. What are the benefits of including international students in the education process?
3. What are the solutions to the challenges academicians have encountered while teaching international students?

Method

Research Design

In the present research, the qualitative research method and phenomenology design were used. In this direction, a common meaning is tried to be reached based on the experiences of many people about the related phenomenon or concept. In this design,

it is aimed to understand the true nature of the related phenomenon or concept by reducing individual experiences to a universal explanation. (Creswell, 2015, 77). In this study, the experiences of academicians regarding the education process of international students are regarded as a phenomenon. Accordingly, the present study seeks to investigate the experiences of academicians with international students in the higher education process, identify what problems are encountered.

Context

There has been a significant increase in the number of international students in higher education in Turkey. According to the 2013-2014 academic year statistics, there were 48.183 international students studying at universities in Turkey. This number reached 108.076 in the 2016-2017 year. Recently about 185.000 international students, mostly from Asia, Africa and Europe, have preferred to study in Turkey. In addition to the international students enrolled in higher education programs, there are also international students for a short term at regular intervals. As part of the student mobility, 7.101 students in total came to the universities in Turkey under the exchange programs in the 2019-2020 academic year (HEC, 2020). As seen, there are undeniably many international students studying in Turkey. One of the reasons includes that international students studying in Turkey are provided with the "Turkey Scholarship Program". Within the framework of the Turkey Scholarships Program, international students are provided with monthly income according to their level of education. Also, students' arrival and departure flight tickets, university tuition fees, general health insurance, Turkish language course fees and accommodation are also included (Gözler, 2019). Therefore, the present study included the universities in Turkey in its scope. Of the universities in Turkey, those in major cities such as Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir appear to be preferred more by international students (Kocabiyik et al., 2019). Also, as Ankara is the capital and a representative of social matters in Turkey (Kaypak, 2014), two major public universities there were included in the study. Besides, there are many international students coming to Turkey from the neighboring Balkan countries who primarily prefer Trakya University. Totally, there are 8494 international students studying at the universities included in this study (HEC, 2020). Therefore, the present study included Trakya University along with the two universities in Ankara.

Study Group

The study group consists of 16 academicians that work at public universities and have international students in their class. Qualitative research is conducted with a few numbers of participants selected purposively. Inline therewith, criterion sampling was used as people with specific characteristics were interviewed to determine the study group (Patton, 2014). In this research, the criteria considered are that the participants work as an academician at the public university and have international students in their class. Accordingly, the interviews were held with a professor, seven associates and four assistant professors and four PhDs working at the different departments. The participants consist of 11 female and five male academicians – their seniority changes from nine to 25 years. As part of the research ethics, the participants were anonymized by coding as P1, P2,....P16 (Hammersly & Traianou, 2017).

Research Instruments and Data Collection

Data was collected with the interview technique. Thereunder, the researchers first prepared a semi-structured interview form. The prepared form was submitted to eight subject experts for their opinion on its content validity. The form was revised according to the opinions of the experts, and it was decided to create an interview form with seven open-ended questions. The examples from the interview questions in this study are listed below:

- What do you think about international student mobility in the context of the internationalization of universities in Turkey?
- What are the benefits of including international students in the education process at universities? Can you explain this?
- How does having international students in your class affect the education process?
- Have you experienced any problems in the education process of international students?
- What are your suggestions for solving the problems you have faced during the education of international students?

Appointments were made with academicians, who agreed to participate in the research, and face-to-face interviews were held with them on the set date and time. Before interviews, the interview protocol was shown to the participants and they were informed that interviews were audio-recorded, but the information collected would be anonymized. However, two participants did not allow voice recording and their interview was recorded by the researchers on paper. The interviews took between 20-40 minutes. Thereunder, a 110-page interview text was derived. For data collection, the researchers sometimes asked the participants to re-explain or provide examples to clarify/concretize their views. The researchers were present onsite to assume the role of participants in the study.

Procedures

The data collected was analyzed by the NVivo data analysis program. The qualitative data analysis process is an inductive one that works from raw data to codes and from codes to themes (Creswell, 2017). In this study, data analysis was structured by following the stages suggested by Robson (2017) and Creswell (2017) and presented in Figure 2.

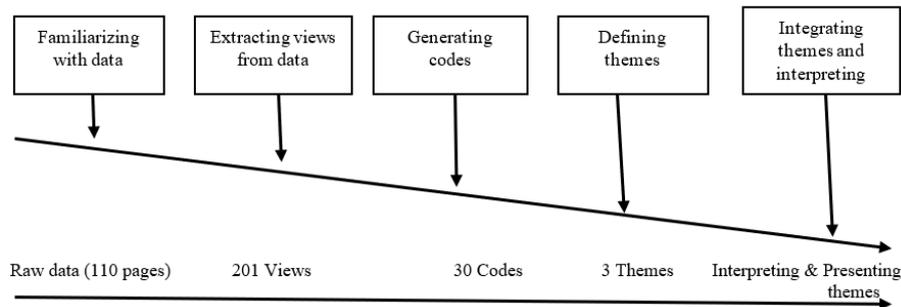


Figure 2. *Process of Data Analysis*

Figure 2 describes the data analysis process in this study. During this process, data acquired from the interviews were first transferred to the computer. The transferred files were listened to again on a voice recorder for checking. Afterward, they were transferred to the analysis program and the views were coded. The coded views were combined under common themes. The analyses were conducted separately by the researchers, and the views, codes and themes on which the researchers agreed were presented in tables.

The Trustworthiness of the Study

The trustworthiness of the study was checked by using different methods such as obtaining expert opinion, peer assessment, quoting, and explaining the data collection-analysis process and participants in detail. Besides, the semi-structured interview form used as a data collection tool was submitted for experts' opinions. Merriam (2015) also suggests selecting participants that fit the data collection process and conducting enough number of interviews until the saturation point is achieved. In this research, participants were determined by a criterion sampling, and it was decided that the saturation point had been achieved when and as the views began to repeat themselves. To achieve dependability in the research, the peer assessment technique suggested by Creswell (2015) was used. Thereunder, the researchers independently analyzed the decoded texts and then checked the analyses by comparing them to reach a common conclusion. On the other hand, to achieve the transferability of the research, detailed descriptions were done during the data collection and analysis process (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). In addition to that, the findings were supported by quotes as part of the confirmability principle (Merriam, 2015).

Results

The findings are presented in line with the aims of the research. Accordingly, the academicians were first asked whether or not they encountered any challenges while teaching international students. The views of the academicians are presented in Figure 3.

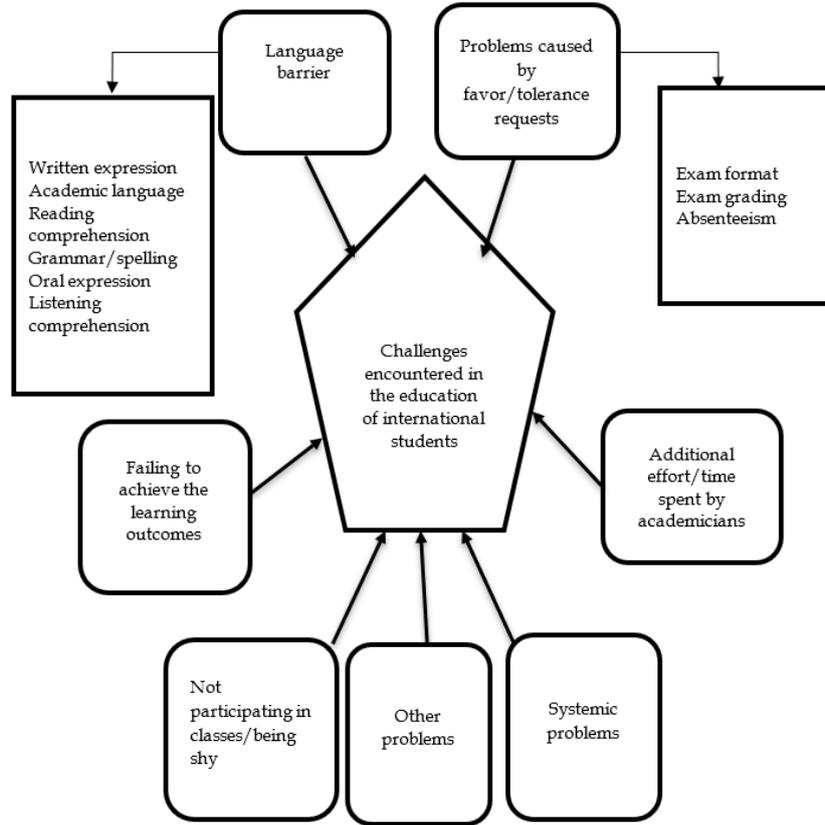


Figure 3. Challenges Encountered While Teaching International Students

According to Figure 3, language barriers, asking for favors/tolerance, failing to achieve the learning outcomes, not participating in classes and systemic challenges, and additional workload are experienced while teaching international students. The present study has identified that the most common problems encountered while teaching international students are the language barrier. The views on this problem are presented in Table 2a.

Table 2a.

The Views on Problems Caused by the Language Barrier

| Categories | Interview Statements | f |
|--------------------|---|----|
| Written expression | - They have difficulty expressing themselves in writing (P4). | 10 |
| Academic language | - They don't have a good command of academic language. Although they have enough command of language to get by in daily life, they find academic terminology different and have trouble (P2). | 8 |

Table 2a Continue

| Categories | Interview Statements | f |
|-------------------------|--|---|
| Reading comprehension | - They even do not understand the questions. When the question is asking for something else, they sometimes give different answers (P10). | 6 |
| Grammar/spelling | - We see assignments written in spoken language. They do not have a good command of conjunctions, prepositions, capital letters-small letters i.e. the Turkish grammar. They experience serious difficulty in spelling, grammar (P11). | 5 |
| Oral expression | - It is extremely hard in graduate classes. When I asked him/her to discuss orally, he/she got too nervous to gather his/her words (P1). | 4 |
| Listening comprehension | - I am not sure that everything I say is understood by some students. They have difficulty comprehending (P10). | 3 |

According to Table 2a, in the language barrier, written expression is the most common problem encountered by academicians. According to the academicians, students cannot express themselves correctly in the exams or assignments. The academicians have difficulty understanding the written expression of students. Regarding that, a participant says, “It is hard to grade/read their exam papers. Their sentences are inverted. I sometimes have to think if the student meant this or that (P1).”

International students have difficulty in understanding the academic language. A participant says, “They think they speak Turkish well, but when the classes begin, they realize they know nothing. That’s because each field has its own terminology (P6),” to express the academic language-related problem. This shows the difference between knowing/speaking a language and using it academically in a concrete way. The other problems because of the language barrier are not understanding what is read, making grammar/spelling mistakes, failing to express themselves orally and not understanding what is listened to. Another major problem for academicians is caused by the favors/tolerance requests by international students. The views in this regard are summarized in Table 2b.

Table 2b.

The Views on Problems Caused by Favor/Tolerance Requests

| Categories | Interview Statements | f |
|-------------------------------------|--|----|
| Expectations about the exam format | - They send messages one day before, asking for additional time for an exam because they cannot understand it (P3). | 12 |
| Expectations about the exam grading | - They sometimes request if we could grade them separately and specifically within their group (P1). - They generally ask for extra grade points (P10). | 10 |
| Expectations about absenteeism | - They make special requests like ignoring them when taking attendance. (P11). | 4 |

According to Table 2b, students generally expect favors or tolerance from academicians about the exam formats, grading and absenteeism. Although students accept the terms imposed by the universities in Turkey and choose to come here themselves, they request academicians to administer different exams for them. Regarding that, a participant says, “international students sometimes request to be assessed by different questions. They can request changing the question types a little more or being asked questions that match the system they are used to in their own country (P13).”

On the other hand, the assessment of international students is another key problem area for academicians. Regarding that, an academician says, “when a student got a low score and failed in an exam, he/she came to me saying he/she didn’t speak Turkish anyway. Also, the student said he/she would not work in Turkey (P14)”, emphasizing that students request to be passed in classes in some way. Further, the academicians report that although these students are subject to the student regulations of the universities, they abuse their international status also in absenteeism.

Academicians have other problems than the language barrier and favor/tolerance requests while teaching international students. The views on these problems are summarized in Table 2c.

Table 2c.

The Views on Problems Encountered While Teaching International Students

| <i>Categories</i> | <i>Interview Statements</i> | <i>f</i> |
|--|--|----------|
| Failing to Achieve the Learning Outcomes | -They want to complete their study and leave by getting a passing grade in the exam, rather than seeking to achieve the full learning outcomes (P11). - They have a high absenteeism rate; therefore, I can’t say they fully achieve the learning outcomes (P16). | 25 |
| Additional Effort/Time Spent | - It sometimes takes 9-10 minutes to teach a subject that would normally take only 5 minutes. They come with a lot of questions, which prolongs the consulting process (P16). | 18 |
| Not participating in classes/being shy | - Most of them prefer to keep quiet during the classes (P1). | 11 |
| Systemic problems | - I believe that these students should not be eligible for choosing all departments in the university just by a single Turkish exam (P2). | 8 |
| Other problems | - There have been students who have disconnected from the school and come to classes very exhausted due to financial reasons (P2). | 3 |

According to Table 2c, academicians experience problems such as academic success, additional time/effort spent, not participating in classes/being shy and systemic problems. The views are grouped most under the category of failing to achieve the learning outcomes. Regarding that, a participant says, “they eventually learn as they repeat a class 2-3 times, but it is as if they pass the class by memorization.

They cannot grasp the logic, cannot comprehend (P1).” On the other hand, about enabling them to achieve the learning outcomes, a participant says, “I try to further simplify the course. I choose the simplest book. I have to seek simpler class notes, or prepare myself for such students (P2),” emphasizing that academicians are spending additional effort in the process.

In addition to these problems, the academicians encounter student and systemic problems as well. International students can choose to move to the back of the classroom as a group in classes. Regarding that, a participant says, “...they usually prefer to sit behind the classroom and are trying to get by as a passive listener (P11),” emphasizing that international students are shy in classes. Otherwise, they have problems relating to the current system while teaching international students. There are different conditions applicable to the acceptance of international students to the undergraduate programs of universities in Turkey. For international students, some universities (e.g., Ankara University [oidb.ankara.edu.tr/]) administer an international student exam, while some only seek a diploma and transcripts (e.g., Trakya University [student.trakya.edu.tr/]). Also, international students can enroll in any program they like by taking the exam of the universities they wish to enroll in Turkey or meeting their conditions. With regard to that, a participant says, “instead of a single admission exam, we could carry out a student placement system that measures their academic interests and abilities, just as we measure the language proficiency (P9),” emphasizing the problem with the higher education admission system.

The academicians have experienced various problems while teaching international students. However, international students also have certain benefits for the university at which they study. These benefits are presented in Figure 4.

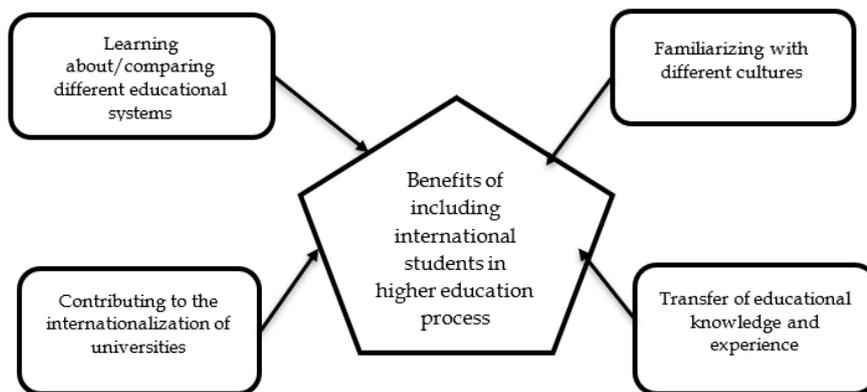


Figure 4. *Benefits of Including International Students in Higher Education Process*

According to Figure 4, there are various benefits of including international students in the education process. These benefits are presented in Table 3.

Table 3.*The Views on Benefits of Including International Students in Higher Education Process*

| Categories | Interview Statements | f |
|--|---|----|
| Learning About/Comparing Different Educational Systems | - While speaking about cases or examples specific to Turkey, I ask students how the same applies to their country. This allows both me and students to broaden our knowledge on the functioning of different educational systems (P15). | 12 |
| Familiarizing with different cultures | - It is good for students to make friends with someone from a different country and get to know the culture there (P1). | 11 |
| Contributing to the internationalization of universities | - The increased number of foreign students is an indication of being an international university (P5). | 8 |
| Transfer of educational knowledge and experience | - I think they apply what they have learned in their country as a representative (P9). | 4 |

According to Table 3, the theme of benefits of including international students in the education process group most under the category of learning about/comparing different educational systems. Regarding that, a participant says, "they enable raising awareness of what type of education is provided in different types of schools in different countries. Such students share their experiences with both us and their friends (P2)," emphasizing that such examples enable making comparisons between the educational systems. Also, international students bring their culture with them and enable the students in Turkey to get to know different cultures. Besides, international students preferring Turkey contributes to the internationalization of universities and the transfer of various educational knowledge and experience.

The recommendations of the academicians for the solution to the problems they encounter in the international students' education are presented in Figure 5.

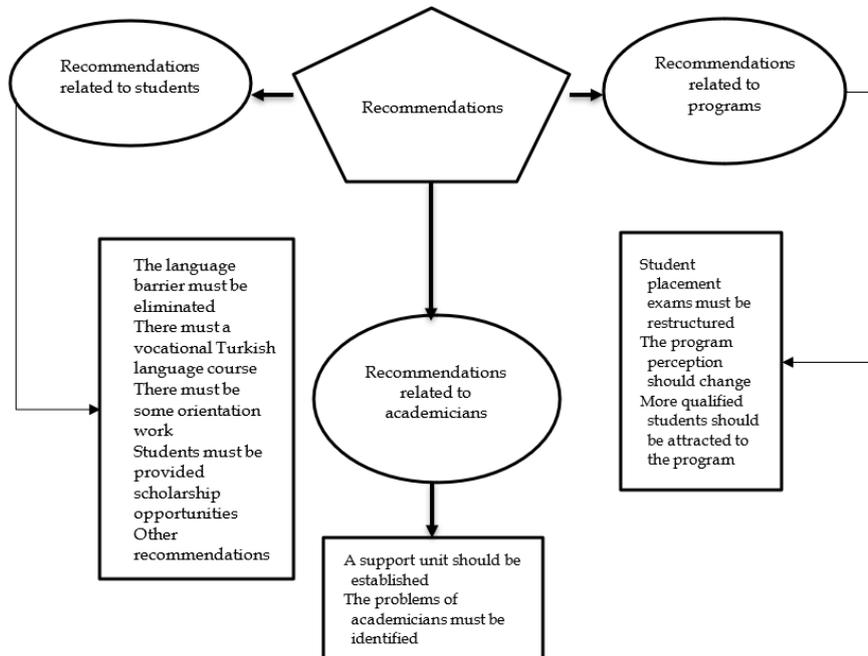


Figure 5. Recommendations of the Academicians for the Solution to the Problems

According to Figure 5, recommendations of the academicians for the solution to the problems are grouped under three themes (Table 4).

Table 4.

The Views on the Solution to the Problems

| | Categories | Interview Statements | f |
|---------------------|---|--|---|
| | The language barrier must be eliminated | They must take a Turkish proficiency test before starting first grade. We must administer a more comprehensive test including reading and writing, comprehension and listening. (P11) | 9 |
| Related to students | There must include a vocational Turkish language course | International students can be taught vocational Turkish appropriate for their field. With a Turkish vocational course, they could learn the terminology and basic concepts of their study field. (P13) | 4 |
| | There must be some orientation work | I believe it would be appropriate for the university and department to organize more orientation work. (P15) | 5 |
| | Students must be provided scholarship opportunities | These students need to build a life here; most incoming students have financial problems. There is a need for financial support. (P2) | 2 |
| | Other recommendations | It could be enriching the libraries a little more for foreign students. If they read a sourcebook in their language after listening to the class, they could better understand the class. (P4) | 2 |

Table 4 Continue

| | Categories | Interview Statements | f |
|-------------------------|--|---|---|
| Related to programs | Student placement exams must be restructured | <i>Since these students are coming with an exam, I think the quality of this exam should be improved. (P10)</i> | 4 |
| | The program perception should change | <i>The perceptions of students coming here should be changed. For this, academicians, starting from the top management, should look at it with such a mentality. It otherwise doesn't work. Even if such students go back to their country, we should be sending them back with the logic that we have raised them as good and eligible teachers. (P12)</i> | 5 |
| | More qualified students should be attracted to the program | <i>It would be nice to have an increased number. It would be better if we could attract qualified students. (P5)</i> | 2 |
| Related to academicians | A support unit should be established | <i>A support unit can be opened at the university that provides consulting to academicians. (P1)</i> | 2 |
| | The problems of academicians must be identified | <i>The implementation is well, we naturally have some shortcomings, and I believe they should be addressed (P13)</i> | 1 |

According to Table 4, according to the academicians, to solve these problems they have encountered while teaching international students, there must first be some arrangements aimed at students. As for student-related recommendations, the participants think that first, the language barrier must be eliminated. Therefore, the elimination of this barrier as a first step is emphasized almost by all participants. For the elimination of the barrier, some participants state that a Vocational Turkish language course would be useful. Also, orientation efforts and providing scholarship opportunities to these students are believed to contribute to the solution to the problems. The participants emphasize that orientation would be more helpful if it were offered to integrate the Turkish and international students. Views of a participant in this regard are as follows: "The orientation program at our university is conducted category by categories, such as orientation programs for foreign students or disabled students. However, I think it would be helpful and would contribute if we had a collective orientation program." (P13).

Some of the recommendations offered for the problems include program-specific arrangements. Thereunder, the participants suggest that student placement exams for the admission of international students to universities must be re-structured. The participants indicate that this exam is not successful in student placement. Also, among the recommendations stated in this category are changing the program perception and planning to attract more qualified students to the program. As seen

from a participant saying, “the incoming child must be taught very well. It is wrong to think that they should come, finish and go as soon as possible.” (P7), it would be helpful to have a more attentive education offered to international students and execute a program in such a way to eliminate the misconceptions. Besides, the participants also recommend as a solution establishing support units where academicians can consult when they experience problems and identifying the problems they experience in this process and taking measures accordingly.

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

The internationalization movement in education takes place through various implementations such as Erasmus, EU projects, scholarships abroad in the form of student mobility, or through the admission of international students by universities in various ways (such as exams, diploma grade). According to the academicians, the most common problem encountered by the academicians while teaching international students is the language barrier. Similarly, the academicians reported in several studies conducted in Turkey that they experienced the language barrier. In a study by Zavalı and Gündag (2017), the first issue with which international students experience problems is the language barrier. In addition to the said study, different studies (Çöllü & Öztürk, 2010; Enterieva & Sezgin, 2016; Ercan, 2012; Ghanbary, 2017; Özçetin, 2013) pointed that the first and foremost adaptation problem encountered by international students in Turkey was the language problem.

However, this is not just a Turkey-specific problem. Studies conducted in different countries (e.g., Almurideef, 2016; Jin & Schneider, 2019; Robertson et al., 2000; Sherry et al., 2010; Wu et al., 2015) also pointed that the lack of language proficiency among international students was a major problem. This language problem experienced by students affects the education process and their academic success accordingly. Hence, a study by Kılıçlar, Sarı and Seçilmiş (2012) reported that there was a negative, significant correlation between the language problems experienced by students and their academic success. Because of their low proficiency level in Turkish, international students have failed in exams (Radmard, 2017). The students were found to have difficulty comprehending the classes due to the language barrier. Özkan and Güvendir-Acar (2018) also report that the greatest difficulty international students have is understanding the target language and understanding the classes accordingly.

The language problem may, in addition to academic learning, affect their participation in different activities and cultural understanding as well (Wu et al., 2015). Therefore, as Levent and Karaevli (2013) suggest, speaking or being prone to the language of the country studied is one of the factors that affect the choices of international students. Therefore, it would be helpful if countries create solutions for the language problem to attract international students. Besides, the solution to these problems would help students adapt to the education process more easily. In Turkey, most of the universities (eg, Abant İzzet Baysal University, Akdeniz University, Aksaray University, Sivas Cumhuriyet University, Celal Bayar University, Trakya

University) is not to require the language certificate in international students' application requirements. Students who are eligible for admission and do not have a certificate for language proficiency are enrolled in language education for a year. Therefore, the international students accepted in the educational process without ensuring the language criteria in Turkey may lead to serious problems. Moreover, the fact that these students continue to have this problem after a year of language training shows that this language training is not very effective.

The academicians report in this research that students are most commonly having written expression problems as a language barrier. Particularly, they say that students cannot express themselves in the exam papers and that they have difficulty understanding the students as well. Also, in the study by Robertson, Line, Jones and Thomas (2000), the academics criticized the poor writing and critical thinking skills among international students. In the study by Jin and Schneider (2019), the academicians reported that 20% of the language problems encountered with international students was writing, 16% oral communication, 4% reading and 2% listening skills. Angelova and Riazantseva (1999) emphasize that writing is already an overly complex task even in one's mother tongue and that it is a lot harder to attempt when it is in a foreign language. Therefore, improving students' skills would help carry out the education process better. To do this, the Turkish language program students should arrange writing, reading comprehension and speaking clubs for international students as a part of their community service practice course.

The second most common problem encountered by the academicians while teaching international students was the student expectations of getting favorable and tolerant treatment. These students request the academicians to administer different exams to them, give them additional grade points and ignore their absenteeism. Absenteeism is among the serious problems encountered in the education of international students (Erişti et al., 2018; McCracken, 2001). The study conducted by McCracken (2001) in Australia found that the reason behind the academic failure of international students was absenteeism. Researching why international students become absentees in higher education in Turkey would shed light on the development of policies accordingly.

The benefits of including international students in higher education are primarily reported as it allows learning about and comparing the education systems of different countries. This opportunity presented by international student mobility to the education process is quite important. For, a comparative education helps students gain new perspectives and an international understanding. Further, this process contributes to the discovery of the main causes behind the education problems of international students and the creation of different solutions (Ertaş & Çelik, 2017). Therefore, as suggested by Jibeen and Khan (2015), including international students in the education process benefits the development of academic quality and training of students with an international focus. Also, in the study by Trice (2003), the academicians report that these students provide an important international perspective. Wu, Garza and Guzman (2015) also emphasize that international students provide different perspectives to the class and enable a mutual understanding and

appreciation of these differences worldwide. Therefore, it can be suggested that it is essential for universities in today's global conditions to develop policies aimed to include international students to improve the quality of the education process.

Including international students in the education process also enables students to familiarize themselves with different cultures. Hence, as suggested by Sasa (2018), international student mobility is quite important for cultural transfer and recognition of cultural ties. Further, this process also contributes to being more tolerant of different cultures and gaining an intercultural perspective (Rowan-Kenyon & Niehaus., 2011). Besides, according to the academicians, having international students in the education process also contributes to the internationalization of universities. The fact that international student mobility is an indication of the internationalization of higher education (Codina et al., 2013; Teichler, 2017) may have led the academicians to embrace this view.

The academicians made some recommendations for the solution to the problems they have encountered while teaching international students, as mentioned above. As a first solution, they recommended the elimination of the language barrier. Some academicians reported that it would be appropriate to structure Turkish vocational courses for these students. Also, in the study by Gültekin (2015), international students mostly request getting support in the Turkish language. In the study by Kozikoğlu and Aslan (2018), international students reported that they did not get adequate support to learn Turkish. Therefore, it may be suggested that universities must review their policies and strategies for teaching Turkish to international students as a foreign language. In this context, research should be conducted on teaching Turkish to international students to make the preparatory class more effective. Increasing the materials and resources for students on this subject, determining effective methods by applying different teaching methods and techniques in the lessons will also be useful in this context.

In addition to providing support for language teaching, according to the academicians, arranging orientation programs specific to international students that are also attended by Turkish students, and providing scholarship opportunities to students in financial distress would contribute to the solution to the problems experienced in the education process. The study by Çöllü and Öztürk (2010) found that the scholarships offered to international students were not adequate, which, therefore, led them to neglect their classes for working. Different studies (e.g., Bayraktaroğlu & Mustafayeva, 2010; Ghanbary, 2017; Sherry et al., 2010) found that international students experienced financial problems and that the scholarships granted to them were inadequate. Therefore, it would be helpful to provide financial support to international students enough for them to get by and not to affect their education process. For, as suggested by Ghanbary (2017), the income level of students affects their social, cultural and psychological adaptation levels.

The academicians also reported that re-structuring the student placement exams applicable to the available international student program quotas, changing the program perception and attracting qualified students to this program were necessary.

Also, in the study by Sherry, Thomas and Chui (2010), attempts to improve the international student profile is among the improvement recommendations. In other words, selecting qualified students is important for benefiting from international students in the education process. Therefore, it may be suggested as necessary to conduct a well and planned student selection. According to the academicians, establishing a support unit for them to consult when they have a problem with these students may also shed light on the problems experienced in the education of international students. Also, the participants reported that identifying the problems experienced by them in this process would contribute to the solution to the problems in the process. Hence, the present study is believed to be helpful for practitioners as it offers concrete solution recommendations.

This study revealed that academicians have faced problems such as language barrier, written expression, and favorable and tolerant treatment while teaching international students. This study is limited to the views of 16 academicians from three different universities. Therefore, new studies are needed to solve these problems. Researchers can examine the views of foreign relations unit officers, academician representatives of international students and international students studying at various faculties to reveal the problems of international students more comprehensively. Also, experimental studies can be conducted to determine the effectiveness of language education at universities. Studies on how international students' admission requirements and language training should be organized and what policies are needed in this field can also be designed.

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Uluslararası Öğrencilerin Eğitim-Öğretim Sürecinde Akademisyenlerin Karşılaştıkları Zorluklar: Türkiye Örneği

Atıf:

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Özet

Problem Durumu: Türkiye'deki üniversitelerde önemli sayıda uluslararası öğrenciye hizmet sunulmaktadır. Son zamanlarda çoğunluğu Asya, Afrika ve Avrupa'dan yaklaşık 185 bin uluslararası öğrenci Türkiye'de eğitim görmeyi tercih etmektedir. Yükseköğretim programlarına kayıtlı uluslararası öğrencilerin yanı sıra Türkiye'de düzenli aralıklarla kısa süreli uluslararası öğrenciler de bulunmaktadır. Öğrenci hareketliliği kapsamında 2019-2020 akademik yılında değişim programları kapsamında Türkiye'deki üniversitelere toplam 7.101 öğrenci gelmiştir (YÖK, 2020). Ancak Türkiye'nin durumu uluslararası öğrencilere cazip imkanlar sunma konusunda %0,6'lık payla oldukça düşüktür (Gür, Özoğlu ve Coşkun, 2012). Bu nedenle alanda yaşanan sorunların tespit edilip sorunların çözülmesi uluslararası öğrencileri üniversitelere çekebilmek adına önem arz etmektedir.

Üniversitelerde öğrenim gören uluslararası öğrenciler eğitim-öğretim sürecinde belirli sorunlarla karşılaşmaktadır. Yaşanan bu sorunlar öğrencilerin görüşlerinden yararlanılarak yapılan çalışmalarla ortaya konulmaya çalışılmıştır. Bu kapsamda Sasa'nın (2018) 133 uluslararası öğrenci ile yürüttüğü çalışmasında öğrenciler harç ücretleri, barınma, yemek, kitap-materyal edinme konusunda maddi zorluklar yaşadıklarını ve okula uyum sağlamada sorun yaşadıklarını belirtmiştir. Beltekin ve Radmard'ın (2013) araştırmasına göre ise uluslararası lisansüstü öğrenciler öğretim elemanlarıyla ilgili yardım alma, iletişim kurma, yeterli materyal ve etkili öğretim yöntemlerini kullanma, adil ve tarafsız değerlendirme konularında olumsuz algıya sahiptir. Kiroğlu, Kesten ve Elma (2010) tarafından yapılan çalışmada uluslararası öğrenciler arkadaşları tarafından zaman zaman dışlandıklarını, önyargılı davranışlarla karşılaştıklarını, sınırlı bütçeyle geçinmek zorunda kaldıklarını, Türk kültüründeki yemeklere alışmakta zorlandıklarını ve kıyafetlerinden dolayı çevreden rahatsız edildiklerini ifade etmiştir. Ayrıca Enterieva ve Sezgin'in (2016) çalışmasında Türki Cumhuriyetlerden gelen lisans ve lisansüstü öğrenciler dil, eğitim sistemi, sınav ve ödev uygulamaları, kalabalık yurt odaları, yurt olanaklarında kontenjan sınırlılığı ve üniversitelerdeki bürokratik işleyişle ilgili konularda sorun yaşadıklarını belirtmiştir.

Görüldüğü üzere yükseköğretimde uluslararası öğrenciler eğitim-öğretim sürecinde çeşitli sorunlarla karşılaşmaktadır. Ancak bu süreçte tıpkı öğrenciler gibi öğretim elemanlarının da belirli sorunlarla karşılaşması muhtemeldir. Çünkü eğitim-öğretim süreci öğrenci ve öğretim elemanları arasında sürdürülen etkileşimli bir süreçtir. Bu süreçteki etkileşim iki grubu da yakından ilgilendirmektedir. Bu sebeple uluslararası öğrencilerin eğitim sürecinde öğretim elemanlarının deneyimleri ve görüşleri de

oldukça önemlidir. Ancak Türkiye’de yapılan çalışmalarda uluslararası öğrencilerin eğitim sürecinde karşılaşılan sorunların genellikle öğrenciler açısından ortaya konduğu (Beltekin ve Radmard, 2013; Enterieva ve Sezgin, 2016; Kiroğlu, Kesten ve Elma, 2010; Sasa, 2018), öğretim elemanlarının bakış açısıyla sınırlı sayıda çalışmaya (Erişti, Polat ve Erdem, 2018) konu olduğu görülmektedir. Bu nedenle bu çalışmada öğretim elemanlarının uluslararası öğrencilerle karşılaştıkları sorunlar derinlemesine incelenerek daha kapsayıcı bir çalışma yapılmıştır.

Araştırmanın Amacı: Bu çalışmanın amacı Türkiye’de öğretim elemanlarının üniversitelerde uluslararası öğrencilerin eğitim-öğretim sürecinde karşılaştıkları sorunları incelemek ve bu konuda çözüm önerileri sunmaktır. Bu amaçla aşağıdaki sorulara cevap aranmıştır:

1. Öğretim elemanlarının uluslararası öğrencilerin eğitim-öğretim sürecinde yaşadıkları sorunlar nelerdir?
2. Öğretim elemanlarının görüşlerine göre uluslararası öğrencilerin yükseköğretimde eğitim-öğretim sürecine dâhil edilmesinin yararları nelerdir?
3. Öğretim elemanlarının, uluslararası öğrencilerin eğitim-öğretim sürecinde yaşadıkları sorunların çözümüne ilişkin önerileri nelerdir?

Araştırmanın Yöntemi: Bu çalışmada nitel araştırma yöntemi ve olgubilim araştırma deseni kullanılmıştır. Bu çalışmada akademisyenlerin uluslararası öğrencilerin eğitim sürecine ilişkin deneyimleri bir olgu olarak kabul edilmektedir. Türkiye’de yadsınamayacak kadar çok sayıda uluslararası öğrenci öğrenim görmektedir. Dolayısıyla bu çalışmada Türkiye’deki üniversiteler araştırma kapsamına dahil edilmiştir. Türkiye’deki üniversiteler arasında ise uluslararası öğrencilerin daha çok Ankara, İstanbul ve İzmir gibi büyük şehirlerdeki üniversiteleri tercih ettiği görülmektedir (Kocabıyık, Bacioğlu ve Güvendir, 2019). Ayrıca Ankara’nın Türkiye’nin başkenti ve sosyal konuların temsilcisi olması sebebiyle (Kaypak, 2014) bu çalışmada Ankara’daki iki büyük kamu üniversitesi çalışmaya dahil edilmiştir. Ayrıca Türkiye’ye sınır komşusu olan Balkan ülkelerinden çok sayıda uluslararası öğrenci tarafından tercih edilen Trakya Üniversitesi de çalışmaya dahil edilmiştir. Bu doğrultuda araştırmanın çalışma grubu kamu üniversitelerinde görev yapan ve sınıflarında uluslararası öğrenci bulunan 16 öğretim elemanından oluşmaktadır. Araştırmada veriler yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu ile toplanmıştır. Araştırmada toplanan veriler NVivo nitel veri analizi paket programı aracılığıyla analiz edilmiştir. Araştırmanın geçerlik ve güvenilirlik çalışması için uzman görüşü alma, akran değerlendirmesi, doğrudan alıntı verme, veri toplama-analiz sürecini ve katılımcıları ayrıntılı açıklama gibi farklı yöntemler kullanılmıştır.

Araştırmanın Bulguları: Bulgular araştırmanın amaçlarına paralel şekilde sunulmuştur. Bu doğrultuda uluslararası öğrencilerin eğitim-öğretim sürecinde çeşitli sorunlar yaşanabilmektedir. Bu sorunlar dil engeli, ayrıcalık/tolerans istemek, öğrenme çıktılarına ulaşamama, derse katılmama/çekingen kalma ve sistemle ilgili olabilirken, öğretim üyesi için ek iş yükü şeklinde de ortaya çıkabilmektedir. Bu çalışmada uluslararası öğrencilerin eğitim-öğretim sürecinde en fazla dil engeli sorunları olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Ayrıca uluslararası öğrenciler Türkiye’deki üniversitelerin koşullarını kabul ederek gelmelerine rağmen genel olarak sınavların formatı,

değerlendirilmesi ve devamsızlık konusunda öğretim elemanlarından ayrıcalık ya da tolerans beklemektedir. Diğer taraftan öğretim elemanları uluslararası öğrencilerin eğitim-öğretim sürecinde akademik başarı, ek zaman/çaba harcama, derse katılmama/çekingen kalma ve sistemden kaynaklı sorunlarla karşılaşabilmektedir. Ancak uluslararası öğrencilerin eğitim-öğretim sürecine dahil edilmesinin çeşitli yararları da bulunmaktadır. Bu yararlar farklı eğitim sistemlerini öğrenme, farklı kültürleri tanıma, üniversitelerin uluslararasılaşma ve eğitimle ilgili bilgi-deneyim aktarımı şeklinde sıralanmaktadır. Öğretim elemanları uluslararası öğrencilerin eğitim-öğretim sürecinde yaşadıkları sorunların çözümü için programa, öğrencilere ve öğretim üyelerine yönelik önerilerde bulunmuştur. Öncelikle öğrenciler için Mesleki Türkçe dersinin, oryantasyon çalışmalarının bursların eğitim-öğretim sürecinde yaşanan sorunların çözümüne katkı sunacağı düşünülmektedir. İlaveten özellikle uluslararası öğrencilerin üniversiteye kabulünde yapılan öğrenci seçme sınavlarının yeniden yapılandırılması katılımcılar tarafından dile getirilmektedir. Öğretim elemanları için de sorun yaşadıkları zaman danışabilecekleri destek birimlerinin kurulması önerilmektedir.

Araştırmanın Sonuçları ve Öneriler: Türkiye’de çok sayıda uluslararası öğrenci yükseköğretim kurumlarında öğrenim görmektedir. Bu öğrenim hizmeti lisans ve lisansüstü düzeyde profesörden öğretim görevlisine çeşitli unvanlardan öğretim elemanları tarafından verilmektedir. Nitekim bu sürecin işleyişinde belirli sorunlar yaşanmaktadır. Bu çalışma ile üniversitelerdeki uluslararası öğrencilerin eğitim-öğretim sürecinde karşılaşılan sorunlar öğretim elemanlarının gözünden ortaya konulmaya çalışılmıştır. Öğretim elemanları uluslararası öğrencilerin eğitim-öğretim sürecinde en fazla dilden kaynaklı sorunlar yaşadığını belirtmektedir. Dil engeli konusunda en yaygın olarak öğrencilerin yazılı anlatımda zorlanmaktadır. Bu sorunla baş etmek için Türkçe Öğretmenliği programı öğrencileri topluma hizmet dersi kapsamında uluslararası öğrencilerle okuduğunu anlama, yazma ve konuşma etkinlikleri yapabilir. Öğretim elemanlarına göre uluslararası öğrencilerin eğitim-öğretim sürecinde ikinci olarak en fazla yaşadıkları sorun, öğrencilerin kendilerine ayrıcalıklı/toleranslı davranılmasına yönelik beklentileridir. Bu öğrenciler öğretim elemanlarına özellikle kendileri için farklı sınavlar yapılması, kendilerine sınavlarda ek puan verilmesi, devamsızlık durumlarının göz ardı edilmesi gibi talepleri iletmektedir.

Uluslararası öğrencilerin yükseköğretimde eğitim sürecine dâhil edilmesinin bazı yararları da bulunmaktadır. Öncelikle farklı ülkelerin eğitim sistemlerini öğrenme ve karşılaştırmaya imkan tanımaktadır. Uluslararası öğrenci hareketliliğinin eğitim sürecine sağlamış olduğu bu fırsat oldukça önemlidir. Çünkü karşılaştırmalı eğitim öğrencilerin yeni bakış açıları ve uluslararası bir anlayış kazanmalarına yardımcı olmaktadır. Diğer taraftan öğretim elemanları yukarıda bahsedilen uluslararası öğrencilerin eğitim-öğretim sürecinde yaşanan sorunların çözümü için öğrencilere, programa ve öğretim elemanlarına yönelik öneriler sunmuşlardır. Öğrenciler açısından en önemli sorun olarak da belirtilen dil engelini ortadan kaldırılması ilk çözüm yolu olarak ifade edilmiştir. Bu açıdan bazı öğretim elemanları bu öğrenciler için mesleki Türkçe derslerinin getirilmesinin uygun olacağını belirtmiştir. Uluslararası öğrenci programları kontenjanları kapsamında yapılan öğrenci seçme sınavlarının yeniden yapılandırılması, programa yönelik algnın değiştirilmesi ve bu

programa daha nitelikli öğrenci çekilmesinin gerekli olduğu öğretim elemanları tarafından dile getirilmiştir. Öğretim elemanları uluslararası öğrencilerle ilgili bir sorun yaşadıklarında başvuracakları bir destek biriminin kurulmasını öncelikle önermektedir. Ayrıca katılımcılar tarafından öğretim elemanlarının bu süreçte yaşadıkları sorunların tespit edilmesinin bu süreçteki sorunların çözümüne katkı sağlayacağı belirtilmiştir. Nitekim yapılan bu çalışmanın da somut çözüm önerileri konusunda uygulayıcılara faydalı olacağı düşünülmektedir. Yapılacak daha kapsamlı nicel veya karma araştırmalarla da yükseköğretimde uluslararası öğrencilerle ilgili eğitim-öğretim sürecinde öğretim elemanlarının yaşadıkları sorunlar detaylı bir şekilde ortaya konulabilir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Yükseköğretim, uluslararasılaşma, öğrenci hareketliliği, çokkültürlülük, nitel araştırma