Understanding the Internationalization of Higher Education in Turkey: The meaning and Current Policies*

Research Article

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Article History: Received: 25.07.2022 Available online: 05.10.2022	In the present study, the issue under scrutiny is the meaning and current policies of the internationalization of higher education (HEI) in Turkey. This research is a descriptive case study and the data were collected through document analysis. The documents analyzed within the scope of the study are as follows: "Internationalization Strategy Document in Higher Education 2018-2022 (CoHE, 2017)"; "Research Project Report on Making Turkish Universities an Attraction Center for International Students in the Framework of Internationalization of Higher Education (Kadıoğlu & Özer, 2015)"; "Growth, Quality, Internationalization: A Roadmap for Higher Education in Turkey (Çetinsaya, 2014)", "10th Development Plan 2014-2018 (T.R. Ministry of Development, 2013)" and "11th Development Plan 2019-2023 (T.R. Presidential Strategy and Budget Department, 2019)". The content analysis method was used to analyze the data. The available evidence seems to suggest that the internationalization of higher education in Turkey has academic meanings in the sub-dimensions of education/training, institutional quality, research/publication, and human resources; cultural meanings in the sub-dimensions of cultural ambassador, diversity, and integration; political meanings in foreign policy, soft power, political closeness sub-dimensions and, finally, economic meanings in the sub-dimensions of human resources, growth, global competition, and economic mobility. There is overwhelming evidence corroborating the notion that the policies of recognition and visibility, mobility, internationalization, strategic planning, and student opportunities have been applied to the internationalization of higher education in Turkey. Overall, this study strengthens the need for the Internationalization of Higher Education Working Committee, which comprises all the stakeholders under one roof. The current data highlight the importance of continuous efforts to make the faculty members, students, and administrative staff competent in foreign languages.

Introduction

The concept of internationalization has been at the core of the university for centuries. In the historical process, the method, reasons, indicators, or driving forces of internationalization have undergone various changes. There are several reasons for these changes. Developed countries' desire to attract qualified minds, increasing technological opportunities, development efforts of developing countries, positive international relations established by countries with strong cultural ties, efforts to earn income in economic terms, travel facilities, acquiring different academic perspectives, lifelong learning, and globalization. The internationalization of higher education has become one of the leading research topics in the world in recent years (Aydınlı & Mathews, 2020; Asada, 2022; Bulnes & de Louw, 2022; Chang & Lin, 2018; Elken, Hovdhaugen & Wiers-Jenssen, 2022; Ergin, de Wit & Leask, 2019; Seggie & Çalıkoğlu, 2021; Pogorelskaya, 2022; Wetzinger, 2022).

The concept of internationalization in higher education has been defined in various ways in the literature, but Elkin, Devjee, and Farnsworth (2005, p. 320) state that there is no consensus on the definition of internationalization in higher education. It is very difficult to define internationalization as universal because it is a comprehensive concept that applies to many different countries, cultures, and education systems. For this reason, it is difficult to gather the reasons, benefits, results, actors, activities, and stakeholders of internationalization under a single definition, as they vary greatly from one nation to another or from one institution to another (Knight, 2004, p. 11). For a higher education institution, internationalization means establishing mutual interaction both within its own culture and between other cultures through ways such as teaching, research, and service. At the same time, internationalization means the interaction of a university with universities in other countries (Yang 2002, p. 83). According to another definition that is frequently encountered and accepted in the literature, "internationalization is the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension of education into the purpose, functions or service of post-secondary education (Knight 2003, p. 2)". Knight (1999, p. 17) argues that there are different ways of defining internationalization, as well as different reasons and motivations for internationalization. Knight (2008, p. 24) refers to these reasons as "the driving force" for countries, sectors, and institutions.

In the literature, the reasons for the internationalization of higher education are listed as economic, political, cultural, and academic reasons (Knight, 1999, pp. 17-20, 2004, p. 21; Knight and de Wit, 1995, pp. 9-14). de Wit (2002, pp. 83-85) listed the economic reasons for the internationalization of higher education as economic development and competitiveness, the labor market, national demand for education, and financial incentives for governments and institutions. According to Knight (1999, p. 17), international education has been seen as an important foreign policy tool in the context of national security and interstate peace in the past. de Wit (2002, pp. 79-82), on the other hand, associated political reasons with foreign policy, national security, technical assistance, peace, mutual understanding, and national and regional identity. Mayor (1989, pp. 5-15) expressed the cultural side of higher education by emphasizing that universities are the producers, transmitters, and reproducers of culture. Yang (2002, p. 83) approached internationalization in terms of university and national education systems.

"For a university, internationalization means the awareness and operation of interactions within and between cultures through its teaching, research, and service functions, with the ultimate aim of achieving mutual understanding across cultural borders. For a national higher education system, internationalization refers to dialogue with those in other countries. Internationalization, then, is not a newly emergent topic or phenomenon."

Knight (1999, p. 19) mentioned the history and development of universities in terms of the academic reasons for the internationalization of higher education. He stated that there has been the mobility of academics and the addition of an international dimension to the research dimension for centuries. Accordingly, the leading academic rationale for internationalization is to achieve international standards in teaching and research.

As can be seen, the internationalization of higher education is a comprehensive concept that concerns the teaching, research, and service dimensions of the university and is constantly up-to-date on a global scale. Similarly, Bulut-Şahin and Kondakı (2022) assert that "the internationalization of higher education (IHE) has become a key policy issue for governments, a research field for scholars, a strategic priority for universities, and a career orientation for administrative staff." So, in the last few years, internationalization has attracted much attention from researchers. However, to the authors' best knowledge, very few publications are available in the literature that discusses the issue of internationalization of higher education. In the Turkish context, comprehensive studies that deal with the internationalization of higher education with a holistic perspective at the level of policy documents are quite limited (Bulut Şahin, 2017; Ergin, 2017; Selvitopu, 2016; Şişmanoğlu Kaymaz, 2018; Taşçı, 2018; Vural Yılmaz, 2014, 2016). Existing researches are on more limited subjects such as various dimensions of internationalization, internationalization status of various institutions, globalization, exchange programs, Bologna Process, quality, and international students (Arkalı Olcay & Nasır, 2016; Büyükgöze & Özdemir, 2016; Dölek & Taşçı, 2018; Önder and Balcı, 2010; Özer, 2012, 2017; Şimşek and Bakır, 2016; Vural Yılmaz, 2017; Yağcı, 2010; Yalı, 2017). Unlike these studies, the current research evaluates the internationalization process of Turkish higher education from a more comprehensive perspective. With this research, it is thought that a different and all-encompassing view will be gained on the field of internationalization of higher education, which is still developing in Turkey.

What has come to the fore in recent years is the trend of *studying abroad* (being an international student, mobility, internationalization). OECD (2020, p. 227) highlights that there has been growing policy attention on international student mobility in recent years. Surprisingly, determining comprehensive strategies for the internationalization of higher education in Turkey and publishing the policy document is not very old. The documents to be evaluated in this context are "Internationalization Strategy Document in Higher Education 2018-2022 (CoHE, 2017)"; "Research Project Report on Making Turkish Universities an Attraction Center for International Students in the Framework of Internationalization of Higher Education (Kadıoğlu & Özer, 2015)"; "Growth, Quality, Internationalization: A Roadmap for Higher Education in Turkey (Çetinsaya, 2014)", "10th Development Plan 2014-2018 (T.R. Ministry of Development, 2013)" and "11th Development Plan 2019-2023 (T.R. Presidential Strategy and Budget Department, 2019)".

This article aims to analyze the policy documents written on the internationalization of higher education in Turkey. The paper concentrates on the meaning of the internationalization of higher education in Turkey and the policies of internationalization of higher education applied in Turkey are aimed to be revealed. For this purpose, answers to the following questions were sought.

1. According to the policy documents on the internationalization of higher education,

 a. What is the **meaning** of the internationalization of higher education in Turkey?

 b. What are the **policies** implemented in the process of internationalization of higher education in Turkey?

Method

This research was conducted with case study, one of the qualitative research designs. According to Creswell (2013, p. 44), qualitative research begins with interpretative/theoretical perspectives and assumptions

that contain information about the research problem. To investigate this problem, the researcher continues processes such as data collection in natural environments, data analysis such as induction/deduction, and establishing patterns and themes. The case study can be defined as an in-depth description and examination of a limited system (Merriam, 2009, p. 40). Within this research, the documents in the literature on the internationalization of higher education were determined as the analysis units.

Study Group

The study group consists of documents that are rich in information. Documents published by universities, various state institutions, syndicates, various non-governmental organizations, faculty members, websites, and all resources were searched. While searching, search terms such as "higher education, policy, internationalization policies, education policies, education planning, Turkey" were used. The search was performed without covering a specific date range. As a result of the searches, many documents were obtained. Since the study discussed the context of Turkey, the focus was on documents originating from Turkey. Documents that addressed the internationalization of higher education holistically at the policy level and included the meaning of internationalization were recorded and examined through the document review form prepared by the researchers. The document review form includes the author, year, type of documents, and the person/institution to which they belong. There is a checkbox indicating whether the document has the content to answer the research question. For example, is internationalization defined in the document? Is the importance of internationalization stated in the document? Are internationalization policies mentioned in the document? Literature review and research questions were taken into consideration in the creation of the document review form. The other documents were not included in the scope of the research because they did not address the internationalization of higher education at the policy level. At the end of this review documents titled "Internationalization Strategy Document in Higher Education 2018-2022 (CoHE, 2017)"; "Research Project Report on Making Turkish Universities an Attraction Center for International Students in the Framework of Internationalization of Higher Education (Kadıoğlu & Özer, 2015)"; "Growth, Quality, Internationalization: A Roadmap for Higher Education in Turkey (Çetinsaya, 2014)", "10th Development Plan 2014-2018 (T.R. Ministry of Development, 2013)" and "11th Development Plan 2019-2023 (T.R. Presidential Strategy and Budget Department, 2019)" were selected for analysis. It is assumed that these documents enabled a description of the internationalization of higher education at the policy level.

Analysis of Data

The content analysis method was used to analyze the data. Content analysis is defined as an effort to make sense of voluminous qualitative data (Patton, 2002, p. 453). Merriam (2009, pp. 175-176) stated the purpose of data analysis as exporting the meaning of data through interpretation and integration. Creswell (2013, p. 180) and Yıldırım and Şimşek (2013, p. 260) put forward various processing steps in content analysis. Following all these purposes and stages, the researchers read the documents in the study group carefully and at various intervals. He took various notes in each session and aimed to have a detailed knowledge of the content of the documents. When the researchers thought they were ready to code, he started the coding process. The researchers associated the codes with the sub-themes and then with the themes using the inductive method. At the last stage, the researchers verified the obtained codes, sub-themes, and themes, with the approval of other coders and eliminated the incompatibilities. The researchers presented the final themes by supporting them with figures.

Establishing Credibility and Trustworthiness

There are various strategies to develop and expand validity and reliability in qualitative research (Merriam, 2009), and researchers are advised to adopt various accepted strategies to prove the accuracy of their studies (Creswell, 2013). In this study, various strategies were followed to increase the credibility

(internal validity) of the study and to ensure its transferability (external validity). A prolonged involvement strategy was used for credibility (internal validity). Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined prolonged involvement as building trust, solving problems arising from the participants or the researcher, and spending enough time learning about the culture. After the researchers decided on this study, which aims to evaluate the internationalization of higher education in Turkey, they were in constant interaction with the experts and administrators who carried out the internationalization studies of the state university where they worked and received support for their work. In addition, the researcher closely followed the university's quality studies in higher education, the work of the ECTS and Bologna coordinator, and attended the meetings held. In this way, the researchers aimed to be closer to the research area and to be familiar with its culture.

Reliability (Consistency) is concerned with what the results will be if research is carried out at the same or similar times with the same or similar participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, various strategies were followed to increase the internal consistency (internal reliability) of the study and to ensure its external reliability. To increase the internal reliability of the research, simple explanations were presented from the data collection stage. With these simple explanations, it is aimed that the whole process will proceed smoothly. The raw data collected within the scope of the research were backed up and stored. In this study, other researchers were used to ensure external reliability, and different perspectives were taken into account in the processes of data collection, analysis, and revealing of the findings. Coders with qualitative research experience were used in the study. During the analysis of the data, it was ensured that there was consensus among all coders.

Findings and Discussion

The Meaning of the Internationalization of Higher Education in Turkey (1a)

For the first part of the research question (1a), the meaning of the internationalization of higher education in Turkey was investigated through the documents in the study group.

The findings obtained as a result of this research are shown in Figure 1 below as codes, sub-themes, and themes.
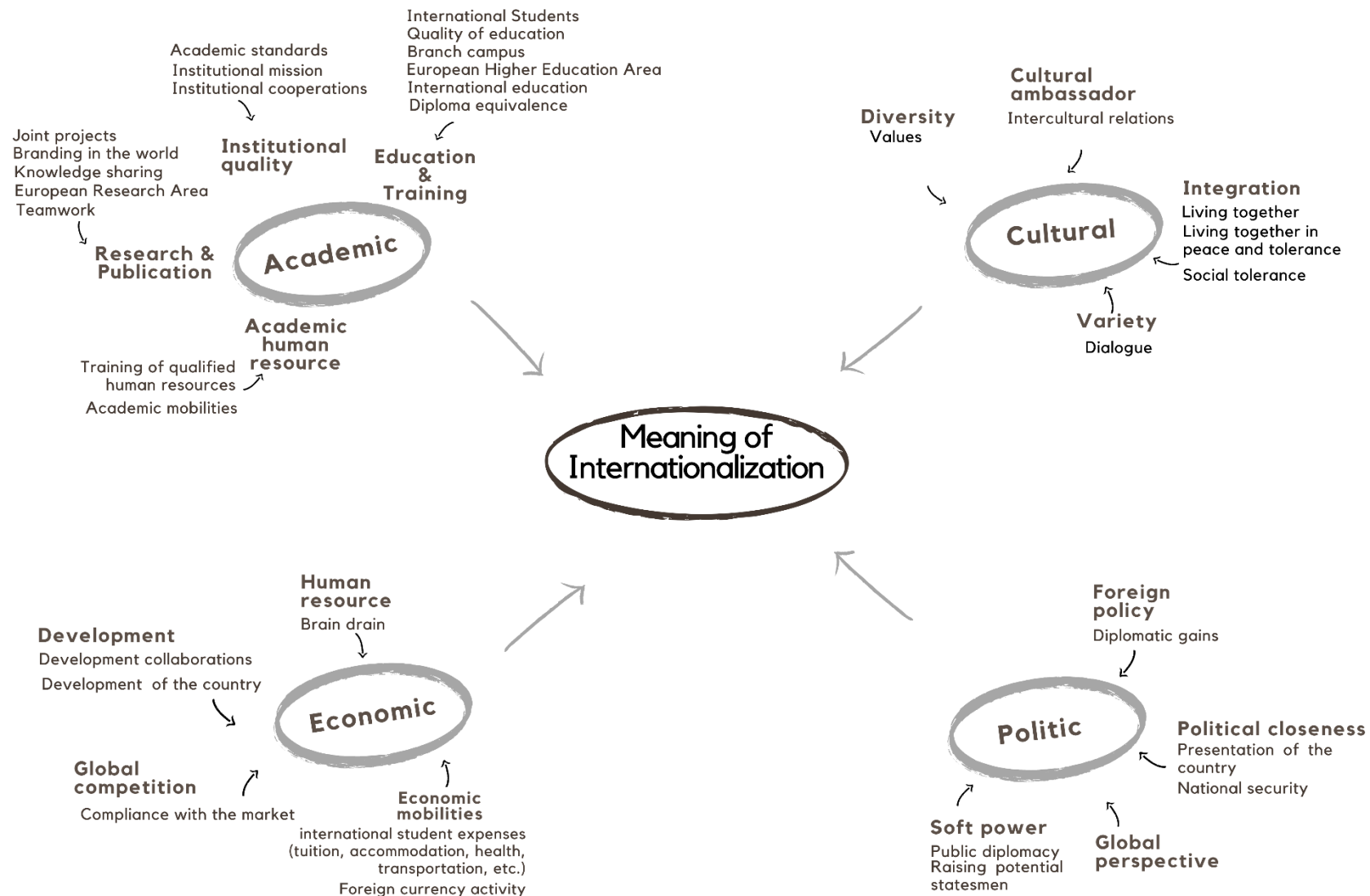
Figure 1. The Meaning of the Internationalization of Higher Education

When Figure 1 is examined, it is seen that the internationalization of higher education in Turkey has academic, cultural, economic, and political meanings.

Theme 1: The statements regarding the academic meaning of the internationalization of higher education in Turkey are presented below.

"One of the important contributions of internationalization is its contribution to the increase of institutional quality and capacity through the sharing of knowledge in academic and scientific fields (CoHE, 2017, p. 7).

"International students are on the agenda of many countries today because of their academic, social, cultural, political and economic contributions (Kadıoğlu & Özer, 2015, p. 11).

"Strengthening the field of higher education in Turkey in internationalization is important not only to contribute to the regional and global position of our country but also to enrich the understanding of the university and increase the education and research quality of our universities (Çetinsaya, 2014, p. 170)."

"The higher education system will be transformed into a quality-oriented competitive structure within the framework of the principles of autonomy, performance-oriented, specialization, and diversity based on accountability (T.R. Ministry of Development, 2013)."

Theme 2: The statements regarding the economic meaning of the internationalization of higher education in Turkey are presented below.

"The sine qua non for our country to be among the top ten economies in the world is the qualified human resource, which plays a key role in shaping the future of the country (CoHE, 2017, p. 7).

"However, in the benefits of internationalization … the benefits that can be grouped as a source of economic benefit come to the fore more than others (CoHE, 2017, p. 7).

"International students contribute to the economy of the country they are in, both with the tuition fees they pay and the expenses they make with their family members to meet their accommodation, travel, and daily needs. Education fees not only contribute to the country's economy but also support the financial sustainability of higher education institutions (Kadıoğlu & Özer, 2015, p. 12).

"The transformation of higher education institutions into an output-oriented structure that attaches importance to technology production in cooperation with industry will be encouraged, and entrepreneurial activities and income sources will be diversified (T.R. Ministry of Development, 2013, p. 33)."

Theme 3: The statements regarding the cultural meaning of the internationalization of higher education in Turkey are presented below.

"However, the benefits of internationalization … being a means of interaction between countries and cultures … (CoHE, 2017, p. 8).

"International students become an important tool of production and development goals by staying in the countries they are in after their education, or they return to their countries as cultural ambassadors and act as a bridge between their countries and the country they host in political, social, cultural and commercial areas (Kadıoğlu and Özer, 2015, p. p. 11)."

"Again, internationalization aims to change the introverted structure of higher education institutions; It is one of the most suitable means for universities to increase intercultural dialogue, negotiation and interaction, and to transform them into research and knowledge sharing spaces (Çetinsaya, 2014a, p. 143)."

"Besides the acceleration, it has brought to quality processes, the most positive contribution of internationalization to higher education is its contribution to university culture. That the university institution is the place where all opinions are voiced, international students from different cultures and different backgrounds breathe and interact with the same environment with the students of the country, the diversified campus environments provide a climate of tolerance, and it helps to enrich higher education in every way. (Çetinsaya, 2014a, p. 142)."

Theme 4: The statements regarding the political meaning of the internationalization of higher education in Turkey are presented below.

"Internationalization also makes important contributions to public diplomacy. When international students return to their countries, they can come to senior positions and have a say in determining the country's policy. It is known that observing the country's interest in foreign policy and public diplomacy and development areas is prominent (CoHE, 2017, p. 8).

"In addition, international student mobility is an effective foreign policy, public diplomacy and development cooperation tool to increase cooperation and solidarity between countries and cultures (Kadıoğlu and Özer, 2015, p. 3)."

"Higher education is one of the main areas that will enrich the position of our country, which has an important human resource and historical background for the solution of regional and global problems, and increase its interaction with other countries (Çetinsaya, 2014a, p. 169)."

All these statements reveal the finding that the internationalization of higher education in Turkey is a multidimensional concept that has academic, economic, political, and cultural meanings. Vural-Yılmaz (2016) conducted a study investigating the opportunities and importance levels offered by the internationalization of higher education. The opportunities that stand out in the results of the study are research and innovation infrastructure, university rankings, international cooperation, intercultural dialogue, academic and personal development, employment of graduates, and opportunities to improve the qualifications of faculty members. When examined carefully, we can see that the findings of Vural-Yılmaz's research overlap with the academic, economic, cultural, and political themes reached within this research. Similarly, Knight (2008) explained the importance of the internationalization of higher education for socio-cultural, political, economic, and academic reasons. We can say that these reasons coincide with the findings of this study. Taşçı (2018) focused on the meaning of internationalization in her study. Although the findings of both studies show similarity in academic and cultural dimensions, they do not show similarity in terms of politics. In the study of Aydınlı and

Mathews (2020, p. 10), academic goals are expressed as the centre of universities' internationalization efforts. In this respect, it can be said that this finding overlaps with the academic meaning theme of the current study.

The finding that the internationalization of higher education in Turkey has academic, cultural, economic, and political meanings is largely confirmed by Kondakçı (2011, p. 588). Kondakçı (2011, p. 588) explained the movements of international students around the world in four circles. The first circle includes traditional destinations such as the USA, England, and Australia. For these countries, the economic reasons for student mobility are at the forefront. The second circle includes countries with Anglo-Saxon education systems, and economically developed, but non-native English-speaking countries. Higher education institutions in these countries may try to attract foreign students for economic reasons, but academic, social, and cultural motivations are also clear for these countries. The third circle includes economically developing and non-English-speaking countries. In this circle, including Turkey, cultural, geographical, historical, and political reasons are relatively more prominent than economic reasons. In addition, these countries are likely to be "sending" countries into student mobility. The fourth circle comprises other countries that are fully qualified as sending countries. Although economically developed and English-speaking countries are attracting attention as study abroad destinations, the trend in international student mobility points to an increasing and intense flow towards countries in the third circle, including Turkey.

Similarly, the finding that the internationalization of higher education in Turkey has a cultural meaning is like the findings of Kondakçı, Çalışkan, Bulut Şahin, Yılık, and Engin Demir (2016, p. 302). Cultural, historical, religious, and social affinities emerge as a pull factor and, for these reasons, the Balkan countries become Turkey's internationalization hinterland. Amblee and Dhayanithy (2018, p. 412) reached various themes in their study on the meaning of internationalization of higher education for faculty members. Internationalization is gaining international visibility; developing intercultural perspectives, and adopting global standards; knowledge production, and learning across borders; It means the movement of people and ideas. It is seen that the aforementioned theme is like the academic, cultural, political, and economic themes that emerged in the current study.

The Internationalization Policies of Higher Education in Turkey (1b)

To answer the second question of this study (1b), the internationalization policies of higher education in Turkey were investigated according to the information obtained from the documents in the study group. The codes, sub-themes, and themes obtained as a result of this research are shown in Figure 2 below.
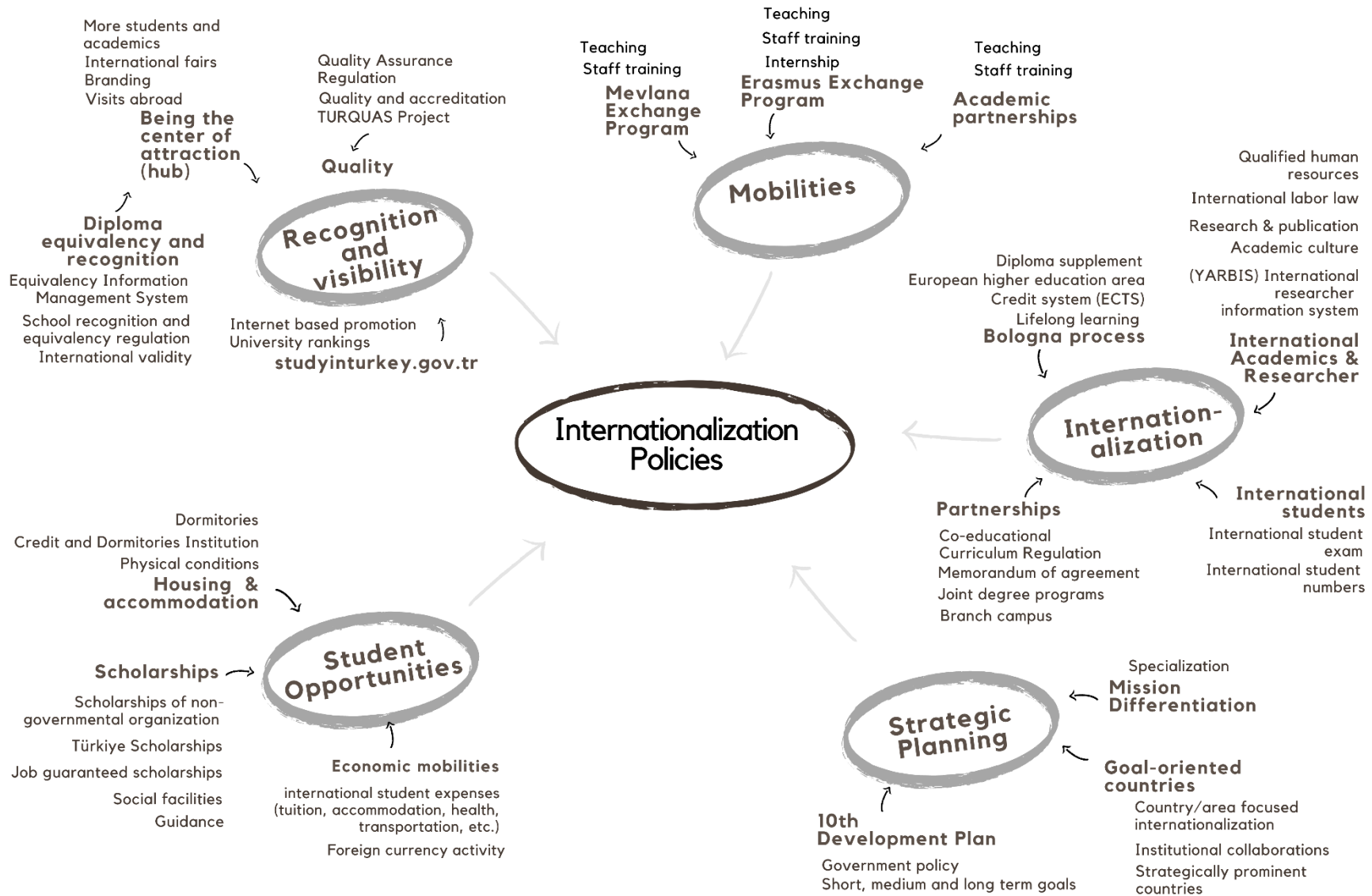
Figure 2. Internationalization Policies of Higher Education Implemented in Turkey

When Figure 2 is examined, it is seen that there are recognition and visibility, mobility, internationalization, strategic planning, and student opportunities policies for the internationalization of higher education in Turkey.

Theme 1: The statements regarding the recognition and visibility policies implemented for the internationalization of higher education in Turkey are presented below.

"Various strategies are being developed for the Turkish higher education system to become an international center of attraction and attract more students and faculty members from more countries, and efforts are made to keep the dynamics of internationalization strong with the policies pursued in this area (CoHE, 2017, p. 15).

"Strategic Goals and Targets
Aim 1. To make Turkey a center of attraction in higher education (CoHE, 2017, p. 52)."

"The issues of accreditation, equivalence, and language of instruction determine the country and university preferences of international students. After determining the target countries for attracting international students, a detailed examination should be made about the recognition status of Turkish universities in these countries and the equivalence of their diplomas, and the initiatives on this subject should be systematized by YÖK (CoHE) (Kadıoğlu and Özer, 2015, p. 6).

Levent and Karaevli (2013) make various suggestions under the theme of communication and promotion in their study, which examines the policies for the education of international students and offers various suggestions. The theme of communication and promotion in the aforementioned study is parallel to the theme of recognition and equivalence, which is the finding reached within the current study. In addition, the strategy of developing communication networks in Şişmanoğlu-Kaymaz's (2018) study coincides with the recognition and visibility dimension of this research. According to the findings of this study, Turkey aims to be a centre of attraction for international students through its recognition and visibility policies. This finding is in line with the study of Kondakçı, Bedenlier, and Zawacki-Richter (2018, p. 531) in which they describe Turkey as a centre emerging in its region. Similarly, Kondakçı, Çalışkan, Bulut Şahin, Yılık, and Engin Demir (2016, p. 301) emphasize that statistical data confirm Turkey is a centre in its region.

Theme 2: The statements regarding the student opportunities policies implemented at the point of internationalization of higher education in Turkey are presented below.

"Our Core Policies

Diversification of scholarship opportunities (CoHE, 2017, p. 50)."

"… Türkiye Scholarships, … YÖK (CoHE)'s start of granting scholarships to international students are some of the important initiatives that strengthen this process (CoHE, 2017, p. 15)."

"Our Core Policies
Increasing the housing capacity (CoHE, 2017, p. 48)."

"…, housing opportunities of higher education institutions for international students will be developed and institutional capacity will be increased in internationalization (T.R. Presidency of Strategy and Budget Directorate, 2019, p. 140)."

Şişmanoğlu-Kaymaz (2018) introduced the university's housing facilities as an institutional strategy for international students and faculty members. Vural-Yılmaz (2016) in his research, which tries to determine the priority dimensions in the internationalization strategies of universities, put forward a priority dimension to increase Turkey's political-cultural influence by providing scholarships to international students. In this study, since the dimension of student opportunities emerged as the dimension of the internationalization policies of higher education, it is seen that the findings of the studies overlap.

Theme 3: The statements regarding the strategic planning policies implemented for the internationalization of higher education in Turkey are presented below.

> *"Our Core Policies*
>
> *Determining target/focus countries and focusing on these countries (CoHE, 2017, p. 48)."*
>
> *"Our Core Policies*
>
> *Identifying priority areas of education and cooperation in the country's context (CoHE, 2017, p. 49).*
>
> *"Our Core Policies*
>
> *Identifying target state universities and supporting them in internationalization (CoHE, 2017, p. 49).*
>
> *"... the extension of the stay of doctoral students in Turkey after graduation, the start of YÖK (CoHE) granting scholarships to international students are some of the important initiatives that strengthen this process (CoHE, 2017, p. 15)."*
>
> *"Turkey should establish its internationalization strategy in line with its regional power and global goals. In this context, it is a viable strategy for Turkey to develop relations in higher education not only with nearby geographical and cultural basins but also with Asian, African, and Latin American countries (Çetinsaya, 2014a, p. 169)."*

In the context of internationalization, strategic planning gains importance primarily in making choices, determining the focal point, determining priorities, and creating effectively organized, coordinated and structured activities (de Haan, 2014, 147). Soysal (2018) reached the sub-theme of strategic planning of higher education under the theme of higher education-quality- management in his study, which aims to analyze higher education studies descriptively. In this sense, the findings of both studies are similar.

Theme 4: The statements regarding the internationalization policies implemented for the internationalization of higher education in Turkey are presented below.

> *"Strategic Goals and Targets*
>
> *Purpose 2. To increase the institutional capacity in internationalization (CoHE, 2017, p. 52)."*
>
> *"Various strategies are being developed in order for the Turkish higher education system to gain more students and academic staff from more countries … and the dynamics of internationalization are tried to be kept strong with the policies followed in this field (CoHE, 2017, p. 15)."*
>
> *"In this context, the International Labor Law No. 6735, which was published in the Official Gazette dated 13 August 2016 and entered force, will contribute significantly to our goals of being a center of attraction for qualified foreign labor force (CoHE, 2017)."*
>
> *"One of the most important steps taken in terms of the internationalization of higher education in Turkey is that the Council of Higher Education abolished the -central and compulsory-Foreign Student*

Examination (YÖS) in 2010, giving universities a great deal of flexibility in determining the procedures and principles regarding the admission of international students. This flexibility and advantage have created an opportunity for our universities, and our universities have taken advantage of this opportunity. The best indicator of this is the significant increase in the number of international students in our country after 2010 (Çetinsaya, 2014a, p. 152)."

"The number of qualified international students in the higher education system will be increased (T.R. Presidency of the Presidency of Strategy and Budget, 2019, p. 140)."

Yağcı (2010) analyzed the Bologna process and discussed the process in terms of diploma degrees, mobility and recognition, quality assurance, lifelong learning, and social dimension. The above dimensions of the Bologna process are parallel to the sub-theme of the Bologna Process, which is included in the international theme of this study. Kara and Çalık (2022) examined the experiences of academics who went abroad for at least one year to carry out academic studies while they were working in Turkey and who did academic studies at foreign higher education institutions. According to this, during the time they spent abroad, academicians felt inadequate in the use of foreign languages and professionally.

Theme 5: The statements regarding the mobility policies implemented for the internationalization of higher education in Turkey are presented below.

"With the Learning Mobility of Higher Education Students and Staff, it is aimed to develop the competencies of higher education students and staff and to offer them professional development opportunities abroad (CoHE, 2017, p. 18)."

"… Erasmus and Erasmus+ programs, … Mevlana Exchange Program, … Project-Based International Exchange Program … are some of the important initiatives that strengthen this process (CoHE, 2017, p. 15)."

"Exchange students take part in international mobility through exchange programs such as Erasmus and Mevlana or bilateral agreements between universities and universities abroad (Kadıoğlu and Özer, 2015, p. 18)."

"One of the most important elements of the internationalization process, which should also be evaluated in terms of massification and universalization of access to higher education, is student mobility (Çetinsaya, 2014a, p. 143)."

In the last two decades, the internationalization of higher education has become a leading policy debate and research topic. Student mobility from various aspects of internationalization has become the subject that attracts the most attention from international institutions, governments, and higher education institutions (Gümüş, Gök, and Esen, 2019, pp. 16-17). Porfirio (2012) reiterates that student mobility is the most important internationalization strategy by higher education administrators. Şişmanoğlu-Kaymaz (2018) put forward increasing international student mobility as an institutional strategy. In his study, Vural-Yılmaz (2016) tried to determine the priority dimensions in the internationalization strategies of universities and revealed that student and faculty mobility should be a priority to a large extent. Since there is a mobility theme among the findings of the internationalization policies of higher education in this study, the findings of these studies overlap.

Conclusion

The Meaning of the Internationalization of Higher Education in Turkey (1a)

Returning to the question posed at the beginning of this study (1a), it is now possible to state that the internationalization of higher education in Turkey has academic, cultural, economic, and political meanings.

The academic meaning of the internationalization of higher education in Turkey includes students and faculty members and their mobility, joint projects, teamwork, publications, academic information sharing, quality and accreditation, and foreign language studies. With this research, it has been revealed that the internationalization of higher education in Turkey is a process that allows the sharing of scientific knowledge, which combines the academic meaning of qualified human resources, research/publication opportunities, and institutional quality with the education process.

The economic meaning of the internationalization of higher education in Turkey includes qualified human resources, expenses such as fees, accommodation, transportation, and health of international students and their relatives, transforming information into value-added production, industry, and university cooperation studies. This study identified that the economic meaning of the internationalization of higher education in Turkey is an understanding that aims to see international students as qualified human resources, as well as to contribute to production by transforming their expenditures and knowledge into technology.

The cultural meaning of the internationalization of higher education in Turkey includes the ability of different cultures to live together, in peace and interaction, tolerating differences, increasing solidarity between countries and cultures, and training cultural ambassadors. The research presented here reports that the cultural meaning of the internationalization of higher education in Turkey is an understanding that includes keeping intercultural relations alive by interacting with different cultures based on human values, integrating with the world, and raising cultural ambassadors.

The political meaning of the internationalization of higher education in Turkey includes diplomatic gains, public diplomacy, soft power, and foreign policy studies. This finding indicated that the political meaning of the internationalization of higher education in Turkey is an understanding that aims to establish deep-rooted and solid relations with the countries that are planning to interact through higher education and to increase the influence of the Republic of Turkey by contacting the peoples of those countries.

The Policies of the Internationalization of Higher Education in Turkey (1b)

The principal findings of this research regarding the second part of the research question (1b) are that the policies of recognition and visibility, student opportunities, strategic planning, internationalization, and mobility for the internationalization of higher education in Turkey were implemented. Among the recognition and visibility policies for the internationalization of higher education in Turkey, there are efforts to become a centre of attraction, reach more students and faculty, create a legal basis, make internet-oriented promotion, and create a competitive system that is higher in university rankings and quality studies. The analysed data suggests that higher education in Turkey maintains its recognition and visibility policies by targeting higher ranks in university rankings, trying to be a centre of attraction or a hub, maintaining quality studies, and strengthening its infrastructure in areas such as equivalence & recognition.

Student opportunities policies for the internationalization of higher education in Turkey include student dormitory construction, Higher Education Credit and Hostels Institution studies, improvement of physical conditions, Türkiye Scholarships, job-guaranteed scholarship programs, social opportunities, and guidance. The research presented here confirms that higher education in Turkey continues its student opportunities policies by expanding the accommodation opportunities for international students, giving scholarships to international students, arranging social opportunities for international students, and providing guidance services to them.

There are activities such as teaching, studying, and doing internships within the mobility policies for the internationalization of higher education in Turkey. The analysis concludes that higher education in Turkey maintains its mobility policies by focusing on Erasmus Exchange Program, Mevlana Exchange Program, and academic collaborations.

Internationalization policies for the internationalization of higher education in Turkey diploma supplement include studies such as the European Higher Education Area, credit system, lifelong learning, number of international students and selection exam, academic cultural richness, international faculty information system, post-graduate stay in the country, bilateral agreements, joint diploma, and branch campus. The results of this investigation show that the higher education system in Turkey maintains its policies of being international with efforts such as adopting the Bologna process, continuing its studies for international students and faculty members, and continuing its studies on qualified human resources, cooperation and partnerships.

Among the strategic planning policies for the internationalization of higher education in Turkey, there are studies to make the issue a government policy, set short-middle-long-term goals, determine the country and field-oriented areas, seek opinions from relevant ministries on strategic issues, to identify countries that stand out from the strategic point of view, and to specialize in higher education. One of the more significant findings to emerge from this study is that strategic planning policies are maintained by including the subject of internationalization in higher education in the development plans in Turkey, by determining the target-oriented and priority countries, and by continuing the mission differentiation studies.

Recommendations

As a result of this study, it was concluded that the internationalization of higher education in Turkey has academic, cultural, economic, and political meaning and that the policies of recognition and visibility, student opportunities, being international, strategic planning, integration, and mobility have been produced for the internationalization of higher education in Turkey. On the other hand, some studies suggest that a comprehensive and planned internationalization process is not carried out in Turkey. This particular research finding also points to the need for the Internationalization of Higher Education Working Committee, which comprises faculty members who carry out academic studies on the internationalization of higher education in Turkey, people who carry out the internationalization practices of universities, relevant units of ministries that contribute directly or indirectly to internationalization, foundations, non-governmental organizations, and student representatives. This committee can contribute importantly to the production of more comprehensive and coordinated studies on the internationalization of higher education by bringing together policymakers, practitioners, and employees who face different problems with different motivations, faculty members, and students.

As previously stated, it was revealed that the internationalization of higher education in Turkey also has an economic meaning. Although international students are perceived as qualified human resources and their economic added value, the other part of this economic meaning is related to accommodation, health, transportation, and other expenses of international students and family members in Turkey. It is clear that Turkey needs to calculate not the economic income to be obtained from the expenditures of international students and their family members, but the long-term contributions of international students to teaching environments, research laboratories, knowledge production, and information technologies in Turkey. In this sense, a second broad recommendation for practitioners is to make more comprehensive plans for international students in Turkey.

As indicated previously, it was revealed that the internationalization of higher education in Turkey also has a cultural meaning. On the other hand, it is revealed as a result of some studies that there are foreign language deficiencies among faculty members and students in Turkey and that there are faculty members and administrative staff with poor awareness of cultural diversity in universities. The importance of knowing a foreign language and having an awareness of intercultural interaction to engage in cultural interaction cannot be denied. So, continuous efforts are needed to make the faculty members, students, and administrative staff competent in foreign languages.

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