

Internationalization Experiences of Universities in the United States and in Turkey

Gülşah Taşçı^{a*}, Bernhard Streitwieser^b, and Seyfi Kenan^c

^a*Istanbul 29 Mayıs University, Turkey*

^b*George Washington University, U.S.*

^c*Marmara University, Turkey*

*Corresponding author: Email: gtaşci@29mayis.edu.tr

Address: Istanbul 29 Mayıs University, Umraniye, Turkey

ABSTRACT

This paper offers an analysis of key stakeholders' internationalization experiences in a selection of three leading universities in the United States and three in Turkey. We used phenomenological research methodology to understand the mechanisms behind internationalization in each setting, and a research design that allowed us to engage in a detailed analysis of the decisions made by some of the key university figures in each country. The findings will be useful for higher education institutions that seek to better understand the myriad ways that internationalization goals can become operationalized, and the impact of particular goals and strategies in two contrasting settings. By illustrating one way that internationalization as a broad trend becomes implemented in local contexts and filtered down for use in six distinct institutions, this paper adds a new intercultural perspective to the existing literature.

Keywords: higher education, internationalization, phenomenological research design, Turkey, U.S.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of internationalization has become a common theme in higher education (HE) discourse in recent years. Some universities view internationalization simply as a strategic goal to pursue, but this understanding can lead to misguided efforts considering that the very notion of internationalization and what it entails in practice continue to be misunderstood and/or contested.

Internationalization remains an ill-defined goal that is alternately lauded and questioned. As such, studying the manifestations of internationalization in different geographic contexts and at various types of institutions is critically important in international HE research.

With the number of international students in HE institutions steadily rising (Shields, 2013), the number of students is expected to reach more than 590 million by 2040 (Calderon, 2018). Governments and education administrators are struggling to creatively develop, remodel, and reform HE (Chapman & Austin, 2002) in line with these increasing numbers. While organizations like Eurydice, with their “Thematic Reports”, are trying to produce comparable international data on HE, the internationalization of HE is regarded as one of the most important means of economic development and social and cultural integration. In response to these changes, broad discussion has emerged in many countries regarding reforms and development of new internationalization strategies for the internationalization of HE.

Today, internationalization in HE is based on a neoliberal perspective (Wadhwa & Jha, 2014) that emphasizes globalization and the role of technological innovation (Heywood, 2013, p. 132). However, critiques of neoliberal tendencies are commonly found within the broader discourse in the literature, where the emphasis has especially been on studies of North-South inequalities (Pineda et al., 2020), the predominance of the English language (Wihlborg, 2019), and certain unethical practices (Denisova-Schmidt, 2018).

This myopic focus is often based on cultural biases and may neglect the “local factors” inherent in internationalization. Several studies have focused significantly on the benefits of internationalization in HE. Although HE is considered to be a human right in most contexts, certain meritocratic views have argued that inert hierarchies, where international students from certain nations are categorized as being more successful than those from other nations, exist in universities (Tannock, 2018). On the other hand, the emphasis on “knowledge colony” (Quijano, 2000) and on the relationship between postcolonialism, knowledge, and power has become more prominent in recent years (Rizvi et al., 2006).

Recent research on internationalization in HE has tended to focus on various components of internationalization, such as meaning, reasons/motivations, strategies, and international mobility (Iosava & Roxå, 2019). In addition, since universities are stakeholders in internationalization (Stohl, 2007), understanding the perspectives of faculties towards internationalization is an important part of internationalization policy. Some of the current research that has framed our understanding of the internationalization of HE and its related issues has focused on different institutions within the U.S. context particularly (see Buckner, 2019, de Wit, 2019), while other research has focused on the inequalities of opportunity (Glass et al., 2021).

Hence, there is a need for more research investigating the internationalization of various systems through the agency of those who play a key role in the internationalization of HE. A literature search on the internationalization of HE showed that the majority of studies has been conducted on developed countries, and that only a small number of comparative studies involving developed and developing countries have been conducted, as seen in the low number of internationalization studies in Turkey. These few studies that have been performed examined Turkey within its own context or in comparison to the European context alone (Fındık, 2016; Göktürk, 2018; Kondakçı et al., 2016).

The present study, therefore, is the first to provide a comparison of HE internationalization between the U.S. and Turkey. Our choice of Turkey and the U.S., as examples of developing and developed/internationalized countries respectively, in our discussion of internationalization efforts in HE provides a unique opportunity to compare various intercultural perspectives on two distinct experiences of internationalization. Moreover, the present study provides an analysis of the internationalization experiences of Turkish HE by examining the practice of theories from

a local perspective. This study is important because it looks at a developing country, Turkey, and a developed country, the U.S., and analyzes their different approaches to and progress with the internationalization of their HE sectors, using a small sample of their respective universities.

In this study, the first and foremost task was to focus on the big picture in the comparison of internationalization experiences in the two countries with different systems and cultures while maintaining a local angle to examine the theory and practice. Establishing a wider focus to be able to analyze the whole picture was key to understanding the internationalization policies in the U.S. and Turkey and their consequences, as the respective policies are based on different social, economic, and cultural dynamics and traditions within their unique approaches and systems. Bearing that in mind, we investigated their local impact as well for the purpose of shedding light upon the workings of these forces at the basic local.

The second goal of the present study was to understand both countries' internationalization efforts through an intercultural lens. Previous studies on the impact of cultural factors on the internationalization of HE have attempted to understand the nature of culture by examining the differences in habits, traditions, languages, and ways of thinking (Cavusgil et al., 2010). Hence, the present comparative study preferred focusing on the “cultural area” of internationalization in HE while investigating the internationalization of HE institutions. It is important that international literature includes studies on the internationalization of HE from the perspectives of developing countries, such as Turkey, as these points of view involve ethical concerns and concepts such as unequal opportunities, issues that must be addressed in future research.

Finally, we argue that the international literature on internationalization in HE should also include internationalization perspectives of developing countries, such as Turkey, in order to investigate the impact of existing internationalization policy measures. Considering the importance of contextual factors, such as internationalization processes, procedures, and decision-making, this analysis significantly contributes to our understanding of internationalization. Therefore, we suggest that future studies address such perspectives. This study argues the need to show how two distinct and different systems have developed internationalization and by showing how the differences exist, it allows understanding of how the national culture and context (environment) influence internationalization efforts.

To this end, the present study aims to provide an in-depth examination of key stakeholders' internationalization experiences in the university context. The following five research questions were developed to guide the study:

- 1) What does internationalization mean to the key stakeholders in U.S. and Turkish universities?
- 2) Why do they feel internationalization is necessary?
- 3) How are they being supported to internationalize?
- 4) What challenges do they face?
- 5) What are the strategies they adopt?

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

As the internationalization of HE has rapidly become a global phenomenon, the term ‘internationalization’ has often been employed in an ad hoc, inconsistent, and idiosyncratic manner (de Wit, 2002). However, the definition and scope of internationalization continues to evolve. How universities perceive and define internationalization is important for understanding how they operationalize it (Hudzik, 2015). Furthermore, misconceptions about the real meaning of internationalization (de Wit, 2011) have also led to incorrect implementations. Thus, it is important to investigate not only how university stakeholders understand internationalization but also how they engage in the process of implementing it. Numerous definitions of internationalization currently exist. For example, in seeking to define internationalization, Knight offers the following:

Internationalization at the national/sector/institutional levels is defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions, or delivery of post-secondary education (Knight, 2004, p. 11).

For several researchers, internationalization implies the necessity of cultural and intercultural transformation. For example, Jiang (2008, p. 348) defines internationalization as “the exchange of national cultures,” while Hudzik views comprehensive internationalization as follows:

Commitment, confirmed through action, to infuse international and comparative perspectives throughout the teaching, research, and service missions of higher education. It shapes institutional ethos and values and touches the entire higher education enterprise... It is essential that it be embraced by institutional leadership, governance, faculty, students, and all academic service and support units. It is an institutional imperative, not just a desirable possibility (Hudzik, 2015, p. 6).

Why has internationalization suddenly become such an important topic in HE research if it already existed for as long as there have been universities? As Taylor (2004) pointed out, internationalization represents one of the most important drivers of change in modern universities. Thus, the development of effective strategies for internationalization is an important element of university administration. The reasons behind the favor shown to internationalization in institutional trends rest on the institutional background, resources, and stakeholders involved (Knight, 1994), and Knight (2004) identified the causes and consequences of internationalization as social, cultural, political, academic, and economic and distinguished between the national and institutional dimensions of these elements. Here, internationalization could be considered as a reflection of a university’s desire to maintain its intercultural context (Lumby & Foskett, 2014). Several researchers have argued that there is a correlation between internationalization and intercultural transformation (Bartell, 2003; Leask, 2008; Schein, 2010; Sporn, 1996).

Today, internationalization is generally considered to be one of the top strategies of HE institutions. With internationalization being a leading theme in current HE strategy, it is imperative for us to understand how developing countries and universities respond to this development. How institutions respond to internationalization in HE presents a varied and uneven picture, as contextual realities understandably dictate policy making on the ground in diverse settings.

A Bird’s Eye View on Internationalization in U.S. Universities and Turkish Universities

The education system in the United States is largely a decentralized education system. The HE model in the U.S. has historically been based on European influences and continues to be so to this day. Oxford and Cambridge, for instance, were the models for the first colleges established in the colonies (de Wit, 2001). The modern U.S. university took shape in the second half of the 19th century (Lagemann & Lewis, 2012) and was inspired by the Humboldtian model imported from Germany, which advocated a joint emphasis on teaching and research. The Morrill Land-Grant Act of 1862 and the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944 helped U.S. universities open their doors to students from every segment of society, including those engaged in agriculture and ranching and those with a military service background. With this shift, HE institutions became more diversified in terms of the curricula they offered, the student population, and notions of service, and due to the success of this shift, the U.S. model of the research university quickly spread globally (Altbach et al., 1999; Kerr, 1994).

Comprehensive internationalization attempts were limited to U.S. universities until the 1990s. The first wave of HE internationalization in the U.S. took place from the 1940s to the 1960s (Goodwin & Nacht, 1991). The second wave, which took place in the 1970s and 1980s, was driven by the rise in the number of international students attending U.S. universities (Goodwin & Nacht, 1991, p. 111). More recently, the tragic events of September 11, 2001, the financial crisis of 2008 (Choudaha & de Wit, 2014), the U.K. Brexit referendum of 2016, and the actions of the current U.S. administration have further affected the direction of internationalization of U.S. universities, including the flow and placement of international students (Choudaha, 2017).

On the other hand, the Turkish higher education system has a centralized structure and is administered by the Council of Higher Education (CoHE), which was established in 1981. Higher education entered the process of restructuring academically, institutionally, and administratively with the Higher Education Law enacted in 1981. With this law, all the higher education institutions in Turkey were gathered

under the roof of the CoHE, academies were transformed into universities, educational institutes were transformed into education faculties, and conservatories were connected to universities. Thus, the CoHE has become the only institution responsible for all higher education (CoHE, 2022).

The internationalization of Turkish universities structurally began after the 1980s and according to Taşçı and Kenan (2019), three key studies have governed this internationalization process. The first is the Turkish HE strategy developed in a seminal study on internationalization strategies conducted by a group under the direction of Teziç (YÖK, 2007). The second is the pioneering study titled, “Growth, Quality, Internationalization: A Roadmap in Turkish HE”, by Çetinsaya (2014), and the third is the study titled, “The New Council of HE Policy in HE”, conducted by the President of the HE board, Saraç, who demonstrated that HE studies in Turkey were more systematic and action oriented (YÖK, 2018).

RESEARCH METHOD

The method for this study is phenomenological which is type of qualitative research and is an approach focusing on the commonality of a lived experience within a particular group. The choice of the phenomenological research design was set by our desire to gain a detailed understanding of the internationalization experiences of key stakeholders (Groenwald, 2004; Moustakas, 1994).

The phenomenological study design was determined to be best suited for examining in detail the perspectives of stakeholders engaged in internationalization (Creswell, 2013). In-depth qualitative interviews have been shown in previous studies to be efficient tools for identifying the similarities and differences of internationalization experiences, cultural views, and practices of the faculties between two countries (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Moreover, it has been stated that it is important to have a comparative perspective when examining internationalization in order to improve intercultural understanding, diversity of views, and mutual understanding (Hudzik, 2015). The interviews conducted as part of the present study provided a rich set of data on the said aspects.

We used the conceptual framework of internationalization developed by Knight (1994), Dijk and Meijer (1999), and Hudzik (2015) to analyze key stakeholders’ internationalization experiences within the context of the university. Our analysis also used Hudzik’s (2015) model of comprehensive internationalization by examining institutional case stories. He argues that it is important to focus on the fundamental strategies, tactics, and structures needed to transfer the idea of comprehensive international engagement into action. For data analysis, we also used Dijk and Meijer’s (1999) “Internationalization Cube”, which includes the three-dimensions of “Policy”, “Support”, and “Implementation”. The institutions in Cell 1 are characterized by limited internationalization activity, indicating a low level of internationalization, while those in Cell 8 have robust activity, indicative of high internationalization.

Participants

The purposeful sampling methods, criterion sampling, and maximum variation sampling, were used to create the study group (Creswell, 2013). Maximum variation sampling aims to reveal similarities and differences between situations that vary by nature (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011).

The world university ranking scores of the universities and the internationalization activity levels constituted the criteria for selection of the universities to be included into the study. In terms of creating the sample by selecting participants from the predetermined universities, we selected participants holding positions related to internationalization.

The study included a total of 30 participants selected from 6 institutions, 3 for each system. In selecting institutions from both systems, special attention was given to their parallel features, meaning that the institutions in one of these systems were roughly equivalent to the institutions in the other system. A total of 30 key representatives in internationalization management and decision-making positions (such as senior officers, international officers etc.) from the universities in the U.S. (15 participants) and in Turkey (15 participants) participated in the study (see Table 1).

Table 1: Key participants

Countries/Universities	Key Participants
Turkey A (private) B (public) C (public)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vice-rector for internationalization • Vice-rector for academic affairs • Head of International office • High-level and mid-level staff members • Senior officer
U.S. X (private) Y (public) Z (public)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vice-rector for internationalization • Vice-rector for academic affairs • Head of international office • High-level and mid-level staff members • Senior officer
Total	30

In order to ensure anonymity, pseudonyms were used for all participants, and the participating institutions were referred to by alphabetical letters. The universities in the U.S. were coded as institutions X, Y, and Z, while the universities in Turkey were coded as institutions A, B, and C. For example, university X, one of the selected universities from the U.S., is a top ten research university, while university Y is a polytechnic university, and university Z is a public university. Similarly, among the universities selected from Turkey, university A is a top ten university in the rankings in Turkey, university B is a technical university, and university C is a public university.

Data Collection and Analysis

The study was conducted through semi-structured interviews with key representatives in internationalization management and decision-making positions at universities in Turkey and the U.S. An open-ended interview protocol was used in the data collection process, which was performed through face-to-face and online interviews between 2017 and 2018. The interviews lasted between 15 and 90 minutes. Each interview was audiotaped and independently transcribed.

The phenomenological approach basically requires the researcher to enter the data in the analysis of the collected data. In this context, in the current study, in order to provide a deep understanding of the participants' experiences of internationalization in higher education, the important explanations made by the participants were emphasized, divided into themes and clusters of shared meaning were created (Moustakas, 1994). Then the findings were compared through categorization. In this way, similarities and differences in themes were elicited. The continuous comparison method was used to explore the emerging themes (Merriam, 1998). The transcripts were reviewed, thematically categorized, and supported with citations to capture the central idea within each area of inquiry. This conceptual framework contributed to our goal of clarifying why it is important for HE institutions to determine their rationale for internationalization before initiating the process, as well as to accurately understand and assess the phenomenon of internationalization.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

The strongest aspect of this study is that it reveals the experiences of internationalization in two different countries. The HE internationalization experiences of Turkey and the U.S. are valuable because they help to provide an understanding of the big picture. From a methodological point of view, conducting interviews with key internationalization figures increased both the reliability and validity of the research. Furthermore, we have using a western model and we have describing Turkey within this western lens. This was strengthen our work and show that we have sought to understand the complexities involved in cross-cultural policy analysis.

As with any research, the present study also has its limitations, the primary one being that the research involved countries with two different systems. While the U.S. has a decentralized higher education structure, Turkey has a central higher education system. Secondly, the study was only able to interview a limited number of participants. Finally, since this study was designed in a qualitative design, it was not aimed to reach generalization (Patton, 2015). It was tried to understand the internationalization processes in depth with the people in the universities selected from the two countries. In the light of this study, it is possible to suggest that a transferable result can be reached as a result of the examination of the processes related to the internationalization experiences of different higher education institutions through studies to be designed in qualitative design.

FINDINGS

The present study provides an in-depth examination of key stakeholders' internationalization experiences in the university context. The data analysis conducted on internationalization activities in the selected Turkish and U.S. participants revealed significant similarities and differences, which are discussed in the following section. Overall, five key results emerged from the study.

Finding 1: Understanding Internationalization

The first priority of the present study was to explore how the stakeholders at each of the participating universities understood the definitions and key concepts of internationalization their university was using. The following sub-themes emerged from the interviews conducted with the respective stakeholders: Key stakeholders at Turkish universities emphasized in their interview the academic aspect of internationalization and focused on the following themes (A, B, C) (see Figure 1).



Figure 1: A, B, and C universities' understanding of internationalization

One of the participants included many components of internationalization in the definition of internationalization:

Internationalization can be achieved through recognition. New studies and development, the publications of faculty members and doctoral students, research partnerships, joint doctoral programs, foreign students, and incoming-outgoing students and faculty members are key elements of the process (A3).

Another participant highlighted the three missions of HE and expressed their difficulties with and misunderstanding of the definition of internationalization as follows:

The classical definition is the internationalization of the three missions of higher education, which are teaching, research, and community service...But lately, we have focused a lot on student mobility. We have neglected the internationalization of the curriculum a little. It seems that there is something missing in various aspects of the definition (B2).

In defining internationalization, the participants underlined the academic dimension of internationalization and the aspect of intercultural awareness:

Internationalization is an important part of acquiring knowledge and fostering cultural interaction. I can say that the internationalization of students is the defining feature of intercultural communication (C1).

Key stakeholders at a U.S. institution emphasized the academic aspect of internationalization and focused on the following themes in the interviews (X, Y, and Z) (see Figure 2).

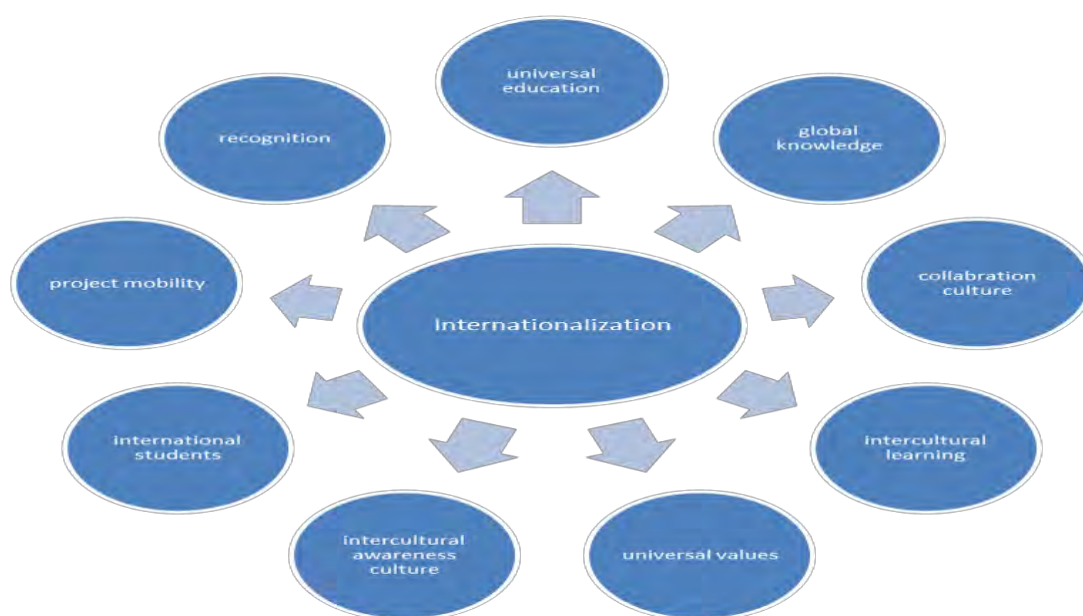


Figure 2: X, Y, and Z universities' understanding of internationalization.

One of the participants defined internationalization by making connections with cooperation culture and corporate identity, as well as with culture, within the framework of world-wide knowledge production, discovery, and quality understanding:

Internationalization involves the global production and discovery of information. It means to make knowledge universal. Within the framework of quality understanding, it is to share this knowledge and information through cooperation culture, corporate identity, and culture. Our university is a research university in the U.S. (X3).

Another of the participants identified internationalization with a comprehensive perspective focusing on three criteria, namely, the internationalization of student unity, curriculum, and experiences (raising intercultural awareness):

The internationalization of universities can be described in multiple ways. One way is to internationalize the student body; we have students from all around the world joining the student body and student life of the university. A second way is to internationalize the curricula by bringing in global perspectives to the curricula of the university to broaden them and allow more comparative examples and comparative experiences. A third way is to provide U.S. students, or any students from different parts of the world, the opportunity to travel and study abroad to give them practical leadership experiences through which they can grow as professional young people (Y2).

Another participant emphasized the many components of internationalization in the definition of internationalization:

Perhaps by offering more study abroad opportunities and more faculty exchange programs, or by attracting more international students to your campus, more research opportunities can be provided for communication and collaboration (Z1).

Finding 2: Rationales Behind Internationalization

It is important that HE institutions determine their reasons for internationalization in a rational way to be able to understand and evaluate the phenomenon of internationalization accurately. Regarding the benefits of internationalization, the key stakeholders interviewed from Turkish universities emphasized the academic rationale of internationalization but disagreed about the socio-economic reasons for it. For example, key stakeholders at university A referred to notions such as academic quality, international scientific production, understanding intercultural research, research policies, developments in technology and science, and international science production, while those in B addressed the economic rationale behind internationalization, which was not mentioned by universities A and C.

Reasons that are clearly, comprehensively, and factually constructed could guide the process of internationalization for universities. The participants tended to rely on academic reasons, such as academic quality, resources, mission-vision, community benefit, international science production, and international students, to support their views about internationalization, as shown in the following statement:

Our founding mission and vision are global education and science production. We need to expose our students to the whole world to achieve science production around the world. The best way to do this is to become international (A1).

Again, focusing on the academic dimension, one of the participants explained the reasons for internationalization as follows:

Therefore, internationalization in higher education is inevitable for mobility programs as well as for joint studies with other academics and for the university to gain a global character in its effort to attain universal knowledge (C2).

The key stakeholders in the U.S., on the other hand, expressed their reasons for internationalization based on institutional missions, actions, and evidence of internationalization. For example, stakeholders in university X cited their university mission and identity, mentioning ideas such as the ‘desire to interact with the world, the desire to encourage students to learn about the world, intercultural awareness and learning, the desire to acquire a different perspective, and emphasis on diversity.’ However, the stakeholders in university Z focused more on the academic rationale, referring to goals like ‘the desire to develop academics, to gain recognition, to establish a network and share knowledge in the international arena, to attain a better ranking, to gain global awareness, and to create common consciousness in the global arena.’

In this context, some of the participants shared their ideas on the reasons of internationalization from a multi-dimensional academic, socio-cultural, geopolitical, and economic perspective:

We have to understand multiple perspectives of certain disciplines, such as the geopolitical perspective and the sociocultural perspective; we have to understand different societies, different nations, different people, and very different issues. Cultural development varies from society to society; universities need to gather students from all backgrounds and with different perspectives, including economic perspectives, considering how inter-connected financial markets (Y2).

Finding 3: Support for Internationalization

The key stakeholders in the U.S. pointed out that cultural support was interactive and multidimensional. The support, assistance, and management practices provided for international activities in university X, Y, and Z are conducted interactively, as the respective participants made clear in interviews by referring to the ongoing flow of information and interaction between the faculty and departments. The interviews further revealed that academic, economic, socio-cultural, and technical support comes from the university.

For example, one participant highlighted the importance of internal motivation when explaining the culture of cooperation in the development of internationalization support culture:

Our university has developed a strong support and motivation culture, characterized by external supports, funds, incentives, and awards. Yet, with that said, academicians are already so desperate to access information that they do not need special external motivation or support. Achieving quality results through cooperation is the product of the internal motivation of the academician (X2).

One participant first emphasized the importance of economic support before turning their attention to the academic support provided at university Y:

We provide faculties the opportunity to participate in workshops and support their research and travel. To expand scholarship, we provide various teaching tools to faculty to support their teaching experiences all over the world. We adopt many different approaches, such as providing incentives to faculty and to colleagues from other universities studying the same topic (Y3).

The key stakeholders in the Turkish universities stated that a support culture was provided at different levels and by different players at each university. The key stakeholders in university A underlined that the support culture was interactive and multidimensional, whereas those in universities B and C stated that it was unilateral. For example, one participant discussed internationalization in connection with a lack of economic support:

In the process of internationalization, especially in the Erasmus exchange process, my university has provided academic support. Particularly, the International Office provided support. But I do not think the economic support is sufficient. Also, more detailed information should be given during the course selection stage (B1).

Finding 4: Internationalization Strategy

Turkish participants emphasized that internationalization is a major priority and highlighted the two-faceted strategy of global exchange and Erasmus. Participant A1 reported the following strategy of internationalization for Asia:

We should be aware of what's happening in China and in India. Asia, in this sense, is like a tsunami of information and knowledge. And we are the first university to establish relations with China. I sent a calendar to my friends, with the message, 'Think China'... It's so important to learn Chinese. Also, India is in a completely different place. We have been searching those geographies. For us, internationalization does not only mean the United States and Europe. Asia is very important, and so is Russia (A1).

One participant implemented internationalization strategies in university B from a multidimensional point of view and found their respective university to be sufficient in this respect:

Our university follows various policies and strategies towards internationalization, and I think it seems sufficient... For example, SUNY cooperation is an important step in this regard, as well as in language politics. There is a significant demand for our university from international academics and students. Our academics are very well equipped... the internationalization of the student body, the internationalization of faculty, the internationalization of research, the internationalization of educational programs, the internationalization of support services, and the internationalization of physical resources and stakeholders (B1).

University C was among the Turkish universities with a large number of international students, and it pursued a more regional policy that focused on European and Muslim countries:

Agreements were made mainly between Arab and Asian countries. These agreements were very useful for those working in those areas at our university and also for those working in Islamic Sciences, such as theology. Our university also has a well-established Faculty of Theology. We can send a large number of students to countries like Qatar, Jordan, Bahrain, and Malaysia (C1).

In our study, the key stakeholders in the U.S. universities all conducted rigorous international research activities, pursued distinct strategies to facilitate international education for domestic and international students and aimed to strengthen student retention and faculty exchange. While participants X, Y and Z demonstrated different levels of integration, all three were committed to internationalization and considered internationalization policies to be among their top priorities. For example, the priority of

university X was to be seen as a leading global bio-medical pioneer. A participant from university X reported that they have followed a worldwide expansionist strategy in internationalization, and that they are working towards developing partnerships and cooperation.

We have operated in over 100 countries all around the world, and 20% of our student body is from different countries. This number of students constituting our international body is huge. As part of the strategy implemented at our university, most of our collaborations on different subjects are carried out by individual researchers, professors, doctors, and academicians. They develop partnerships and enter into cooperation. The faculty have academic and health care interests and conduct research. I can't tell you the exact number, but it's something like 20% of the student body (X1).

One of the participants from university Y also discussed the organizational strategies and program strategies they used for internationalization. These include adequate funding, adequate financial support, research, cooperation, and implementation.

We contribute to global development in many fields, including agriculture, as well as higher education capacity development. We have a research faculty for doing that. We developed a lot of study programs and learning programs. We have centers in different parts of the world; for example, we have large centers in Senegal, in India, and in Africa. We engage in a lot of activities, both on the research side and the teaching side (Y1).

One of the participants in university Z emphasized the importance of implementing an effective strategy to gain internationalization awareness and create a cooperation culture.

I think the most effective strategy for increasing the efforts or achieving the goal of internationalization is to have awareness, to prepare your campus and institution by providing information, and to incorporate all your faculties, your academicians, your senior leaders, and all other stakeholders in international activities. The most effective way to develop an internationalization strategy and to achieve internationalization is to ensure the entire campus is working in cooperation towards these efforts (Z1).

Finding 5: Challenges in Internationalization

The key stakeholders in the U.S. institutions in our study all conducted rigorous international research activities, pursued distinct strategies to facilitate international education for domestic and international students, and aimed to strengthen student retention and faculty exchange. While universities X, Y, and Z demonstrated different levels of integration, all three were committed to internationalization and considered internationalization policies to be among their top priorities. For example, the priority of university X was to be seen as a leading global bio-medical pioneer.

Through our analysis of the key stakeholders in the U.S. based on academic and cultural perspectives, we noticed that the participants were aware of the challenges presented by internationalization. One of the participants stated that there are difficulties due to differences in procedures between countries:

They experience difficulties working in different countries under different rules and difficulties dealing with different kinds of funding, immigration, tax and hiring issues. Under these constraints, the distance from people's mother countries feels more acute when they come here. So that's a challenge, and then of course the search for funding is always a challenge (X1).

University Y participants discussed the economic, academic, socio-cultural, and political challenges, while university Z participants largely focused on the difficulties experienced in the process of implementing common internationalization goals, cultural and linguistic differences, and economic support.

Among the difficulties encountered in the internationalization process, the most striking was economic difficulties:

That is the major difficulty; working without resources is very hard. It is very difficult to work with resources outside of the university... On the student side, there are the issues of family perspectives and the funds required to study abroad (Y1).

Another participant explained the difficulties students face in internationalization in terms of academic, economic, and socio-cultural factors.

So, some of the challenges involve money, as students feel they don't have the money to study abroad...In addition, there can be barriers with the curriculum... That is one of the consequences of faculty not being internationalized...That is an example of how the challenge could be partly cultural, or partly financial; I think they vary (Z1).

The same participant expressed the concern that students have about whether they will receive the same quality of education abroad:

If you are a student studying sociology, your faculty will probably be very happy if you want to go abroad. So, the only problem may be financial. But if you are a student of engineering, your faculty members may be worried that you will not get the same quality of training. So, it differs depending on the field of study...But sometimes the faculty discourages students when the study abroad program involves educating the faculty (Z3).

When discussing the disadvantages of internationalization, Turkish universities A, B, and C tended to focus on economic problems, language problems, cultural problems, lack of time, and red tape. The most frequently mentioned themes were difficulties in implementing common internationalization goals, cultural differences, language problems, and economic support. For example, one participant explained the difficulties encountered in the process of internationalization in connection with the academic mentality:

The issue is the mental problem at the top rather than the bureaucracy. We could not raise the academic mentality despite all our efforts. During the process of institutionalization, establishing the institution, establishing the university, hiring the staff, establishing the system, and setting up the lessons, we have to act with an academic mentality in all those processes. But I am afraid everyone knows what mentality we act on (C1).

One participant criticized the insufficiency of funds:

I feel that there is merit to opportunities like congresses, seminars, and academic mobility in understanding the values of different cultures and developing myself in the academic field. Of course, these are limited by the funds available (B2).

The issue of "brain drain and quality" was emphasized in the reported difficulties encountered in the process of internationalization:

At present, we have exchange programs with some universities, but we are not satisfied with some of the incoming students from these programs. We should be a little more selective about them...What we want is to improve the quality...But when it comes to attracting doctoral students, we have a few problems. Turkey's top graduates want to go to world universities for their doctoral studies. I have to compete with Stanford, Yale, and Princeton (A1).

One participant highlighted language problems, lack of institutional support, physical deficiencies, lack of social facilities, and management and coordination problems stemming from the fact that the university has very large campus as the main difficulties encountered in the internationalization process:

Language is the first obstacle for the university. Among the problems we face as an institution, the lack of support from the university for the activities that we are conducting ranks among the top. We're just doing research with the budget the National Agency gives to us. Unfortunately, the physical conditions are not very good here (C2).

DISCUSSION

The present study provides an analysis of internationalization by examining a selection of universities in the U.S. and in Turkey. We demonstrate the importance of using an intercultural approach to internationalization in the following seven subsections. Our main argument is that it is of critical importance to focus on contextual factors to explain internationalization processes, procedures, and decision-making.

1) Understanding the concept of internationalization.

Understanding the concept internationalization was the first point addressed in the present study. Full comprehension of this concept is an important first step, insofar as it establishes a clear and resolute

path toward internationalization (Simon, 2013, p. 50 as cited in Hudzik, 2015, p. 59). The findings showed that the participants made an effort to develop and integrate international elements into the student experiences at their respective institutions, which suggests that the concept of internationalization in HE is of utmost importance for universities. In this process, comprehending and interpreting internationalization in a correct manner accelerates the transition from theory to practice. From the analysis of the participating universities, we determined that they all shared an awareness of the importance of internationalization. Our study's findings were clearly consistent with Knight's (2004) defined "as the process of integrating an international, intercultural, dimension into the purpose, functions, or delivery of post-secondary education" (p. 11).

2) Why internationalization is necessary.

The second issue addressed in the study was the reasons behind the necessity of internationalization. The data collected from the key stakeholders we interviewed at three universities in Turkey revealed congruence in the academic rationales of internationalization, particularly in terms of the benefits that the participants receive from the internationalization, whereas some divergence was observed for the socio-economic rationales. The institutional internationalization trends are governed by the institutional background, resources, and the impact of institutional stakeholders (Knight, 2004). For example, while the key stakeholders at the A, B, and C universities in Turkey referred to ideas such as "academic quality, international science production, understanding of intercultural research, research policies, developments in technology and science, and international science production", the key stakeholders at the three universities in the U.S. referred more to institutional missions, actions, and evidence of internationalization when expressing their reasons for internationalization. Moreover, the stakeholders at university X emphasized their university mission and identity to explain internationalization, and in a similar manner, the stakeholders at university Y spoke of "the mission of the research university being the production and sharing of universal information, the interaction of countries, the recognition of different cultures, and the production of new knowledge". In both countries, the reasons provided by the university representatives included academic, political, socio-cultural, and economic factors.

3) Internationalization requires support from the highest levels.

The third point addressed in the study was the effect of the support provided by the university administration or its board of directors for internationalization. McMurray and Scott (2013) reported that various factors determine the organizational climate of a university, such as support, justice, trust, innovation, and recognition. The magnitude of the support is determined by the type of support, assistance, or resources provided to encourage international activities at the university (Dijk & Meijer, 1999), while the image of the institution, which is built on its achievements, serves as a source of pride for the employees and students and contributes to defining their objectives (Bess & Dee, 2007). The most prominent feature of the universities selected from the U.S. in the present study is that they have a well-developed and broad framework of competition and cooperation culture. We observed that the support culture was interactive and multidimensional in the institutions in the U.S. Also, university donor policies are also important pillars of internationalization. As seen in institution X, major donations could boost the international profile of an university and provide support for high-achievement students.

On the other hand, an analysis of the views of the participants at the institutions in Turkey revealed that while the support culture was interactive and multidimensional at university A, it was unilateral in universities B and C. For example, at university A, the interviewees indicated that negotiations around the implementation of a variety of internationalization activities had been inadequate and unilateral in terms of the level of economic support for such initiatives, which resulted in a perception of being unproductive. Similarly, the interviewees at university C also reported that there was an inadequate culture of support for the implementation of internationalization activities, and that they held the university's strategies in economic, bureaucratic, and academic matters responsible for such a negative outcome.

4) Organizational culture is a determining factor for internationalization.

Bartell (2003) suggests that the promotion or prevention of successful internationalization depends on the organizational culture, and that the culture of the university stakeholders determines the dominant

culture. These values and beliefs are conveyed verbally and through symbols (Bartell, 2003; Schein, 2010). In our study, the key stakeholders from the U.S. pointed out that universities adopted a facilitating, outward-looking, and multiple-support culture, while two universities in Turkey adopted weaker and inward-focused support cultures. Furthermore, the key stakeholders in Turkey reported that lack of financial support, inadequate institutional strategies, and lack of multiple-support systems limited the availability of the international learning experiences for students. Thus, it can be suggested that a strong culture is an important factor in the internationalization success of institutions (Sporn, 1996). Based on these findings, it can be argued that it is necessary to provide academic, economic, and bureaucratic support to increase the participation of students and professors in overseas education.

5) Besides the challenges, internationalization also offers many opportunities.

The fifth issue addressed in this study was the challenges encountered during internationalization. Our study identified several problems in Turkish universities, such as the lack of infrastructure, the inadequacy and dysfunction of libraries, and the lack of cultural and sports facilities, while the most common challenges faced by the U.S. universities were related to procedural differences between countries, culture shock, difficulties experienced in scholarships, economic-related and cultural-related student problems, and time constraints.

In Turkey, the issue of lack of adequate support for research could be attributed to insufficient economic resources of the university and the inadequacy of reward and incentive mechanisms. For internationalization, rewards and encouragement are important for motivating the academic staff and for achieving successful internationalization (Hudzik, 2015; Ratliff, 2013). Furthermore, it has been argued that financial problems are the main reason for the slowdown of internationalization progress (Green, 2002). In the U.S., social activities and social and cultural events hosted by the university that include the participation of students, administration, and staff in a variety of settings are considered particularly important aspects of internationalization. Universities in Turkey experience problems in providing work environments, resources, and infrastructure that are because financial resources are more limited in Turkey.

This study further found that a couple of the universities from the Turkish sample experienced language problems in pursuing their internationalization goals. These universities emphasized the importance of English as a way to further develop themselves internationally. A related challenge was the integration of international students into the campus community. According to Leask (2008), international perspectives help students to understand and work with diverse cultures in both domestic and international contexts. The literature on this subject has shown that it is common for international students to connect with other international students since they share a similar sense of isolation and identity struggle (Garrord & Davis, 1999).

6) Internationalization must also address intercultural learning.

This study was also focused on intercultural learning, which was often found to be inadequate. Internationalization provides individuals the opportunity to learn about other cultures and individuals in foreign countries. Despite monolingualism being declared the "illiteracy of the twenty-first century" (Roberts et al., 2018, p. 116), the importance of the English language is nonetheless clear; however, this leads to unequal opportunities that benefit the students of Turkish universities where courses are taught only in English.

Another key point to mention is that internationalization in HE has been shown to contribute to the development of international understanding and of intercultural skills and competencies in students (Beelen & Leask, 2011). Ironically, however, socio-cultural and social justice dimensions, economic differences, and access problems are still neglected in the literature on the internationalization of HE. In Turkey, universities A and B were especially aware of the importance of focusing on quality rather than on quantity. The issue of quality was also associated with the issue of brain-drain (Wahlers, 2018). Stakeholders in the Turkish universities expressed their concerns about brain-drain.

Furthermore, internationalization is an individualistic phenomenon, one that usually entails tension as a result of political, institutional, and cultural resistance. It is important to create a mindset of common responsibility and cooperation in internationalization among individual members of the university community (Hudzik, 2015). It is difficult to think of a successful strategic and comprehensive approach to

internationalization that does not involve experienced, active academic staff. We noticed in our research that the staff at university C did not have an international vision, and that this led to mental barriers to internationalization.

7) Internationalization policies and strategies need careful consideration.

It is important to focus on the fundamental strategies, tactics, and structures needed to transform the idea of comprehensive international engagement into action. Internationalization in HE has been applied differently by different institutions (Buckner, 2019; Seeber et al., 2016).

Knight and de Wit (1995), who considered university programs to be strategic components of internationalization, argued that every institution had its own set of internationalization strategies. U.S. institutions conducted international research activities and adopted corporate strategies, such as the development of programs to facilitate foreign education, international student registration, and other services. Thus, while the policy of attracting foreign students to the campus is given the priority in U.S. universities, the strategic priority in Turkey is to send students abroad, especially through the Erasmus program. Furthermore, while the U.S. strategy primarily aimed to attract students from Asian countries, Turkey focused primarily on Europe and the Turkic Republics. This trend in student mobility at the institutional level reflected the current priorities of the CoHE and Turkish universities, where traditionally local students in Turkey are now encouraged to participate in international exchange programs.

Moreover, it is known that the universities are often influenced by international trends, which in turn affect academics and researchers (Altbach et al., 2009). Additionally, national educational policies and policies adopted by the government or civil society organizations also influence and shape this process. U.S. higher education has been shaped by the free-market system for several years and has been a pioneer in competition and internationalization. In the U.S., systematic administrative regulations are based on a common belief that corporate autonomy should be maintained (Amaral et al., 2013). In Turkey, by contrast, university administration and senior higher education administration should cope with a high-level centralization and low institutional autonomy. The centralized structure in Turkey, which is reflected in the universities, the CoHE, and the government, all work in tandem in carrying out the internationalization process. In Turkey, the university administration, and the senior HE administration are faced with a high-level of centralization and low institutional autonomy. As a result, HE internationalization is now seen as a new process with multiple approaches, which include the policies of HE massification and a variety of strategies that seek to attract more foreign students to study in Turkey (Taşçı & Kenan, 2019).

Organizations in the U.S. influence the direction of internationalization in a similar manner. In addition, the study by Shchepetylnykova and Alvis (2020) showed that the participation of the faculty in internationalization is considered to be very important for public universities in the U.S.

CONCLUSION

This paper provided analysis of key stakeholders' internationalization experiences in selected universities in the U.S. and in Turkey. From our analysis on internationalization in the US and Turkey we argue that it is critically important to not only take the national culture and context into account when examining internationalization but also to consider the factors that are managed by committed individual decision makers in specific institutions and that subsequently play out on a local level.

We have further shown how broad analyses of internationalization can be filtered down into localized contexts and specific institutional settings to illuminate the true mechanisms behind the curtain. We recommend that Turkey needs to develop new strategies by playing to its strengths, especially its geopolitical position, strong historical ties, and its advantages as a multicultural society. Its best approach would be to respond to current needs and establish the conditions required for future change. On the other hand, the U.S. universities have a lot to learn from universities in other countries. In particular, we argue that the U.S. universities should develop more local strategies to improve the socio-cultural aspects of internationalization. Another remarkable point is that the primary strategy in the U.S. universities is to attract students to campus. In addition to this strategy, their expanding the student sending strategy can contribute to the process of learning and experiencing intercultural skills from universities in other countries.

One of the significant findings of the present study is that the categorization based on the unequal relations between developed and developing nations, HE institutions (public and private), faculty members (qualified and less qualified), and students (English speaking and non-English speaking) overshadowed the ultimate goal of internationalization. The intercultural learning dimension and especially the inequality of opportunity dimension are neglected in the literature. Thus, the present study, although based on only two countries, demonstrates the importance of improving the socio-cultural aspects of internationalization.

In this context, it is seen that many factors, including geographical location (for countries in the Middle East, Africa etc.), individual student qualifications, and especially the mindset of personnel, institutional factors (funding shortages, donation systems, teaching-research focus), and systemic factors (central-local systems, amount of resources, differentiation of cultural priorities) affect the level and direction of internationalization in HE. Therefore, we suggest that future studies investigate these factors with an analysis that includes more countries.

Finally, we believe that the most important contribution of this study is that it presents an in-depth analysis of the internationalization efforts in two quite distinct countries and contexts based on an intercultural perspective. The perspectives of the university stakeholders in the two cultures and systems that were profiled in the present study provided an understanding of how cultural differences can alter practical approaches. For example, the meanings attributed to "internationalization" differed based on the culture and applications and served to determine the developmental direction. Due to the inequalities of opportunity and the ethical concerns expressed in the global literature, future studies should include more internationalization perspectives, especially those from emerging economies.

Our study of the U.S. and Turkey has demonstrated the value of analyzing internationalization based on the culture and context of each nation. As such, we hope we have been able to make a worthwhile contribution to further developing an understanding of the intercultural dimension of internationalization in HE.

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GÜLŞAH TAŞCI is an Assistant Professor in Istanbul 29 Mayıs University, Turkey. Taşçı earned her PhD in Educational Administration from Marmara University in Turkey. She was visiting scholar (2017-2018) at George Washington University, Washington DC, U.S. Also, Taşçı attended the Women Leadership Program, Cornell University 2018, New York, USA. Her research brings critical and comparative perspectives to the study and practice of internationalization, women studies. Email: gtasci@29mayis.edu.tr

BERNHARD STREITWIESER is an Associate Professor at George Washington University, Washington D.C., U.S. Streitwieser earned his PhD in International and Comparative Education from Columbia University, Teachers College. Dr. Streitwieser was a visiting professor at Berlin's Humboldt Universität, where he was funded by research grants from the Fulbright Commission and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). Email: streitwieser@email.gwu.edu

SEYFI KENAN is a Professor at Marmara University in İstanbul, Turkey. Seyfi has carried out a number of research projects for a variety of projects at Columbia University, New York (1996-2003). He uses interdisciplinary method with a concentration on the history of comparative intellectual thought, educational sciences, and philosophy. Email: seyfi.kenan@marmara.edu.tr