



THE REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE
SOCIAL SCIENCES UNIVERSITY OF ANKARA
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

**HIGHER EDUCATION'S USE AS A SOFT POWER TOOL IN INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONS**

Master's Thesis

Adem GÜDÜK

International Relations

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ABSTRACT

When it comes to international relations, one of the first concepts that comes to mind is "power." The types of power, its sources, and the ways it is used, along with its effects, are topics as much debated and studied as the concept of power itself. In an era where globalization is at the core, and both states and international civil society organizations, as well as intergovernmental institutions, are reshaping, and their effects and spheres of influence can change every day, in the field of education, especially as a result of the mobility in higher education, cultural diplomacy and education diplomacy have gained greater importance and increased effectiveness. In this context, with the aim of determining how education can be used as a soft power element starting from the definition of "power," this thesis is written.

An assessment of international studenthood from the past to the present is made, and the situation of international students studying in higher education in Turkey is identified, and scholarship programs are examined. In the continuation of the study, the impact of foreign students studying in Turkey with scholarships on the relationship between their countries' diplomatic representatives and the relationship between students in this context, as well as the effect of scholarship programs, is researched and analyzed through interviews. As a result of the interviews, it has been observed that scholarship programs leave positive impressions on bilateral relations for many years and strengthen relationships into a tighter bond, especially in countries that already share common values. In conclusion, the most impactful outcomes of the study emphasize once again the importance of education diplomacy. It can be said that providing exchange programs and scholarships to students in higher education creates a cultural bond or strengthens an existing one, significantly affecting the relationship between two countries.

Keywords: Soft power, cultural diplomacy, higher education, scholarship, exchange program

ÖZET

Uluslararası ilişkiler denince ilk akla gelen kavramlardan biridir “güç”. Gücün türleri, kaynağı ve kullanım şekilleri ile etkileri de en az güç kavramının kendisi kadar tartışılan ve üzerine epeyce çalışılan konulardır. Küreselleşmenin temelinde, gerek devletlerin gerekse uluslararası sivil toplum örgütleri ve devletlerarası kurumların yeniden şekillendiği, etkilerinin ve etki alanlarının her geçen gün değişebildiği bir çağda, eğitimde; özellikle de yükseköğretimdeki hareketliliğin bir sonucu olarak kültürel diplomasi ve eğitim diplomasisi her zamankinden daha da fazla önem kazanmış ve etkinliğini artırmıştır. Bu kapsamda; “güç” tanımından yola çıkarak eğitimin yumuşak güç unsuru olarak nasıl kullanılabileceğini tespit etmek amacıyla bu tezin yazımına karar verilmiştir.

Uluslararası öğrenciliğin geçmişten günümüze bir değerlendirmesi yapılarak Türkiye’de yükseköğrenim gören uluslararası öğrencilerine ilişkin durum tespiti yapıp burs programları incelenmiştir. Çalışmanın devamında ise Türkiye’de burslu yükseköğrenim gören yabancı ülke vatandaşlarının ülkelerinin diplomatik temsilcileri ile bu kapsamdaki öğrencilerin ve burs programlarının iki ülke arasındaki ilişkiye etkisi mülakatlarla araştırılarak analiz edilmiştir. Mülakatların sonucunda ise burs programlarının ikili ilişkilere uzun yıllar sürecekle iyi izler bıraktığı, zaten bir takım ortak değerlere sahip olan ülkelerde ilişkileri daha da sıkı bir bağa sahip hale getirdiği görülmüştür. Sonuç olarak; çalışmanın en etkileyici çıktılarının, eğitim diplomasisinin önemini bir kez daha ortaya çıkarması ve özellikle yükseköğrenim gören öğrencilere değişim programları ile burs verilmesinin kültürel bir bağ oluşturarak ya da var olan bağı güçlendirerek iki ülke ilişkilerini önemli oranda etkileyen çok önemli bir unsur olduğu söylenebilir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Yumuşak güç, kültürel diplomasi, yükseköğrenim, burs, değişim programı

CHAPTER 1

1. INTRODUCTION

Education has always been very important throughout history and at the center of human life and in known history. Education is an activity that is mainly based on the transformation of knowledge from person to person, it is broadened and education is not only between people but also between countries and nations.

Using education, especially higher education as a ‘soft power’ tool is not a new concept and it has been a way of creating fruitful relations in international relations. Especially through universities and other higher education institutions, knowledge is distributed throughout to world. This way creates some relations between countries and countries may benefit from these education activities.

Common higher education programs between different higher education institutions from different countries, scholarship programs, and student exchange programs are some of the main ways of using education to create relationships between countries.

In international relations, soft power and cultural diplomacy have always been very important. Especially in this contemporary globalized world, soft power is getting more and more important in international relations, cultural diplomacy and education diplomacy.

This study aims to define the concept of power in international relations and focus on soft power. What is power, what is soft power, and how education is used as a soft power tool will be asked and as a case study YÖK Scholarship program will be examined to find out its effects on international relations.

Data will be collected using the standardized open-ended interview technique within the methods of interviews. The standardized open-ended interview technique involves the application of a carefully written and ordered set of questions to each participant in the same sequence and style.

In the end, the study aims to answer all the questions above and to explain what the role of a scholarship program in the relations of a scholarship giver and beneficiary of a scholarship is.

1. 2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND DISCUSSIONS

1.2.1. Types of Power in International Relations and the Increasing Importance of Soft Power

The power concept in international relations has been present throughout the history of humanity. While the definition, content, and methods of obtaining power have changed over time, its significance has remained intact. Power is a concept that has found its place in all forms of international relations in the modern world. Power has always existed as the potential of an actor within a social relationship to carry out his own will, regardless of the foundation upon which this possibility rests, even in the face of resistance (Weber, 1964). In another definition, power is described as the desire of one actor to persuade or coerce another to act or refrain from acting in a certain way (Hocking and Smith, 2014).

The majority of analyses conducted within the scope of international relations are based on the foundation of power. Effectiveness in international relations is associated with the concept of power. In this context, countries strive to identify elements that will make them powerful. Although the concept of power is crucial in modern international relations, different classifications exist in the literature due to varying perspectives. Additionally, power is divided into tangible power and intangible power (Kaleli, 2023). Elements of national power such as geography and demography, economic tools, military instruments, institutions, and information technologies contribute to both the hard and soft power of countries. The intangible elements

of national power include culture, historical background, ideology, diplomatic tools, leadership, and the nature of prestige policies. These also contribute to both hard and soft power (Erguvan, 2010).

There are three main criteria for observing and measuring power. These are control over resources, control over actors, and control over events and outcomes. The approach of controlling events and outcomes emerges as the best method for measuring power in contemporary international politics. This is due to its consideration of mutual interdependence and the possibility of collective action. Control over actors, on the other hand, is a broader approach than the former. The approach of controlling events and outcomes is a type of analysis that possesses both descriptive and normative advantages. This approach is claimed to be superior to the other two in measuring power in contemporary international politics. This approach is more suitable for situations where mutual interdependence and the derivation of collective action can occur. (Hart, 1976).

1.2.1.1. Hard Power

As with many definitions related to power, there are various approaches in the literature to define hard power. Hard power has been defined as the use of police power, economic power, and hiring/firing capabilities to change the positions of others (Nye, 2004), among other definitions. Another definition of hard power usage is the use of elements of power to coerce, threaten, and deter international actors. Another description of hard power is the practice of an international actor resorting to coercion, threat, and military force against other actors to achieve its political objectives. Considered a part of the applied power in international relations, hard power serves to redirect the target factor in the desired direction without the consent of the implementer (Çamır, 2009).

Hard power can be defined as the application of coercion, intimidation, and military force to achieve the goals of a policy. In international relations, hard power ensures that a

situation desired by the implementer occurs even without the consent of the implementer. Although the concept of hard power is often associated with military power, military power alone is not sufficient to explain hard power. Countries' efforts to exist in the international arena have shifted from a security framework to the power of economic freedom. When these two powers (military-economic) are used together, they have a greater impact than the effect they create individually. In the post-2000 period, economic power seems to have taken a more prominent role for countries. The increasing cost of obtaining and maintaining power in international relations has triggered new quests for power. While the use of hard power remains an option, its application creates negative implications for a country's image. Although possessing significant military power does not necessarily make a country strong, it does provide an advantage in the use of power (Işık, 2019).

1.2.1.2. Smart Power

Simply put, smart power in international politics is defined as the mixture of both hard power and soft power. In the literature, the concept of smart power is often attributed to both Suzanne Nossel and Joseph Nye. A more comprehensive definition of smart power includes the strategic use of diplomacy, persuasion, capacity building, and the reflection of power and influence, essentially encompassing both military power and all forms of diplomacy in a way that incurs costs (Crocker, Hampson, and Aall, 2007). Within this scope, smart power emerges by blending the characteristics of both hard and soft power (Işık, 2019). In a different definition, smart power is described as the skilful fusion of hard and soft power. Smart power involves developing an integrated strategy, infrastructure, and toolkit by sometimes leveraging hard power and sometimes soft power to achieve a country's goals. The smart power strategy emphasizes the necessity of a strong military while simultaneously investing in alliances, partnerships, and institutions at all levels to expand the country's influence and establish the legality of its activities (Armitage and Nye, 2007).

The success of a smart power strategy depends on a country's specific choices. Firstly, it is essential to determine the objectives and outcomes for which smart power will be employed. Additionally, the types of resources available to the country and which ones are usable must be identified. The purposes for which smart power will be utilized and the locations of these objectives should also be determined. The likelihood of success for each smart power resource should be assessed. Finally, in order for a smart power strategy to be successful, the overall probability of success for the strategy must be calculated (Armitage and Nye, 2007).

1.2.1.3. Soft Power

The concept of Soft Power, introduced by Joseph Nye in the late 1980s, was initially shaped by criticisms brought forward by Norman Angell in 1910, challenging the idea that power is limited to economic and military capabilities (Karakoyunlu, 2023). While the conceptual framework was established around this time, the concept's entrance into international literature occurred when Nye, in a general assessment of the pre and post-Cold War periods, concluded that states could expand their spheres of influence over other states without being coercive or oppressive (Foreignaffairs, 2022). In his 1990 book "Bound To Lead," Nye further developed this idea with the notion that using attractiveness—without resorting to manipulation (carrot) or threats (stick)—can lead to cooperation, stating, "If I can get you to want what I want, then I don't have to force you to do what I want" (Nye, 2005). Within the context of partnerships, Nye suggested that culture and values would be synthesized through diplomacy, policies, and institutions. This idea eventually became known as "soft power" within international literature. As a relatively new concept within the discipline of international relations, it has been criticized for not being fully understood by researchers and for a perceived lack of sufficient studies on soft power (Vuving, 2009). Despite various definitions of soft power, the most comprehensive interpretation has been provided by Nye himself: "Soft power is the ability to shape the preferences of others... Unlike hard power, which

coerces through force or threats for the desired outcome, soft power is the ability to obtain preferred outcomes through attraction and persuasion without using money or force directly... Soft power is the ability to set the agenda and influence others through attraction and persuasion. In behavioral terms, it is the power to shape the preferences of others. In resources terms, it is the power to co-opt rather than to coerce... Soft power rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others and create a desire in them" (Nye, 2005).

From these definitions, it is evident that soft power refers to the ability to persuade through attraction, without resorting to direct coercion or force, to achieve goals that might not be accepted under normal circumstances.

1.2.2. The Diplomacy and Soft Power Dimension of Education

The concept of soft power, widely discussed in public discourse, is often used intuitively and lacks formal theorization. It was first introduced by Joseph Nye in 1990 and has been subsequently expanded in his later works (Kaleli, 2023). As previously defined, Nye characterizes soft power as the ability to achieve desired outcomes through attraction rather than coercion or payments. Soft power originates from a country's culture, political ideals, and policies, and is understood to some extent as a form of social capital (Putnam, 1993). While the concept of soft power is popular and frequently appears in written and visual media, policy speeches, and social media, there is a gap in its operationalization within the field of International Relations literature (Blanchard and Lu, 2012). Soft power remains a debated and discussed concept among scholars.

Considering the transformations in various aspects of social life, education is claimed to be becoming an increasingly significant factor in international relations, evolving into a form of soft power for a country. However, although studies involving education within the context of soft power are popular, they may not be sufficient. From a structural perspective, the soft

power of higher education is not only rooted in a country's culture, values, and policies but also depends on the structure of the international education system, which encompasses international education norms, rules, and institutions. Therefore, the most important capability for countries is the ability to shift their potential resources toward soft power. In other words, this involves supporting the creation of international norms, directing or limiting institutional activities, and aligning with societal consistency.

In light of the variability of the soft power of higher education, the effects of higher education can be examined in four dimensions. Firstly, the soft power of higher education deeply embeds itself in a country's evolution of educational traditions, contributing to ethnic, religious, and cultural traditions. Secondly, the soft power of higher education focuses on the mainstream of the time, directing knowledge's timely, social, and technological advancement. Thirdly, the soft power of higher education should possess a strong ability to disseminate and compete, extending beyond geographic borders, national ethnicity, and cultural differences. Lastly, the development of the soft power of higher education signifies a dynamic process characterized by significant uncertainty and mobility in the global education system (Li, 2018).

Broadly, the discipline of International Relations seeks to understand and explain relationships within and between states. Each international relations theory offers different narratives and conceptual frameworks to explain prominent issues such as the causes of war, conditions for peace, inter-state relations, international organizations, institutions, global power relations, global warming, migration, world order, and global development challenges like poverty. Normally, the role of education in international relations is limited to conflict prevention and peacekeeping, which is often connected to the absence of conflict. Education is assumed to be used as a means of conflict prevention before any conflict arises. Following a conflict, education can be used for peacebuilding, peacekeeping, and state-building or rebuilding (Davies, 2015).

Education, which is crucial in fragile contexts, is often seen as a necessary responsibility for societal development. In a report published by UNESCO in 2021, it is stressed that full and equal opportunities for education on a national level are essential. Education is seen as a vital tool both to express a country's linguistic and cultural diversity and to nourish its economic development and social cohesion. With this in mind, the report was updated to support the implementation and monitoring of the 2030 sustainable development agenda and to conduct relevant research on expanding education and promoting global citizenship education for sustainable development (UNESCO, 2021).

The influence of education on politics has been a subject of debate among scholars and thinkers for a long time. From ancient Greek times, with figures like Plato and Aristotle, to more recent centuries with Rousseau and Dewey, the impact of education on society and politics has been discussed. The common thread in these debates is the belief in the necessity of improving education. Formulating educational policies is considered a highly political endeavor closely tied to domestic politics and prevailing political ideologies among the ruling elites in society. Like other public policies, educational policy formulation has political consequences and often reflects national priorities related to modernization, economic growth, democratization, and development of a country. On a national scale and in the political sphere, this implies that education supports a unique "depoliticization policy." Many traditional responsibilities and social functions of states have been redefined as personal issues and responsibilities (Szkudlarek, 2013).

A study conducted in 2010 identified at least three mechanisms through which education can influence economic growth. Firstly, education can enhance labor productivity by developing human capital, which is embodied in the labor factor of production. Secondly, education can increase the capacity of capital through innovations, new processes, and new

technologies. Thirdly, education can accelerate the dissemination of knowledge about technology or new methods of production to individuals (Gültekin, 2019).

Studies in the literature suggest that education benefits both individuals and society as a whole in economic and social terms. In line with the theory of human capital, education contributes to enhancing employment, productivity, and earning skills, while also contributing to economic growth. According to modernization theory, education can aid in the development of democratic and social behavior necessary for a participatory political culture in modern society and a sustainable democratic political system. As society's political socialization and participation increase with higher levels of literacy and education, the process of democratization theoretically continues to grow steadily, and the efficiency of institutions rises with higher levels of political culture, which has a significant impact on a country's overall growth and development. When economic development and cultural advancement reach a certain level in a country, they tend to transfer these to other countries. If we focus on education in particular, internationalization of education will come to the fore.

1.2.2.1. Cultural Diplomacy

Culture constitutes the way of life of societies and reflects their way of life (Ünal, 2017). Culture, as defined by Anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor in 1981, is the "complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, tradition, custom, habit, morality, law, and capabilities acquired by man as a member of society" (Cited in: Yıldırım, 2015). Culture begins within the family due to the social environment, and continues within schools, workplaces, friend groups, and the society people live in (Hofstede, 1980). Culture is interpersonally produced and publicly sustained.

Culture encompasses all the material and spiritual productions, practices, and value patterns of a society in a given historical period. Culture involves a shared cultural existence

based on practices rooted in a certain ethnic identity, primarily linguistic unity, carrying value patterns that keep individuals together, forming a foundation that is transmitted from generation to generation (Binark, 2019). According to Goody and Watt, societies transmit their cultural heritage primarily by passing on natural resources and material tools, followed by standardized behavioral patterns. However, the most important elements of human culture are transmitted through words. These elements encompass not only traditions and customs but also ideas, goals, passions, specific meanings, and attitudes (Cited in: Özel, 2015).

The public culture of social democracies has increasingly become commercialized in the 20th century. Instead of previous unifying cultures of nation-states, a fragmented global culture focused on more popular pleasures is emerging. This global culture is creating new identities and weakening previous forms of national solidarity (Stevenson, 2015). Horkheimer states that the influence of dominant ideology and the interaction of people's internal dynamics lead to the disappearance of individuals' existence and freedoms, giving rise to the concept of the culture industry. With the advent of the culture industry, high culture eroded, and traditional art and culture vanished (Cited in: Karagöz, 2010). The rise of capitalism and technological developments have increased cultural production, giving rise to mass culture. The popularity of mass culture through mass media has led to the emergence of popular culture (Yaylagül, 2016, pp. 91-93). Certain popular culture products receive support from governments, conveying long-term and indirect messages (Eken, 2015). Adorno and Horkheimer, thinkers of the Frankfurt School critical of capitalist socio-political structures, emphasized the concept of the culture industry, asserting that culture is not produced by the people/masses but by culture industries. Dominant culture directs individuals, and unconscious masses are drawn into the production process of a debased culture known as popular culture (Cited in: Karagöz, 2010). According to Adorno, who investigated the structure of the culture industry, popular culture is shaped by large capital and agents of the culture industry (Cited in: Öktem and Karagöz, 2015).

Public diplomacy and soft power seek to attract foreign nations through various cultural or ideological interactions, such as popular culture.

Cultural diplomacy involves the exchange of thoughts, knowledge, art, and other cultural elements to enhance understanding between cultures and nations, forming an important component of public diplomacy (Cummings, 2003), allowing a nation to present itself to the world. Cultural diplomacy is conducted by states or civil society, and sometimes jointly (Ekşi, 2018). Edmund Gullion emphasized the communicative aspect and the dimension of cultural relations of public diplomacy by including intercultural communication (Ekşi, 2018). Public diplomacy is an important tool for the transfer of different cultural structures to international contexts (Yıldırım, 2015).

International and cultural exchanges are not only important for young people to learn about global issues but also provide an opportunity to learn how to work and collaborate with people from different cultures and backgrounds (Brown, Mcgrath, and Morgan, 2010).

Cultural relations between countries are carried out through cultural and artistic events such as exhibitions, concerts, sports, and fairs within the framework of public diplomacy (Ekşi, 2018). These cultural dynamics representing society are among the most significant tools of public diplomacy (Yıldırım, 2015). Sister city practices between local administrations of countries are also included in cultural activities (Karadağ, 2016).

The integration of cultural diplomacy efforts with political values, foreign policy, and information plays an important role in demonstrating effective public diplomacy activities (Yıldırım, 2015).

Culture, identity, and religion play a critical role in public diplomacy. Similarly, this culture shapes a nation's political culture, policies, negotiation style, or conflict management approach. Culture also significantly influences a country's public diplomacy strategies and

tactics (Zaharna, 2010). Music, film, literature, language, dance, and drama are among the other aspects of culture. In the context of cultural diplomacy, these aspects of culture can be seen as cultural products that countries can exchange, promote, and even export. Although cultural diplomacy emphasizes the idea of cultural product exchange, nations are more willing to export their own cultural products through cultural diplomacy rather than facilitating mutual cultural exchange (Zaharna, 2010).

When countries convey their values, ideas, and messages through cultural diplomacy, which is a crucial component of soft power, they can create a positive perception and image. Once a positive perception and image are established, trust and mutual understanding can be achieved (Özkan, 2015).

Hofstede defines four dimensions of culture. "Power distance" points to the main differences in intercultural inequality. In cultures with low power distance, open communication between superiors and subordinates and dialogue between individuals are common. "Uncertainty avoidance" expresses the ability to deal with uncertain and risky situations. In cultures with low uncertainty avoidance, individuals tend to display more controlled and calm behavior in such situations. "Masculinity and femininity" expresses the differentiation of gender-based roles. In masculine cultures, men tend to be more prominent, tough, and material-oriented, while in feminine cultures, women and men are in solidarity and equality. "Individualism and collectivism" defines relationships and bonds between individuals. In collectivist cultures, the interests of society take precedence, while in individualistic societies, individual interests are prioritized (Cited in: Becerikli, 2005). Based on Hofstede's cultural definitions, it can be said that cultural diplomacy will be more effective in cultures with low power distance and low uncertainty avoidance, as well as a prevalence of femininity and individualism. This is because dialogue and mutual benefit take precedence in these cultures.

Cultural diplomacy encompasses various dimensions, including education, sports, and literature (Ekşi, 2015). The cultural tools utilized in public diplomacy practices include visual and written media, foreign language education, films, radio broadcasts, music, elements of popular culture, and the granting of cultural and artistic awards (Ünal, 2017). The goal of cultural diplomacy is to create a positive image of a culture in the desired manner (Signitzer and Coombs, 1992). Art, books, exchange programs, and cultural diplomacy are slow communication tools that demonstrate their impact in the long run. Radio, cinema, and short films promise a swift and visible response (Nye, 2017). Activities aimed at public diplomacy are generally understood as exchange programs and are evaluated within the scope of cultural diplomacy (Ünal, 2017). Foreign language education and instruction are also tools for cultural application in public diplomacy. Language education encompasses mutual efforts to learn reciprocal languages (Karadağ, 2016). Due to the similarities in activities, cultural diplomacy and educational diplomacy are considered within the scope of cultural diplomacy by some experts and within the scope of educational diplomacy by others.

European countries place language and culture at the core of their public diplomacy efforts. With their efforts in the field of education, they aim to become centers of attraction worldwide. Given the results, it can be said that they have achieved many goals (Özkan, 2015).

1.2.2.2. Educational Diplomacy

Through educational programs, countries aim to attract individuals who can play an active role in shaping their future decision-making processes. The efforts in the field of education contribute to promoting cultures, establishing shared values, and fostering civil dialogue within the scope of public diplomacy (Erzen, 2014).

Various institutions, including universities, as well as public and private organizations, play a significant role in promoting the country through voluntary activities (Ünal, 2017).

Countries that prefer to conduct their public diplomacy policies through education aim to leave a lasting impression in the long term. Many European Union member countries are promoting public diplomacy policies through education (Özkan, 2015).

One of the most striking aspects of the relationship between the United States and China in the 20th century is that despite sharp differences in cultural, political, and economic systems, educational exchange has emerged as the strongest link between them. Educational exchange has facilitated the development of both societies and the reshaping of relations between the two nations. The widespread dissemination of educational exchange has demonstrated that knowledge and ideas can be spread and shared among people from different civilizations (Özel, 2021).

Education emerges as a key area for spreading values (Dutta, 2015). Educational activities form an important dimension of public diplomacy. Within the framework of education activities, students benefit from exchange programs and receive education at universities in other countries through various scholarships. Academics also participate in international conferences and seminars and publish international publications (Karadağ, 2016). Academics can also benefit from exchange programs, and teach or receive education at universities in other countries as part of these programs.

Publications by academics in international journals are evaluated within the framework of a scoring system, contributing to the prestige of universities and the country (Karadağ, 2016). International production performance is significant in a period when the number of publications per capita is included in the United Nations (UN) development index.

Turkey joined the Bologna Process in 2001, which began as a process to restructure the higher education system in Europe (Erzen, 2014). The Bologna Process signifies an international process carried out in the field of education and contributes to the development of

higher education. The program, established to develop common standards in higher education and academic matters in Europe, facilitates the implementation of educational exchange programs between countries by minimizing differences in education programs.

For education to be effectively used in the context of public diplomacy, the programs of the relevant parties must be genuinely appealing to each other. Additionally, a strong connection needs to be established between the parties (Waithaka and Maluki, 2016).

Public diplomacy, often seen as a systematic effort to communicate with foreign publics, can be effectively carried out through education. The greatest advantage of educational programs, unlike other tools used in public diplomacy, is that they touch on all lifestyles rather than adhering to a specific viewpoint or behavior pattern (Waithaka and Maluki, 2016).

3.1. International Education History and Concept

A vital component of enhancing a state's soft power involves the international exchange of students and academics. Under certain conditions, especially hosting international students, it has been shown that this can contribute to policy changes in the students' home countries. Furthermore, having a large number of international students is one of the most visible effects of educational soft power. Mobility is the main driving force behind the internationalization of higher education systems. In this context, internationalization is considered a necessary condition for higher education to adapt well to the globalized world. Therefore, internationalization is not solely achieved through personal contact between exchange students and academics. It is also expected that exchange programs, by enabling the importing of knowledge by the sending country, will improve the system and contribute to the creation of soft power (Kaleli, 2023).

Internationalization is not a new term, and debates about its definition are not new either. However, its popularity in the education sector has been increasing since the early 1980s.

Before the 1980s, the preferred terms were "international education" and "international cooperation," and these terms are still used in some countries. In the 1990s, the debate focused on distinguishing between overlapping terms such as "international education," "comparative education," "global education," and "multicultural education." National, transnational, and international forms of education create confusion.

In the 1960s, the most frequently used terms were concepts such as "international cooperation," "international relations," and "international education," which were often defined by activities such as studying abroad, language studies, institutional agreements, and field studies. However, in the first decade of the 21st century, less emphasis was placed on development activities, and more importance was given to academic mobility, which includes students, research, programs, and providers that transcend borders. Additionally, this stage was characterized by a greater orientation towards commercial and market-focused activities. A third defining feature is significant growth in international academic networks and partnerships based on mutual benefit and collaboration. In other words, the internationalization of education involves both for-profit and non-profit aspects (Marginson and Sawir, 2005). The international dimension has become a key factor shaping and challenging the higher education sector in countries around the world. Since the 1990s, internationalization has become a driving force for change, perhaps even a fundamental characteristic of the higher education sector. There are many factors involved in this change. With the proliferation of these factors, the international dimension of higher education has steadily increased in importance, scope, and complexity. The diversity of actors, providers, and stakeholders brings new waves of innovation, impact, and competition to the provision and policies of international higher education.

In the first decade of the 21st century, it is impossible to overlook the changing context of globalization how it has affected education and how internationalization itself has become an agent of change in this regard. Most of these challenges can be grouped into eight areas:

globalization, regionalization, information and communication technologies, new providers, alternative funding sources, borderless issues, lifelong learning, and the growth in the number and diversity of actors (Knight, 2006).

For various reasons, it is important to examine different levels and types of actors involved in promoting, providing, and regulating the international dimension of higher education. Firstly, internationalization now involves a wide range of programs and activities that bring new actors into play. Secondly, these activities and issues have implications for international, regional, and local policies and regulations. Thirdly, the lines or boundaries that separate these different levels are becoming increasingly blurred and porous (Knight, 2006).

1.3.2. International Students

While the phenomenon of globalization affects educational institutions across the board, its most intense differentiation is observed at the higher education level. Individuals who are considered adults along with higher education seek to specialize in different countries to acquire expertise, whether guided by factors like family and environment or driven by personal preferences (Keskin, 2020).

Student mobility within higher education has evolved from being a country-specific occurrence to a global phenomenon over time. Faced with a significant demand for higher education from countries with a high youth population to developed countries, the higher education systems in developed countries are becoming increasingly open to student mobility. An example of this is the European Union's Erasmus and Sokrates programs, which aim not only to increase faculty and student mobility among candidate and member countries but also to promote a shared European perspective, enhance cultural dialogue, and establish a European education and research area. As a result, progress in mutual solidarity and understanding among EU countries is anticipated (Yükseköğretim Kurulu, 2007).

Countries striving to have individuals with accumulated knowledge and continuous self-improvement emphasize the concept of a qualified workforce. When there is a shortage of qualified individuals to meet the demand from internal resources, societies try to bridge the gap by sourcing talent from abroad. Therefore, in recent years, student mobility has become one of the significant areas of focus in many countries (Gençler, 2003).

Higher education institutions, working to adapt to the rapidly changing world and enhance the quality of education, aim to promote themselves internationally by educating international students who are familiar with different cultures and geographies (cited in Önder and Balcı, 2010). Particularly, in the face of a high demand for higher education from less developed societies to developed ones, the higher education systems in these societies are becoming more open to student mobility. In other words, the international dimension of higher education is constantly growing, with academic staff and short-term student mobility, as well as the increasing number of long-term students opting for foreign countries for graduate and undergraduate education (Bediyev, 2022). International student mobility plays a significant role in increasing the competitive strength and scientific research capacity of higher education institutions. The internationalization of education is not only important for closing the gap in qualified personnel in professional fields and economic returns. Instead, having foreign students and faculty members on a university campus has a direct impact on the quality and form of education offered, and it also facilitates the advancement of intercultural dialogue (Özer, 2012).

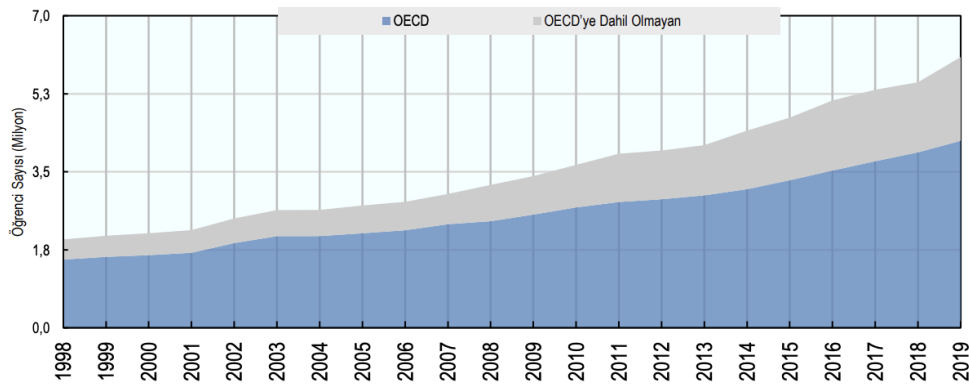
In developed societies with a high demand for qualified human resources, various flexible and facilitating measures have been implemented to attract skilled foreign workforce to produce new technologies gain a competitive edge internationally and expand their resources (Gençler, 2003). Among these measures are the issuance of internationally recognized credentials, the restructuring of curriculum for international students, and the effective use of modern information and technology resources (McBurnie, 2002).

In recent years, student mobility, which has seen even sharper increases, has become increasingly important on a global scale due to its contributions in economic, social, political, and cultural fields, as well as its impact on quality. Foreign students create significant opportunities for both human capital and economic benefits in the host countries. As a result, countries with developed higher education institutions are fiercely competing to seize these opportunities. Especially when looking at countries like the United States, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom, which host the most international students, it is clear how these students contribute significantly to the economies of these countries. For example, in Canada, the total expenditures of foreign students within the country can even surpass the income generated from some of the country's most important export sectors (Özer, 2012).

1.3.3. International Students Worldwide

In today's age of globalization, knowledge has become a commodity that moves between countries. The growth of the knowledge-based economy has led to competition not only among employers for the best minds but also among institutions that produce the best minds. Therefore, the rapidly increasing demand for higher education exceeds the capacity that many countries can provide domestically. For decades, numerous students have migrated to other countries to pursue higher education, and this process continues to grow. However, higher education institutions are increasingly forming partnerships with universities in other countries, providing education through online and other technologies, and establishing branch campuses abroad that are changing the traditional relationships and structures in higher education. If these developments continue, students seeking higher education may have more opportunities to receive quality education in their own countries or nearby countries without the need to travel to distant regions (Kritz, 2006: 4).

Due to globalization and the internationalization processes of higher education institutions, there has been a continuous increase in international student mobility worldwide over the last 20 years. As shown in Figure 1, the number of students enrolled in higher education globally was around 3 million in 2007, and by the year 2019, it had reached 6.1 million. The number of foreign and international university students grew by an average of 5.5% annually between 1998 and 2019. While most international and foreign students are hosted by OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries, there has been a rapid increase in the number of foreign students enrolled in non-OECD countries. While there was a 4.9% increase in student numbers in OECD countries, the number of international students in non-OECD countries has been growing at an average rate of 7% per year. In 1998, foreign students enrolled in non-OECD countries accounted for 23% of the total international student mobility, but by 2019, this proportion had risen to 31% (OECD, 2021).



OECD, 2021: 216.

Figure 1. Development in the Number of International Students Worldwide (Millions) (1998-2019)

1.3.3. International Students in English-Speaking Countries

English-speaking countries are among the most preferred destinations for international students, hosting around 35% of the total international student population in OECD and partner countries. The United States ranks first as the most desired destination for foreign students, with 977,000 international students enrolling in higher education institutions within its borders among the 4.2 million international students in OECD countries. Following the United States, Australia hosts around 509,000 international students, the United Kingdom hosts 489,000, and Canada hosts 279,000. While Australia and the United Kingdom each have a global market share of 8%, the United States alone holds a 16% share in the global education market. In other words, 16% of all international students worldwide choose the United States as their destination. Luxembourg has the highest proportion of foreign students, accounting for 49% of all students enrolled in higher education, followed by Australia with 28%, New Zealand with 21%, the United Kingdom with 19%, and Austria and Switzerland with 18%. The highest proportion of students studying abroad in countries other than Luxembourg is 77%. This rate is 19% in Slovakia, 14% in Iceland, and 13% in Slovenia.

According to Bediyev (2022), while the focus of international education in the 21st century is on enhancing diplomacy, and political and cultural ties, the massification of higher education has created a new market where international students are valued as a source of income. The increasing demand for education worldwide has significantly increased the value and prestige of marketable educational services. As a result, policymakers and higher education administrators consider international students as an economic advantage. Studying abroad provides important opportunities for students' professional development while also being perceived from an economic return perspective (Levent and Karaevli, 2013).

1.3.4. International Students in Turkey

The process of attracting foreign students to Turkey, which began with the Foreign Student Exam (YÖS) in 1981, has been further supported and progressed through various scholarship opportunities and programs. Relevant institutions in Turkey aim to bring foreign students to the country, offer them quality education opportunities, gain momentum in global integration, and promote and introduce Turkey and Turkish culture to them (Günay, 2014).

Following the end of the Cold War and the subsequent dissolution of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, Turkey experienced a turning point in developing economic, historical, cultural, and social relationships with the newly established republics. During this period, Turkey's higher education system was made more open to internationalization. Examples of this coordination include universities established through intergovernmental collaborations (Brzezinski, 2013).

Turkey's geographical location, the inflow of foreign capital, the transformation of major cities into commercial centers, and the country's influential role and voice in the international arena have positively impacted its educational advantages and accelerated the influx of international students (Rzayev, 2020). The tables below provide numerical data on the foreign students coming to Turkey in recent years.

Table 1. Foreign Student Numbers in Turkey by Year

Year	Number of Students
2013-2014	48.183
2014-2015	72.178
2015-2016	87.903
2016-2017	108.076
2017-2018	125.138
2018-2019	154.505
2019-2020	185.047
2020-2021	224.048

Source: Higher Education Information System, <https://istatistik.yok.gov.tr/>

Table 1 provides the total number of foreign students in Turkey for the academic years. Based on the table, the number of foreign students in Turkey, which was 48,183 in the 2013-2014 academic year, has nearly quintupled to 224,048 in the 2020-2021 academic year. The reason for this increase can be attributed to Turkey's geographical appeal to international students, its pursued education policies, the participation of universities in education fairs in foreign countries for promotional purposes, and the active functioning of international student offices at universities (Rzayev, 2020).

Table 2. Countries Sending the Most Foreign Students to Turkey

Ülkeler	2013- 2014	2014- 2015	2015- 2016	2016- 2017	2017- 2018	2018- 2019	2019- 2020	2020- 2021
Afghanistan	2.332	3.672	4.338	5.251	5.826	6.804	7.517	8.428
Germany	396	728	722	3.755	4.012	4.378	4.637	4.959
Azerbaijan	6.901	10.638	12.504	14.878	17.088	19.383	21.069	23.770
Bulgaria	843	1.011	951	2.030	2.510	3.010	3.688	4.432
China	691	1.088	1.297	1.496	2.084	2.257	2.399	2.251
Indonesia	530	670	707	732	792	1.218	1.664	2.252
Morocco	314	471	568	649	769	1.071	1.758	2.531
Palestine	675	976	1.238	1.472	1.825	2.483	3.145	3.935
Iraq	1.585	3.033	4.414	5.012	5.187	7.608	9.752	14.799
Iran	4.343	5.302	5.661	6.099	6.418	7.154	8.776	11.223
Kazakhstan	1.306	1.799	1.986	2.015	2.065	2.191	2.349	2.909
Egypt	199	410	697	1.217	1.921	2.910	4.109	5.821
Nigeria	876	1.176	1.392	1.287	1.296	1.562	2.208	3.174
Uzbekistan	371	556	652	736	840	1.075	1.598	2.421
Pakistan	728	1.127	1.438	1.606	1.822	2.115	2.386	2.948
Somali	638	915	1.383	1.735	2.310	3.764	6.104	8.141
Syria	1.785	5.560	9.689	15.042	20.701	27.034	37.236	47.482
Turkmenistan	6.941	9.092	9.903	10.418	12.247	17.571	18.016	19.384
Jordan	306	507	730	1.006	1.603	2.643	4.043	5.317
Yemen	327	678	994	1.380	1.896	3.076	4.386	5.829
Greece	1.500	1.826	1.993	2.285	2.546	2.713	2.876	2.827

Source: Higher Education Information System, <https://istatistik.yok.gov.tr/>

Table 2 lists the countries that send the most students to Turkey in alphabetical order. Here, for the 2020-2021 academic year, it can be observed that most students came to Turkey from Syria, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan, respectively. Especially due to recent political crises in countries such as Egypt, Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Palestine, many refugees seeking asylum in Turkey have contributed to the increase in the number of students registering from these countries. A significant portion of foreign students who choose Turkey for their education come from Turkish Republics, African and Middle Eastern countries, and other developing nations. Additionally, the number of foreign students from Germany increased from 396 in the 2013-2014 academic year to 4,959 in the 2020-2021 academic year. This notable increase can be attributed to Turkish-German citizens in Germany choosing Turkey for higher education. Furthermore, due to geographical proximity, an increase in the number of foreign students is observed in countries like Bulgaria and Greece (Rzayev, 2020).

1.4. STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

1.4.1. Student Exchange Programs in Turkey

1.4.1.1. Türkiye Bursları (Turkey Scholarships)

In 2010, with the establishment of the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities under the Prime Ministry, Turkey's official scholarship activities were consolidated under the name "Türkiye Bursları" (Turkey Scholarships), and the organization of scholarships was transferred to the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (Türkiye Bursları Website).

Türkiye Bursları is a cultural-based scholarship program initiated by Turkey for international students. Since its inception in 2012, Türkiye Bursları has received 4,000

applications and provides scholarship support to international students in undergraduate, master's, and doctoral programs. These programs also offer 1 year of Turkish language education to students. Under the full-time undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral scholarship programs, students receive support for 1 year of Turkish language courses, accommodation, tuition fees, health insurance, and a one-time flight ticket. Additionally, students receive a monthly stipend based on their level of education. For the year 2019, the monthly stipends were set at 700 TL for undergraduate students, 950 TL for master's students, and 1,400 TL for doctoral students. Türkiye Bursları also offers short-term scholarship programs in two areas: achievement scholarship programs and research scholarship programs. Unlike full-time scholarship programs, short-term scholarship programs do not cover accommodation and other expenses. However, underachievement programs, and monthly stipends of 400 TL for undergraduate, 590 TL for master's, and 880 TL for doctoral students are provided. The research scholarship program, spanning 3 to 12 months, offers recipients a monthly stipend of 3000 TL (Türkiye Bursları, Website).

Türkiye Bursları's full-time scholarship programs are open to applications from international students worldwide. Eligible candidates with the required criteria can apply for Türkiye Bursları through the program's official website at www.turkiyeburslari.gov.tr. The basic criteria for applying to Türkiye Bursları include academic achievement, age limit, and suitability for the program's objectives (Ejder, 2019).

Since Türkiye Bursları is aimed at foreign students, Turkish citizens or individuals who have lost Turkish citizenship cannot apply to these programs. However, the criteria set for applicants are as follows:

- Undergraduate applicants must be under 21 years of age and have achieved a 70% academic success rate,

- Master's degree applicants must be under 30 years of age and have achieved a minimum of 75% academic success,
- Doctoral program applicants must be under 35 years of age and have achieved a minimum of 75% academic success,
- Lastly, applicants applying in the field of health sciences must have a minimum of 90% academic success (Ejder, 2019).

Applicants who meet the criteria mentioned above are selected by interview and selection committees. Initially, candidates who apply on the program's official website are evaluated for their suitability based on the above criteria. They are then invited to an interview based on criteria such as career goals, the content of the submitted statement of intent, and participation in social activities. Following the interviews conducted by the interview committees, the selection committee carries out the final evaluation and concludes the application process for the candidates (Türkiye Bursları, Website).

According to the administrative activity report published by YTB in 2017, Türkiye Bursları received 106,550 applications from 163 countries in the year 2017. Among these applications, 5,383 students were awarded scholarships for undergraduate, master's, and doctoral programs under the Türkiye Bursları program (YTB Administrative Activity Report, 2017:5). As seen, despite receiving over 100,000 applications, only 5,383 students were awarded scholarships. This indicates that the selection process for students in Türkiye Bursları is meticulously conducted, ensuring that only qualified students are awarded scholarships.

1.4.1.2. YÖK Scholarships

According to the Higher Education Council (Scholarships and Support), various scholarship and support programs are provided to students studying in Turkey, contributing to

their educational processes. These scholarships are offered to support students' academic achievements, meet their financial needs, and ensure the uninterrupted continuation of their education. YÖK scholarships have a strategic significance in developing the country's qualified human resources and enhancing the quality of education. Among the scholarships offered to students by YÖK are need-based scholarships, achievement scholarships, graduate scholarships, and domestic/international research scholarships.

Need-Based Scholarships: Need-based scholarships provided by YÖK establish a support mechanism for students facing financial difficulties. Applications are generally submitted with documents demonstrating students' economic status, and the scholarship amount is determined based on the student's needs.

Achievement Scholarships: Achievement scholarships, which focus on academic excellence, are awarded to students with high-grade point averages and exceptional academic achievements. These scholarships contribute to motivating students and guiding them toward a more successful academic career.

Graduate Scholarships: Graduate scholarships for master's and doctoral-level education are offered to contribute to scientific research and encourage advanced academic studies.

Domestic/International Research Scholarships: Domestic and international research scholarships enable students to conduct scientific research and provide significant opportunities for those seeking international experience. YÖK scholarships serve as an important support mechanism to facilitate university students' educational journey, enhance their potential, and strengthen the country's power in science and technology.

1.4.1.3. TÜBİTAK Scholarships

According to TÜBİTAK (The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey), various scholarship programs are available to support scientific and technological

research in our country. These valuable scholarships are aimed at students and researchers who wish to enhance their knowledge and excel in the academic field. TÜBİTAK scholarships are granted in line with the objectives of advancing scientific research, increasing knowledge accumulation, and enhancing the country's competitiveness in science and technology. TÜBİTAK scholarships provided for undergraduate students aim to provide financial support to talented young individuals interested in studying science and engineering fields. For those aspiring to pursue postgraduate education and research, scholarships for master's and doctoral levels are offered. These scholarships provide significant opportunities to contribute to scientific research and support advanced academic studies. Additionally, TÜBİTAK offers research scholarships for those wishing to gain international experience as students and researchers. These scholarships promote international collaboration in the field of science by offering the opportunity to work at leading universities and research centers worldwide. Furthermore, support for thesis writing is provided for graduate students, aiding them in enhancing their abilities as young researchers who aim to contribute to scientific research. TÜBİTAK scholarships hold great importance in enhancing the potential of our country in the field of science and technology and opening doors for talented researchers who seek to contribute to scientific research. Through these valuable scholarship programs, qualified researchers who contribute to the development of science and technology in our country are nurtured.

4.1.4. Erasmus+

The foundation of true student exchange in Europe was laid with the adoption of the Erasmus+ Program on June 15, 1987. Initially, the program was designed as a short-term exchange program for students at universities in European Union countries. In later years, non-European Union country students were also included in this program. The Erasmus Program

facilitates student and academic exchange through agreements between higher education institutions, allowing for mobility (Sancak, 2009:9-10).

Starting with the participation of 11 countries and 3,244 students in the 1987-1988 academic year, the Erasmus+ Program initially targeted short-term mobility for higher education students. However, over time, it expanded to support adult education, school education, vocational education, sports, and youth sectors. Over more than 30 years and supporting nearly 10 million individuals in activities such as education, training, voluntary work, and professional development in other European countries, the Erasmus+ Program has gone through various phases. From 1987 to 1995, the program operated as Erasmus+, primarily focusing on student mobility and promoting collaboration between universities in European Union countries. From 1995 to 2000, under the name Socrates I, the program aimed to support student and teacher mobility, as well as program development efforts. In 2000, it transitioned to Socrates II, which continued until 2007 and aimed to enhance higher education reforms to promote the internationalization of European universities. From 2007 to 2014, the program operated under the name "Lifelong Learning Programme," focusing on enabling mobility in all areas of life, regardless of age.

Erasmus+ Program has attracted participants from various age groups and backgrounds, with higher education students forming its largest participant base. Over 30 years, approximately 5 million higher education students have benefited from this program, representing more than half of the total beneficiaries. The objectives of the Erasmus+ Program are listed as follows:

- Equipping students with new skills regardless of their educational background and age,
- Enhancing awareness of personal development.

Within the scope of the Socrates program, the Erasmus+ Program supports the exchange of undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral students as well as academic staff for periods ranging from six to twelve months.

1.4.1.5. Mevlâna Exchange Program

Another example of collaboration in the field of education is the Mevlâna Exchange Program. With the Regulation published in the Official Gazette on August 23, 2011, the "Mevlâna Exchange Program" was launched to facilitate the exchange of students and academic staff between domestic and foreign universities. "Change" holds significant importance in Mevlâna's life and philosophy.

Individual students and academics cannot directly participate in the Mevlâna Exchange Program. For the exchange to take place, the higher education institutions must have signed a Mevlâna Exchange Program Protocol with a foreign higher education institution. To achieve this, an application must first be made to the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) to confirm whether the intended institution is recognized. If the institution is recognized by YÖK, an agreement is signed, and the exchange activities commence. The program, based on its philosophy, does not make any country distinctions. However, as of the 2013-2014 academic year, universities in European Union member countries are not included among the institutions eligible for agreements. This is mainly due to the existing Erasmus Exchange Program with European Union member countries. Therefore, priority for the first year of this program was given to countries where mobility activities could not be carried out.

American universities lead in terms of the number of higher education institutions participating in the Mevlâna Exchange Program, with 13 institutions in the United States. Azerbaijan follows with 12 institutions, and Kazakhstan ranks third with 9 institutions. These are followed by Bosnia and Herzegovina with 8 institutions, and China and Kyrgyzstan with 6

institutions each. As of the 2013-2014 academic year, a total of 125 foreign higher education institutions had signed agreements to participate in the Mevlâna Exchange Program. In addition to the mentioned countries, the list includes a total of 34 countries: Albania, Georgia, Japan, Macedonia, Russia, Canada, South Korea, Taiwan, Kosovo, Australia, Serbia, Egypt, Indonesia, Brazil, Malaysia, Iran, Yemen, Jordan, Israel, Palestine, Laos, Montenegro, Nigeria, Lebanon, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Ukraine, and Thailand.

1.4.1.6. Farabi Exchange Program

According to the Farabi Exchange Program (farabi.yok.gov.tr), this program is a significant academic exchange and scholarship program offered to students and academics in Turkish higher education institutions. Named after the philosopher Farabi, this program aims to enhance academic collaboration between universities and provide national and international mobility for students and academics. The Farabi Exchange Program offers undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral students in Turkey the opportunity to study at different universities. This allows students to experience different teaching methods and research opportunities, enriching their academic knowledge. Similarly, academics working at universities in Turkey also have the opportunity to work and collaborate at other universities as visiting researchers. The program also embraces international students and academics, contributing to making Turkish universities a global hub. Foreign students and academics gain an international perspective and engage in knowledge exchange while experiencing the Turkish education and cultural environment. The Farabi Exchange Program creates new opportunities in academia and enhances the quality of scientific research. By providing advantages to students and academics, it strengthens the quality of higher education in Turkey, both nationally and internationally. With its support for individuals and universities, the program contributes to advancing Turkey in the fields of science and education while providing an important platform for sharing and disseminating knowledge and experiences.

CHAPTER 2

2.1. MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this section, information regarding the research model, study group, data collection tool, and the process of data analysis is presented.

2.2. Research Model

The research was planned and conducted according to the case study design, which is one of the qualitative research types. Case studies involve an in-depth analysis of a situation, often an event, action, process, or one or more individuals, conducted by the researcher (Creswell, 2014). According to Yin (1984), a case study is described as a research method where a current event is studied within its own reality, without clear boundaries between the case and its content, and when more than one data source is involved (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2005; Büyüköztürk et al., 2016).

2.3. Study Group

This study was conducted with 3 individuals. Purposeful sampling: Qualitative research is often conducted in-depth with purposefully selected small samples, sometimes even with a single sample (N=1). Purposeful sampling allows the selection of information-rich situations for in-depth studies (Patton, 2014). Can a table created to provide information about the job/age of the participants?

2.4. Data Collection Tool

Data were collected using the standardized open-ended interview technique within the methods of interviews. The standardized open-ended interview technique involves the application of a carefully written and ordered set of questions to each participant in the same

sequence and style. One of the positive aspects of this approach is that it reduces interviewer bias and subjectivity, making it easier to compare and analyze the obtained data. Another positive aspect is the ease of simultaneous application of the data collection tool by many researchers and, moreover, its ease of use by other researchers (Patton, 1987, p. 114). On the other hand, detailed information about the topic was initially provided to the ... students identified through the purposive sampling method in the study. A structured interview form consisting of 10 questions developed by the researcher was used in the study. The research questions are as follows;

1. How many students from your country have been studying in Türkiye so far?
(higher education students)
2. What are the factors (culture, religion economy etc.) that lead your citizens to choose to study in Turkey?
3. What are the expectations of your citizens upon choosing a Turkish scholarship?
Are they satisfied with the scholarships after they are accepted?
4. Is it possible for your citizens to study in a field that they choose and that your country needs?
5. What is the percentage of your citizens' return to your country after a higher education period?
6. In terms of Turkish scholarship programs, what is the percentage of your citizens being employed in your country after studying in Turkey?
7. What are the reasons of your citizens choose the YÖK Scholarship Program instead of other programs such as TÜBİTAK and Türkiye Bursları?

8. How can you evaluate the effects of the YÖK scholarship on the relations of Türkiye and your country?
9. Can you compare the YÖK Scholarship to others?
10. How do your citizens evaluate Türkiye after studying here with any scholarship program?

2.5. Data Analysis

The analysis of the data utilized methods of "Content Analysis." The reason for choosing content analysis is to facilitate the establishment of conceptual connections in explaining the relationship between the collected data and the objectives of the method (Büyüköztürk, 2013). The analysis was completed by organizing themes and codes, and the findings were interpreted. Data collection is terminated when the themes begin to repeat themselves in the analysis of the collected data related to the research questions (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013). In this process, along with the pre-determined themes, the analysis of the data followed the path of "coding" to reach sub-themes through codes.

For the reliability calculation of the research, the reliability formula suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) ($\text{Reliability} = \text{Agreement} / (\text{Agreement} + \text{Disagreement}) \times 100$) was used. The reliability ratio was found to be 90% after the analysis. Additionally, another reliability criterion, "direct quotations," was included.

Table 3. Word Frequency List Used in Content Analysis

1	Culture	32
2	Brotherhood	29
3	Friendship	27
4	Economy	24
5	Abroad	21
6	Good Education	19
7	Tradition	19
8	Generosity	18
9	Suitable Living Condition	14
10	Employment	14
11	Career	13
12	Quality	10
13	Hospitality	9
14	Family	9
15	Success	7
16	Communication	5
17	Policy	5
18	Integration	4
19	Program	4
20	Development	3

2.6. Conversion of Qualitative Data in Qualitative Research

In qualitative research, the process of quantifying qualitative data involves transforming written data obtained through interviews, observations, or document analysis into numbers or figures. While numbers and figures are often associated with quantitative research types, it is possible to reduce qualitative data to some extent into numerical representations. The purpose of quantifying qualitative data is not to make generalizations or seek relationships among a limited number of specified variables using statistical methods. Indeed, the nature and structure of qualitative data do not allow for this (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013).



CHAPTER 3

3. FINDINGS

This section presents the findings and interpretations of the interviews conducted in the research. Upon examining the data obtained from the participants, the theme of "soft power" was initially established. When the opinions under this theme were examined, codes such as "brother countries," "friendship," "mutual relationships," "shared traditions," "generosity," "Türkiye's development," and "hospitality" were obtained (Figure 1).

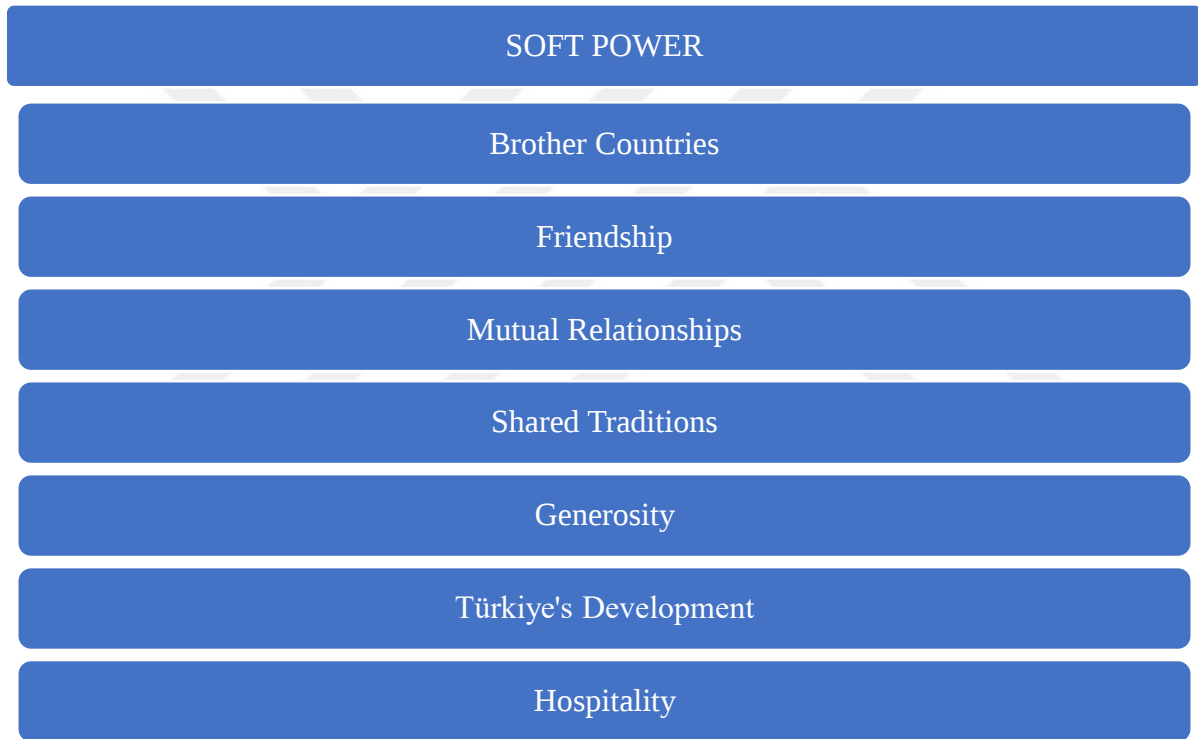


Figure 2. The theme of Soft Power

3.1. Participants' Responses Regarding the Preference for YÖK Scholarships as a Soft Power Element

The responses encountered as a soft power element in the participants' preference for YÖK scholarships include the understanding of brotherhood between the two countries and,

consequently, the existence of friendship relationships, the development of strong relationships based on mutual interests, the similarity of traditions between the two countries, the hospitality of the Turkish society, and the generosity towards guest students. Additionally, the rapid development of Turkey is cited as a factor. Examples from participant opinions are provided below for a more detailed explanation of the codes:

"We see that especially in the field of engineering, Turkey has made great progress in the last 20 years (Participant 2)."

"There are several reasons for students to come to Turkey for education. Among these are strong relationships between two friendly and brotherly countries, the countries having common culture and traditions, and also the characterization of the Turkish people with friendship, generosity, and hospitality. Additionally, there is a sense of brotherhood between the two nations (Participant 1)."

"Turkey is an attractive destination for many foreign students based on its historical and cultural heritage. Situated at the intersection of three continents, Turkey attracts students from Asia, Europe, and Africa. Historical ties with the nearby geography, in particular, are among the leading reasons for students in that region to prefer Turkey (Participant 4)."

"And actually many of the parents, the students, I've heard, they feel more relaxed if they let their children just live in Turkey compared to let's say in Western European

countries because they say oh they will do much better there because we have some compatibility of values. (Participant 3)."

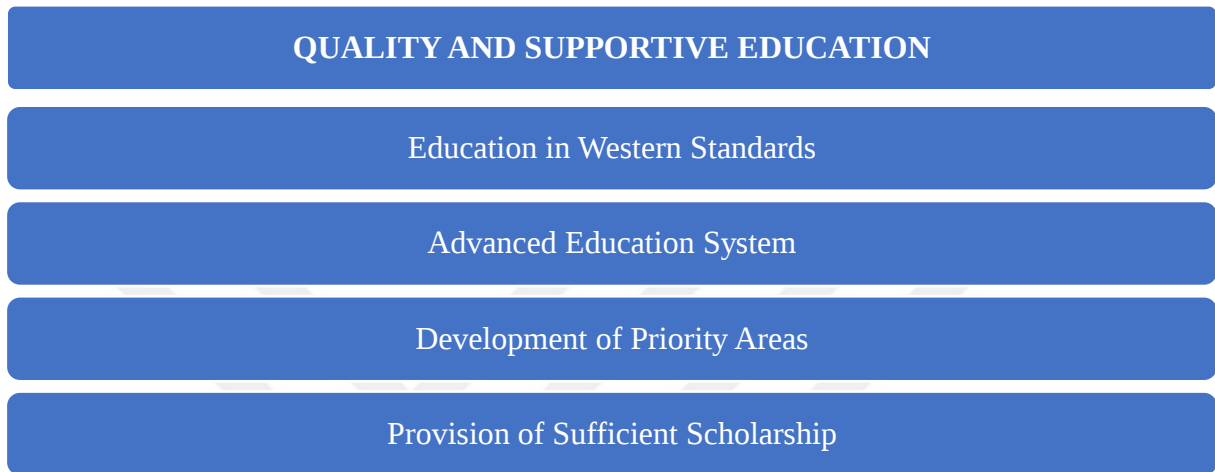


Figure 3. Theme of Quality and Supportive Education

In the participants' preference for YÖK Scholarships and when comparing YÖK scholarships with other scholarship programs, the theme of quality and supportive education was formed, including codes such as "education in Western standards," "advanced education system", "development of priority areas," and "provision of sufficient scholarship." Examples from participant opinions are provided below for a more detailed explanation of the codes:

"All guest students are happy when they receive the YÖK scholarship, and especially considering the challenging conditions in our country, they have the desire to pursue higher education in Turkish universities. In addition, students can receive education in

Turkey in fields where there is a need, both for the development and progress of their countries and to meet the needs in their labor markets (Participant 1)."

"I can say that Turkey has a very good education system. In recent years, Turkey has adopted and implemented many things from Western standards, and thus, it has progressed (Participant 2)."

"Turkey has become a country that generously provides scholarships compared to other countries. At the same time, the scholarship process is a preference because it provides the advantage of learning Turkish and being able to study in Turkey for a long time (Participant 2)."

"Higher education is actually kind of expensive to study in most of the developed countries and many of the students say it's much more affordable to study in Turkey among developed countries. I think the accessibility to the opportunities that Turkey has are like the biggest catch for students. (Participant 3)."

"YÖK scholarships cannot be considered independently of Turkey's approach to foreign students. In this context, foreign students highlight YÖK scholarships due to the better living conditions in Turkey along with the quality of the Turkish education system. Furthermore, the value of these scholarships is increased by moving in the axis of merit and quality when granting them (Participant 4)."



Figure 4. Theme of Employment

In the participants' preference for YÖK Scholarships, and when comparing the advantages of having received education under the YÖK Scholarship in their professional life with other scholarship programs, the theme of employment was formed, including codes such as "suitable living conditions," "good job opportunities," and "job continuity." Examples from participant opinions are provided below for a more detailed explanation of the codes:

"It is observed that guest students who have studied in Turkey establish a strong bond with the country. In this context, it is seen in interviews and discussions that guest students have a special sympathy for Turkey due to reasons such as the quality of service, the development of campuses and living areas, and not feeling foreign in the community where they are. Many people who work in foreign missions in Turkey were once scholarship students. In interviews with these individuals, it is known that they have good memories and experiences from their time in Turkey for education (Participant 4)."

"YÖK plays an important role in strengthening the relations between the two countries by continuously supporting our students to receive education in Turkey. In this way, they differentiate themselves from other institutions that provide scholarships to our country's students because each institution has its own unique role and method of providing support (Participant 1)."

"I think when they return to our country, they find a very good opportunity to serve their country, and they are offered very important and lucrative positions in many companies, institutions, and different universities (Participant 2)."

"Because, based on my personal experience, after we got scholarship from Türkiye and go back to our country, the society perceives us differently. Which is like there is a prestigious kind of a level of treatment and they say oh you've been going abroad and studying and then you got scholarship from a country which has a high-quality higher education system. (Participant 3)"

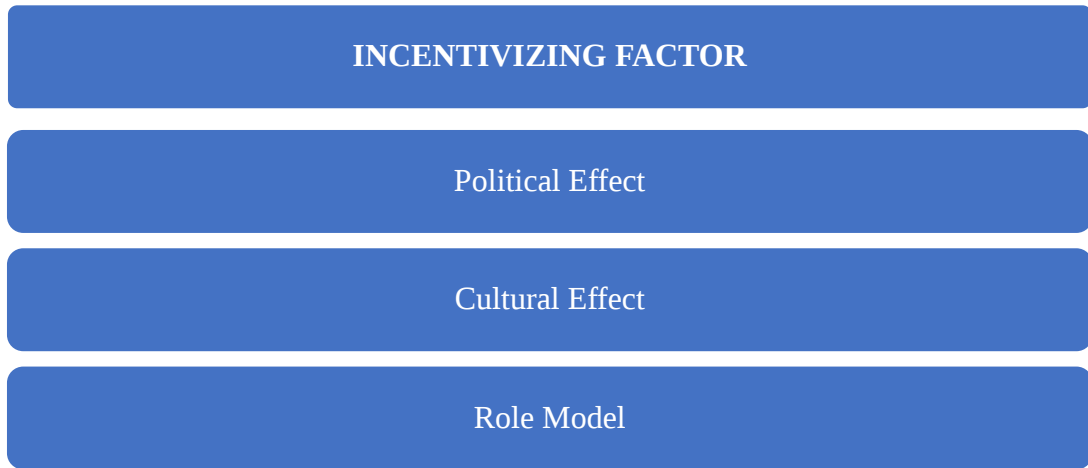


Figure 5. "Incentivizing Factor Theme"

The theme of an incentivizing factor was formed for the participants' preference for YÖK scholarships and having received education under the YÖK scholarship. Codes such as "political impact," "cultural impact," and "role model" were developed. To provide a more detailed explanation of the codes, examples from participant opinions are provided below.

"The prioritized reason for foreign students during the preference ranking is the quality standard in education, as Turkish universities are recognized in the European higher education arena and acknowledged by European states (Participant 4)."

"After receiving education in Turkey, the evaluations of guest students are very positive. The reason for this is their ability to receive scholarships from various institutions in Turkey. This situation encourages many students from other countries to pursue education in Turkey (Participant 1)."

"Our country's students, while studying in Turkey, have the opportunity to spend a period in Europe or other countries (Participant 2)."



4. CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this work, the main objective was to examine the effect of Turkish scholarship programs on the relationship between the Türkiye and other countries that send higher education students to Türkiye. The reason that led the way to narrow this work to YÖK Scholarship only was the absence of enough data on “Türkiye Bursları”. Although an official request, the data on the distribution of foreign students according to their origin country cannot be reached.

Then, the three countries, which have sent the greatest number of students with the YÖK Scholarship to Türkiye, Pakistan, Indonesia and Palestine were interviewed with ten questions to examine the effects of this scholarship on relations of Türkiye and their countries.

As expected in terms of cultural diplomacy; “culture”, “brotherhood”, and “friendship” became the most pointed terms in the interviews. It is easy to understand that similarities and common values in the culture of the countries affect relationships in a good and positive way. Culture is also a powerful factor in initiating cooperation in the field of education. It is obvious that the mutual cultural background and similarities have always been a facilitator in relations of countries but education serves as intensifier and accelerator in relations. The intersection of education and culture leads to tight relations between countries, and nations.

Quality and Supportive Education became another outstanding theme of this work. Culture and mutual values are important in the relations of countries but not enough. According to the answers of negotiators, the quality level of education and higher education system of Türkiye is important to appeal to students from abroad. Since Türkiye is in European and USA standards in higher education, students from other countries see Türkiye as a good option for their higher education. Moreover, the scholarship program is an additional inspiring factor for

students to choose Türkiye. In general, the amount of scholarship is seen enough to study in Türkiye

It is understood from the negotiations that after completing their higher education in Türkiye with a scholarship, foreigners can find a good job easily in their homelands. It is also important that they find not only an ordinary job, but they also find a good and satisfying job according to their country's standards as a result of their education in Türkiye. It can be inferred that people take employment into consideration after higher education before deciding to study abroad. That is, a scholarship program may create a life-long effect on people's lives and relations between countries. Moreover, a scholarship program for higher education can give a country lots of goodwill ambassadors.

All the opportunities that a scholarship enables turn into stairs that bring countries together. YÖK Scholarship is appreciated by its beneficiaries in general. It can be recommended that the scope of this program should be broadened, the number of scholarship students should be raised and the connection with scholarship students should be continued after graduation.

During the negotiations, countries' representatives' good expressions on the YÖK Scholarship program showed that this kind of cultural and educational activities are effective and beneficial ways of creating good relations between countries. Both parties of such a program get the benefits of this kind of organization. Moreover, the effects of this kind of organization can last decades.

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