

THE DEVELOPMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN TURKEY

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INTRODUCTION

It has been observed that the concepts of university and higher education have sometimes been given separate meanings, but sometimes been put into the same framework in terms of their primary aims and functions. However, the common point in all of these different definitions is that higher education is an education level encompassing universities, academies and other schools of higher education. For this very reason, it does not seem possible to separate higher education and universities from one another with definite lines (**Kısakürek, 1976:6**). However, as was pointed out, what distinguishes universities from other higher education institutions is the importance they place on research functions (**Üstünel, 1965:6**). The function of academies and other schools of higher education, on the other hand, are to train people for vocational purposes and in this sense they fulfill a different function than universities (**Velidedeođlu, 1967:25**).

According to the article 34 of the National Education Law enacted in 1973 and according to the article 3 (a) of Law no. 2547 on higher education, higher education is defined as a system based on secondary education and including institutions offering at least two years of higher education.

Universities can be defined as institutions offering education and training, conducting scientific research and publishing such studies. The higher education institutions formed to fulfill such functions are also expected to carry out studies in order to solve the problems of the society. Societies have determined such main responsibilities of universities according to their own priorities and in order to meet their specific needs in the best possible ways. English universities, while providing students with general and vocational education, also give priority to the culture of the society and try to shape the personalities of the students. German universities, however,

with the influence of Wilhelm von Humbolt, are seen as institutions undertaking the responsibility of conducting scientific research and as institutions adopted the principle of carrying out education with this belief. The priorities of the American universities are determined by the nature of the human power to be educated, by the subject of studies conducted and by the representatives of the business world that meet the demands of the society. French universities, until the year 1968, only functioned as institutions that create individuals who maintain the social order and enable the continuity of the nation. The main duty of the universities in the Eastern Bloc was to give vocational and ideological education that would increase productivity. According to this classification suggested by Dreeze and Debelle, first three universities are considered idealist, while last two are considered utilitarian (**Meray, 1971:13**).

In recent years, the idea, which gains in popularity, is to see universities as places to conduct studies in order to solve the problems of the society. Today, universities are not only perceived as institutions to produce and transmit information, but also regarded as institutions which undertake important responsibilities to educate social leaders who can use these research results successfully in order to better shape the society's social, economical and political future (**Kaya, 1984**).

HIGHER EDUCATION IN TURKEY

Due to important social responsibilities, universities, academies and other schools of higher education have always attracted attention of the media and higher education problems have always been discussed in the public. The purpose of such discussions is to point out the expectations of the society and they sometimes resulted in attempts to change and reform the university systems. First radical changes in the Republic period in the higher education system took place with the 1933 Reform Act. After that, reformation attempts proceeded with the acts enacted in 1946 and 1973. Last radical change in our higher education system took place with the 1981 Reform Act. With the Law no. 2547, our higher education system was regulated based on the principle of integrity and a new content for the system was introduced.

As was stated by Koçer, "In a nation which moved from a theocratic absolutism to a theocratic monarchy and from there to single and multi-political party periods and afterwards to a secular and democratic republic, it is inevitable for scientific institutions to undergo structural changes" (**Koçer, 1979:3**). Such changes continued in the Republic period like in the pre-Republic period. For this reason, different periods were experienced in the development of higher education in our country.

In the history of our higher education, the departure from medresseh education and moving towards first secular education institutions happened in 1773. In this year, Mühendishane-i Bahr-i Hümayun and in successive years Mühendishane-i Berr-i Hümayun were founded in İstanbul. In 1827, School of Medicine and in 1834 War

Academy was established. These schools, apart from medressehs, formed the basis of today's secular modern universities in our country.

In the Ottoman Empire period, the establishment of Darülfünun, which was planned to take place in 1846 by Muvaffakat Maarif Meclisi, could only be realized in 1863. However, because of a fire in the building in 1965, Darülfünun could not continue its function for long. After that, it was reestablished with the name Darülfünun-u Osmani and with different dates it was renamed Darülfünun-u Şahane (**Korkut, 1984:8**). In this period, together with its name, it also underwent some structural changes. In the end, the university carrying the name Darülfünun-u Osmani was named Darülfünun of İstanbul with the Law no. 493 in 1924, shortly after the foundation of the Republic. Just like in every country and in every period, the administrative changes in the Ottoman Empire were also reflected on the universities and as a result the name Darülfünun was changed occasionally. With the Law no. 430 named "Integration of Education" in 1924, medressehs were closed. Darülfünun of İstanbul, which was the first higher education institution of the Turkish Republic, consisted of the faculties of medicine, law, literature, science and theology. This institution, which assumed a legal structure, was governed with an added budget. However, in spite of the high expectations, Darülfünun of İstanbul could not keep up with Atatürk's revolutions, did not support them or even went against them. For these reasons, it was closed in 2 May 1933 together with all the institutions attached to it and changed into İstanbul University.

The reasons for the abolishment of Darülfünun and the establishment of İstanbul University were as follows:

1. Lack of support it provided for the Turkish revolution, objecting and resisting the revolutions,
2. Lack of a control body,
3. Lack of scientific research,
4. Lack of interaction with the society.

In professor Malche's report, who was brought from Switzerland with Atatürk's instructions in order to examine the condition of Darülfünun, such points were mentioned (**Hirsch, 2000:229-295**).

Among the 155 of Darülfünun's academic personnel, which was closed due to the inadequacies mentioned both by Malche and Reşit Galip, the Minister of Education of the period, only 59 of them were accepted to the İstanbul University in 6 June, 1933 (**Ökten, 1973:48**).

With the arrival of Jewish professors escaping from Nazis, İstanbul University and other education institutions in Ankara (Institute of Agriculture and Law School) became important education centers (**Taşdemirci, 1992:31**).

As was mentioned above, together with the development taking place in İstanbul, other higher education institutions also started to be founded. Shortly after the declaration of the Turkish Republic with the attempts of mobilization in education, higher education institutions started to spread Anatolia and in 1925 School of Law, in 1926 Gazi Education Institution and in 1930 Higher Agriculture Institutions were founded in Ankara.

İstanbul, İstanbul Technical, and Ankara Universities which were founded with the spirit guiding the University Education in 1933 started to become insufficient to meet the changing needs and the conditions of the society. With the university Law no 4936 enacted in 1946, which were prepared in parallelism with the rapid changes in the society, universities were gathered in a structural integrity, and the administrative dimensions of this integrity was named “University Committee” and thus a new organization was founded. This Law accepted the Minister of Education as the supreme director of universities and gave him the responsibility of controlling the higher education institutions. The establishment of this committee can be seen as a novelty in terms of cooperation and an attempt to find joint solutions to the problems. In the first 15 years of multi-political party period, foundations of universities in undeveloped parts of the country and spreading the culture and higher education to the whole nation were seen as the rational and realistic ways of removing the difference and imbalance in the different regions of the country (**Keleş, 1978:2**). Under this framework, together with the universities founded in İstanbul, Ankara and İzmir between 1950-1960, other universities were started to be established in other cities of the country as well.

Just like in every new government, the National Unity Government that was founded after the 27 May, 1960 revolution attempted to reestablish and regulate certain parts of universities. The 1961 Constitution brought some independence to universities in terms of scientific and administrative aspects. The item 120 of this Constitution that said that “universities will be administrated by the bodies chosen within the universities and the academic personnel and their assistants will not be dismissed by authorities outside universities” can be interpreted as a broad and comprehensive change attempt in the administration and the structure of the universities (**İnan, 1988:27**).

Within the period from 1960 to 1973, in other words, until the enactment of Law no. 1750, changes in the higher education system continued. In this scope, the main issues attracting the attention of public about education were the establishment of private higher education institutions in accordance with the Law no. 625 named “Private Higher Education Institutions Law” and the closure of such institutions according to the decision of the Constitutional Court.

Also in this period, in accordance with the principle of the Constitution that says, “economic, social, and cultural development must be based on a plan”, such changes started to be based on certain plans. However, within the following 11 years, due to the fact that this planned period was not taken advantage of as required especially for universities, another Law no. 1750 named Universities Law was enacted in 1973 (**Anonymous, 1972**). The main principles of this Law was as follows:

1. Integrity of higher education and its interaction with secondary education,
2. Equality of opportunity,
3. Efficient Utilization of resources,
4. Organization of higher education planning,
5. Security of educational planning.

Based on the Law no. 1750, the improvements experienced in the higher education system can be stated as follows:

1. Integrity of higher education,
2. Foundation of a Higher Education Council to guide higher education,
3. Limitation in education periods,
4. Inclusion of all the universities under this law, except from some of the constitutional rights of Middle East Technical and Hacettepe Universities,
5. Foundation of a University Control Committee, which would enable an external control mechanism.

The Constitutional Court abolished Higher Education Council and some other principles of Law no. 1750. This situation prevented universities from engaging in cooperation with the aim of educating qualified people, as was stated in universities’ development plan, and from the integrity of universities under the same umbrella. As a result, in the beginning of 1980s, a reformation in higher education system became an inevitable necessity and the foundation of a central organization became obligatory (**Anonymous, 1981:3;Kaptan, 1982:1**).

From the past till the present time, universities and/or higher education institutions have always been the most important institutions, which influence the society and be influenced from it. Some of the responsibilities of higher education like contributing to science, converting the information produced into technology and by this way to ensure

the happiness and well being of the society, form the basis of development. Today, expectations from universities have undergone some changes in the world and also in Turkey. Universities today are not just institutions conducting scientific research and training supreme human brains but also institutions which are expected to work productively just like a factory. In today's world where sources are getting scarce day-by-day, it is essential to have institutions that work productively and efficiently. In parallelism with this, administrative changes have also gained importance. In other words, societies do not see universities only as institutions that contribute to science. Therefore, the responsibilities and the implementations expected from the universities have started to be questioned (**Meray, 1971:13**). With this approach, many countries are in search of new concepts, new aims and as a result new administration forms. The increase in the students numbers since the middle of 20th century, scientific studies, supervision, medical care and treatment services occupy an important place in various functions of the universities and all these resulted in changes in the administrative systems of the universities.

Today, however, research-development and service departments and industrial cooperation units in universities aim at integrating these institutions with the society and thus point out the changes in the administration.

In our country, contrary to developments in the West, variety, disorganization and diversity in higher education system before the Law no. 2547 uncovered the lack of harmony of this system with its sub-systems. In other words, contradiction and lack of interaction between universities, academies and other schools of higher education resulted in a decrease in the quality of education, prevented training qualified human power necessary for the country, in brief resulted in wasting all the efforts of directing higher education to a common objective (**Kaptan, 1982:1;Kaptan, 1986:1**).

Within the period of Law no. 1750, the changes and the inequalities in the law on higher education system resulted in following problems:

1. The functions of higher education institutions were hindered.
2. Statue differences created injustice and discontent.
3. Education was carried out in different levels and people were trained with different qualities.
4. National budget was spent extravagantly.
5. Student acceptance created problems in terms of national employment potentials and capacities that would not be used were created.

6. Existence of different laws hindered the foundation of a central organization. Also, the necessity of newly established universities were not met in terms of academic staff because it would not be possible to transfer academic staff from universities, which had a surplus to the developing and newly established universities.

7. There was a lack of interaction between students and instructors, which did harm to the students.

The points mentioned above were discussed with authorities.

Higher education institutions, which existed until 6 November, 1981, the date in which the Law 2547 was enacted, established different norms, values and concepts. It is therefore normal to have some difficulties in an attempt to integrate all these under one umbrella in a short time. Time was necessary for the academic staffs, who were trained by these institutions and adopted their point of view, to accept a totally different system.

The Law no. 2547 was enacted in November, 1981 in order to solve these problems, to create human power in accordance with the necessities of modern science and technology and in accordance with the objectives of the development plans and to use the national sources effectively. With this law, Turkish Higher Education System moved from a European model to the basic principles of the Anglo-Saxon System (**Gürüz, 2001:305**).

There can be some logical sides of criticisms which claims that structural changes or rather uniformities do not suit different faculties or regions. However, if we think about the fact that every organization, to some extent, shapes their own academic staff and that the academic staff enables the organizations gain different dimensions, in the future more rational formations are expected in the structure and functions of the universities.

The Law no. 2547 resulted in significant changes in the administrative aspects of the universities as well and the responsibility to appoint university presidents was given to the President to the country with the suggestion of Higher Education Council.

The terms of duty for University presidents were increased from 3 to 5 years, and they were given extensive authority and responsibilities. Due to these and similar changes in the administration of universities, and because of some disputes concerning the prejudice and publications with insufficient information, parliament and public were influenced and in 1 July, 1992 Law number 3826 was enacted. According to this law, the university presidents was chosen by the academic personnel of the universities by means of secret voting and their term of duty were decreased from 5 to 4 years. However, the first negative results of this law were experienced in the selection and appointment of university directors in the year 2000 (**Doğramacı, 2000:30**).

In spite of all these negative conditions in the administrative dimension of the system, Turkish Higher Education system made an unprecedented improvement between the years 1982 and 2000. With the new regulation in 1982, the number of universities was raised from 19 to 27. With the Law no. 3837 enacted in 1992, 21 new universities and 2 institutes of technology were founded and thus the number of state universities was increased to 51. Today, the number of state and private universities has reached 77.

CONCLUSION

The improvements in the Turkish Higher Education system from the school year of 1923-1924 to 1999-2000 can be summarized as follows:

1. The number of higher education institutions were raised from 1 to 74,
2. The number of students was raised from 2,914 to 1,419,927.
3. The number of graduates each year was raised from 321 to 198,654,
4. The number of academic staff was raised from 307 to 63,866.

Also, in the young Turkish Republic, universities were spread to every part of Anatolia and Trace, apart from İstanbul.

In spite of certain negative political and economic conditions experienced from time to time, the improvements achieved through great efforts and sacrifices are the indicators of the determination and the desire of the Turkish Republic to reach the modern civilization level.

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