Faculty Perception on International Students in Turkey: Benefits and Challenges

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to examine faculty perceptions on international students with respect to benefits and challenges of having them in a liberal arts university located in Istanbul, Turkey. The research data were collected through evaluation of pertinent documents of the school and interviews with sixteen faculty members and one administrative staff member. Revealed themes for the benefits of having international students within the institution included: (1) escalading the overall academic and disciplinary success of the school, (2) creating diversity in learning environment and (3) generating competitive learning environment. Themes that are revealed for the challenges of having international students included: (1) adaptation to a new educational system, (2) language accents, (3) time management issues, and (4) isolation and grouping.

Keywords: International education, international students, isolation, diversity, English, faculty perception, time management, accent

1. Introduction

International education can be examined from two distinct perspectives. The first and foremost perspective is the philosophical approach, which explains international education with respect to the reality of globalization. The globalized world makes individuals and societies more interconnected and, accordingly, more interdependent (Suarez-Orozco, 2005). Fast communication and transportation allow people to reach other cultures and societies easily. Social, cultural, political, economic and scientific engagements are changed in response to certainties of the globalized world (Aydin, 2013). Those who are engaged in these modifications and escalations also need to meet the requirements of being global citizens through comprehensive education (Killick, 2012). Such education should include international perspectives and motifs as well as local content. In institutions of higher education, this international education prepares citizens for a world that is rapidly globalizing, interrelating and changing. Development of global thinking, cultural awareness, and an understanding of universal values can be better achieved through an education that contains transnational perspective (Kitsantas, 2004; Yurtseven & Altun, 2015). People with such perspective become more adaptive to and tolerant of the constantly changing realities of our digital age (Hadis, 2005).

On the other hand, a second perspective regarding international education explains such educational experience that exceeds the borders with more technical aspects. People travel abroad to receive education from different educational systems. By doing so, they develop requirements of global citizenships (Aydin & Tonbuloglu, 2014). Requirements of being global citizens include understanding and solving global issues as well as participating local, national and global life (Feast, Collyer-Braham, & Bretag 2011). This second technical perspective identifies international education as a challenge for students, who are immersed in different educational, social and cultural settings. During this extensive dimension of the learning process, mobilized students naturally learn about other cultures as well as social and educational systems that might be significantly different from their own. They are able to learn about others by interacting with them in person. Different norms, perspectives, styles and methodologies in and out of educational institutions can be experienced, and practiced via such an educational opportunity (Phillips & Schweisfurth, 2014).

According to the UNESCO (2015), there are approximately two million seven hundred thousand international students who are mobilizing around the world. The top five destination countries that attract international

students are: (1) the United States, (2) the United Kingdom, (3) France, (4) Australia, and (5) Germany. The United States hosts the highest number; it has approximately nine hundred thousand international students in its educational institutions.

International students make unique contributions in the destination country where they receive their education. There are two major benefits of having these students in the educational systems of the host country. The first benefit is the financial profit that results from the economic contributions of international students who spend significant amount of money for their educational and living expenses. The costs of tuitions, fees, rent, insurance, travels costs, and the like are considerable, and may contribute greatly to the host country's economy (Kelly, 2012). For instance, international students in Australia, between 2009 and 2014, provided 18.5 billion dollars to Australia's universities. For Australia, education became the fourth largest export after iron, coal and gold (Group of Eight, 2014). Beside to financial benefits of having those students, host countries have other long term benefits simply can be explained as intellectual benefits. They enrich the intellectual and cultural environment for domestic students who interact with them. They also contribute to the research and innovation. For instance, international students have earned thirty one percent of all postgraduate research degrees in Australia. Impact of those students on research is accordingly significant at Australia's universities (Department of Education, 2014).

As a developing country, Turkey also attracts international students seeking an educational experience outside of their home country. Statistics (UNESCO, 2015) show that, as of 2015, there are approximately forty thousand international students at Turkish schools from more than one hundred sixty different countries, including Vanuatu, Tuvalu, Nauru and Liechtenstein. However, this number represents only 1.1 percent of all international students that mobilize around the world. Statistics also show that, with 4,412 international students in Turkish schools, Azerbaijan is the leader among countries that send students to Turkey. Turkmenistan follows Azerbaijan with 4,167 students. Other home countries for large numbers of international students in Turkey include Iran (1,488), Germany (1,388), Bulgaria (1,236), Afghanistan (1,122), Mongolia (958), Kazakhstan (851), Kyrgyzstan (785), and Bosnia/Herzegovina (629).

Although there are about forty thousand international students at Turkish higher educational institutions, little is known about faculty members' perceptions of these students. Naturally, international students come from different educational and cultural backgrounds. Such students increase classroom diversity for the instructors and there are expected benefits and challenges for the overall educational process (Trice, 2003). Faculty members, from one perspective, are the ones who might have the most salient opinions about the international students in their classes. Faculty members may have answers about: (1) the differences between international and domestic students in terms of academic and disciplinary success, (2) the benefits of having those students in their departments and classes, and (3) the challenges of having those students in the higher educational institutions where they work. This study aims to reveal faculty members' awareness of, and mindsets about, international students in a liberal arts university where English is the medium of instruction in Istanbul, Turkey. The researcher used a qualitative approach since limited research has been conducted in this area.

2. Literature Review

Faculty members' perceptions of diverse subjects in the field of education have been recognized as a significant source for broader understanding of educational issues. From one perspective, faculty members are one of the three important figures (teachers, students, and administrators) in all educational activities. Several researchers have also investigated faculty members' perceptions of specific groups of students (Comeaux, 2013; Day, Lovato, Tull, & Ross-Gordon, 2011; Quick, 2013). Due to the importance of international education and the escalation of the number of international students who mobilize around the world, researchers from diverse disciplines have conducted a substantial amount of research about international students (Akanwa, 2015; Boafo-Arthur, 2015; Brendan, 2015; Sullivan & Kashubeck-West, 2015; Triana, 2015).

Barber and Morgan (1984) conducted national survey of engineering faculty members to examine the impact of foreign students on the United States' engineering education. Faculty members mentioned a variety of benefits and challenges that international students brought to their departments. The common belief of faculty members regarding international students was that without foreign graduate students, who constitute approximately fifth percent of Ph.D. candidates in engineering, research and teaching in engineering departments would suffer. However, language issues and different research styles among international students were identified as problems for both faculty and students.

A specific study considering faculty perceptions of the benefits and challenges of international students was completed by Trice (2003) in the United States. The study revealed several specific themes about those students' contributions and challenges from the faculty members' point of view. For instance, study revealed that one

significant contribution of international students was the international perspectives that those students provided within the unit. The contribution of international students to the enhancement of a department's international reputation was revealed as another theme in the study. Trice (2003) also discovered that those international students provided American (domestic) students with a more accurate perception of their life circumstances. On the other hand, the study revealed several themes regarding the challenges of having those international students within the institutions. One significant challenge that was indicated by interviewed faculty members included international students' English language capacity. Those students' English language skills were creating obstacles for both domestic students and faculty members in the institution. Another identified challenge of having international students was unsuccessful incorporation of domestic and international students for social and educational activities. Cultural differences were leading to the disintegration of student unity and often led to a sense of isolation among international students.

With respect to the increasing number of international students, several studies have been conducted regarding international students in Turkey. Researchers from various disciplines have studied international students in Turkey's educational system. Ozoglu, Gur, and Coskun (2015) conducted research to reveal the factors that influenced an international student's choice to study in Turkey. The results suggested that geographical proximity and cultural, historical, religious and ethnic affinities seem to be very prominent factors in international students' decisions to study in Turkey. Snoubar and Celik (2013) investigated the relationship between cultural differences and the educational success of international students. Their study revealed that cultural dissimilarity is one of the most crucial factors that negatively affect the academic success of international students in Turkey. Ozcetin (2013), on the other hand, studied social adaptation of international students in Turkey, and found out that there is a strong relationship between social adaptation and gender, income level, and the educational success of international students. Yildiz, Cakir, and Kondakci (2011) examined predictors of psychological distress among international students studying at different public universities in Turkey. The results revealed that life satisfaction, integration to social life in Turkey, Turkish language proficiency, and length of stay in Turkey account for thirty-two percent of the variance in the international students' psychological distress levels.

For the most part, studies about international students in Turkey collect data from the international students' perspective. Opinions of international students based on their real life experiences, both within and outside of the educational context, become the major source for the researchers. However, no literature exists about faculty members' perceptions of international students within the Turkish educational system. Accordingly, this study is meant to fill a gap in the existing literature by investigating faculty members' opinions about international students in Turkey.

3. Method

3.1 Design

The researcher conducted the study in three departments: psychology, international relations, and business administration. Each department had a student enrollment that was at least fifteen percent international students at the undergraduate level; these students hailed from forty different countries. The study used a qualitative research design. Open-ended interview questions were designed with respect to the research question of the study. The questions were also customized and approved by the researcher's colleagues for the validation purposes of the study. Follow up questions were also designed when the researcher felt lack of fulfillment of the answers. Seventeen people were interviewed, including the two deans, three chairpersons, eleven faculty members and one administrator from the international student office. Each interview took around two hours. Further, the researcher submitted a study proposal to the University's Institutional Review Board. Following approval, the researcher contacted to the Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences and presented details about the study. All interviews were tape recorded by the researcher, and a professional transcriptionist transcribed the tapes verbatim. For validation purposes, the researcher sent the transcripts to all interviewees for their approval. The researcher read the transcribed interviews several times. Then the researcher prepared a list of potential themes drawn from the interviews under the titles of (1) benefits and (2) challenges of having international students in the institution. The researcher coded the transcript and listed the revealed codes. The interview transcriptions provided a natural inquiry for interviewees' awareness, mindsets, experiences and beliefs, as in the form of direct quotations (Patton, 1990).

In addition to the interviews, a review of pertinent documents including enrollment reports and strategic plans was also conducted in order to improve the study's accuracy. All interviewed instructors expressed their perceptions precisely by giving specific headings regarding the benefits and challenges of having international students.

According to social learning theory, the guiding theory for the study, people learn through connections. According to Bandura (1986), learning is a cognitive process and it happens in a social context. With respect to this viewpoint, the perceptions of faculty members and administrators about the benefits and challenges of having international students is considered in light of those students' contributions to their environment, through connections with domestic students and their instructors.

3.2 Guiding Research Question

How do faculty members perceive international students with respect to benefits and challenges of having them in their classes?

3.3 Participants

The psychology department was the first department examined for the study. There were one hundred eighty undergraduate students in the department, including twenty-five international students. Locality, including cultural, social and religious values, customs, and tradition, is an important determinant in the field of psychology. However, as indicated by the chairperson of the department, there is a global description of the science of psychology too. With respect to this reality, the dean and the specific department's chairperson agreed to and encouraged the internationalization process for the psychology department at the university. With the faculty members' efforts, they pursued formal international ties with universities to support student and faculty exchanges.

The international relations department was the second department studied by the researcher. There were one hundred eighty undergraduate students in the department, including twenty-nine international students. The dean and the chairperson have considered international perspectives and backgrounds as a necessity for the department, rather than an advantage. The theoretical and practical approaches of international students and faculty members enriched the learning environments and affected the academic success of all students in the department. As indicated by the department chairperson, course content as well as extracurricular activities (i.e., lectures, workshops, etc.) designed with respect to the global standpoint. Further, the chairperson indicated that since Turkey has a critical geographic station in the Middle East and has a democratic experience among the Muslim countries, international students from some specific countries prefer studying in Turkey. On the other hand, the department of international relations also tries to increase the number of its international connections through various means, including magnetizing international students, hiring internationally experienced faculty members and engaging in agreements with universities abroad.

The business administration department was the last department in which the researcher conducted the study. There were one-hundred-seventy-eight undergraduate students in the department, including forty-six international students. Like the other departments studied, students from diverse backgrounds are welcomed and encouraged, as indicated by the department's chairperson. The department recognized the necessity of bringing in different cultural and social perspectives, since a strong global standpoint was the aim of the overall design of the business administration department at the university. This global standpoint is reflected in the department's curriculum and extracurricular activities, including lectures, workshops and exhibitions.

3.4 Admission Process of International Students at the Institution

There were flexible admission processes in place for the international students at the university. Different types of national and international exams have been accepted for admission to the university. The university was accepting applications from international students through its website. For the application process the school was expecting international or national high school diplomas (e.g., International Baccalaureate, European Baccalaureate) beside the English proficiency test scores (e.g., TOEFL, IELTS) from the international applicants. National and international exam scores (e.g., higher education entrance exam, American college testing, etc.) are also considered during the admission process of international students.

4. Results

4.1 Benefits

Interviewed faculty members highlighted several benefits about having international students at the university. Exposed benefits of having international students were (1) escalading the overall academic and disciplinary success of the school, (2) creating diversity in learning environment, (3) creating learning environment.

The high level of academic and disciplinary success of international students was the primary benefit for the university, and was emphasized by all interviewed faculty members frequently. Pertinent school documents (i.e., transcripts, attendance sheets) supported the reports of interviewees about the overall success of international

students. High exam scores, active participation in class discussions and excellent attendance rates were all also cited by the interviewed faculty members as examples of the academic and disciplinary success of international students. In other words, according to interviewed faculty members, international students represented the highest quality of the students. The chairperson of the international relations department said "They act like locomotives" when describing how the performance of international student elevated the overall class grade point averages (GPA). An interviewed professor from the psychology department, when explaining the academic and disciplinary success of international students, specified that these students had better analytical and critical skills as well as the enhanced total discipline that they received from the high schools in their home countries. He noted that "they are assets for the university". The chairperson of the psychology department explained the foundation of the academic success of international students thusly: "They are more participative; they read more and prepare for the class better. They would like to contribute to the class more than domestic students. They are more enthusiastic".

All interviewed faculty members also mentioned such academic and disciplinary successes of international students as benefits for the domestic students. The difference between domestic and international students with respect to overall academic success was creating a competitive learning environment. An interviewed faculty member said "competition motivates Turkish students". International students were far more comfortable than domestic students with utilizing English both in the classroom and for out-of-class activities. International students were coming with operative language skills. Some of them were native speakers and some learned English as a second language in their home countries. Their English skills have been cited as the main reason for their overall success and for the great disparity between domestic and international students. Two interviewed faculty members believed that the English skills of international students motivate domestic students too. They believed that international students' meaningful presence in their classes shows domestic students how much they can develop their English. All interviewed faculty members indicated that while domestic students spend one year at the language preparatory school before transferring the university, they still experience difficulties, especially with the spoken aspect of the English language. Since the medium of instruction was English at the university, such difficulties create serious pedagogical problems for both instructors and students. Four interviewed faculty members indicated that English as a second language education in Turkey is problematic. International students with their enhanced English skills boost the performance of instructors and motivate domestic students to become actively involved in classes, and to prepare and study for them. However, two interviewed faculty members stressed that the motivational benefits of those international students for domestic students were limited. In most cases, domestic students isolate themselves during classroom activities (i.e., discussions, participation), since they lose their concentration because their English skills are weaker than those of the international students.

On the other hand, four interviewed faculty members specified that international students are the best examples and motivational models for the domestic students in the longer term. Four interviewed faculty members asserted that international students were accomplishing a lot just by choosing another country for their educational career. Staying away from their families and significant others in a socially and culturally different country is an achievement in itself (Karatas & Oral, 2015). Such an achievement is a respectable example for domestic students. Those international students inspire domestic students to continue their educational career outside Turkey. Interviewed faculty members linked this exemplary action of international students and its positive effect on domestic students with the school's policy that encourages all students to study for at least one semester outside Turkey. Agreements with universities abroad afford students the opportunity to experience international education with little to no financial burden. One interviewed faculty member indicated that for such study abroad opportunities, the actual struggle involved domestic students' motivation. He believed that domestic students are reluctant to travel for long periods of time, since they might act emotionally about planning their future including decisions about continuing their education outside Turkey. They create their own barriers in their minds. Staying away from their friends and family members is a serious challenge for those local students. Yet international students become the best example to overcome the hesitation that domestic students allow to grow. An interviewed faculty member said that domestic students were aware of the struggles of international students in Turkey. He believed that domestic students recognize those international students' accomplishments and such accomplishments motivated local students, most notably to think about and plan their educational career during and after their years of study at the university. On the other hand, an interviewed faculty member from the international relations department stressed that the presence of international students allowed domestic students to face in advance the opponents they would later meet in the international arena. Interviewed chairperson of the business administration department said:

> The borders (of countries) are disappearing although there are conflicts taking place among them sometimes. Further, we observe an incredible mobilization and internationalization and we cannot stay behind such process. We do business with China and our students will work at global companies. They (domestic students) have advantage of interacting with international students now. Those students will be the entrepreneurs of the future.

The interviewed faculty members also frequently mentioned the benefits of having international students in the university for faculty members. Seven interviewed faculty members indicated that with the presence of international students, preparing for class activities (i.e., presentations, choosing discussion topics, etc.) required additional precautions given the diverse educational, cultural and social backgrounds of those international students. One faculty member from the international relations department said "we have to be more sympathetic when it comes to the themes around religions and cultures". Accordingly, the faculty member emphasized that he needs to add more international perspectives into his course content. In his view, international students would like to hear about their cultures, or at least the perspectives from their home country or the region where they come from. The chairperson of the international relations department has given a specific example from African history:

> We (the faculty members) unfortunately may have some narrow perspectives when it comes to internationalization. Having those international students in our classes helps us a lot. We have emphasis of western viewpoints and concentration beside the national (Turkish) views when we design our courses. This is problematic since west was not always center for civilization, business, science etc. I have African students and they are very successful. Having them in my classes led me reading a lot about African history and I have learnt great deals. I used many examples from my readings and linked the examples to the course subjects. They (Africans) have the history too. They played important roles in the history of human beings and they will definitely have roles regarding international relations in the future.

The chairperson of the psychology department also gave her own explanations regarding the benefits of international students for faculty members in the department. The chairperson noted that observing, understanding and accepting the cultural differences of people were especially important in the field of clinical psychology. She said:

> In clinical (psychology) practice we have to approach people with respect to their cultural backgrounds. Accordingly we have to cultivate open-minded students regarding this reality. In other words, we need more tolerated minds regarding prejudices about the other perspectives, cultures and practices. For instance in different cultural contexts, psychology works inversely. In some parts of Africa, there are people so called "witches" and they practice as psychologists. We have to understand this reality in a cultural content…I have listened to international students from Africa regarding such people's practices and learnt a lot. Hearing from the first person (international students) is more effective than learning from the books…I prepare myself and modify my syllabus and class discussions with reference to such international realities. Without existence of those international students we could stick to local perspectives or we (faculty members) would briefly remark how other perceptions and practices applied in different cultures.

Another given example of how faculty members benefitted from having international students in classes involved the utilization of English as the instructional language. Four interviewed faculty members indicated that the significant number of international students in their classes pushed them to stick with English as the specified instruction language by the university. An interviewed faculty member indicated that he had heard about some other schools where English is also the medium of the instruction. He explained that in those schools, faculty members intentionally or unintentionally reverted to instruction in Turkish, since there were few or no international students in their classes. When students struggled to understand subject matter delivered in English, instructors explained it to them in Turkish in order to make sure the students comprehended. In those schools, students do not complain if the faculty member instructs in Turkish. Instructing in Turkish is naturally easier for the Turkish faculty members. He said that they could not do that at his institution, since there were always a substantial number of international students who would not understand if the faculty members instructed in Turkish. The presence of a substantial number of international students forced faculty members to be more cautious about not utilizing English during the class activities.

The interviewed faculty members stated that the provision of an international perspective within the unit was another benefit of having international students at the university. Diversity has been seen as a major component of the contributions of those international students to the courses that they attend. All interviewed faculty members expressed that international students postulate distinct opinions and articulate their unique experiences

from their own culture and countries as they pertain to course subjects. Such diversity increased the university's overall academic quality, as all interviewed faculty members agreed. An interviewed faculty member from the international relations department emphasized that diversity is a must not only for their department but also for every other department in the university. The chairperson of the business administration department said: "This is a necessity for internationalization in a globalized world. Those students bring international perspective. We learn from them. It is becoming an interesting class experience for both students and faculty members with those students' cultural backgrounds." Another faculty member emphasized that the school had global objectives and a global philosophy and that accordingly all characteristics of the school were designed based on the internationalization process. The interviewed faculty member added:

> School administrators were prioritizing faculty members who have received their PhDs abroad during the hiring processes. There are significant numbers of foreign faculty members at the school. The instructional language is English for all departments except the Turkish literacy and language department. The school is encouraging students to study abroad at least one semester. There are exchange agreements with more than sixty universities from all continents. Extra curriculum activities at the university frequently included international motives and so on. With the existence of international students, the puzzle completes.

Another faculty member from the business administration department also added:

> We are nurturing our students with global perspective. Students are establishing international ties. One of our students travelled to Georgia with his Georgian classmate during the summer. Another one travelled to Africa with his Kenyan classmate. These are just few examples. They are becoming global citizens with more tolerant and respectful perspectives.

4.2 Challenges

Interviewed faculty members highlighted a few challenges about having international students at the university. Revealed challenges observed and encountered by interviewed faculty members were (1) adaptation to a new educational system, (2) language accents, (3) time management, and (4) isolation and grouping. Further, all interviewed faculty members indicated that the actual causes that lead to challenges on international students were taking place outside the university. Interviewed faculty members were aware of the culture shock that international students experienced in Turkish culture. Bureaucratic procedures for international students' legal status in and out of the school were also identified as one of the major issues that affected the overall performance of those international students at the school.

Two interviewed faculty members stressed that some international students have difficulty adapting to the overall educational practices at the university. The educational expectations for students, including homework, class discussions, and take-home exams may cause confusion among international students, since some of those students may not be familiar with the assignment formats or with faculty members' expectations of the students. However, only two interviewed faculty member highlighted such difficulty by emphasizing that they observed this problem with a few international students.

Four interviewed faculty members identified the English language accents of international students as a challenge. Although all interviewed faculty members appreciated the English skills of international students, diverse accents created obstacles during class activities for both domestic students and faculty members. Interactions during the class activities with faculty members and domestic students were becoming problematic because of the strong accents of some international students. A faculty member said:

> English is a barrier for some students anyway. Diverse accents are making problems more complicated even for faculty members. Some students' accents from specific regions of the world are difficult to understand. I believe that such problem creates discomfort on faculty members.

On the other hand, two interviewed faculty members noted that some international students have time management problems. The interviewed faculty members have frequently acknowledged time management as a positive trait among most of the international students. However, a few of the international students had problems with time managing. As indicated by one interviewed faculty member, some international students were arriving late to classes, and were submitting their assignments late. The interviewed faculty member said: "it is very clear that some students from specific regions definitely have time management problems and we are sensitive for such management here at our university".

All interviewed faculty members identified students' isolation and grouping as the major challenge for international and domestic students as well as for themselves. This challenge was caused and experienced by both domestic and international students. International students, as a minority group, are establishing friendships

with culturally similar students. Three interviewed faculty members noted that this is a natural disposition since basic human nature leads to the establishment of such friendships. On the other hand, domestic students were establishing friendships with domestic students, and a mutual isolation and grouping were occurring as observed by the interviewed faculty members. The major reason for such isolation for both sides was again the weak English language skills of domestic students, as cited by eight interviewed faculty members. Domestic students were not comfortable with utilizing English to begin to establish beneficial friendships with international students. Eight interviewed faculty members identified lack of English language skills as the primary reason for domestic students' reluctance to start building up friendships with international students. Cultural dissimilarities were given as the second factor causing the above-mentioned mutual isolation and grouping among domestic and international students. However, all interviewed faculty members indicated that the ensuing grouping and isolation were not leading to discriminatory acts in the university, and so could be tolerated. One interviewed faculty member emphasized that "some domestic students are so judgmental and have some biases about the international students". The interviewed faculty member believed that a nationalistic point of view was the reason for such biases.

Isolation and grouping in classes were affecting faculty members' performance. Examples are given from group discussion activities. An interviewed faculty member said: "Domestic students prefer domestic students for any group activity including group discussions. If they have to work with international students I see the silence. Not effective class activities." Another faculty member added:

> Domestic students would like to work with domestic students for the group projects that take place outside the classes. Like for some research projects. This forms disappointment on international students. This is kind of preclusion. I want them to work together.

According to interviewed faculty members, international students seemed to accept being isolated as a reality. Such isolation was not hindering international students' participation in extracurricular activities. The chairperson of the international relations department stressed that the events that international students were organizing were more colorful. He said: "International students are more dynamic when it comes to organizing extracurricular activities".

5. Discussions and Conclusion

There were various perceptions in terms of how interviewed faculty members see international students in their departments. Those perceptions were categorized into two major titles as (1) benefits and (2) challenges of having those international students in the university. All interviewed faculty members promptly and clearly expressed their opinions regarding both academic and disciplinary issues of those students. There were significant differences between domestic and international students as all interviewed faculty members indicated when they compared the two groups in order to distinguish and support their perceptions. All examples that are given by all interviewed faculty members regarding their perceptions on international students were in the form of strong comparative evaluation. The following factors manipulated the faculty members' perceptions on international students. (1) The faculty members are working with those students closely in and out of class, including in extracurricular activities and class discussion, without reflecting domestic students' performance. In other words, those faculty members evaluated international students within the framework of their own cultural, social and educational dimensions without comparing them with domestic students. (2) The school's vision and mission statements indicate that scientific studies and educational activities are being conducted at international standards. This philosophy, with its emphasis on internationalization, was a significant determinant when interviewed faculty members expressed their thoughts on international students. All interviewed faculty members frequently mentioned the vision and mission statements when they linked their perception of international students with the expectations of school administrators.

Ten out of sixteen interviewed faculty members received their doctoral degrees outside of Turkey and accordingly spent a substantial time abroad. They themselves experienced the challenges of being international students in different countries. Those ten faculty members emphasized this authenticity as an advantage in generating empathy for their international students. Subsequently, the study indicates that interviewed faculty members were clearly aware of the benefits and challenges of having international students in the institution.

On the other hand, differences among the international student population with respect to their countries and world regions of origin were not noteworthy. Only two interviewed faculty members indicated that their perception varies with respect to the countries of origin of international students. Those two faculty members have perceived students from western countries as better students academically. Further, compared to African students, students from central Asian countries were perceived as less successful and more challenging by those

interviewed faculty members. Regarding English skills, two faculty members suggested a noticeable difference among the international students. Students from western countries had better English language skills than all other international students. Students from African countries were utilizing English better than the students from central Asian countries. Students from central Asia were seen as the least successful students with respect to English as a second language. However, the general perception of international students regarding utilizing English was that they all were performing far better than domestic students, and differences in performance of English among the international students in and out of classes was not significantly visible.

Interviewed faculty members frequently linked the benefits and challenges of having international students with the facts outside of the university. In their view, those facts affected the overall success and performance of international students in the university. Living in a notably distinctive cultural and social setting was a serious challenge for many of those international students. Accordingly, they may feel isolated and lost. Culture shock, which explains personal disorientation in an unfamiliar environment, may take longer, and the person may not show his/her actual performance in different aspects of a daily life routine. They may lose their overall motivation and concentration. Such motivation and concentration are crucial, especially for international students' academic life.

Due to the nature of the qualitative research design, limitations exist intrinsically. The chief limitation is the sample size used in the study. Data was collected from three departments and from seventeen people at one liberal arts university located in Istanbul, Turkey. Findings cannot be generalized to other locations. A second limitation was the study's consolidation of the international students into a single body for purposes of study. Although there were more than ninety international students from more than forty countries at the selected departments where the research conducted, international students were regarded as a single group of students who were differentiated from the domestic students based solely on their citizenship status. In other words, the diverse backgrounds of the international students were rarely considered. The researcher used this approach since reflecting in the study the diverse backgrounds of the international students would prove too cumbersome. The third limitation involved the instructional language used at the institution. Since English was the medium of instruction in all departments at the institution, international students were more comfortable utilizing English, both for classroom activities and outside of class, than the domestic students. Their ability to use English comfortably created an academic advantage for international students. In other words, the conclusion of this study cannot be generalized for other institutions where Turkish is the medium of instruction. Last limitation that

This preliminary case study shows that faculty members welcome international students as contributions to their classes. Although there are a few challenges noted, all interviewed faculty members appreciated having those students in the institution. Further studies regarding faculty members' perceptions on international students may include other Turkish universities where the instructional language is Turkish. On the other hand, potential future research may also involve faculty members' perceptions on international students who come from specific countries or specific regions of the world. A comparative approach in future research can be applied among countries and regions where international students come from.

International students have contributions to the host country in several ways. No doubt, countries are trying to attract international students' attention to receive them. Policy makers, educators, even politicians need to know the benefits and challenges of having those students in their countries' educational institutions. Accordingly they are able to design and modify their educational plans and practices to lower the stress of international students as well as the challenges of instructors and the domestic students regarding this matter. Faculty members are the ones who work closely with those students and accordingly their perceptions are valuable sources for researchers who focus on international students in different discipline areas.

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