TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION: THE CASE OF RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES IN TÜRKİYE

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ABSTRACT

TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION: THE CASE OF RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES IN TÜRKİYE

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This thesis will examine the following question: How did the Erasmus+ Program contribute to the internationalization policies in the case of Turkish higher education between 2021 and 2023 from the perspective of education diplomacy? In response to this question, my argument is that Erasmus+ Program contributes to the internationalization of the Turkish higher education through learning mobility under four main themes which are soft power and image building, policy and institutional collaboration, cultural exchange and understanding, and academic collaboration from education diplomacy perspective. Within this framework, the analysis will be made through interviews. Among Turkish research universities, three state universities from each level will be analyzed for sampling. These universities will be Middle East Technical University, Ege University and Atatürk University. Choosing these universities, the aim has been to have universities from different regions of Türkiye to get more accurate results for the Turkish HE case. The findings from interviews with students, academic staff who participated in the Erasmus mobility program and staff that work at International Relations Offices will shed light on the contribution

of the Erasmus program to the internationalization of the Turkish higher education. The findings will give an overview of the impact of the Erasmus mobility program, the EU projects, and international partnerships of Turkish higher education institutions. Official documents and secondary resources will provide detailed information about internationalization policies and process of Türkiye and its relations with Europe.

Keywords: Internationalization in Higher Education, Erasmus+ Program, Education Diplomacy, Research Universities, Turkish Higher Education

ÖZ

YÜKSEKÖĞRETİMİN ULUSLARARARASILAŞMASININ DÖNÜŞTÜRÜCÜ GÜCÜ: TÜRKİYE'DEKİ ARAŞTIRMA ÜNİVERSİTELER ÖRNEĞİ

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Bu tez şu soruyu inceleyecektir: Erasmus+ Programı, 2021-2023 yılları arasında Türk yükseköğretiminin uluslararasılaşma politikalarına eğitim diplomasisi perspektifinden nasıl katkıda bulunmuştur? Bu soruya yanıt olarak, Erasmus+ Programının eğitim diplomasisi perspektifinden yumuşak güç ve imaj inşası, politika ve kurumsal işbirliği, kültürel değişim ve anlayış ve akademik işbirliği olmak üzere dört ana tema altında öğrenme hareketliliği yoluyla Türk yükseköğretiminin uluslararasılaşmasına katkıda bulunduğunu iddia ediyorum. Bu çerçevede, analiz mülakatlar aracılığıyla yapılacaktır. Türk araştırma üniversiteleri arasından her seviyeden üç devlet üniversitesi örneklem olarak analiz edilecektir. Bu üniversiteler Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi, Ege Üniversitesi ve Atatürk Üniversitesi olacaktır. Bu üniversitelerin seçilmesindeki amaç, Türkiye'nin farklı bölgelerinden üniversitelere sahip olmak ve böylece Türkiye'deki yükseköğretim durumu için daha doğru sonuçlar elde etmektir. Öğrenciler, Erasmus hareketlilik programına katılan akademik personel ve Uluslararası İlişkiler Ofislerinde çalışan personel ile yapılan görüşmelerden elde edilen bulgular, Erasmus programının Türk yükseköğretiminin uluslararasılaşmasına katkısına ışık tutacaktır. Bulgular, Erasmus hareketlilik

programının, AB projelerinin ve Türk yükseköğretim kurumlarının uluslararası ortaklıklarının etkisine genel bir bakış sağlayacaktır. Resmi belgeler ve ikincil kaynaklar, Türkiye'nin uluslararasılaşma politikaları ve süreci ile Avrupa ile ilişkileri hakkında ayrıntılı bilgi sağlayacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yükseköğretimde Uluslararasılaşma, Erasmus+ Programı, Eğitim Diplomasisi, Araştırma Üniversiteleri, Türk Yükseköğretimi

To my precious father Mahir, mother Muazzez and my niece Zeynep Defne

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PLAGIARISM iii
ABSTRACT iv
ÖZ vi
DEDICATION viii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ix
TABLE OF CONTENTS xii
LIST OF TABLES xv
LIST OF FIGURES xvii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS xviii
CHAPTERS
1. INTRODUCTION 1
1.1. Scope& Objective 7
1.2. The General Structure of the Thesis 8
1.3. Methodology 9
1.3.1. Research Design 9
1.3.2. Data Collection 11
1.3.3. Sampling 13
1.3.4. Data Analysis 14
1.3.5. Ethical Considerations 15
1.3.6. Limitations 16
2. LITERATURE REVIEW: INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION 19
2.1. Definition of the Concept: Internationalization of Higher Education 19
2.2. The History of Internationalization of Higher Education 29
2.3. Rationales for Internationalization of Higher Education 35
2.4. The International Dimension of Higher Education in Europe 43
2.5. Internationalization of Higher Education in Türkiye 53

2.6. Erasmus+ Programme and Internationalization of Higher Education 63
3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: EDUCATION DIPLOMACY AS A TOOL OF SOFT POWER/PUBLIC DIPLOMACY 74
3.1. Soft Power 74
3.2. Public Diplomacy 78
3.3. Education Diplomacy 81
4. THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE ERASMUS PROGRAM TO THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF TURKISH HIGHER EDUCATION 95
4.1. Three Research Universities' Approach to Internationalization in Turkish Higher Education 95
4.2. Findings from Three Interviewee Group 114
4.2.1. Students' Approach to Internationalization in Turkish Higher Education: Country Promotion and Exploring Different Cultures 115
4.2.2. Academic Staff's Approach to Internationalization in Turkish Higher Education: Contribution of Erasmus and Collaborative Projects 117
4.2.3. Erasmus Offices Staff 's Approach to Internationalization in Turkish Higher Education: Partnership and Institutional Strategies 119
4.3. Findings about Themes 120
4.3.1. Findings about Academic Collaboration 121
4.3.2. Findings about Cultural Exchange and Understanding 124
4.3.3. Findings about Policy and Institutional Collaboration 128
4.3.4. Findings about Soft Power and Image Building 131
5. EVALUATION FROM THE EDUCATION DIPLOMACY PERSPECTIVE 135
5.1. Discussion on Academic Collaboration 135
5.2. Discussion on Cultural Exchange and Understanding 149
5.3. Discussion on Policy and Institutional Collaboration 155
5.4. Discussion on Soft Power and Image Building 168
6. CONCLUSION 173
REFERENCES 182
APPENDICES
A. ANNEXES 202
B. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE 206
C. CURRICULUM VITAE 206

D. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET.....210
E. THESIS PERMISSION FORM / TEZ İZİN FORMU 233

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Erasmus + participants leaving Türkiye Erasmus+ in numbers 2017-2022 59
Table 2. Erasmus + participants traveling to Türkiye Erasmus+ in numbers 2017-2022 60
Table 3. Coding system 96
Table 4. Data from All Interviews 97
Table 5. Statistics of Coding from All Universities 99
Table 6. Coding Hierarchy of METU 100
Table 7. Coding of the responses of METU participants 102
Table 8. Top 10 most used Codes among METU participants 103
Table 9. Coding Hierarchy of Ege University 103
Table 10. Coding of the responses of Ege University participants 106
Table 11. Top 10 most used Codes among Ege University participants 107
Table 12. Coding Hierarchy of Atatürk University 107
Table 13. Coding of the responses of Atatürk University participants 110
Table 14. Top 10 most used Codes among Atatürk University participants 111
Table 15. Comparison between METU and Ege University 112
Table 16. Comparison between ME8TU and Atatürk University 113
Table 17. Comparison between Ege and Atatürk University 114
Table 18. Students' Responses from Three Universities 116
Table 19. Academic Staff's Responses from Three Universities 118
Table 20. Erasmus Office Staff's Responses from Three Universities 120
Table 21. Coding Hierarchy of Academic Collaboration Theme 122
Table 22. Top 10 codes referred under Academic Collaboration Theme 123
Table 23. Coding Hierarchy of Cultural Exchange and Understanding Theme 125
Table 24. Top 10 Codes Referred Under Cultural Exchange and Understanding Theme 126
Table 25. Coding Hierarchy of Policy and Institutional Collaboration Theme 128

Table 26. Top 10 Codes Referred Under the Policy and Institutional Collaboration Theme 129
Table 27. Coding Hierarchy of Soft Power and Image Building 131
Table 28. Top Three Codes Referred under the Soft Power and Image Building Theme 132

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Theme Statistics 121
Figure 2. Statistics about Academic Collaboration 123
Figure 3. Statistics about Academic and Professional Development 124
Figure 4. Statistics about Institutional Support and Resources 124
Figure 5. Statistics about Cultural Exchange and Understanding 126
Figure 6. Statistics about Cultural Exchange and Awareness 127
Figure 7. Statistics about Personal Development 127
Figure 8. Statistics about Policy and Institutional Collaboration 129
Figure 9. Statistics about Barriers and Challenges 130
Figure 10. Statistics about Perceptions of Internationalization 130
Figure 11. Statistics about Soft Power and Image Building 132
Figure 12. Statistics about Country Promotion 133

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHE	Council of Higher Education
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
HE	Higher Education
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
METU	Middle East Technical University

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

With the rise of globalization, internationalization in higher education became crucial during the 21st century in the world. As Knight states "Internationalization is changing the world of higher education and globalization is changing the world of internationalization."[1] Thence, globalization affects the world, and internationalization is the response to this effect. Through the interaction between states, internationalization response emerges as four-fold; cultural, academic, economic, and political. This dissertation will focus on academic concerns and highlight the effect of internationalization in the academic world through the case of Türkiye.

Due to its great potential, the field of higher education has become an important international competition area in the world, especially in the second half of the 2000s. Countries are trying to determine strategies for internationalization in Higher Education (HE) and to implement them. The reason is that internationalization in HE is a way to transform not only universities but also cities and countries. Countries are building new partnerships by maintaining and developing existing relationships in achieving their targeted internationalization strategies in HE. Indeed, internationalization in HE is one of the most effective ways used by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to increase intercultural dialogue, research contacts, negotiation, interaction, and sharing of research and knowledge among universities around the world.[2] Moreover, under internationalization in HE, universities carry out

[1] Jane Knight, "The Internationalization of Higher Education in the 21st Century: New Realities and Complexities," essay, in *Higher Education in Turmoil* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2008), 1–18, 1.

[2] Hans de Wit and Philip G. Altbach, "Internationalization in Higher Education: Global Trends and Recommendations for Its Future," *Policy Reviews in Higher Education*5, no. 1 (September 16, 2020): 1-19.

joint programs in which student and academics exchange are at the forefront and they establish research collaborations within the framework of research centers. Internationalization in HE is crucial for universities since it is the criteria that objectively measures the success of academic units, scientific progress as well as their international rankings.[3]

According to UNESCO and OECD statistics, the number of international students, which was 800 thousand in 1975 and 2.1 million in 2000, reached 4.1 million in 2012 and 5.6 million in 2019. Additionally, it is expected to have more than 8 million international students in 2022.[4] When these data are taken into consideration, internationalization is the idea of increasing international students all over the world for international, cultural, and global exchange to contribute to the development of higher education. In line with this purpose, there are various key actions that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) follow. For instance, internationalization idea becomes a must for universities both in Türkiye and abroad. HEIs organize courses with a small number of students with a focus on global and intercultural impact. In short, for the purpose of internationalization, HEIs take concrete steps to heighten their global rankings and to attract more international students to develop their education system.

Considering all this information about internationalization in universities in the world, the main research question of this thesis is how did the Erasmus+ Program contribute to the internationalization policies in the case of Turkish higher education between 2021 and 2023 from the perspective of education diplomacy? In response to this question, my argument is that Erasmus+ Program contributes to the internationalization of the Turkish higher education through learning mobility under four main themes which are soft power and image building, policy and institutional collaboration, cultural exchange and understanding, and academic collaboration from education diplomacy perspective. The reason for choosing this time frame is that Erasmus+ is implemented in 7-year periods. The latest period is between 2021 and

[3] Marek Butrym, "The Internationalisation Of Hıgher Educatıon: Losses and Benefits" Acta Unıversıtatıs Lodzıensıs, no.74, 2020: 40.

[4] YÖK, "Yükseköğretimde Hedef Odaklı Uluslararasılaşma," 2020, 19.

2027. To reflect the recent innovations under Erasmus+, the initial year is chosen as 2021. Also, I started the interviews in 2023, so those who participated after this year were not included in the study. As stated at the beginning, with the rise of globalization, the internationalization in higher education become important and in Turkish education policy it keeps a crucial place. The internationalization process is mostly studied by the members of the department of education. There was a gap in literature of the discussion of the internationalization of Turkish higher education from international relations perspective. Therefore, this thesis will fill this gap by focusing on research universities in Türkiye. In line with this purpose, some information about Turkish HEIs and its internationalization process will be discussed in the following part.

Although Turkish HEIs took part in various international studies for cultural or educational exchange for more than 30 years, the internationalization strategy recently became popular in Turkish universities. The aim has been to increase the institutional quality and capacity of Turkish universities. In addition, policies are developed to make Turkish HEIs an international center of attraction by having more international students and staff. In general terms, the purpose is the massification and universalization of students and staff both coming to Türkiye and going from Türkiye. Consequently, mobility programs are perceived as tools for this purpose. In short, the internationalization process in Turkish HE is defined as "a process that allows the sharing of scientific knowledge, which combines the academic meaning of qualified human resources, research/publication opportunities, and institutional quality with the education process."[5]

Furthermore, the internationalization of Turkish HEIs became one of the crucial goals of the Turkish Council of Higher Education (CHE). For this purpose, CHE highlights the role of international and strategic cooperation with other states. The main goal is to be one of the international centers of attraction, to attract more students and staff from different parts of the world. For instance, as part of this

[5] Barış Ericok, & Gökhan Arastaman, "Understanding the internationalization of higher education in Türkiye: The meaning and current policies", 2020 *International Online Journal of Educational Sciences*, 14(4), 1120.

strategy, the Council has implemented the Bologna process and the Erasmus program. Moreover, in order to regulate these internationalization goals, Turkish CHE established the department of international relations on July 6th, 2017.[6] The aim is to exchange more students and faculty members, to open joint programs, to appoint joint advisors for postgraduate theses on topics or fields that concern Turkish countries, and to further develop Turkish relations by conducting joint projects. To realize these goals, Turkish CHE signed agreements forming the institutional framework of cooperation in the field of higher education between countries.

Through emphasizing the importance of internationalization, Turkish CHE took necessary steps in order to raise the quality of HE, produce the qualified knowledge needed in line with the development goals of the country, and train qualified manpower.[7] Another policy that Turkish CHE followed for the internationalization of HEIs is the initiation of the Bologna Process. Turkish HEIs were included in the Bologna Process in 2001. The main purpose of the Bologna process is to create a vision and roadmap for the internationalization of European higher education. Accordingly, through the Bologna process, HEIs embarked comparable higher education degrees, giving a "Diploma Supplement" summarizing the content of the education completed in a foreign university in order to make this compatibility. HEIs establish a common two-stage degree system for undergraduate and graduate students. This system is European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). It is aimed at ensuring the mobility of students and teaching staff, establishing and disseminating a network of quality assurance systems in higher education, and developing the European dimension in higher education. Through the Bologna process, promoting lifelong learning, ensuring active participation of students and HEIs, and making the European Higher Education Area attractive were also considered as goals of Turkish CHE for the internationalization of HEIs.[8] Thence, when Turkish Higher Education Institutions started to take part in Erasmus

[6] Ibid.,25

[7] Mehmet Akif Kireçci et al., "The Internationalization of Higher Education in Türkiye: Creating an Index," *TED EĞİTİM VE BİLİM*, 2016, 12.

[8] Osman Gültekin, "International Education and Soft Power: The Case of Türkiye" (dissertation, Bahçeşehir University, 2019), 44.

Program as part of internationalization politics, they aim to strengthen their education system and strengthen the international partnership.

One of the aims of the internationalization of Turkish HEIs is to have engagement with European countries and to cooperate with other countries for having sustainable international links. Moreover, Turkish HEIs are benefiting from international mobility programs specifically the Erasmus mobility program in order to "reach its aim of becoming one of the most dynamic and competitive knowledge economies in the world, as envisioned in its Vision 2023 Strategy."[9] Therefore, Türkiye not only has the opportunity to develop its higher education system but also to reach research areas of the world. In addition, through this mobility program, a connection between Türkiye and other countries occurs in terms of national systems, funding mechanisms, and research activities.

As part of the development of Turkish HEIs, Turkish CHE nominated research universities. In 2017, the first Research Universities were announced by the president of the Turkish Republic. The purpose of choosing specific research universities among other Turkish universities was to have better research projects, qualified education, and international cooperation with other universities in different parts of the world.[10] Another point that differentiates Research Universities from others is the active participation of students in research subjects and projects for both self-development and contributing to the research. Research Universities are comprehensive institutions at the national level. Also, Research Universities are multiple academic and social institutions that contribute most to universal science and technology. The main goal for supporting Research Universities is to train strong researchers and develop various national and international programs that contribute to world science and the development of the country. Research Universities consist of distinguished faculty members and have advanced research infrastructure. These

[9] Derya Bütüktanır Karacan, "Science Diplomacy as a Foreign Policy Tool for Türkiye and the Ramifications of Collaboration with the EU," *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 8 (2021): 8.

[10] "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, 10 Araştırma Üniversitesini Açıkladı," ntv.com.tr, 2017, https://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/erdogan-arastirma-universitelerini-acikladi,qT4C7XIYTUmWS5PP-1ihBQ.

universities, which have sufficient financial resources and rich funding, have libraries at a global level and offer a wide range of physical facilities. In short, by choosing research universities, Turkish CHE aimed to support universities to increase the rankings of Turkish universities in the world and to increase both degree-seeking and exchange students in Türkiye.

Based on all these goals and explanations, in 2022, Turkish CHE chose 23 Research Universities under 3 main categories and one for foundation universities. The A1 category represents the highest-level research performance universities. The A2 category represents high-level research performance universities. The A3 category represents medium-level research performance universities. There is no categorization for foundation universities. To mention these universities respectively; Universities in the A1 category: METU, İstanbul Technical University, Boğaziçi University; in the A2 category: İzmir High Technology Institute, İstanbul Yıldız Technical University, Ankara University, İstanbul University, Erciyes University, Hacettepe University, Gebze Technical University, Ege University, İstanbul University –Cerrahpaşa; in the A3 category: Marmara University, Bursa Uludağ University, Dokuz Eylül University, Atatürk University, Gazi University, Çukurova University, Fırat University, Karadeniz Technical University; in Foundation Universities category: İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University, Sabancı University and lastly, Koç University.

Moreover, the purpose of supporting and choosing Research Universities is to contribute to the development of Turkish HEIs to attract more international students and to empower the existence of Türkiye in the international area.[11] There were different criteria for the selection of these universities which formed the basis for choosing research universities as a sample for this thesis. Indeed, the number of international collaborative publications and international cooperation project fund amount was considered during the decision process for the selection of universities by the Turkish CHE. Therefore, the goal of promoting research universities is to

[11] "Araştırma Üniversiteleri Destek Programi Protokolü İmzalandı," Yök Araştırma üniversiteleri Destek programı Devreye Giriyor, 2022, https://www.yok.gov.tr/Sayfalar/Haberler/2022/arastirma-universiteleri-destek-programi-devreye-giriyor.aspx,1.

contribute to the internationalization process of Turkish HEIs. With the emergence of research universities, which aims to increase the competitiveness of research universities in the international arena, Türkiye, as part of their internationalization strategy, aims to increase research and development activities, increase their place in international rankings, increase the number of publications, and increase their brand values so that research universities can produce more research in various fields. Furthermore, research universities around the world play critical roles in educating professionals, senior experts, scientists, and researchers, and in producing new knowledge to support national innovation systems. Ultimately, with these crucial roles and goals, research universities are essential parts of the internationalization of HE and they fundamentally shape the internationalization process. Hence, this thesis will focus on Turkish research universities for these reasons. According to the literature, the attendance of Turkish Higher Education Institutions in Erasmus Programs is characterized as education diplomacy in which Turkish HEIs encourage people for international partnership, projects, and mobilities for capacity building, sustainable development, networking, reciprocity, and mobilization of resources of the institutions and country. In other words, Turkish HEIs are perceived as actors of Education Diplomacy through bilateral or multilateral interactions among universities in the world.

1.1. Scope& Objective

As Turkish Higher Education Institutions started to participate in Erasmus mobilities, partnerships and EU projects, many anticipated a development in education diplomacy between Türkiye and Europe. With regard to this interpretation, this thesis will examine the following question: How did the Erasmus+ Program contribute to the internationalization policies in the case of Turkish higher education between 2021 and 2023 from the perspective of education diplomacy? In response to this question, my argument is that Erasmus+ Program contributes to the internationalization of the Turkish higher education through learning mobility under four main themes which are soft power and image building, policy and institutional collaboration, cultural exchange and understanding, and academic collaboration from education diplomacy perspective.

Within this framework, the analysis will be made through interviews. Among Turkish research universities, three state universities from each level will be analyzed for sampling. These universities will be Middle East Technical University, Ege University and Atatürk University. Choosing these universities, the aim has been to have universities from different regions of Türkiye to get more accurate results for the Turkish HE case. The findings from interviews with students, academic staff who participated in the Erasmus mobility program and staff that work at International Relations Offices will shed light on the contribution of the Erasmus program to the internationalization of the Turkish higher education. The findings will give an overview of the impact of the Erasmus mobility program, the EU projects, and international partnerships of Turkish higher education institutions. Official documents and secondary resources will provide detailed information about internationalization policies and process of Türkiye and its relations with Europe.

Considering these points, what distinguishes this thesis from other studies is its reliance on primary sources and the analysis of the Türkiye's case from an International Relations perspective. This thesis will contribute to the literature by drawing some facts from interviews and official documents to disclose the effect of Erasmus program on the internationalization process of Turkish higher education. At the same time, this thesis will present a case in point of these applications by doing fieldwork and focusing on research universities.

1.2. The General Structure of the Thesis

This thesis comprises of six chapters. After the introduction, the second chapter focuses on the conceptual framework, which addresses the internationalization of higher education. The chapter is subdivided into six subsections- definition of the concept, history of the internationalization of higher education, rationales for the internationalization of higher education, internationalization of higher education in Europe, internationalization of higher education in Türkiye, Erasmus Program and the internationalization of higher education. This chapter is quite essential as it provides a detailed understanding of the concept, because the analysis of the

internationalization of Turkish higher education would not be possible without understanding of the concept.

The third chapter discusses the theoretical framework. The education diplomacy theory as a tool of soft power is examined. The fourth chapter focuses on the methodology of this thesis. The chapter gives a detailed information about the research design, population sampling, data collection method, data analysis, ethical considerations and limitations of the research.

The fourth chapter focuses on findings. This chapter examines the contribution of Erasmus program to the internationalization of Turkish higher education under three main points. First findings about themes from the interviews that were conducted with students and academic staff who realized Erasmus+ mobility and Erasmus office staff in three research universities, which are Atatürk University, Ege University and Middle East Technical University (METU) respectively, are shared. Second, findings from three interviewee group, which are students, academic staff and Erasmus office staff, are examined. Lastly, finding from the conducted interviews about four main themes are discussed. These themes are academic collaboration, cultural exchange and understanding, policy and institutional collaboration, lastly, soft power and image building.

The fifth chapter focused on discussion of the findings. The chapter makes an overall evaluation of the findings and evaluate them from education diplomacy perspective. The last chapter gives a comprehensive overview of the thesis and discusses the main findings of this study.

1.3. Methodology

1.3.1. Research Design

In this part, the research design of this dissertation will be explained. As a primary approach, a qualitative research method is adopted to discuss the contribution of the Erasmus+ Program to the internationalization of Turkish higher education between

2021 and 2023 from multifaceted aspects of the topic. There are three main objectives of this research. The first objective is to understand the contribution of the Erasmus+ Program, specifically the learning mobility program, to the internationalization process of Turkish higher education. the second objective is to understand the experiences and perspectives of the beneficiaries of the program, which are students, academic staff, and Erasmus Office Staff. The last objective is to analyze the benefits and challenges that Turkish higher education institutions faced while conducting the Erasmus+ learning mobility program. In order to discuss these objectives, this specific research method is chosen. All these objectives need an in-depth understanding and experience. Therefore, qualitative methods are reasonable to have a detailed and deep perspective. Also, these methods allow flexibility and in-depth analysis for exploratory research.

For this analysis, structured interviews were conducted with participants from three different Turkish research universities: Atatürk University, Ege University, and Middle East Technical University. Therefore, as a data collection method, interviews were used. Interviewees were students and academic staff who completed Erasmus+ mobility between 2021 and 2023 and staff who work at Erasmus Offices of these universities. A set of questions was directed to the participants to understand the contribution of the Erasmus+ mobility program to the internationalization processes of Turkish higher education institutions. Based on these responses, interviews were conducted with experts from the Turkish National Agency as well. As a research type, this dissertation conducted an exploratory study. This study is exploratory research because it focuses on Turkish research universities and analyzes the contribution of the Erasmus mobility program to the internationalization process of Turkish higher education. This is a unique study that may lead to further research and become a base for these kinds of studies. Furthermore, as a research strategy, it can be stated that this study has a cross-sectional and case-study design. It is cross-sectional because the purpose of the interview is to gather the perspective or view of the students, academic staff, and Erasmus officers about the contribution of Erasmus+ mobility programs to the internationalization process of Turkish higher education institutions, in which participants reflect their opinion about their experiences during a specific time. Cross-sectional design is chosen because it is

both flexible and practical. Due to limited time and resources, I collected various participant data. The study also has a case study design because this research focuses on a specific case, which is the contribution of the Erasmus mobility program within a real context, Turkish higher education. Therefore, the data collected from these participants will shed light on understanding the internationalization of the Turkish higher education system from a broader perspective. Also, the case study helps to get a comprehensive view of the Erasmus learning mobility program and its impact on participants. In short, this research design is not only applicable to address and have an in-depth understanding of the research question and the objectives but also practical and feasible to gather the data within a manageable timeframe.

1.3.2. Data Collection

Under this qualitative research, as a primary source, the interview is chosen as a way for the collection of data because of an emphasis on the perspectives and experiences of participants. Directing open-ended questions to the participants creates an area for understanding the internationalization process of Turkish higher education institutions and the contribution of the Erasmus+ mobility program to this process. Conducting interviews with three groups offers a chance to understand the case from different perspectives. Moreover, as stated in the previous chapter, Turkish CHE categorized universities according to their research within three categories. Under this categorization, I chose one university from each category. There were three reasons for these choices. The first one is to understand the case by analyzing research universities from different categories. The second reason is to choose universities from different parts of Türkiye. Having research universities from different geographies may allow getting diverse perspective.

As stated before, the interviews were conducted with three different groups, which were Erasmus Office staff, students, and academic staff who participated in the Erasmus+ mobility program. Then, based on the responses, another set of interviews was conducted with three experts from the Turkish National Agency. These three experts were the higher education coordinator, a specialist and an assistant specialist. I conducted the interview first with the coordinator and then with the specialist and

assistant specialist respectively. The statements of all three participants supported each other and the answers were based on general book knowledge. As I achieved satisfaction with the answers, I did not conduct interviews with any more expert. For each group, a different set of questions was directed. The reason for asking different sets of questions to each group is to understand their perspective on the issue and to analyze the impact of the Erasmus learning mobility program from different perspectives on the internationalization process. Each group has different expectations and different outcomes from the program; Therefore, different questions were asked to the respondents. First, the interview questions were asked to academic staff who realized Erasmus+ mobility; in total, 15 questions were directed. The second set of questions that were directed include 14 questions. These questions were directed to the students who participated in Erasmus+ mobility program. The third set of questions was directed to the staff who work at the Erasmus offices of these research universities. In total, 12 questions were asked to them. The last set of questions was directed to the experts from Turkish National Agency.

All these different sets of questions were asked to these groups to discuss the three main research questions of this research regarding the objectives that are discussed above. To start with the first research question, to discuss this point, structured interviews were conducted with these beneficiaries. Conducting an interview was a convenient method because during the interviews participants can share their perspectives and experiences in a detailed way. Through open-ended questions, the nuances and in-depth perceptions of the beneficiaries become visible to understand and to make an in-depth analysis of how the Erasmus+ learning mobility program has contributed to the internationalization process of Turkish higher education institutions from different perspectives. Regarding the second research question, structured and open-ended interviews were conducted to have an in-depth understanding of the experiences and individual perceptions of participants. The interview questions were designed by providing a space for the participants to share their experiences and individual ideas. Regarding the last question, to examine the challenges and benefits of participants, specific questions were directed to them to learn both the positive and negative sides of the program and its impact both on individuals and the internationalization process of their institutions. When all these

purposes are considered, conducting an interview with the participants was chosen as a data collection method. As Ranjit Kumar stated, interview is one of the used methods for the collection of data from people. He also defined interview as "any person-to-person interaction, either face to face or otherwise, between two or more individuals with a specific purpose in mind is called an interview."[12] As he pointed out, conducting an interview with participants gives a freedom to the researcher for the format and the content of the questions. The researcher can formulate and choose the words according to his/her own will and decide on the order of the questions.[13] Moreover, he stated that one of the benefits for structured interview is that "it provides uniform information, which assures the comparability of data."[14] Hence, conducting an interview, especially structured interview, will be helpful to make a comparison between participants and universities. In short, conducting structured interviews by asking open-ended questions to the participants was an appropriate method for this research. The reason is that I had the chance to analyze in-depth perceptions, individual experiences, challenges, and benefits of the participants through interviews. Hence, interviewing a primary source was an effective way to address the three research questions of this study.

1.3.3. Sampling

Considering the data collection strategy, it is now necessary to discuss the sampling strategy that is used in this research. As stated, this research conducted structured interviews with the students, staff who realized Erasmus+ learning mobility, and Erasmus Office staff of three research universities in Türkiye. Therefore, the participants were chosen by using a purposive sampling technique. This technique was used because the purpose was to have participants who experienced or realized the Erasmus+ learning mobility program and have knowledge about the program itself. Through this technique, I was able to get in-depth, diverse, and relevant answers to the interview questions.

[12] Ranjit Kumar, *Research Methodology: A Step-by-Step Guide for Beginners*, 3rd ed. (London: SAGE Publications, 2011), 137.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid., 138.

Regarding the sample size, interviews were conducted with 61 participants in total. In a detailed way, from Atatürk University, 8 academic staff, 13 students, and 5 Erasmus Office staff conducted interviews. From Ege University, 3 academic staff, 10 students, and 3 Erasmus Office staff became volunteers as interviewees. Lastly, from Middle East Technical University, 4 academic staff, 10 students, and 5 Erasmus Office staff participated in the interviews. This sampling size was chosen to have diverse and qualified perspectives from different groups within this constraint timeframe. This diversity assures an inclusive understanding of the contribution of the Erasmus+ mobility program to the internationalization process of higher education in Türkiye from different roles and experiences.

This diverse sample represents the target populations because the participants are the ones who are either directly experienced and participated in the Erasmus+ learning mobility program or have expertise in the program itself. Indeed, through interviews with the academic staff and student beneficiaries of the Erasmus+ mobility program and Erasmus office staff from multiple Turkish universities, the sample catches a broad range of viewpoints and experiences.

Therefore, a diverse sample assures that the findings can reflect a significant understanding of the contribution of the Erasmus+ mobility program to the internationalization process of higher education institutions in Türkiye. In short, although the sampling size is restricted, through a purposive sampling technique, the key arguments and experiences about the research question of this research could be comprehensively examined.

1.3.4. Data Analysis

The data gathered from the interviews conducted with the academic staff and students who participated in the Erasmus+ mobility program and Erasmus office staff will be analyzed through thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was preferred to identify the themes received from the interviews. Under thematic analysis, as a first step, the data will be coded, then the themes will be identified and as a last step, the meaning and consequences of these themes will be discussed from education diplomacy perspective.

During the data analysis process for the thematic analysis, this research will use a software tool, MAXQDA. MAXQDA is a program that analyze qualitative and quantitative data. The program initiated in 1989, and the recent version is MAXQDA24. Through this program various data including texts, tables, photographs and videos can be analyzed. The program has four main windows which are system area, document browser, data analysis area and document system area. MAXQDA program can code, create and visualize themes. Also, this software tool can transcript the voice recordings, create memos for users, suggest themes and categories and create different models. The program also edits, summarizes and reports the data. This software tool is used in this thesis for identifying, coding and analyzing the interviewees' answers. MAXQDA will help with the management of the data and will assist in the coding and investigation of the themes from the dataset. Through this software tool, the relationship between datasets will be analyzed, and data visualization will be made. Hence, for the discussion and findings chapter, the data analysis will be conducted through MAXQDA.

To assure the reliability and validity of the data through thematic analysis, two main strategies were followed. The first one was the development of the manual coding for the consistency. Two independent researchers coded the responses of the interviewees. The reliability of the researchers was evaluated for the consistency between the identified themes. To develop the coding, the incoherencies were discussed and solved. The second strategy was the use of triangulation. To have comprehensive and strong themes, the data gathered from three different sources, academic staff, students, and Erasmus Office Staff, were compared. In short, the aim of using these strategies was to strengthen the reliability and validity of the thematic analysis. Also, at the same time, this research aimed to ensure the findings reflect the perspectives and experiences of the interviewees in a correct way.

1.3.5. Ethical Considerations

For the ethical considerations, an ethical approval of this research for conducting interviews with the participants was acquired from the Institutional Review Board of Middle East Technical University. The ethical approval was obtained on May 15,

2023, under the reference number 0267-ODTUİAEK-2023. This approval was also shared with other universities, Atatürk and Ege University. Also, the ethical approval of the research for conducting interviews was obtained from the Institutional Review Board of these universities. The approval guaranteed that this research considers the ethical, legal, and regulatory standards for the research. These ethical considerations were shared with the participants. During the data collection process, before conducting the interview, the participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the process of the interview, how their answers would be used in the research, and the potential risks and benefits of the research. The participants were informed about the interview that their participation in the research would be completely voluntary.

At the beginning of the interview, they were informed that they would not be asked for any information identifying their identity or organization. It has been stated that their answers will be kept completely confidential and will only be evaluated by the researchers. Additionally, their real names were not used for the data analysis instead nicknames were used for anonymity. Any data that identifies the participant was eliminated and changed. Furthermore, an informed consent form was acquired from all the participants before conducting the interview. In the form, it is clearly stated that the information obtained from the participants will be evaluated collectively and will be used in scientific publications. It was also noted that the data provided would not use the identity information collected in the voluntary participation forms. Ultimately, the interviews were conducted in a way to ensure the well-being of the participants. I endeavored to create a safe and respectful environment for the participants to openly express their perspectives and experiences. During the analysis, I, as the researcher, was careful to be objective about the participants' responses and respect their perspectives.

1.3.6. Limitations

Regarding the limitations of this research design, it can be stated that there are four main limitations. The first one is the use of purposive sampling. This sampling strategy can limit the generalization of the data. Since the sample does not represent

the perspective of all participants involved in the Erasmus mobility program or staff of Erasmus Offices of Turkish higher education institutions, the generalization can be limited. The second limitation can be the subjectivity of the responses. Since the data relies on the participants' responses, their responses are individual experiences, which are subjective and can be biased. The third limitation is the sampling size of the data. The data gathered from a targeted group may not reflect diverse experiences and perspectives. The last limitation is the focused period of the research. As stated before, this research focuses on the Erasmus mobilities realized between 2021 and 2023. Therefore, the data may not reflect the changes before or after this period.

These limitations may affect the validity and generalizability of the data. Due to the purposive sampling and small sample size, the findings may not be easily generalized to all higher education institutions in Türkiye or other exchange programs. In other words, the data reflects the specific group of participants and experiences within a specific context. This may have an impact on generalization to a diverse population. Moreover, as stated above, one of the limitations is that the data can be biased because of individual experiences and perspectives. Due to this, the biased responses may have an impact on the accuracy and interpretation about the Erasmus mobility program and its contribution to the internationalization process of Turkish higher education institutions.

To diminish these limitations and impacts, some actions can be taken. For instance, to mitigate the limitation of purposive sampling, I conducted interviews with people from different groups, which are the Erasmus Office staff, academics and students who participated in the Erasmus mobility program. Also, these interviews were conducted in multiple universities from diverse regions of Türkiye. This diversity of sampling helps to get a broad range of experiences and perspectives from the participants. Another strategy that is used is the triangulation strategy. As stated above, through triangulation, the validation of the responses was provided. A last strategy that is developed to diminish the impact of limitations is the information provided to the readers that this research focuses on a limited group of people within a specific context. They were inspired to read and evaluate the results by considering these limitations.

In conclusion, within this methodology chapter, this research examined the research design, data collection, sampling, data analysis, ethical considerations, and limitations of this research. It is stated that this research is qualitative research that uses a structured interview with the academic staff, students who realized the Erasmus mobility program, and Erasmus Office staff from three research universities in Türkiye: Atatürk, Ege, and Middle East Technical University. The purpose of the research was to analyze the contribution of the Erasmus mobility program to the internationalization process of Turkish higher education institutions between 20125and 2023. For the analysis part, thematic analysis was conducted by using the MAXQDA 24 software tool. This research method will be used to understand the program's effectiveness from different perspectives. In the following part, the findings from the thematic analysis of the data will be examined.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW: INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

2.1. Definition of the Concept: Internationalization of Higher Education

In order to discuss the internationalization process of higher education, it is necessary to define the concept itself, because as noted by Heleta and Chasi, definitions "can shape our thoughts, worldviews, visions, strategies, policies, plans, practices and activities."[15] Based on this importance, different scholars made various definitions of the concept. But still there is no definition of the internationalization of higher education that every scholar agreed on as de Wit emphasizes.[16] Although the concept of internationalization of higher education became popular in the recent years, actually it is not a new concept and scholars started to define the concept in the second half of 1900s. For instance, Groennings expressed that internationalization is one of the most crucial developments in the higher education of the U.S.[17] One of the first definition was made by Harari in 1989. He described the concept by integrating three main issues which are internationalized curriculum, international mobility activities of both students and academic staff and lastly the international cooperation programs.[18] Therefore, Harari described the

[15] Savo Heleta and Samia Chasi, "Rethinking and Redefining Internationalisation of Higher Education in South Africa Using a Decolonial Lens," *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* 45, no. 3 (November 13, 2022): 1–15, 1.

[16] Hans de Wit, *Internationalization of Higher Education in the United States of America and Europe: A Historical, Comparative, and Conceptual Analysis* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 114.

[17] Sven Groennings, *Economic Competitiveness and International Knowledge* (Boston, Ma.: New England Board of Higher Education, 1987), 2.

[18] Furkat Sharipov, "Internationalization of Higher Education: Definition and Description," *Mental Enlightenment Scientific-Methodological Journal* 2020, no. 1 (2020): 127–38, 130.

internationalization of higher education in terms of the internationalization of curriculum and the international mobility and cooperation programs. Internationalization of higher education is also described as an innovative change in higher education. For instance, according to Kerr, internationalization is the issue that mobilizes higher education institutions.[19]

According to Smith, Teichler, and van der Wende, internationalization is the symbol of modernity. They argue that internationalization is one of the most crucial characteristics of higher education.[20] Moreover, one of the most comprehensive definitions of the concept is made by Knight. For her, internationalization of higher education is "the process of integrating an international or intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of the institution."[21] Knight defined the concept by including research, study, teaching and training activities. She also analyzed the concept in terms of service and cultural gain of internationalization too. Davies visualized internationalization as the main topic of the next ten years.[22] Van der Wende described the concept as "any systematic effort aimed at making higher education (more) responsive to the requirement and challenges related to the globalization of societies, economy and labour markets."[23] Hence, the author perceives the concept as a response to globalization.

Furthermore, Rudzki defined internationalization as "a process of organizational change, curriculum innovation, staff development and student mobility for the purpose of attaining excellence in teaching, research and the other activities which

[19] Clark Kerr, "Higher Education Cannot Escape History: The 1990s," *New Directions for Higher Education* 1990, no. 70 (1990): 5–17, https://doi.org/10.1002/he.36919907003, 5.

[20] Alan Smith, Ulrich Teichler, and Marjik van der Wende, *The International Dimension of Higher Education, Setting the Research Agenda: Proceedings of an International Research Workshop, Vienna, 29-30 April 1994* (Wien: nternationales Forschungszentrum Kulturwissenschaften, 1994), 1.

[21] Jane Knight, *Internationalization: Elements and Checkpoints* (Ottawa: Canadian Bureau for International Education Research, 1994), 7.

[22] G.J. Davies, "Editorial," *Journal of the Royal Society of Health* 117, no. 5 (1997): 276–276.

[23] Torsten Kalvemark, Van der Wende Marijk, and Van der Wende Marijk, "Missing Links: The Relationship between National Policies for Internationalisation and Those for Higher Education in General.," Chapter, in *National Policies for the Internationalisation of Higher Education in Europe.* (Distributed by ERIC Clearinghouse, 1997), 19.

universities undertake as part of their function."[24] Rudzki expresses the concept of internationalization as both the change in curriculum and administrative issues and also the international mobility programs for students and staff. Similar to this comprehensive perspective, Schoorman made a definition of internationalization by focusing on various aspects and argued that "an ongoing counter-hegemonic educational process that occurs in an international context of knowledge and practice where societies are viewed as subsystems of a larger, inclusive world. The process of internationalization at an educational institution entails a comprehensive, multifaceted program of action that is integrated into all aspects of education."[25] Thence, with this definition, Schoorman argued that internationalization is both the development of an international information and also international practices. Paige and Mestenhauser made a similar definition of the concept by stating that internationalization is "a complex, multidimensional learning process that includes the integrative, intercultural, interdisciplinary, comparative, transfer of knowledge-technology, contextual and global dimensions of knowledge construction."[26]

From a different perspective, Wächter expressed the concept as the international dimension of university activities.[27] Similarly, after her first definition, Knight reorganized her definition and defined internationalization "as integrating an international/ intercultural dimension into the teaching, research, and service functions of the institution."[28] In addition this, she also argued that internationalization concept emerged as a response to globalization and its effects.[29]

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[24] Rudzki Romuald Edward John, "The Strategic Management of Internationalization - towards a Model of Theory and Practice" (dissertation, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, 1998), 16.

[25] Dilys Schoorinan, "The Pedagogical Implications of Diverse Conceptualizations of Internationalization: A U.S. Based Case Study," *Journal of Studies in International Education* 3, no. 2 (1999): 19–46, 21.

[26] R.M. Paige and J.A. Mestenhauser, "Internationalizing Educational Administration," *Educational Administration Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (October 1999): 500–517, 504-505.

[27] Bernd Wächter, *Internationalisation in Higher Education: A Paper and Seven Essays on International Cooperation in the Tertiary Sector* (Bonn: Lemmens, 1999).

[28] Jane Knight, "Internationalization of Higher Education," Chapter, in *Quality and Internationalization in Higher Education*, ed. Hans de Wit and Jane Knight (Paris: OECD, 1999), 13–23, 16.

[29] Ibid, 14.

Considering this revised definition, Callan claims that the redefinitions of the concept emerge as a response to the evolutions in education across the world.[30] Furthermore, Yang explained the internationalization concept from institutional and national level. At the institutional level, internationalization is the interaction both within and between different cultures through different tools including teaching and research. At the national level, internationalization is the interaction or dialogue between higher education institutions.[31] Yang was not the only scholar that defined the internationalization concept at different levels. Knight also described the concept at different levels and said, "internationalization at the national/sector/institutional levels is defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education."[32] Hence, internationalization was defined as a process that includes various perspectives, levels and interactions.

Moreover, Bartell addressed the concept from two cases. First, it is an external funding for various international activities, including international exchange programs of student and international research. Second, it is a complex and policy-oriented process that includes the research of university members and university life, culture, curriculum and instruction methods.[33]As stated before, the concept of internationalization is always evolving, and there is no definition that all scholars have a consensus on it. For instance, Knight updated her definition and argued that internationalization is "the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education."[34]. With this definition, Knight underlined that internationalization of

[30] Hilary Callan, "Higher Education Internationalization Strategies: Of Marginal Significance or All-Pervasive? The International Vision in Practice: A Decade of Evolution," *Higher Education in Europe* 25, no. 1 (2000): 15–23, 16.

[31] Rui Yang, "University Internationalisation: Its Meanings, Rationales and Implications," *Intercultural Education* 13, no. 1 (2002): 81–95.

[32] Jane Knight, "Updated Definition of Internationalization," *International Higher Education*, no. 33 (September 2003): 2–3, 2.

[33] Marvin Bartell, "Internationalization of Universities: A University Culture-Based Framework," *Higher Education* 45, no. 1 (2003): 43–70, 48.

[34] Jane Knight, "Internationalization Remodeled: Definition, Approaches, and Rationales," *Journal of Studies in International Education* 8, no. 1 (2004): 5–31, 11.

higher education is not a process among countries but also among cultures. This definition was adopted and used by many scholars for a while. Similarly, Enders focused on interaction among nations by claiming that internationalization is a process of constructing crucial international relations and activities among states based on mutual cooperation.[35] Unlike other definitions, Teichler defines internationalization as the changes in higher education under the influence of world events by stating that "the totality of substantial changes in the context and inner life of higher education relative to an increasing frequency of border-crossing activities amidst a persistence of national systems."[36]

Some definitions highlight the positive consequences of internationalization. Several scholars argue that internationalization of higher education leads to multiculturalism or reformation in higher education. For instance, Valiulis & Valiulis argued that the purposes of internationalization of higher education are to promote multicultural and intercultural education and to contribute to the learning experience of exchange students and the teaching experiences of exchange academic staff.[37] Similarly, Stromquist defined internationalization as "a subtle response that affects not only the academic programs, faculty, and students but also creates new administrative structure and privileges."[38] Moreover, considering all these contributions and definitions Murphy explained the concept under three main points. First, he argues that internationalization is not a case, instead it is a process. Second, the aim of it is to connect students and academic staff with different methods, people and ideas from other countries. Third, it is a necessity for universities all around the world.[39] Altbach made the definition of internationalization from a different comprehensive

[35] Jürgen Enders, "Higher Education, Internationalisation, and the Nation-State: Recent Developments and Challenges to Governance Theory," *Higher Education* 47, no. 3 (2004): 361–82.

[36] Ulrich Teichler, "The Changing Debate on Internationalisation of Higher Education," *Higher Education* 48, no. 1 (2004): 5–26, 22-23.

[37] Algirdas V Valiulis and Donatas Valiulis, "The Internationalisation of Higher Education: A Challenge for Universities," *Global Journal of Engng. Educaction* 10, no. 2 (2006): 221–28.

[38] Nelly P. Stromquist, "Internationalization as a Response to Globalization: Radical Shifts in University Environments," *Higher Education* 53, no. 1 (2007): 81–105, 81.

[39] Moira Murphy, "Experiences in the Internationalization of Education: Strategies to Promote Equality of Opportunity at Monterrey Tech," *Higher Education* 53, no. 2 (2007): 167–208.

perspective. According to Altbach, internationalization is a special politics and program that is followed by higher education institutions in order to support the exchange of both students and academic staff, to promote international joint research, and to have joint-degree programs.[40] In line with this view, Knight again renewed her definition and declared that "internationalization of higher education is the process of integrating an international, intercultural, and global dimension into the purpose, functions (teaching, research, and service), and delivery of higher education at the institutional and national levels."[41] Therefore, in the early 2000s, authors argued that internationalization has evolved and developed universities by contributing an international, intercultural and global dimension.

Another definition was made by Hudzik, and he made a specific definition of comprehensive internationalization. He stated that

> Comprehensive internationalization is a commitment, confirmed through action, to infuse international and comparative perspectives throughout the teaching, research, and service missions of higher education. It shapes institutional ethos and values and touches the entire higher education enterprise. It is essential that it is embraced by institutional leadership, governance, faculty, students, and all academic service and support units. It is an institutional imperative, not just a desirable possibility. Comprehensive internationalization not only impacts all of campus life but the institution's external frames of reference, partnerships, and relations. The global reconfiguration of economies, systems of trade, research, and communication, and the impact of global forces on local life, dramatically expand the need for comprehensive internationalization and the motivations and purposes driving it.[42]

Considering this definition, Hudzik focused on the concept within the framework of institutionalization and globalization. According to this understanding, internationalization does not have an impact only on higher education but on every

[40] Philip G. Altbach , "Globalization and the University: Realities in an Unequal World," essay, in *International Handbook of Higher Education*, ed. James J.F. Forest and Philip G. Altbach (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007.), 121–39.

[41] Jane Knight, *Higher Education in Turmoil: The Changing World of Internationalization* (Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense Publishers, 2008).

[42] John K. Hudzik, *Comprehensive Internationalization: From Concept to Action* (Washington, DC: NAFSA, 2011), 6.

part of life and countries, including economy, communication, and politics. Similarly, North American Educational Association and the American Council on Education in the United States (ACE) handle the concept from a broad perspective and defined the concept as "a strategic, coordinated process that seeks to align and integrate international policies, programs, and initiatives, and positions colleges and universities as more globally oriented and internationally connected." [43] This quotation states that internationalization is a way for international connection for educational institutions. Therefore, through different initiatives and policies, educational success through internationalization was expected.

In line with these definitions, de Wit highlights the change or transformation of the concept by stating that internationalization became more proactive in strategic cases and became a more competitive type.[44] Gün, Topaloğlu, & Savaş also described internationalization in terms of competition. Indeed, they argued that in the academic world, in order to compete with other universities and people, internationalization is a tool to construct new policies.[45] de Wit also argued that "the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society."[46] Hence, the purpose of internationalization is not only to contribute to the quality of education but also to society. By considering all the definitions of internationalization of higher education, Taşçı made her definition and stated that internationalization is the effort of higher education institutions to produce interactive universal knowledge in a perspective where intercultural awareness and international learning are developed, taking into account the dimensions of

[43] "Comprehensive Internationalization," American Council on Education (ACE), 2023, https://www.acenet.edu/Research-Insights/Pages/Internationalization/Comprehensive-Internationalization.aspx, 1.

[44] Hans de Wit, "Globalization and Internationalisation of Higher Education," *RUSC. Universities and Knowledge Society Journal* 8, no. 2 (2011): 241–47.

[45] Feyza Gün, Hakan Topaloğlu, and Mücella Savaş Yalçın, "Uluslararası Eğitime Giriş," essay, in *Karşılaştırmalı ve Uluslararası Eğitim*, ed. Gökhan Arastaman (Ankara: Pegem Akademi, 2009), 111–30.

[46] Hans De Wit et al., *Internationalization of Higher Education* (Brussels: European Parliament, 2015), 29.

education-teaching-research and service to society.[47] Ultimately, starting from the 1980s, the concept of internationalization was defined by many scholars, but they still could not find one that was accepted by every scholar.

When all these definitions were considered, some scholars brought criticism of these definitions in general. It is argued that by using the decolonial lens, it can be proved that all these definitions have emerged from the North, and this is limited. Indeed, "internationalization has been shaped and influenced by colonialism, neocolonialism, capitalism and neoliberalism, and continues to propagate Eurocentric ideas about society, politics, economics, education and other spheres as universal." [48] Therefore, the criticism is that all these definitions are one-sided and Eurocentric. Moreover, it is claimed that "Eurocentric framing and conceptualization of the global and international dominate internationalization of higher education in both the global North and South."[49] With the influence of Eurocentric conceptualization, the understanding of the concept becomes limited to this specific understanding. These criticisms were made by taking the case of South African higher education institutions. For instance, Heleta and Chasi indicated that "using a decolonial lens, we show that the definitions of internationalization developed in the global North are limiting and inappropriate for post-apartheid challenges and complexities, and that their use is contributing to the maintenance of coloniality and Eurocentric hegemony in South African higher education."[50] They argue that the definition of internationalization is Eurocentric, and taking this description as the base leads to the dominance of Eurocentric understanding in South African higher education. Also, they say that while making these definitions, it is crucial to criticize these understandings in terms of their relevance and appropriateness to different parts of the world.

[47] Gülşah Taşçı, "Yükseköğretimde Uluslararasılaşma: Türkiye Örneği (1995-2014)" (dissertation, 2018), 22-23.

[48] Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "Internationalisation of Higher Education for Pluriversity: A Decolonial Reflection," *Journal of the British Academy* 9(s1) (2021): 77–98, https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/009s1.077.

[49] Savo Heleta and Samia Chasi, "Rethinking and Redefining Internationalisation of Higher Education in South Africa Using a Decolonial Lens," *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* 45, no. 3 (November 13, 2022): 1–15, 5.

[50] Ibid, 1.

Moreover, it is criticized that if these biased definitions are taken into consideration by scholars or officials, they should not be reflected by governments; they should be redefined and changed according to the conditions of each state. In other words, it is asserted that "a contextualized understanding of internationalization – one that is responsive to local needs, interests, and aspirations – opens up the possibility of re-imagining internationalization of higher education in South Africa in fundamental ways."[51] Therefore, the internationalization process needs to be reshaped according to the needs of each country for success or development. Moreover, it is argued that the definition of internationalization should highlight inclusion and social justice.[52] Indeed, it is argued that "internationalization must be a liberatory and dehumanizing project engaging with colonialism and dislocating it."[53] Hence, it is argued that a decolonial perspective is a necessity for the description of internationalization. This decolonial lends is crucial for a critical perspective on Eurocentric definitions of the concept, strategies, policies and practices in other parts of the world, like South Africa.[54] A decolonial lens is crucial to show the limitations of these Eurocentric definitions within the new world order, where there is a transformation in terms of social justice, decolonization, and socio-economic context.[55]

Similarly, Chasi asserted that a definition of internationalization from a decolonial lens is crucial for a better understanding of the inequality between higher education in North and South in terms of partnerships, collaborations, and educational support.[56] Apart from the imbalance, Mbembe declared that defining

[51] Samia Chasi, "South Africa's Policy Framework for Higher Education Internationalisation," *The Thinker* 89, no. 4 (2021): 30–37, 36.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "Internationalisation of Higher Education for Pluriversity: A Decolonial Reflection," *Journal of the British Academy* 9(s1) (2021): 77–98, 94.

[54] Upenyu S. Majee and Susanne B. Ress, "Colonial Legacies in Internationalisation of Higher Education: Racial Justice and Geopolitical Redress in South Africa and Brazil," *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 50, no. 4 (2018): 463–81, https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2018.1521264.

[55]Ibid; Gennaro Ascione, "Decolonizing the 'Global': The Coloniality of Method and the Problem of the Unit of Analysis," *Cultural Sociology* 10, no. 3 (2016): 317–34.

[56] Samia Chasi, "North-South Partnerships in Public Higher Education: A Selected South African Case Study" (dissertation, 2019).

internationalization from a decolonial perspective will provide a space for plurality and to connect past and present. This idea was supported by stating that "the only hope for the world in the twenty-first century is in the expanded global archives and epistemic plurality where all knowledge, archives, memories, texts, and worldviews are critically assessed and studied in order to understand the past and present and chart a better future."[57] In addition to these views, Mpofu and Steyn reminded that the idea of proposing a new definition of internationalization from a decolonial perspective does not mean rejecting Eurocentric knowledge or scholars. By defining the concept from the decolonial lens, the purpose is to take both the Eurocentric knowledge and the rest of the world as the base. With a decolonial perspective, the goal is to have a global knowledge including the global North and South together. In other words, it is supported that both sides and perspectives are necessary for a plural, unbiased and global understanding.[58]

Based on all these expectations and criticisms from a decolonial perspective Heleta and Chasi proposed a new definition of internationalization considering South African higher education. They declared that

> Internationalization of higher education is a critical and comparative process of the study of the world and its complexities, past and present inequalities and injustices, and possibilities for a more equitable and just future for all. Through teaching, learning, research and engagement, internationalization fosters epistemic plurality and integrates critical, anti-racist and anti-hegemonic learning about the world from diverse global perspectives to enhance the quality and relevance of education.[59]

With this definition, it is reflected that the world is unequal, diverse and unjust. The important thing is to accept this reality and act accordingly. Also, it is highlighted

[57] Savo Heleta and Samia Chasi, "Rethinking and Redefining Internationalisation of Higher Education in South Africa Using a Decolonial Lens," *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* 45, no. 3 (November 13, 2022): 1–15, 10.

[58] Melissa Steyn et al., "Decolonising the Human: Reflections from Africa on Difference and Oppression," Chapter, in *The Trouble with the Human* (Wits University Press, 2021), 1–24.

[59] Savo Heleta and Samia Chasi, "Rethinking and Redefining Internationalisation of Higher Education in South Africa Using a Decolonial Lens," *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* 45, no. 3 (November 13, 2022): 1–15, 9-10.

that the world is not apolitical instead it has complexities.[60] Indeed, this definition proposes "ethical and political questions about why, in whose name, for whose benefit, and to what end." [61] Most important of all, being international is not the main point according to this definition. According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni, the definition of the concept emphasizes that each university needs to internationalize according to the framework of its own country and put its own country at the center instead of putting internationalization at the center.[62] This definition was interpreted by Pashby & Andreotti in a detailed way. They stated that "the global, regional and local historical and contemporary inequalities and inequities are visible in the curriculum and knowledge produced at universities; challenges the status quo on the institutional, national and international levels; and can lead to international collaboration that is based on solidarity, tolerance, equity, fairness and equality."[63] Hence, with this new definition of internationalization from a decolonial lens, it is argued that the existing curriculum or the higher education system reflects the inequalities and differences between North and South. The important point is to accept these differences and act in order to eliminate these inequalities and biases by putting every country at the center of their internationalization process of higher education. This is the only way to have a global internationalization process of higher education. Ultimately, this internationalization of higher education definition will be the base of this thesis, and the upcoming chapters and arguments will be made accordingly.

2.2. The History of Internationalization of Higher Education

In order to analyze the internationalization process of higher education, it is necessary to understand the historical context of the concept. Therefore, when the

[60] Elizabeth Buckner and Sharon Stein, "What Counts as Internationalization? Deconstructing the Internationalization Imperative," *Journal of Studies in International Education* 24, no. 2 (May 2020): 151–66, 152.

[61] Sharon Stein and Dale M. McCartney, "Emerging Conversations in Critical Internationalization Studies," *Journal of International Students* 11, no. S1 (May 21, 2021): 1–14, 1.

[62] Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "Internationalisation of Higher Education for Pluriversity: A Decolonial Reflection," *Journal of the British Academy* 9(s1) (2021): 77–98.

[63] Karen Pashby and Vanessa de Oliveira Andreotti, "Ethical Internationalisation in Higher Education: Interfaces with International Development and Sustainability," *Environmental Education Research* 22, no. 6 (June 30, 2016): 771–87.

literature is analyzed, the history of the concept can be categorized under four main periods: the period until the 18th century, the period between the 18th and World War II, the period between World War II and the Cold War, and the period between the Cold War and today. To start with the period until the 18th century, the beginning of the internationalization of higher education goes back to the Medieval period.[64] According to Huang, within this period, the primary purpose was to spread Christian values to the world. Therefore, especially in Europe, during this period, scientists realized physical mobility to different geographies in the world in order to spread Christian values. Mobilities in higher education of these scientists popularized three main points. These are the common European Culture based on Christian values, a common university curriculum within the framework of ancient and religious knowledge along with fine arts, and Latin as the language of science.[65]

Knight and de Wit (1995) summarized the internationalization process period until the 18th century in terms of the usage of the Latin language, the spread of Christianism, and the transformation of academic and everyday life. They pointed out these inferences by stating that

> The use of Latin as a common language, and of a uniform programme of study and system of examinations, enabled itinerant students to continue their studies in one "studium" after another, and ensured recognition of their degrees throughout Christendom. Besides their academic knowledge, they took home with them a host of new experiences, ideas, opinions, and political principles and views. Also—and this is important—they brought back manuscripts and, later on, books. They had become familiar with new schools of artistic expression, and with living conditions, customs, ways of life, and eating and drinking habits all previously unknown to them. As most itinerant scholars belonged to the élite of their country and later held high office, they were well placed to apply and propagate their newly acquired knowledge. The consequences of academic pilgrimage were, indeed, out of all proportion to the numerically insignificant number of migrant students. [66]

[64] Harold Perkin, "History of Universities," chapter, in *International Handbook of Higher Education*, ed. James J.F. Forest and Philip G. Althbach (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007), 159–205.

[65] Futao Huang, "Internationalisation of Higher Education in the Era of Globalisation:What Have Been Its Implications in China and Japan? ," *Higher Education Management and Policy* 19, no. 1 (2007): 47–61.

[66] Mehmet Akif Kireçci et al., "The Internationalization of Higher Education in Türkiye: Creating an Index," *TED Education And Science* 41, no. 187 (2016): 1–28, 2.

Furthermore, some scholars argued that apart from religious movements, there was also mobility toward Europe by university members and students. Indeed, Ridder-Symoens stated that since there were not too many universities in the world, including Europe, during the 12th and 13th centuries, people needed to move abroad for higher education or scientific research.[67] Further, it is pointed out that even in the 15th century, when universities emerged in Europe, many students and professors went abroad either temporarily or permanently for studying or research purposes. Till the 18th century, the main goal of students to study abroad was "to continue their studies in an internationally renowned university and disciplines not taught in their schools."[68] In short, until the 18th century, students and professors realized mobility for scientific purposes, spreading Christian values and Latin as a common language.

When the internationalization process of higher education between the eighteenth and World War II was analyzed, it can be argued that, during this period, universities became de-Europeanized. With the rise of political and cultural nationalism, the power of international cultural relations was questioned. de Wit identifies this period within three aspects; "export of higher education systems, dissemination of research, and individual mobility of students and scholars."[69] Thence, until the 19th century, the focus of higher education in terms of internationalization was mobility activities, international projects, and internationalization of the system. Within the framework of the export of higher education systems, the purpose was to direct colonies in line with the colonial powers.[70] For instance, when Africa, Asia, or Caribbean countries belonged to the British Empire, they were following the system of British Empire higher education. However, when the colonies were under France, these countries were following the model of French higher education. Other countries that were not under any colony, like China and Japan, followed Western higher education's

[67] Hilde de Ridder-Symoens, "Mobility," chapter, in *A History of the University in Europe*, ed. Hilde de Ridder-Symoens, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 280–304, 281.

[68] Ibid.,287.

[69] Hans de Wit, *Internationalization of Higher Education in the United States of America and Europe: A Historical, Comparative, and Conceptual Analysis* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 8.

[70] Mehmet Akif Kireçci et al., "The Internationalization of Higher Education in Türkiye: Creating an Index," *TED Education Anf Science* 41, no. 187 (2016): 1–28, 2.

structure.[71] The other two aspects which were research and mobility programs were considered as a constant factor of the internationalization process of higher education. In other words, research and publication abroad was the national goal of countries during this period, and this was always the case.[72]

Moreover, de Wit summarized this period as "one of predominantly nationally oriented higher education." [73] Indeed, during this time, academic and qualified students were realizing their mobility to the most successful universities or institutions in the world. European colonials were exporting their academic model to other parts of the world. Also, academics were cooperating and exchanging abroad for research. Until World War II, with the acceleration of the scientific revolution and the strengthening of nation-states, the international dimension in higher education has diversified through inter-state academic and technical cooperation activities. In this period, the international dimension in the curriculum, foreign language education and the introduction of international political economy was also expanded.[74] Ultimately, de Wit stated, "the focus of higher education in that period became more directed to the development of a national identity and national needs and less to universal knowledge."[75]

Between World War II and the Cold War, political and ideological motivations were more effective in the internationalization process of higher education.[76] During this period, the main framework of internationalization was shaped by the academic and

[71] Hans de Wit, *Internationalization of Higher Education in the United States of America and Europe: A Historical, Comparative, and Conceptual Analysis* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 8.

[72] Hans de Wit, *Internationalization of Higher Education in the United States of America and Europe: A Historical, Comparative, and Conceptual Analysis* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 9.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Futao Huang, "Internationalisation of Higher Education in the Era of Globalisation:What Have Been Its Implications in China and Japan? ," *Higher Education Management and Policy* 19, no. 1 (2007): 47–61.

[75] Hans de Wit, *Internationalization of Higher Education in the United States of America and Europe: A Historical, Comparative, and Conceptual Analysis* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 9.

[76] Futao Huang, "Internationalisation of Higher Education in the Era of Globalisation:What Have Been Its Implications in China and Japan? ," *Higher Education Management and Policy* 19, no. 1 (2007): 47–61.

technical cooperation and capacity-building activities in higher education carried out by the countries in the same bloc.[77] Also, after World War II, the bilateral agreements and cooperation among universities rapidly increased. Indeed, with the emergence of the United States and the Soviet Union as superpowers, they wanted to have more influence on other countries in various areas, and international education was one of them. They focused on international exchange and cooperation.

However, in Europe, the situation was different at the beginning. Because of the impact of the war, the focus of European countries was to recover their countries. They could not provide any support for international education or cooperation. [78] But, after the 1980s, the situation changed, and the European Community gained its power, and Japan became the global economic power. This global change challenged the dominance of the United States not only in economic issues but also in international educational activities. Indeed, European countries together with Japan focused on international research and development programs to weaken the U.S. power.[79] Furthermore, the European Commission formed a regional identity in higher education in terms of both economic and cultural dimension. Indeed, economic investments were held for national and regional higher education under regional cooperation. As a cultural aspect, a European international dimension was followed in research, teaching, and education activities in higher education.[80] Shortly, between World War II and the Cold War, there was the rise of European impact in higher education, and all the cooperation and research were held accordingly.

After the Cold War, globalization became the most important factor in innovation in higher education. Therefore, after 1991, the internationalization of higher education understanding changed in political, cultural, economic and academic dimensions

[77] Hans de Wit, *Internationalization of Higher Education in the United States of America and Europe: A Historical, Comparative, and Conceptual Analysis* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002).

[78] Mehmet Akif Kireçci et al., "The Internationalization of Higher Education in Türkiye: Creating an Index," *TED Education Anf Science* 41, no. 187 (2016): 1–28, 3.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Rachel Brooks and Johanna Lesley Waters, *Student Mobilities, Migration and the Internationalization of Higher Education* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

with the emergence of globalization. Indeed, with the rise of globalization, some innovations in areas like science, technology, and communication emerged. Higher education institutions started to search for non-public financing and accountability in higher education raised. All these changes led higher education institutions to feel the global competition more.[81] For instance, activities like developing institutional research partnerships with universities in other countries, attracting international students who pay tuition fees, and opening campuses abroad have become widespread with economic motivations. [82] When these transformations are considered, it can be stated that most of these changes occurred based on academic motivation.[83] During this period, international university rankings were accepted as quality indicators in many parts of the world; therefore, these rankings became competitive internationalization tools.[84]

With the impact of globalization, the current century was called as information age in which information is valuable, and it became a global market. Most of the definitions of internationalization of higher education emerged during this period as well.[85] In short, the roots of the current understanding of the concept of internationalization started after the Cold War. When we come to the 21st century, especially after the 2000s, the competitive understanding of the internationalization of higher education became more visible through the impact of quantitative indicators, such as the number of international students in universities, international publication statistics, and university rankings.[86] In other words, with the rise of globalization, the

[81] Philip G. Altbach and Jane Knight, "The Internationalization of Higher Education: Motivations and Realities," *Journal of Studies in International Education* 11, no. 3–4 (2007): 290–305.

[82] Jane Knight, "Education Hubs: A Fad, a Brand, an Innovation?," *Journal of Studies in International Education* 15, no. 3 (2011): 221–40.

[83] Hans de Wit, *Internationalization of Higher Education in the United States of America and Europe: A Historical, Comparative, and Conceptual Analysis* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002).

[84] Riyad A. Shahjahan, Paul E. Bylsma, and Chetan Singai, "Global University Rankings as 'Sticky' Objects and 'Refrains': Affect and Mediatisation in India," *Comparative Education* 58, no. 2 (2021): 224–41.

[85] Mehmet Akif Kireçci et al., "The Internationalization of Higher Education in Türkiye: Creating an Index," *TED Education Anf Science* 41, no. 187 (2016): 1–28, 4.

[86] Hans de Wit and Philip G. Altbach, "Internationalization in Higher Edu- Cation: Global Trends and Recommendations for Its Future," *Policy Reviews in Higher Education* 5, no. 1 (2021): 28–46.

internationalization of higher education became more prominent in all areas, including international and national documents and statements. Also, it became a vital actor in the global knowledge economy.[87] Ultimately, after the Cold War, globalization had an important impact on the internationalization of higher education, and a competitive understanding emerged among universities in terms of statistics and rankings.

2.3. Rationales for Internationalization of Higher Education

Having explained the history of the internationalization of higher education, it is necessary to understand the rationales for this internationalization process. Although the rationales change according to the needs or conditions of the country or the higher education institution, Knight and de Wit claimed four main rationales.[88] These are political, economic, academic and social-cultural. de Wit asserted that these rationales are "motivations for integrating an international dimension into higher education. They address the "why" of internationalization."[89] Thence, rationales reflect the reasons and necessities for internationalization. To start with the political rationale, the internationalization of higher education draws attention because of various reasons. Some of them are indicated by de Wit. He argued that national security, foreign policy, technical assistance, peace and mutual understanding, national identity and regional identity are subcategories of political rationales.[90] All these reasons are interrelated, and they indicate that for diplomatic and foreign policy relations, governments lay emphasis on the internationalization of higher education. de Wit argued that "the political rationale links education in the first place to foreign policy, the educational cooperation can be considered as a form of diplomatic investment in the future political relations and that the cultural and academic

[87] Hans de Wit and Gil Merks, "The History of Internationalization of Higher Education," essay, in *The Sage Handbook of International Higher Education*, ed. Darla K. Deardorff et al. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2012), 43–59, 55.

[88] Jane Knight and Hans de Wit, *Quality and Internationalization in Higher Education* (Paris: Organisation for economic co-operation and development, 1999).

[89] Hans de Wit, *Internationalization of Higher Education in the United States of America and Europe: A Historical, Comparative, and Conceptual Analysis* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 84.

[90] Ibid.

agreements signed between countries can contribute to the strengthening and advancement of the political and economic relations of the nations."[91] Therefore, states underline the internationalization of higher education because state authorities use this internationalization process as a tool for their diplomatic relations with other states.

Like de Wit, Knight indicated that "higher education is often considered a form of diplomatic investment for future political and economic relations."[92] For instance, if an international student takes his/her education in another country, when he/she returns to his/her own country by taking a position in politics, business, education or any other field in authority, the diplomacy between these two states may have strong relations and they may benefit from this connection. Indeed, higher education institutions are used as the center of attraction by other countries. Through internationalization, universities become a global power with attraction. The more universities accept international students, the more networks between universities and countries. With this process, higher education institutions become a soft power tool for political or diplomatic relations between states.[93] In short, higher education institutions become a tool for the diplomatic, political or economic relations between countries and the students and academics become the future diplomats. Through international education, international students or academics develop a sympathy for the hosting country, leading to close relations between states. Therefore, the internationalization of universities is crucial to attract more international participants to the country and their institutions.

The second rationale is social/cultural. Within this rationale, national cultural identity, intercultural understanding, citizenship development, social and community

[91] Ibid.,85.

[92] Jane Knight, "Internationalization of Higher Education: A Conceptual Framework," essay, in *Internationalisation of Higher Education in Asia Pacific Countries*, ed. Jane Knight and Hans de Wit (Amsterdam, the Netherlands: European Association for International Education, in cooperation with IDP Education Australia and the Programme on Institutional Management in Higher Education of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1997), 5–19, 9.

[93] William Yat Lo, "Soft Power, University Rankings and Knowledge Production: Distinctions between Hegemony and Self-determination in Higher Education," *Comparative Education* 47, no. 2 (2011): 209–22, 215.

development, regional identity, and national identity are listed.[94] de Wit also indicated these issues as social/cultural rationales. He asserted that when an international student or academic realizes his/her mobility in another country, he/she will be able to learn the culture of the host country. Then, they will be able to transfer these cultures to their own country and this transfer will help the development of bilateral relations between states.[95] Knight also evaluates this interaction by expressing that "the preparation of graduates who have a strong knowledge and skill base in intercultural relations and communications is considered by many academics as one of the strongest rationales for internationalizing the teaching/learning."[96] Therefore, one of the reasons for the internationalization in higher education is the interaction among different cultures through import or export of them. Besides these cultural exchanges, Hudzik argued that the protection of national identity is another means for the internationalization process under social/cultural rationales. He asserted that with the increase in the number of nation-states, governments tried to search for ways to protect the national identity. Higher education is recognized as a tool for this aim. Through internationalization, universities are expected to form a ground for social or cultural exchange between international participants, countries, and other higher education institutions.[97] The role of universities as the place for cultural exchange is also expressed by Federico Mayor. He stated that "the university is an institution in which the production, transmission, and reproduction of culture meet harmoniously and in which the latter is completed by reflection on the role and the function of culture in the life of nations and individuals."[98] He also supports the idea that "to develop an awareness of the

[94] Jane Knight, "Internationalization Remodeled: Definition, Approaches, and Rationales," *Journal of Studies in International Education* 8, no. 1 (2004): 5–31, 23.

[95] Hans de Wit, *Internationalization of Higher Education in the United States of America and Europe: A Historical, Comparative, and Conceptual Analysis* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002).

[96] Jane Knight, "Internationalization of Higher Education: A Conceptual Framework," essay, in *Internationalisation of Higher Education in Asia Pacific Countries*, ed. Jane Knight and Hans de Wit (Amsterdam, the Netherlands: European Association for International Education, in cooperation with IDP Education Australia and the Programme on Institutional Management in Higher Education of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1997), 5–19, 11.

[97] John K. Hudzik, *Comprehensive Internationalization: Institutional Pathways to Success* (London: Routledge, 2015).

[98] Frederico Mayor, "Culture and the University," *Higher Education in Europe* 14 (1989): 5–13, 5.

interdependence of peoples and societies in today's world must be one of the basic functions of the universities."[99] Therefore, according to this understanding, universities are tools to impose the idea about the benefits of internationalization and interdependence of states. Related to these cultural rationales, de Wit argues that social rationales "stress the importance of the individual development of the student and the academic through a confrontation with other cultures, but also, and perhaps even more, with the home culture."[100] Thence, social rationales are the reflection of cultural rationales on individuals. Ultimately, one of the rationales for the internationalization of higher education is the social/cultural. Through international activities of students and academics, a cultural and social exchange occurs between states, which leads to a development between countries.

Economic rationale is the third rationale according to the categorization of Knight. Within this rationale, revenue generation, development, competitiveness, financial incentives, and labor market are indicated.[101] Similarly, de Wit stated that "the economic growth and competitiveness, the labor market, national education demand and financial incentives for institutions and governments" are some of the economic rationales for the internationalization of higher education.[102] Most of the universities lay emphasis on internationalization through international students and academic mobilities, international branch campuses, international cooperation, projects, and partnerships to enlarge their economic growth. For instance, some higher education institutions charge higher tuition fees for international students when compared with national students. The purpose is to higher the income of the university. On the other hand, other higher education institutions do not charge any tuition fees for international students. The purpose of these universities is to have more international

[99] Ibid. 13.

[100] Hans de Wit, *Internationalization of Higher Education in the United States of America and Europe: A Historical, Comparative, and Conceptual Analysis* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 94.

[101] Jane Knight, "Internationalization Remodeled: Definition, Approaches, and Rationales," *Journal of Studies in International Education* 8, no. 1 (2004): 5–31, 23.

[102] Hans de Wit, *Internationalization of Higher Education in the United States of America and Europe: A Historical, Comparative, and Conceptual Analysis* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 223.

students in their country and get the economic benefit in the long run. Moreover, some higher education institutions offer international mobility programs for students and staff to attract international students to their country. Through these mobilities, the income of universities will increase, and this will benefit the government with the increase in the economic gain of the country.[103] In other words, to fulfill the higher education demand, governments encourage international mobilities of students and staff instead of investing in higher education. Governments can also provide job opportunities to international students for this purpose, which is one of the economic reasons for the internationalization of higher education.[104]

Moreover, when the relation between economy and higher education is considered, Kahn and Agnew state that "global learning mirrors the interconnected world in which one lives and learns and demonstrates how ideas, communities, and practices intersect and cross borders."[105] It can be inferred from this statement that through globalization, societies can easily have an international network and interaction with other nations. Economic, political, or academic relations between people lead to better communication and connection between states. Through these interactions, the internationalization of higher education becomes a tool of the economic rivalry between states. Indeed, global promotion of higher education is recognized by some states as an opportunity for a transnational economy. The reason is that internationalization of higher education is an opportunity with a high amount of income and states try to benefit from this economic gain.[106] Hence, for states,

[103] Ibid.

[104] Zha Qiang, "Internationalization of Higher Education: Towards a Conceptual Framework," *Policy Futures in Education* 1, no. 2 (2003): 248–70.; Jane Knight, "Internationalization of Higher Education: A Conceptual Framework," essay, in *Internationalisation of Higher Education in Asia Pacific Countries*, ed. Jane Knight and Hans de Wit (Amsterdam, the Netherlands: European Association for International Education, in cooperation with IDP Education Australia and the Programme on Institutional Management in Higher Education of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1997), 5–19.; Philip G. Altbach and Jane Knight, "The Internationalization of Higher Education: Motivations and Realities," *Journal of Studies in International Education* 11, no. 3–4 (2007): 290–305.

[105] Hilary E. Kahn and Melanie Agnew, "Global Learning Through Difference: Considerations for Teaching, Learning, and the Internationalization of Higher Education," *Journal of Studies in International Education* 21, no. 1 (2017): 52–64, 54.

[106] Jane Knight, *Higher Education in Turmoil: The Changing World of Internationalization* (Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense Publishers, 2008).

internationalization of higher education is crucial. States viewthe internationalization of higher education as an investment for possible future economic relations.

When universities can have more international students, academics or activities through opening international branch campuses and academic collaborations, their economic gain will be higher. As a consequence, both higher education institutions and countries will have more income. Within this framework, "the underlying vision is to create a university that is dynamic and responsive to socio-economic agendas and gives priority to innovation, entrepreneurship and competitiveness."[107] In this sense, internationalization reflects the entrepreneurial, innovative, and competitive features of a higher education institution. But at the same time, the internationalization process led to competition among universities. Practically, "the more an individual university aspires to the top end of the competition, the more significant global referencing becomes." [108] Marginson highlights that with global referencing, the income of higher education institutions and states increases. Consequently, the economy of both universities and countries can have an advantage.

The last rationale for the internationalization of higher education is academic. Some of the academic rationales are internationalized research and teaching, expansion of the academic horizon, institution-building, and improvement of academic quality and standards.[109] It is assumed that the more internationalization of higher education, the higher education quality of universities. Therefore, in order to advance the academic quality of their higher education institutions, governments encourage universities to achieve higher academic standards. In other words, universities which have high academic quality and success will be able to realize more mobilities. Therefore, one of the most crucial purposes of higher education institutions is to develop their academic standards as the academic rationale for the internationalization of higher

[107] Peter Maassen, "Universities and the Effects of External Funding: Sub-Saharan Africa and the Nordic Countries," Chapter, in *The Global University Past, Present, and Future Perspectives,* ed. Adam R. Nelson and Ian P. Wei (New York: Palgrave, 2012), 231–54, 231.

[108] Simon Marginson, "Dynamics of National and Global Competition in Higher Education," *Higher Education* 52 (2006): 1–39, 27.

[109] Akbar Zolfaghari, Mohammad Shatar Sabran, and Ali Zolfaghari, "Internationalization of Higher Education: Challenges, Strategies, Policies and Programs," *US-China Education Review* 6, no. 5 (2009): 1–9, 3.

education. [110] These academic standards are better services, teaching and research activities. Indeed, it is assumed that if universities have more international students, they will achieve higher academic standards, which means recognition in the international arena.[111] Another indicator of high academic standards is the international university rankings. Higher education institutions compete to be on the top lists of these rankings and try to internationalize their universities by being world-class.[112] For rankings, universities try to attract more international students and staff to have more international cooperation. Therefore, it is assumed that internationalization of higher education and academic quality are interrelated concepts. In other words, through internationalization, collaborations are produced with high quality and knowledge.[113] Similar to the academic quality of university understanding, some scholars assert that the internationalization of higher education does not only have an impact on universities but on the academic skills of scholars in terms of teaching and research quality. Indeed, it is stated that through internationalization, universities can realize mobilities, initiate collaborations and this contributes to academics by raising their teaching, research and academic skills.[114] de Wit expresses these skills as curriculum innovation, cross-cultural training, foreign language study, joint research initiatives, study abroad, academic mobility, and research cooperation.[115] In short, achieving international academic

[110] Zha Qiang, "Internationalization of Higher Education: Towards a Conceptual Framework," *Policy Futures in Education* 1, no. 2 (2003): 248–70.; Jane Knight, "Internationalization of Higher Education: A Conceptual Framework," essay, in *Internationalisation of Higher Education in Asia Pacific Countries*, ed. Jane Knight and Hans de Wit (Amsterdam, the Netherlands: European Association for International Education, in cooperation with IDP Education Australia and the Programme on Institutional Management in Higher Education of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1997), 5–19.;

[111] Ibid.; Jane Knight, "Internationalization Remodeled: Definition, Approaches, and Rationales," *Journal of Studies in International Education* 8, no. 1 (2004): 5–31.

[112] Ulrich Teichler, "Internationalisation of Higher Education: European Experiences," *Asia Pacific Education Review* 10, no. 1 (2009): 93–106.

[113] Eva Egron-Polak and Ross Hudson, rep., *Internationalization of Higher Education: Growing Expectations, Fundamental Values* (International Association of Universities (IAU), 2014).

[114] Ivan Svetlik and Alenka Braček Lalić, "The Impact of the Internationalisation of Higher Education on Academic Staff Development – the Case of Slovenian Public Universities," *Studies in Higher Education* 41, no. 2 (2016): 364–80.

[115] Hans de Wit, *Internationalization of Higher Education in the United States of America and Europe: A Historical, Comparative, and Conceptual Analysis* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002)

standards, being on the top lists of international rankings and development of academic skills of scholars can be shown as academic rationales for the internationalization of higher education.

Considering all these rationales, it should be stated that these rationales can shift from one to another in a broader perspective. De Wit argues these rationales can change according to the necessities or priorities of institutions and states.[116] Indeed, universities or countries are involved in a multidimensional process in terms of internationalization. Therefore, the reasons for internationalization can change. For instance, universities justify their internationalization process by considering their vision, mission, and organizational structure. de Wit stated that

> There is a strong overlap in rationales within and between different stakeholders' groups; the main differences are in the hierarchy of priorities. In general, stakeholders do not have one exclusive rationale but a combination of rationales for internationalization with a hierarchy in priorities. Rationales may differ between stakeholder groups and within stakeholder groups. Priorities in rationales may change over time and many change by country and region. Rationales have a strong influence on the internationalization of higher education, but the question why is in many cases not explicitly formulated[117]

It can be inferred from this statement that there can be shifts or overlaps between rationales, rationales can change according to priorities and to the university, country or people. Moreover, Hudzik stated that even though there are different rationales, and these reasons change according to different circumstances, all of them have four common drivers. These are first; "the core mission or business of higher education is ideas and innovation manifested in the creation of knowledge through research, the transmission of knowledge to learners and the translation of knowledge into applications for the benefit of people and society."[118] Second, "Higher Education's customers at home are "going global" as well. They include students/graduates, local

[116] Ibid., 101.

[117] Ibid., 100-101.

[118] John K. Hudzik, "Changing Paradigm and Practice for Higher Education Internationalisation," chapter, in *An Introduction to Higher Education Internationalisation*, ed. Hans de Wit (Milan, Italy: Centre for Higher Education Internationalisation (CHEI), 2013), 47–60, 51.

communities, businesses and employers. Life and work in a global environment is increasingly an expectation of nearly everyone."[119] Third, "the social responsibilities of higher education are extending beyond the local and national to a global frame. The traditional rationales for higher education internationalization (which remain highly salient) are related to fostering global relationships, peace and justice, enhancing presence in the global environment, and improving cross-cultural understanding."[120] The last component is "The growth and flattening of global higher education capacity spawns a number of other factors favoring more variability in patterns of higher education internationalization."[121] In short, this section discussed four main rationales, which are political, academic, economic and social-cultural, for the internationalization of higher education and asserted that there can be changes or shifts among these rationales according to the priorities of universities or countries.

2.4. The International Dimension of Higher Education in Europe

To understand the education diplomacy of Türkiye with Europe in terms of internationalization in higher education, it is necessary to understand the internationalization process of European higher education. Although internationalization is still in development, as de Wit states, the process of internationalization needs attention. de Wit states that when the process is analyzed, there is a shift in the direction toward "more autonomous institutional strategies for internationalization, which are less dependent on governmental support, a growing involvement of private support in addition to public subsidies for internationalization, more active institutional leadership instead of reactive policies and lastly the creation of more self-financing mechanisms at both the institutional and individual levels."[122] Therefore, this shift occurred due to the privatization of

[119] Ibid.

[120] Ibid., 52.

[121] Ibid.

[122] Hans de Wit, *Internationalization of Higher Education in the United States of America and Europe: A Historical, Comparative, and Conceptual Analysis* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 42.

universities. With the initiatives of the institutions, instead of government authorities, universities took concrete steps for internationalization.

The historical development of the internationalization of higher education in Europe is analyzed by different scholars under four main phases. de Wit noted that according to the categorization of Brouwer, the first phase includes the incidental cooperation between 1951 and 1972. The second phase reflects the initiation of the European collaboration in education between 1972 and 1977. Between 1977 and 1986, the third phase, the initiated cooperation, was implemented, and different international education programs were held based on intergovernmental cooperation. The fourth phase, between 1986 and 1993, consists of the second stage of the previous period. The only difference is that during the implementation of education programs, all these steps are taken according to the EU directions. The last phase includes the period between 1993 and 1995. This stage started with the exercise of the EU Treaty for EU collaborations.[123] de Wit argues that this categorization should have one more phase which is 1999 and onwards. According to him, in 1999, "a new phase started, in which cooperation and harmonization will meet in a more coherent European education policy, stimulated by the intergovernmental declarations of Sorbonne and Bologna."[124]

Similar to the description of Bouwer, Field also presented the history under four phases. According to Field classification, the first phase includes the period between 1957 and 1973, when educational activities started to get attention. During the second phase, between 1974 and 1985, the interest in international programs increased, specifically in vocational training. In the third phase, between 1986 and 1992, education became one of the crucial fields for the EU policies. The last period comprises the period starting from 1992 and onward. During this extent of time, certain actions were taken to encourage the notion of learning society.[125] By

[123] Ibis., 43.

[124] Hans de Wit, *Internationalization of Higher Education in the United States of America and Europe: A Historical, Comparative, and Conceptual Analysis* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 43.

[125] John Field, *European Dimensions: Education, Training, and the European Union* (London: Jessica Kingsley, 1998).

considering all these stages, de Wit argued that "at present the overall picture is that in Europe this international dimension was marginal, mainly foreign-policy driven, and as far as there was a more active organized presence."[126] With this statement, he emphasized that the internationalization of European higher education evolved according to the foreign policies of the European states.

Similar to others, de Wit analyzed the phases of the international dimension of European higher education starting from the 1950s. For the earlier period, he stated that there were some changes and developments that led to the evolution of the internationalization of European higher education. these were the evolution of nation-states before the 19th century, the place of Europe in the colonization and decolonization process, the European higher education influence on the other parts of the world, developments in the European integration, the collapse of the Soviet Union, financial changes, enlargement of higher education, and lastly the emergence of new blocs.[127] All these concrete changes led Europe to internationalize its higher education and the international dimension of European higher education got attention. According to the categorization of de Wit, the first phase, the 1950s and 1960s is called as Laissez Faire. This period includes an open-door policy for foreign students.[128]

This period was summarized by Baron that "promoting academic mobility was predominantly seen as an element of foreign policy. From the point of view of the receiving countries, provision, and care for foreign students were perceived as connected to foreign policy objectives, such as maintaining political influence with future elites in other countries and preparing useful contacts for international relations in commerce and industry."[129] Therefore, during this period, academic mobilities were part of foreign policy of countries. In line with this understanding,

[126] Hans de Wit, *Internationalization of Higher Education in the United States of America and Europe: A Historical, Comparative, and Conceptual Analysis* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 43.

[127] Ibid., 44.

[128] Ibid.

[129] Britta Baron, "The Politics of Acadamic Mobility in Western Europe," *Higher Education Policy* 6, no. 3 (1993): 50–54, 50.

according to de Wit, Guy Neave observed the expansion of student mobilities and the crucial role of these mobilities in the internationalization of higher education. Moreover, de Wit argued that all open-door policy, laissez-faire, and one-way dimension policies were the three main characteristics of this period in terms of the international dimension of European higher education. He also emphasized the since higher education institutions were only the side for hosting international students, they were passive partners in policies.[130] In addition to him, Gisela Baumgratz-Gangly described the characteristics of this period by stating that

> Historical ties with former colonies; political considerations; presence of political refugees; economic considerations; educational demands; research cooperation in the natural sciences; top-level postgraduate study; migration of guest workers; increasing foreign language competence at the school level; traditional links between disciplines; traditional mobility of elites; improvement of transport and communication and expansion of tourism; cooperation at the postgraduate level between Western Europe and the United States; and mobility of Third World students and staff to Western Europe (brain drain). Institutions were passive partners in exchange programs during this period.[131]

In short, during the 1950s and 1960s, the internationalization of European higher education was dominated by foreign policies of states, and there was a one-way and open-door policy for foreign students. According to the categorization of de Wit, the second phase of the internationalization of European higher education is the period of the 1970s. he described this period as the initiation of the Europeanization of higher education. Indeed, in 1972, Sweden started a program that highlights internationalization as a tool to encourage higher education institutions to take an active role in programs to change policies through international understanding and collaboration. This program contains an international credit system, curriculum, and mobilities.[132] Different from the previous phase, in the 1970s, there was an emphasis

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[130] Hans de Wit, *Internationalization of Higher Education in the United States of America and Europe: A Historical, Comparative, and Conceptual Analysis* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 45.

[131] Gisela Baumgratz-Gangly et al., "Developments in the Internationalization of Higher Education in Europe," essay, in *Academic Mobility in a Changing World: Regional and Global Trends*, ed. Peggy Blumenthal (Kingsley: Jessica, 1996).

[132] Hans Löwbeer, "Internationalization of Higher Education -Sweden: A Case Study," essay, in *The International Encyclopedia of Higher Education*, ed. Asa S. Knowles (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997), 2303–6.

on outgoing mobilities instead of incoming students for international mobilities. Furthermore, in 1976, the Council of the European Communities maintained an education program, specifically about the exchange of young workers.[133] The action program consisted of three groups, which are "mobility in education, education for children of immigrant workers, and the intention to implement a European dimension in education."[134] He further expressed three measures of higher education as "Joint Study Programmes, Short Study Visits, and an educational administrators program."[135] Ultimately, the 1970s is the period for the start of the Europeanization of higher education with the emergence of certain actions and programs.

de Wit expressed the 1980s as the third phase and named this phase the "Great Leap Forward."[136] He argued that this period reflected four different changes in the internationalization process of Europe. These are "in the open-door mobility of individual students; second, in the development of a research and development policy for the EU; third, in student mobility as an integrated part of study; and fourth, in the widening of scope to other regions-third countries in Western, Central, and Eastern Europe, third countries outside Europe and development cooperation."[137] To start with the first change, which is individual mobility, in the 1980s, higher education institutions started to take an active role in accepting international students to their universities. For the internationalization process, the role of foreign students became more crucial, and this was realized by institutions. Therefore, universities took certain steps to pull foreign students to their country. This was expressed by Alice Chandler as;

> What has changed in recent years is the balance of motives. Humanitarianism and internationalism still exist as rationales for foreign student enrolments. But they have been overshadowed in both rhetoric and reality during the

[133] Hans de Wit, *Internationalization of Higher Education in the United States of America and Europe: A Historical, Comparative, and Conceptual Analysis* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 46.

[134] Ibid., 47.

[135] Ibid.

[136] Ibid., 46.

[137] Ibid.

> 1980s by the increased emphasis on pragmatics: by the monies to be derived from foreign student tuitions, by the purchases and expenditures made by foreign students as tourists, and by the less measurable but ultimately even more important contribution to be made by foreign graduates as future financial and diplomatic allies.[138]

It can be inferred from this statement that institutions perceived foreign students as the actors for financial and diplomatic relations with other states. Indeed, the expenditures of foreign students contribute to the economy of the state. As for diplomatic relations, the mobilities of these foreign students will strengthen the relations between countries. Therefore, foreign students are strategic actors in bilateral relations between states in various areas.[139] Considering all these impacts, it can be argued that through the end of the 20th century, all these individual international mobilities had a big role in the policies regarding the internationalization of higher education. The second change during this period was the initiation of the research and technological development programs. For instance, as academic and international research programs different international activities were held like conferences, workshops, congresses and seminars. In terms of research and technological programs, the European Commission has a crucial role. The Commission initiates and follows international cooperation about such research because these projects have certain contributions and useful impacts on institutions.[140] Furthermore, the objectives of these European research and development programs were "to establish a European research and technology community; to increase the capacity of European industry to develop its own technological capability through research and innovation; to strengthen the international competitiveness of the European economy; to establish uniform rules and standards where these were needed; to improve the quality of life and living."[141]

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[138] Alice Chandler, *Obligation or Opportunity: Foreign Student Policy in Six Major Receiving Countries* (New York, NY: Institute of International Education, 1989), viii.

[139] Hans de Wit, *Internationalization of Higher Education in the United States of America and Europe: A Historical, Comparative, and Conceptual Analysis* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 49.

[140] Ibid.

[141] Jill Preston, *EC, Education, Training and Research Programmes: An Action Guide* (London: Kogan Page, 1991).

Therefore, the main aspects of these programs were Europeanization, compatibility and worldwide integration as de Wit argues.[142]

The third change in this period is the European Commission mobility programs according to de Wit. In the early period of 1980s, Study Abroad idea became popular. States started to promote the mobility of their national students to other international universities to get their degrees from them. This was the new development after individual student mobilities. But short-term mobilities as the exchange of students were still one of the priorities of higher education institutions during this period.[143] Indeed, "the objectives of the EU policy for education in that period were a pluricultural Europe, a Europe of mobility, a Europe of education for all, a Europe of expertise, and a Europe open to the world." [144] Moreover, during this period, various mobility programs emerged for cooperation among higher education institutions like Erasmus. In line with these programs, professional organizations were found to bring international officers in organizations.

The European Commission published the Memorandum of Higher Education. In this memorandum, the place of the EU in education and education-related programs was discussed in 1991. The enlarged role of the EU was expressed by Jacques Delors as "the mutual integration and opening up to each other of general education and professional training systems are an economic issue, in terms of maintaining competitiveness, and a political issue, in terms of defending democracy and human rights" according to the statement of de Wit.[145] Another development during this period in terms of education policies was the Maastricht Treaty. The educational policies became formal with the signing of this treaty in 1992. The treaty was ratified

[142] Hans de Wit, *Internationalization of Higher Education in the United States of America and Europe: A Historical, Comparative, and Conceptual Analysis* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 50.

[143] Ibid., 51.

[144] Hans de Wit, *Internationalization of Higher Education in the United States of America and Europe: A Historical, Comparative, and Conceptual Analysis* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002),51.

[145] Ibid., 54.

in 1993. [146] This treaty introduced two agendas, which were open distance education and higher education, by enlarging the role of the European Commission. [147] In short, the emergence of mobility programs with the involvement of the European Commission was another change during the 1980s.

The last change was the involvement of the European Commission with the rest of the world according to the classification of de Wit. Regarding the cooperation with Central and Eastern Europe, it had a great effect on higher education in these regions. For instance, cooperation with these regions increased, and it became popular in Europe. [148] Governments of Central and Eastern Europe supported the internationalization of their program and international cooperation. According to de Wit the national education system and its quality improved. Although there were some unsolved problems within the governments, the gap between the West and other parts of Europe diminished and disappeared.[149] Furthermore, regarding cooperation with third countries, the European Commission took certain steps, too. For instance, different programs were stimulated. All these programs were held to develop the administrative staff and students in these third countries, change in curriculum, the cooperation with other higher education institutions, development in education and mobilities of students. [150] In short, all these developments occurred not only in Europe but also in other parts of the world. The awareness of the internationalization of higher education became worldwide.

According to the classification of de Wit, the last decade for the internationalization process was the present decade. He described this period as the harmonization of systems and structures. The late 1990s and early 2000s were the time for a big change toward Europeanization. The biggest and the most crucial change was the

[146] Hans de Wit, *Internationalization of Higher Education in the United States of America and Europe: A Historical, Comparative, and Conceptual Analysis* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 53-54.

[147] Ibid.

[148] Ibid., 57.

[149] Ibid., 58.

[150] Ibid., 60.

signing of the Bologna Declaration. Indeed, the Bologna Declaration about higher education in Europe was signed by 29 European states on June 19, 1999, in Italy.[151] The purpose of this declaration was that

> A Europe of Knowledge is now widely recognized as an irreplaceable factor for social and human growth and as an indispensable component to consolidate and enrich the European citizenship, capable of giving its citizens the necessary competences to face the challenges of the new millennium, together with an awareness of shared values and belonging to a common social and cultural space. The importance of education and educational co-operation in the development and strengthening of stable, peaceful and democratic societies is universally acknowledged as paramount, the more so in view of the situation in South East Europe. [152]

Therefore, the declaration correlated education with the welfare of countries. According to the statement, for the continuation of a peaceful and democratic understanding in countries, the role of education and educational collaboration was crucial. Hence, the importance of education was highlighted and proved by the declaration. The declaration had some concrete objectives. These were;

> adoption of a system of easily understandable and comparable degrees, including the adoption of a Diploma Supplement, adoption of a system essentially based on two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate, establishment of a system of credits as a means of promoting student mobility, promotion of mobility by overcoming obstacles to the effective exercise of free movement, promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance, promotion of the European dimension in higher education [153]

When these objectives were analyzed, it can be inferred that the declaration laid emphasis on the internationalization of higher education. In addition to this, it highlighted the necessity for competitiveness among universities to attract international students to their countries and universities. In short, with the signing of the Bologna Declaration, it was openly shown that educational activities, specifically the internationalization of higher education institutions, were one of the most crucial elements for the Europeanization process. In order to influence other parts of the

[151] Ibid., 62.

[152] Ibid.

[153] Ibid., 62-63.

world, education is an important tool to attract foreign students and to promote Europeanization.

Considering all these historical developments in internationalization of European higher education, it is necessary to examine the impact of international programs on this internationalization process. One of the impacts was the change in the direction of mobilities. Before internationalization, there was only one-way mobility, and mobility was very limited. After the promotion and initiation of internationalization, there were mobilities two or multiple directions. Also, the exchanges started to be realized by different levels of higher education.[154] Indeed, through this internationalization process, students from lower or middle classes had the chance to realize international mobilities. Also, the number of these mobilities has risen. But before, only students from the upper class had the chance to realize exchange, and the number of these students was very limited. Hence, this was one of the biggest impacts of the internationalization of European higher education. Another impact was the active involvement of higher education institutions during the European programs. Therefore, different programs became an income for institutions through different international programs.[155]

Moreover, Ulrich Teichler recognized three main contributions to the internationalization of European higher education. [156] The first one was "from a predominantly vertical pattern of cooperation and mobility, towards the dominance of international relationships on equal terms."[157] Hence, collaborations and mobilities were held equally through close international relations. The second one was "from casuistic action towards systematic policies of internationalization."[158]

[154] Godelieve Laureys, "'Mobility Has Come to Stay': Management Strategies to Meet the Demands of Internationalisation in Higher Education," *Higher Education Management* 4, no. 1 (1992): 108–20, 109.

[155] Hans de Wit, *Internationalization of Higher Education in the United States of America and Europe: A Historical, Comparative, and Conceptual Analysis* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 66.

[156] Ulrich Teichler, "Internationalisation as a Challenge for Higher Education in Europe," *Tertiary Education and Management* 5 (1999): 5–23, 5.

[157] Ibid., 9-10.

[158] Ibid.

Therefore, higher education institutions took organized actions. And the third one was "from a disconnection of specific international activities on the one hand, and on the other internationalization of the core activities, towards an integrated internationalization of higher education."[159] Therefore, international actions or activities were perceived as a part of the internationalization of higher education in Europe instead of a separate action plan. Ultimately, when all these developments, impacts, and policies were considered, it can be asserted that in the progress of time, although the process was complicated and not clear, Europeanization became the touchstone and effective of the internationalization process of Europe. Higher education in Europe developed according to different educational programs through internationalization.

2.5. Internationalization of Higher Education in Türkiye

The history of internationalization of higher education in Türkiye goes back to the Ottoman Empire period and took its form nowadays. Before discussing the history of the internationalization process, it is first necessary to explain the major factors that have an impact on this process and the main features of it. To start with the factors, according to Kondakçı, there are four main factors that reflect the role of Türkiye for reflect the role of Türkiye in the internationalization of higher education. The first one is "the geopolitical position of Türkiye, one of the important factors defining its role in internationalization, being a natural bridge between East and West, a gateway for neighbors seeking access to advanced industrialized European economies, ...Türkiye's political atmosphere ... attracting foreign students and institutions"[160] Therefore, the strategic geopolitical place of Türkiye is one of the aspects of the internationalization process. The second factor is "the capacity and diversity of Türkiye's higher education system, specifying that most of the universities are established according to Anglo-Saxon type system"[161] Hence, the education system

[159] Ibid.

[160] Yaşar Kondakçı, "Türkiye's Distinctive Position in the Internationalization of Higher Education," *Higher Education and the Middle East: Serving the Knowledge – Based Economy* 1, no. 7 (2010): 52–54, 53.

[161] Ibid.

in Türkiye has importance for the process. The third aspect is "Türkiye's historical and cultural characteristics, which make it attractive, especially for the students from the Balkans, Caucasia, Central Asia, and the Middle East."[162] Therefore, cultural and historical similarities play an important role in the internationalization process, especially in attracting incoming students. The fourth factor is "Türkiye's macro-economic performance, its engagement to the Western economy which attracted foreign students who are hoping to find employment opportunities in Türkiye and as well creating an opportunity to the foreign institutions for collaboration with Turkish educational higher institutions."[163] Thus, the economic relations between Türkiye and Western states are crucial for the internationalization process. Close economic relations increase the opportunity for incoming students to stay in Türkiye and find a job through cooperation between states.

Based on these factors, Kondakçı described three major features of the internationalization of Turkish higher education. To start with the first one, Türkiye can be described as a sending country with respect to student mobility. The number of outgoing students in Türkiye is much for higher than the incoming students, although the incoming students raised starting from are much higher than the incoming students, although the number of incoming students have risen since the 2000s. The second characteristic is that the Turkish government supports higher education institutions for their internationalization processes and to increase their collaboration and joint programs. The third feature is that the Turkish government is directly involved in the internationalization process of higher education by following policies accordingly and developing scholarships for international mobilities.[164] Considering these factors and features, Kondakçı analyzes students' rationales for their mobility. He analyzes these rationales within two categories which are pre-departure and post-departure. Regarding the first category, students have public and private reasons. As public rationales, students consider wage differences, political issues, environmental cases, and job opportunities. As private rationales, students

[162] Ibid.

[163] Ibid.

[164] Ibid.

look at the academic successes of schools, food diversities, city life, language skills, family relations and the attitude of citizens towards foreign people. Considering all these issues, students decide on their mobility and country choice. Regarding the second category, students similarly have public and private considerations. As public rationales, students look at the opportunities for their academic network, the internationalization of higher education institutions, and the migration policies of the receiving state. As private rationales, students consider stay both their academic and social satisfaction for continuing their mobility or staying in that country. Thence, through the end of their mobilities, students consider both academic careers and economic standards.[165] In short, the internationalization of higher education in Türkiye occurs based on economic cooperation, social and cultural interaction, and political and diplomatic relations.

Considering all these features, factors, and rationales, it is necessary to discuss the historical development of the internationalization process of higher education in Türkiye. Although the scientific, social, and political developments in the last couple of years accelerated the internationalization process in Türkiye, the roots of the process go back to the Ottoman Empire period. During this period, students went to France and Paris as an international mobility. This was the first international mobility for the country, and the number of these outgoing students raised in the upcoming years.[166] During the Tanzimat reform era, authorities were supporting international mobilities and education. Therefore, they sent students to Europe for education. Also, some studies were translated into Ottoman Turkish and European specialists visited the country for collaboration. Furthermore, during the Republic period, the policy and support for sending students to abroad for studying. In 1923, the Turkish government took certain steps to send students to Europe to study and develop themselves.[167] In the 1950s, the Turkish higher education system started to

[165] Yasar Kondakçı, "Student Mobility Reviewed: Attraction and Satisfaction of International Students in Türkiye," *Higher Education* 62, no. 5 (2011): 573–92, 575.

[166] Aynur Erdoğan, "Tanzimat Döneminde Yurt Dışına Öğrenci Gönderme Olgusu ve Osmanlı Modernleşmesine Etkileri," *Sosyoloji Dergisi* 3, no. 20 (2010): 121–51.

[167] Devrim Vural-Yılmaz, "Yükseköğretimde Uluslararasılaşma: Türkiye'de Ulusal Siyasalar, Kurumsal Stratejiler ve Uygulamalar= Internationalization in Higher Education: National Policies, Institutional Strategies and Implementations in Türkiye" (dissertation, 2014).

consider the American model. Indeed, during this period, the Democrat Party was commissioned by the University of Nebraska. With this visit, "Turkish-American Joint Commission and Land-Grant university model" was initiated. In line with this model, the authorities decided to open faculties in different parts of Türkiye. Through this partnership, Ege, Karadeniz Teknik, Atatürk, and Middle East Technical Universities were founded.[168] Moreover, during this period, development plans were also effective in the internationalization of higher education. For instance, in 1961 constitution, under the first development plan, sending students to abroad for graduate education and research studies was included. The purpose was to have academic staff who studies abroad.[169] Study abroad idea was continued in the following development plans too. After the 1980s, language policy was developed by the government, and specifically, learning English became widespread.[170] In addition to language, the internationalization of higher education institutions was also determined a policy in Türkiye since the 1980s, and some legal regulations were made by the government. For instance, on 14th of October 1983, Law No. 2922 on Foreign Students Studying in Türkiye was printed for all the universities, which were gathered under the umbrella of the Council of Higher Education with Law No. 2547 in 1981. Under this law, an Evaluation Board was established in order to regulate and identify the procedures of incoming students with scholarships. On April 15, 1985, the Cabinet Decree released the "Regulation on Foreign Students Studying in Türkiye".[171] The purpose of this regulation was to determine the working principles of this Board and the issues related to the implementation of the law.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, with the independence of states, new cooperation between the Turkish Republics and Türkiye emerged based on cultural

[168] Emre Dölen, *Türkiye Üniversite Tarihi 5: Özerk Üniversite Dönemi 1946-1981* (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2010), 85.

[169] Devrim Vural-Yılmaz, "Yükseköğretimde Uluslararasılaşma: Türkiye'de Ulusal Siyasalar, Kurumsal Stratejiler ve Uygulamalar= Internationalization in Higher Education: National Policies, Institutional Strategies and Implementations in Türkiye" (dissertation, 2014).

[170] Nuray E. Keskin, "Türkiye'de Kamu Yönetimi Disiplininin 'köken' Sorunu.," *Amme İdaresi Dergisi* 39, no. 2 (2005): 1–21.

[171] "Mevzuat Bilgi Sistemi," T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Mevzuat Bilgi Sistemi, accessed January 21, 2024, https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/.

and historical similarities.[172] For instance, starting from 1992, with the initiation of the Great Student Project, scholarships were given to incoming students from the Turkish Republics in Central Asia and Balkan countries. With these countries, through this internationalization step of Turkish higher education, the economic and political relations were improved.[173] Apart from these collaborations, starting in the 2000s, Türkiye started to initiate new integration policies with Europe. Indeed, due to its strategic geopolitical position, Türkiye tried to have close relations and partnerships both with the East and West at the same time.[174] With this purpose, and for its membership to the EU, Türkiye followed certain steps. For instance, on April 1, 2001, as an internationalization step, Türkiye became part of the European Higher Education Area project by fulfilling the requirements. The aim was to complete it by 2010, and it was officially established official as the European Higher Education Area in 2010. The goals of this project were to establish comparable higher education diplomas, degrees, the European Credit Transfer System, higher education qualification frameworks, and quality assurance systems. European Higher Education Area ensures its members that higher education systems and institutions can provide services of similar quality and work in harmony by having a standard among states.[175] Through Great Student Project, Turkish government aimed to develop the quality of the Turkish higher education and wanted to upskill students for finding jobs.

As a member of the European Higher Education Area, Türkiye got involved in the process of the Bologna Declaration. Indeed, although the process of the Bologna

[172] Yüksel Kavak and Gülsün Atanur Başkan, "Türkiye'nin Türk Cumhuriyetleri, Türk ve Akraba Topluluklarına Yönelik Eğitim Politika ve Uygulamaları," *Hacettepe Üniversitresi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi* 20 (2001): 92–103.

[173] Gözde Ergin and Fahri Türk, "Türkiye'de Öğrenim Gören Orta Asyalı Öğrenciler," *Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Dergisi* 2, no. 1 (2010): 35–41, 36.

[174] Fatma Mızıkacı, "Prospects for European Integration: Turkish Higher Education," *Higher Education in Europe* 30, no. 1 (2005): 67–79.

[175] Ibid.; Hilal Büyükgöze and Murat Özdemir, "Avrupa Yükseköğretim Alanı (AYA) Çerçevesinde Yükseköğretime Erişimi ve Katılımı Genişletme Politikalarının Değerlendirilmesi.," *Yuksekogretim Dergisi* 6, no. 1 (2016): 40–46.; Gökhan Çetinsaya, *Büyüme, Kalite, Uluslararasılaşma: Türkiye Yükseköğretimi Için Bir Yol Haritası* (Eskişehir: Yükseköğretim Kurulu, 2014).; Nurhayat Çelebi, "Avrupa Birliği ve Eğitim," essay, in *Küreselleşme ve Eğitime Yansımaları*, ed. Nurhayat Çelebi (Ankara, Türkiye: Nobel Akademik Yayıncılık, 2016).

Declaration started in 1999, Türkiye officially became involved in the Bologna Process in May 2001.[176] Thence, through this involvement the Turkish higher education became more Eurocentric. After the membership to this declaration, Turkish higher education institutions intensely focused on adopting the objectives of the declaration. In order to receive membership to the EU, Türkiye was involved in the Bologna Process, and this was perceived as a crucial step for Turkish higher education. The goals of the Bologna Declaration were "to adopt a system of easily readable and comparable degrees; to implement a system based essentially on two main cycles; to establish a system of credits (such as ECTS); to support the mobility of students, researchers, and administrative staff; to promote European cooperation in quality assurance; to promote the European dimensions in higher education (in terms of curricular development and inter-institutional cooperation"[177] In line with these goals, the declaration had four main objectives. These were "lifelong learning; the partnership of higher education institutions and students; promoting the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA); and objective introduced in the 2003 Berlin Communique as; doctoral studies and the synergy between the EHEA and the European Research Area (ERA). [178] When all these goals and objectives were considered, it can be asserted that the aim of the Bologna Process of higher education institutions was to have a unique and accessible system for grading, easy mobility, and regional partnership between universities. Another aim was also to find a common solution to the problems of higher education institutions by comparing their education systems. While doing these, the aim of the declaration was not to have one system to be applied by every member. Instead of forcing universities to have the same education system, the process supports the harmonization of different education systems without eliminating the differences between them.[179]

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[176] "Yükseköğretim Kurulu Bolonya Süreci, Bolonya Sürecine Üye Olan Ülkeler," YÖK, 2014, https://uluslararasi.yok.gov.tr/uluslararasilasma/bologna.

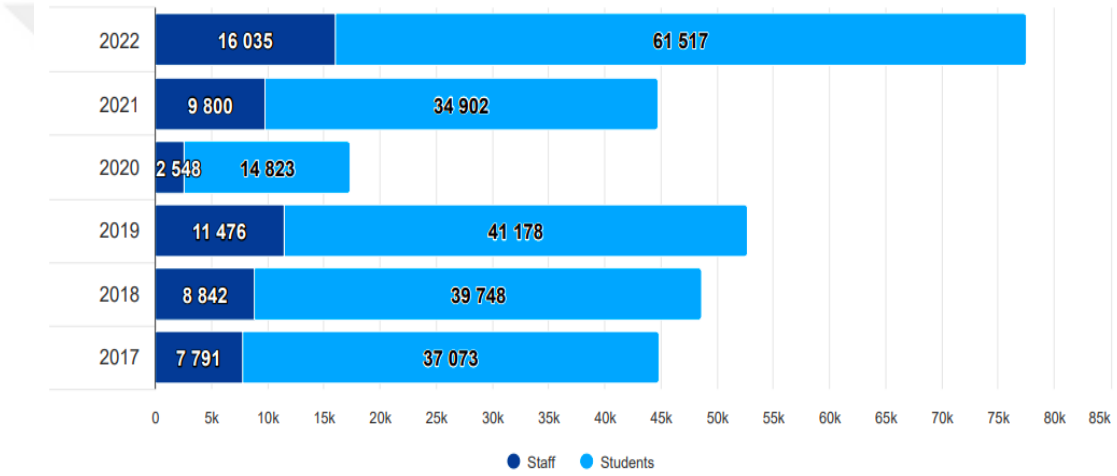
[177] David Crosier and Teodora Parveva, *The Bologna Process: Its Impact in Europe and Beyond* (Paris: UNESCO, 2013), 23.

[178] Laurel S. Terry, "The Bologna Process and Its Impact in Europe: It's So Much More than Degree Changes," *Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law* 41, no. 1 (2008): 107–228, 116.

[179] "Bologna Süreci Nedir?," YÖK, accessed January 21, 2024, https://uluslararasi.yok.gov.tr/uluslararasilasma/bologna/temel-bilgiler/bologna-sureci-nedir.

Another certain step that was taken by Turkish higher education institutions is their involvement in the Erasmus+ program in 2004. Since time, more than120 a thousand project applications have been received from Türkiye through the Turkish National Agency, and more than 28 thousand of them have been allocated more than 1 billion Euros in grants. Also, more than 475 thousand participants have benefited from education and youth opportunities by participating in mobility projects coordinated by Türkiye.[180] According to the statistics of the European Commission, the following graphic shows the total number of outgoing students and staff between 2017 and 2022.

Table 1. Erasmus + participants leaving Türkiye Erasmus+ in numbers 2017-2022[181]



When the graph (Table 1) is analyzed, it can be asserted that the number of outgoing students and staff increases gradually, except for 2020. The reason for the decrease in 2020 is the Covid-19 impact. The following graph (Table 2) shows the number of incoming students and staff. When both graphs are compared, it can be argued that the number of incoming participants is almost half the number of outgoing participants. Similar to outgoing statistics, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, in 2020, the number of incoming participants decreased.

[180] "ERASMUS'tan ERASMUS+'a 30 Yılın Hikayesi," Türkiye Ulusal Ajansı, 2017, https://www.ua.gov.tr/media/jejdp0rl/erasmus-30-y%C4%B1l.pdf, 19.

[181] European Commission, "Erasmus+ Türkiye in 2022, Statistics on Mobility, Cooperation and Other Data," European Commission, Erasmus+, 2023, https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/factsheets/2022/t%C3%BCrkiye.

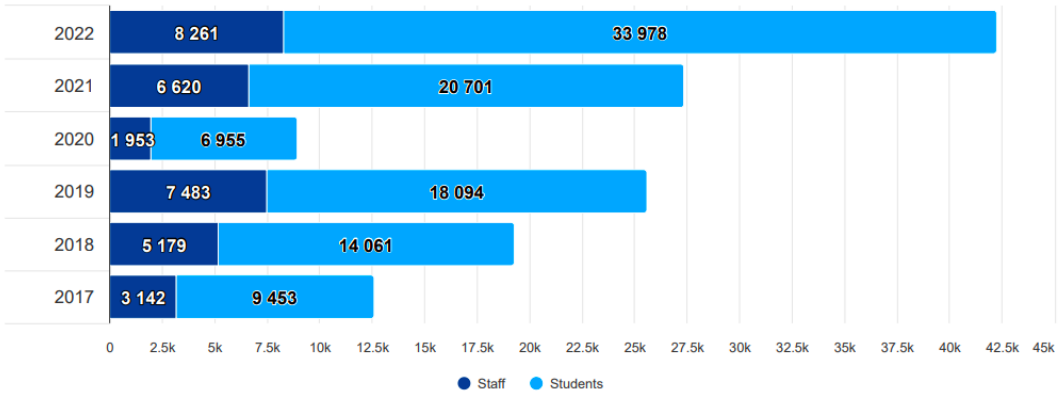


Table 2. Erasmus + participants traveling to Türkiye Erasmus+ in numbers 2017-2022[182]

Apart from the cooperation with the Turkish Republics and Europe, the Turkish government followed other steps for the internationalization of Turkish Higher Education. Indeed, on March 17, 2010, with the decision of the General Assembly of Higher Education, the decision about the admission of international degree-seeking students was left to the universities. Therefore, universities had the discretion about the process of international students.[183] In addition to this decision, the Assembly decided to open International Student Offices in universities to promote international education, follow the process of the admission of international students, and guide these students during their education life.[184] In the same year, on March 24, the Department of International Students was established under the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities. On August 8, 2011, with a decree law, the right to make a decision about the incoming international students who come to Türkiye through their own means was given to the Council of Higher Education.[185] On January 11, 2012, all the scholarships, including the State Scholarships, Government Scholarships, Ministry Scholarships, and Turkish Religious Foundation Scholarships,

[182] Ibid.

[183] Armağan Erdoğan, "Türkiye'de Yükseköğretimin Gündemi için Politika Önerisi," *Yükseköğretim ve Bilim Dergisi* 4, no. 1 (2014): 1–17, 4.; KAM, rep., *Yükseköğretimin Uluslararasılaşması Çerçevesinde Türk Üniversitelerinin Uluslararası Öğrenciler Için Çekim Merkezi Haline Getirilmesi (Rapor No: 2936)* (Ankara, Türkiye: T.C. Kalkınma Bakanlığı, Kalkınma Araştırmaları Merkezi [KAM], 2015), 81.

[184] Mustafa Yakupoğlu, "Türkiye'nin Yükseköğretim Uluslararasılaşma Stratejisi, Avustralya İle Karşılaştırılması" (thesis, Yurtdışı Türkler ve Akraba Topluluklar Başkanlığı, 2014), 100.

[185] Armağan Erdoğan, "Türkiye'de Yükseköğretimin Gündemi için Politika Önerisi," *Yükseköğretim ve Bilim Dergisi* 4, no. 1 (2014): 1–17, 10.

were gathered under Türkiye Scholarships. The purpose of this scholarship was expressed as "Strengthening the cultural, political and economic relations that Türkiye has developed in the international arena through the ties to be established by international students, ensuring the sharing of our country's culture and civilization and the accumulation of knowledge in the field of higher education at the global level, and contributing to the internationalization of our higher education institutions with qualified international students."[186]

Moreover, on April 11, 2013, under the Law No.6458, provisions that legally prevented foreign students from working have been abolished.[187] Additionally, in 2013, various regulations have been made to prevent international students studying in Türkiye from dealing with bureaucratic procedures, including their residence permits, health insurance and tuition amounts.[188] Furthermore, in 2014, the Turkish government made various arrangements and revisions for the internationalization of higher education. Apart from these, the Turkish government wanted to have qualified incoming students. Thence, the head of the Council of Higher Education, Yekta Saraç, stated that "practices will go in parallel with the strategy to be determined and work will be carried out especially to increase the quality of students coming from abroad."[189] For this purpose, the Council initiated a Project-Based International Exchange Program. For instance, the government enlarged the scope of scholarship programs and initiated the Mevlana Exchange program. Therefore, the internationalization of higher education was one of the top priorities in Türkiye.[190]

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[186] "Türkiye Bursları Yönetmeliği, 29033," Başbakanlık Mevzuatı Geliştirme ve Yayın Genel Müdürlüğü, June 17, 2014, https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2014/06/20140617-9.htm.

[187] "2016 Türkiye Göç Raporu," T.C. içişleri Bakanlığı Göç idaresi Başkanlığı, April 2017, https://www.goc.gov.tr/kurumlar/goc.gov.tr/YillikGocRaporlari/2016_yiik_goc_raporu_haziran.pdf, 49.

[188] Mustafa Yakupoğlu, "Türkiye'nin Yükseköğretim Uluslararasılaşma Stratejisi, Avustralya İle Karşılaştırılması" (thesis, Yurtdışı Türkler ve Akraba Topluluklar Başkanlığı, 2014), 102-103.

[189] DEİK, rep., *YÖK Başkanı Prof. Dr. Yekta Saraç İle Uluslararası Öğrenci Temini Ve Yükseköğretimde Uluslararasılaşma İstişare Toplantısı* (Dış Ekonomik İlişkiler Kurulu (DEİK) Eğitim Ekonomisi İş Konseyi, April 24, 2015), https://www.deik.org.tr/uploads/yok-baskani-ile-uluslararasi-ogrenci-temini-sonuc-raporu-24-nisan-2015.pdf, 11-12.

[190] Gülşah Taşçı, "Yükseköğretimde Uluslararasılaşma: Türkiye Örneği (1995-2014)" (dissertation, 2018), 90-91.

Although the internationalization process of Turkish higher education initiated with exchange programs, the process enlarged and became more institutionalized. Indeed, the Council of Higher Education printed a report about internationalization process and addressed a road map by identifying internationalization as one of three main goals of higher education.[191]

Within the framework of the enlargement of internationalization processes, in 2017, the Council of Higher Education printed the Strategy Document on Internationalization in Higher Education for 2018 and 2022. The purpose of this document is to have a qualified higher education with universal standards and to guide universities about internationalization policies and strategies of higher education. Most of all, to make Turkish higher education as an international center of attraction.[192] Hence, all these steps and purposes were addressed to raise awareness about internationalization, to build international partnerships and cooperation, and to have an international dimension in higher education.

In conclusion, when the internationalization process of Turkish higher education is considered, it can be asserted that the process includes not only international mobility of students or staff, but also the standardization of universal education, the recognition process of degrees from different universities, scholarship or degree-seeking programs, the Bologna Process, etc. were these steps aimed to raise the number of international students and staff, and international mobilities, and to have international standards and qualified education. Most of all, to make Türkiye the center for attraction through higher education for better international relations. In other words, in soft power, the most important motivation is to train potential future leaders. Türkiye wants to draw a positive profile of the country in the eyes of future leaders when they come to Türkiye to study and then return to their countries for close international relations.

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[191] Gökhan Çetinsaya, *Büyüme, Kalite, Uluslararasılaşma: Türkiye Yükseköğretimi Için Bir Yol Haritası* (Eskişehir: Yükseköğretim Kurulu, 2014).

[192] YÖK, *Yükseköğretimde Uluslararasılaşma Strateji Belgesi 2018-2022* (Yükseköğretim Kurulu, June 30, 2017), https://www.yok.gov.tr/Documents/AnaSayfa/Yuksekogretimde_Uluslararasilasma_Strateji_Belgesi_2018_2022.pdf, 2.

2.6. Erasmus+ Programme and Internationalization of Higher Education

Erasmus+ Programme is one of the components of the internationalization of the higher education process. Before going into the details of its aim and objective, it is first necessary to address the origin of the program. The program took its name from the renowned philosopher Desiderius Erasmus. Erasmus also refers to the acronym for the "European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students."[193] The program is one of the crucial and well-known initiatives of the EU. Thence, Erasmus+ is the cornerstone of educational activities regulated by the EU.[194] Originally, the programme was founded in 1987 by the EU. Its initial name was Erasmus, and it only followed mobility programs and cooperation. On June 15, 1987, the European Council decided on the action scheme for the Erasmus with the decision 1987/327 - 87/327/EEC. In the statement, the objectives were stated as

> (i) to achieve a significant increase in the number of students from universities as defined in Article 1 (2) spending an integrated period of study in another Member State, in order that the Community may draw upon an adequate pool of manpower with first-hand experience of economic and social aspects of other Member States, while ensuring equality of opportunity for male and female students as regards participation in such mobility; (ii) to promote broad and intensive cooperation between universities in all Member States; (iii) to harness the full intellectual potential of the universities in the Community by means of increased mobility of teaching staff, thereby improving the quality of the education and training provided by the universities with a view to securing the competitiveness of the Community in the world market; (iv) to strengthen the interaction between citizens in different Member States with a view to consolidating the concept of a People's Europe; (v) to ensure the development of a pool of graduates with direct experience of intra-Community cooperation, thereby creating the basis upon which intensified cooperation in the economic and social sectors can develop at Community level. [195]

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[193] "Erasmus to Erasmus+: History, Funding and Future," Erasmus+, accessed January 21, 2024, https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/about-erasmus/history-funding-and-future.

[194] Vassiliki Papatsiba, "Political and Individual Rationales of Student Mobility: A Case-study of Erasmus and a French Regional Scheme for Studies Abroad," *European Journal of Education* 40, no. 2 (2005): 173–88.

[195] "Decision 1987/327 - 87/327/EEC: Council Decision of 15 June 1987 Adopting the EC Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (Erasmus) - Main Contents," European Council, accessed January 21, 2024, https://www.parlementairemonitor.nl/9353000/1/j4nvk6yhcbpeywk_j9tvgajcor7dxyk_j9vvij5epmj1ey0/vitgbgh93hzl.

Therefore, the Council highlighted 5 main objectives of the Erasmus programme. These were; to increase the number of outgoing exchange students by opening a space for students for an exchange study by considering gender equality, to promote international cooperation between higher education institutions, to promote exchange of academic staff for qualified education, to open space for communication between societies, and lastly, to have qualified graduate students for business sector. In brief, the programme initiated with the aim to have qualified higher education with qualified students and staff in Europe. At the initial stage, the programme was only focused on the mobility actions of the students between European states. Based on these characteristics and aims, Teichler expressed the characteristics of the Erasmus Programme as:

> Erasmus supports regional mobility; Erasmus promotes temporary study abroad; Erasmus almost exclusively supports collective mobility; Erasmus promotes mobility and cooperation within networks of departments sending and receiving students; Erasmus advises the networks, institutions and departments involved to provide systematic support to ensure satisfactory 'organized study abroad' for participating students; Erasmus encourages 'curricular integration' ranging from joint or coordinated academic activities between the partner departments on the one hand, and the incorporation of the temporary study period into the home country curriculum on the other; Erasmus has an inclusive approach towards the temporary study period abroad, with recognition upon return of the achievements during the study period abroad being the key criterion for granting support; Erasmus is a partial and incentive funding scheme. Students are awarded a grant to cover the additional costs of study abroad, while networks receive a moderate grant for institutional support which usually has to be complemented by institutional resources.[196]

Hence, according to this description, Erasmus is matched with mobility, cooperation and network. Moreover, depending on these characteristics and aims, the program is finalized under three main key actions. The first key action was “Learning mobility of individuals”. The second key action was “Cooperation among organizations and institutions”. The last key action was “Support to policy development and cooperation”.[197] Based on these key actions, the program was realized.

[196] Ulrich Teichler, “Student Mobility in the Framework of ERASMUS: Findings of an Evaluation Study,” *European Journal of Education*, 31, no. 2 (1996): 153–79, 155-156.

[197] “Erasmus to Erasmus+: History, Funding and Future,” Erasmus+, accessed January 21, 2024, https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/about-erasmus/history-funding-and-future.

Considering these objectives and aims of Erasmus programme in general, it is now necessary to address the historical background of the programme. The Erasmus programme was initiated in 1987. The program was launched in 11 European Countries, which were Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, France, Ireland, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom.[198] The initial aim was to promote cooperation among higher education institutions in Europe. Hence, at the beginning of the programme, the original purpose was to have an international student exchange. The program is implemented in seven-year cycles. Until 1994, this program followed as Erasmus. Starting from 1995 till 2006, the programme named under Socrates programme. Between 1995 and 1999, the program was part of the Socrates I Program, and after that time until 2006, it was part of the Socrates II Program. The purpose of the Socrates Program was to have a qualified education and to have cooperation and collaboration in European higher education. During this time, Erasmus programme enlarged its activities and initiated traineeship activity.[199] Between 2007 and 2013, the programme was realized as a branch of Lifelong Learning Programme.[200] Lifelong Learning Programme became an umbrella term that covered not only Erasmus education program but also training activities, Comenius for schools, Leonardo da Vinci for vocational education, and Grundtvig for adult education.[201]

In 2014, Erasmus expanded its objectives and became a programme that covers not only education and training but also youth, sport and other activities. Therefore, the name changed from Erasmus to Erasmus+ by the European Commission.[202] Erasmus+ became an umbrella term for the whole Erasmus, Grundtvig, Leonardo da

[198] "ERASMUS'tan ERASMUS+'a 30 Yılın Hikayesi," Türkiye Ulusal Ajansı, 2017, https://www.ua.gov.tr/media/jejdp0rl/erasmus-30-y%C4%B1l.pdf, 7.

[199] "From Erasmus to Erasmus+: A Story of 30 Years," European Commission, January 26, 2017, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO_17_83.

[200] "Erasmus to Erasmus+: History, Funding and Future," Erasmus+, accessed January 21, 2024, https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/about-erasmus/history-funding-and-future.

[201] Manja Klemenčič and Alenka Flander, *Evaluation of the Impact of the Erasmus Programme on Higher Education in Slovenia* (Ljubljana: Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Mobility and European Educational and Training Programmes - CMEPIUS, 2013).

[202] "ERASMUS'tan ERASMUS+'a 30 Yılın Hikayesi," Türkiye Ulusal Ajansı, 2017, https://www.ua.gov.tr/media/jejdp0rl/erasmus-30-y%C4%B1l.pdf, 7.

Vinci, and Comenius programs, Youth in Action and Erasmus Mundus, Tempus, Alfa, Edulink, Youth and Sport programs.[203] With the transformation of Erasmus to Erasmus+, the objectives of Erasmus+ also changed. Indeed, the new objectives were asserted by the European Commission as: 1) to predispose people regardless of their age or educational background. 2) to raise awareness about personal development. 3) to increase employment opportunities.[204] Therefore, the Erasmus+ focuses not only on the education and career development of students but also their lifelong learning by supporting personal development.

Based on these objectives, Erasmus+ programme provides three main key actions. The first one is Learning Mobility for Individuals. This key action includes education, training, internships, volunteering, personal and professional development, and learning-based youth activities. The second key action is Cooperation among Organizations and Institutions, which includes cooperation between educational institutions, the business world, youth organizations, institutional partnerships within the scope of youth activities, local/regional authorities, and non-governmental organizations within the scope of education, training, and youth activities. The last key action is Support to Policy Development and Cooperation. This action aims to rise the production of science-based policies, to share practices that may be applicable in this field, to strengthen policy reforms in European countries and to foster partnerships with non-EU Member States in this field and to share best practices.[205] According to the program regulations, eligible countries who can participate in Erasmus+ projects can be only EU member states or third countries associated with the program. These eligible countries are; Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland, Sweden, North Macedonia, Iceland, Norway, Serbia, Liechtenstein, Türkiye. In addition to these, in

[203] Ibid.

[204] "What Are the Objectives of the Erasmus+ Programme?," European Commission, accessed January 21, 2024, https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-a/priorities-of-the-erasmus-programme/objectives-features.

[205] "The Erasmus+ Programme Guide," European Commission, 2024, https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-programme-guide, 2-3.

some actions, for instance, the projects on higher education, vocational, youth education, or sports, third countries not associated with the program can participate. These eligible countries are from the regions of Western Balkans, Neighborhood East, South-Mediterranean countries, Russian Federation, Asia, Central Asia, Middle East, Pacific, Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, Caribbean, US, and Canada.

Having explained the historical development of the Erasmus+ programme, it is now necessary to address the programme activities. As stated before, Erasmus+ is held under three main key actions and the programme is implemented in seven-year cycles. In every cycle, different priorities are decided by the Commission. Although the main implementation is held by the European Commission, the programme is conducted in coordination of the Commission with the European Education and Culture Executive Agency, the National Agencies of every eligible countries.[206] During every period, new priorities and activities are introduced. The latest period covers the period between 2021 and 2027. During this cycle, the Commission decided on four main priorities. These are inclusion and diversity; digital transformation; environment and fight against climate change; participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement. In this period, the objectives of the programme are "to support, through lifelong learning, the educational, professional and personal development of people in education, training, youth and sport, in Europe and beyond thereby contributing to sustainable growth, quality jobs and social cohesion, to driving innovation, and to strengthening European identity and active citizenship."[207]

Three key actions were designed according to these objectives and priorities. All these key actions were expected to be implemented by the beneficiaries. The first key action refers to the mobilities of individuals. It includes mobility of learners and staff, youth participation activities, mobility of staff in the field of sport, DiscoverEU, language learning opportunities, virtual exchanges in higher education and youth. The second key action refers to the cooperation among organizations and institutions. This key action includes Partnerships for Cooperation, including

[206] Ibid., 20.

[207] Ibid.

cooperation Partnerships and Small-scale Partnerships; Partnerships for Excellence, including European Universities, Centres of Vocational Excellence, Erasmus+ Teacher Academies, Erasmus Mundus Action; Partnerships for Innovation, including Alliances for Innovation, Forward-looking Projects; Capacity Building projects, including Capacity Building projects in the field of higher education, Capacity Building projects in the field of vocational education and training, Capacity Building projects in the field of youth: Capacity Building projects in the field of sport; Not-for-profit sport events. The third key action refers to the support to policy development and cooperation.[208] Based on all these three key actions, Erasmus+ programme is implemented. In conclusion, as explained in previous chapters, countries took certain steps to internationalize their higher education institutions. One of the action that countries took is the exchange programs. Erasmus+ programme is one of them. Erasmus+ is the most popular exchange programme that is held almost in every region in the world. Erasmus+ is a way for universities to have close relations with other universities in different states. In short, Erasmus+ programme is a tool in order to have an international understanding in higher education.

Having examined the general information about the Erasmus+ and internationalization in higher education, it is now necessary to discuss this relation in respect to Türkiye. As stated above, Türkiye involved in Erasmus+ program in 2004. Turkish authorities stated that Erasmus+ program is one of the contributing factors to the internationalization process of Turkish higher education. Especially learning mobility under the Erasmus+ program has both short-term and long-term impacts on the participants and the country itself. These contributions and impacts will be discussed below according to the statements from the interviews that were conducted with the experts from the Turkish National Agency. Regarding the contribution of the Erasmus+ program to the internationalization of Turkish higher education institutions, it could be stated that according to the experts from the Turkish National Agency, the Erasmus+ program had an undeniable impact on this internationalization process. For instance, one of the experts from METU, named NA1, stated that

[208] Ibid., 15-17.

> We can see the opportunities offered by the Erasmus+ program in the higher education sector, including Individual learning mobility-exchange program, Erasmus Mundus Activities, European Universities Initiative, Jean Monnet Activities, Partnership projects as tools and processes that give higher education institutions an international dimension. With these tools, the Erasmus+ program contributes to our higher education institutions in their internationalization processes: networking/development, accessing additional financial resources to institutional/national resources, providing/increasing visibility in the international arena, collaborating with prestigious institutions/academics through producing joint publications and projects, making Türkiye a center of attraction for international students, increasing institutional quality and capacity through the sharing of know-how/good practices in academic and scientific fields, harmonizing the Turkish higher education field with the Bologna Process.

Hence, the experts provided a comprehensive overview of the relationship between the Erasmus+ program and internationalization in higher education. The experts focused on institutional development and discussed different opportunities of the Erasmus+ program, including Jean Monnet Actions and European Universities Initiatives. The second expert, named as NA2, stated that

> Through Erasmus+ activities in the field of higher education (student study/internship and staff teaching/training), cooperation between higher education institutions in Türkiye and institutions/organizations in other countries is encouraged and international cooperation networks are established, people with the necessary knowledge and skills are trained and the global understanding of the participants is improved through the mobility activities. It is also ensured that education programs comply with international quality standards.

Therefore, the expert focused on individual progress and quality under Erasmus+ mobility programs. The expert emphasized the importance of skills and knowledge development of individuals, the development of a global understanding, and the high educational standards of universities. S/he stated that through these developments, initiation and enlargement of international cooperation and networks are possible. The last expert from the Turkish National Agency, named as NA3, expressed that

> Thanks to the Erasmus program, academic staff and students in Türkiye have the opportunity to cooperate with universities abroad. I think that the development of bilateral relations, especially in staff mobility, contributes to the creation of joint projects between institutions. The more projects you

> present in an international environment, the more it will contribute to your internationalization. Especially in this sense, I think staff mobility is very meaningful. The participation of qualified students in the program will increase the confidence of higher education institutions in Türkiye and abroad. In this sense, it will be a good advertisement. These students study abroad.

It could be inferred from these sentences that the expert emphasized the tangible impacts of student and staff mobilities from a personal perspective. S/he highlighted the contribution of mobility programs to international projects and international recognition of higher education institutions.

When all these statements were considered, all three experts emphasized four common points. First, they all argued that through cooperation, international networks, and the visibility of Türkiye in the international field, the Erasmus+ program contributes to the internationalization of higher education institutions. Second, they stated that opportunities for international cooperation and network arise through student and staff mobility under Erasmus+ exchange program. Third, all three experts mentioned that through the Erasmus+ mobility program, higher education institutions need to align their education programs with international quality standards and to work on increasing institutional capacity. The last point that is emphasized by three experts is that Türkiye needs to become a center of attraction for international students and staff.

In addition to the views of these experts on the contribution of the Erasmus+ program to the internationalization of Turkish higher education institutions, they also made suggestions to Turkish universities for increasing this contribution. For example, the expert, named as NA1, stated that

> I find it essential for the realization of the objectives that the international relations offices of our higher education institutions are supported by their administrations and that expert staff are recruited. We can suggest that international strategy plans should be created more effectively, monitoring mechanisms should be established, the promotion of the Program should be increased, staff mobility should be encouraged, interest in our Central projects should be increased, workshops should be held on these issues and policies should be produced.

From this statement, it could be inferred that the expert highlighted the cruciality of dissemination of the Erasmus+ program. For this purpose, s/he pointed out that collaborative work among university administrations is necessary and various steps, including encouragement on exchange mobilities and international projects, the promotion of the Erasmus+ program should be followed. Another expert, named NA2, asserted that

> First, I think it is important to encourage participants through information activities, promotional meetings, sharing good practice examples, etc., to ensure that more people benefit from the program. In addition, Erasmus offices have a great role in supporting participants at every stage from pre-application information to the end of the mobility activity, so I think the number of staff and knowledge of the offices should be improved to support this. I also think that participation in events such as EAIE, NAFSA, etc., organized abroad, is important in terms of increasing bilateral collaborations and that universities should also show the necessary interest. Finally, I think that it would be beneficial to develop international collaborations established through country-based projects and to benefit from Central Projects by transforming them into long-term partnerships.

Similar to NA1, this expert also underlined the importance of encouraging participants to benefit from the Erasmus+ program. S/he also suggested the development of knowledge of the staff working at Erasmus offices needs to be supported. For this purpose, the expert stated that these staff need to attend international events to develop their international cooperation and network. Moreover, s/he suggested that universities should benefit from international projects for strong collaboration and partnership development. The last expert, named NA3, expressed that

> Erasmus+ is not the only program of the EU. There is also Horizon. Institutional cooperation is necessary to capture the synergy between these two. Especially with the closure of KA2 projects, there could be a process analysis and follow-up on the evolution of these projects into larger projects, central projects, or horizon projects. Likewise, KA171 programs can be given more attention to evolving into capacity-building projects.

Unlike others, the expert focused on specific examples and highlighted the continuity of collaborations and projects. Indeed s/he suggested to Turkish higher education institutions to expand their existing projects to enlarge their projects and develop

their capacities. In short, the experts from the Turkish National Agency suggest that to increase the contribution of the Erasmus+ program to the internationalization process of Turkish higher education institutions, universities should lay emphasis on collaborative work within their own institutions, encouraging exchange mobilities, international projects, and on developing the expertise of their staff.

In conclusion, when all these discussions in literature are considered, it could be stated that the Erasmus+ program is often discussed in terms of student mobility, academic achievements or personal development, with very limited examination of its role in broader political and cultural contexts like foreign policy or diplomacy. Most of the studies conducted in Türkiye are limited to specific universities, and the studies examine general trends with quantitative data. Within this context, there is a need for qualitative analyses that evaluate the contribution of Erasmus to internationalization in higher education as a diplomatic tool, based on multi-actor field data, including regional diversity and examining it theoretically.

What distinguishes this thesis from other studies is that it conceptualizes the Erasmus+ program not only as a student exchange program, but also as an educational diplomacy tool that overlaps with Türkiye's higher education policies and integrates with the public diplomacy strategies of its foreign policy. In this framework, the concept of education diplomacy is discussed relationally and the contribution of the Erasmus+ program to internationalization in higher education is discussed on this conceptual framework. This approach positions Erasmus+ program as an area where both individual experiences and institutional and national interests intersect, thus offering a critical alternative to approaches in the literature.

Furthermore, the use of multi-actor field data, such as students, academics and Erasmus office staff, is another important feature that distinguishes this thesis from similar studies. Analyzing the experiences of not only students but also Erasmus office staff and academics provides an important depth in understanding the multi-layered structure of the Erasmus+ program. Moreover, the in-depth interviews with these actors were conducted in three different regions of Türkiye (Ankara, Erzurum

and Izmir), geographically and institutionally diversified, thus making visible the effects of spatial diversity on Erasmus+ practices.

Methodologically, the analysis of this thesis was conducted using MAXQDA24, a qualitative data analysis software. The data obtained through thematic analysis succeeded in establishing a strong link between data and theory by associating these themes with the theory of educational diplomacy. In this respect, the study not only fills empirical gaps in the literature but also makes original contributions at the methodological and theoretical levels. In short, this thesis evaluates the Erasmus+ program as a multidimensional component of internationalization dynamics in higher education, demonstrating that the program not only generates individual benefits but also functions as a diplomatic mechanism that increases a country's international visibility. Through this multi-layered approach, the thesis aims to bridge the gap between education policies, foreign policy and internationalization processes, filling an important gap in the existing literature.

As can be seen in the literature, most of the studies do not sufficiently address the diplomatic and strategic dimensions of Erasmus in internationalization processes. In particular, the relationship of Erasmus+ program with concepts such as public diplomacy, soft power or educational diplomacy, which have an important place in the international relations literature, has not been examined in depth. This suggests that Erasmus+ program should be considered not only as an educational policy but also as a foreign policy tool. Therefore, in the next section, in order to better analyze the multidimensional nature of Erasmus, the concepts of educational diplomacy, soft power and public diplomacy, which form the theoretical basis of the study, will be discussed in detail. Thus, it will be possible to discuss the field findings not only descriptively but also theoretically.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: EDUCATION DIPLOMACY AS A TOOL OF SOFT POWER/PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

This thesis seeks to enhance our understanding of the contribution of the Erasmus+ Program to the internationalization of Turkish higher education between 2021 and 2023. The evaluation will be held through soft power and education diplomacy concepts through the prism of experiences of research universities in Türkiye. Soft power, public diplomacy, and education diplomacy are terms primarily used in discussions about promoting the linkage between international relations and education. Within this framework, education diplomacy is recognized as a means of public diplomacy. This section will discuss the theoretical challenges of defining and highlighting the characteristics of soft power, public diplomacy, and education diplomacy. In addition, the current debates about these concepts' origins, practices and constraints will be reviewed.

3.1. Soft Power

In the field of International Relations, traditionally power has been understood and defined in terms of military power and economic strength. However, with the emergence of new actors other than states, including companies, organizations, individuals, political parties, media and various groups, this traditional understanding of power shifted from hard power, which refers to the use of coercion and force to soft power which refers to the use of power of ideas, culture, media and diplomacy to reach strategic goals and to gain support. The concept of soft power first emerged with the usage of Joseph Nye. Soft power refers to the ability of a state to influence others and shape their ideas according to your perspective through various means like culture, foreign policy, media, etc. It became essential for states to use soft

power tools to achieve their objectives in an interdependent world. Nye described soft power by stating that "a state may achieve the outcomes it prefers in world politics because other states want to follow it or have agreed to a situation that produces such effects. In this sense, it is just as important to set the agenda and structure the situations in world politics as to get others to change in particular cases."[209] According to Nye, soft power is the ability to influence others and direct them according to their own will.

Like Nye, Oğuzlu defined the concept of power as the capability of a state or actor to shape the decisions of other states or actors. [210] Thence, the stronger a country is in terms of attractiveness, the more capable it is to influence the decisions of others. Apart from the definition of Nye, Alexander L. Vuving contributed to the definition of Nye and defined the concept as "what we want is wanted or accepted by others." [211] Instead of "accept", Vuving used the statement of "want". Therefore, according to the understanding of Vuving, the base of soft power is the willing. In other words, soft power is the ability of an actor to influence others in the way they want. Actors need to take action to make others want the thing in their own will.

Geun Lee is another scholar who examined soft power. According to his understanding, the definition of Nye is vague because Lee claims that in different cases, whether it is soft power or hard power is not clear in Nye's definition. Therefore, Lee states that the concept should be redefined according to its resources. He defined the concept as "when non-material symbolic ''soft resources'' are employed to exert influence on others, the final outcome is soft power, while the final outcome is defined as hard power when material ''hard resources'' are employed. Therefore, within this definition, soft power can be both co-optive and coercive, as can hard power. The difference lies only in the power resources being

[209] Joseph S. Nye, "Soft Power," *Foreign Policy*, no. 80 (1990): 153–71, https://doi.org/10.2307/1148580, 166.

[210] Tarık Oğuzlu, "Soft Power in Turkish Foreign Policy," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 61, no. 1 (2007): 81–97, https://doi.org/10.1080/10357710601142518.

[211] Alexander Vuving, "How Soft Power Works," *Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies*, 2009, 19–38.

used."[212] When this definition is analyzed it can be seen that for Lee, the basis of the concept of power is its resources. Moreover, Lee emphasizes that it is crucial to differentiate between soft power and soft resources. Indeed, he argues that having soft resources does not mean that the state exerts soft power. Instead, if a state uses these soft resources to direct others, then it will be a soft power. In Lee's words, "Until soft resources are diverted into influence, soft power is not exerted. Being soft is not soft power!" [213] In short, the main difference between Nye and Lee in terms of the definition of power is that the former highlights the nature of power, and the latter emphasizes the importance of the used resources.

Having discussed the definition of soft power; it is crucial to examine its resources. According to Nye, culture, political values and foreign policy are the three main resources of soft power. Indeed, "the soft power of a country rests primarily on three resources: its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority)."[214] Therefore, it is highlighted that necessary. He states that for hard power, you need more resources including "population, territory, natural resources, economic size, military forces, political stability, etc."[215] All these hard power resources require money, force and power of control. But soft power is less tangible, noncoercive and untransferable from one state to other.[216] Hence, it is more self-controlled and unique for every state. Consequently, Geun Lee asserts that soft power strategies are

> Manipulation or creation of self-images to improve the security environment: A typical example of this strategy is Germany and Japan's post World War II efforts, respectively, to repent for their imperial atrocities and consequent

[212] Geun Lee, "A Theory of Soft Power and Korea's Soft Power Strategy," *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 21, no. 2 (2009): 205–18, https://doi.org/10.1080/10163270902913962, 210.

[213] Ibid.

[214] Joseph S. Nye, "The Information Revolution and American Soft Power," *Asia-Pacific Review* 9, no. 1 (2002): 60–76, https://doi.org/10.1080/13439000220141596.

[215] Joseph S. Nye, "Soft Power," *Foreign Policy*, no. 80 (1990): 153–71, https://doi.org/10.2307/1148580, 153.

[216] Ibid.

> institutionalization and repeated rituals relating to the repentance. The Peace Constitution and self-restraint on defense spending and remilitarization in Japan helped prevent hostile coalitions against Japan from forming in the Asian region, which were of course complemented by the presence of the U.S.-Japan alliance. Germany's peaceful coexistence with the surrounding European countries has been made possible by sincere repentance and the attitudes shown by German leaders and politicians regarding the behavior of Nazis (which again was complemented by the presence of NATO, and other multilateral institutions in Europe). [217]

States, therefore, act strategically to gain the support of others and to have an influence on others. These states conduct this process through soft power tools. In other words, nations use soft power tools to have supremacy over others and to improve their image in the eyes of others.

In addition to the perspective of Nye, Vuving claims that the sources or elements of soft power are "beauty, brilliance, and benignity." "Benignity is an aspect of the agent's relations with others, especially with the client of soft power. […] Brilliance is an aspect of the agent's relations with its work. It refers to the high performance that you accomplish when you do things. […] Beauty is an aspect of actors 'relations with ideals, values, causes, or visions' others." [218] For Vuving, all these three sources are the power currencies. Regarding the benignity source, Vuving claims that it is the kind attitude towards others during the interaction. Through acknowledgment and mutual understanding, states create soft power under benignity. Regarding the brilliance element, he refers to the act of big performance you showed when a state performs something. It also refers to the act of knowledge from the success of others. Through admiration, states create soft power under brilliance. Regarding beauty element, Vuving claims that it refers to the harmony emerged from common values, ideals, and different visions. Therefore, states seek ways to have mutual relations with others who have similar thinking, values, goals, and understanding. This creates a source of beauty. Through the production of inspiration, states create soft power under beauty.

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[217] Geun Lee, "A Theory of Soft Power and Korea's Soft Power Strategy," *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 21, no. 2 (2009): 205–18, https://doi.org/10.1080/10163270902913962, 212.

[218] Alexander Vuving, "How Soft Power Works," *Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies*, 2009, 19–38, 8-9.

In conclusion, when all the definitions of soft power are considered, it can simply be defined as the ability of a state to achieve what it wants without using hard power tools. Different from hard power, its sources are culture, foreign policy, education, politics, and brilliance. Therefore, without force, money or territory, it is possible for states to have power to have an influence on other states. The following part will discuss public diplomacy and its difference from soft power.

3.2. Public Diplomacy

Although the concept of public diplomacy is used interchangeably with soft power, this is not the case because there is a very subtle difference between soft power and public diplomacy, which is the role of the government. Within public diplomacy, there is the presence and interest of government but for soft power, there is no government. Before going into the details of public diplomacy, the difference between these two concepts needs to be examined. Karadağ drew an analogy about these concepts by stating that "we can liken the soft power of countries to gravitational fields, and public diplomacy to a magnet within these gravitational fields that creates much more attraction in the direction it is directed. [219] Therefore, he pointed out that public diplomacy can be perceived as a catalyst to empower the impact of the gravitational field, which is soft diplomacy. In other words, public diplomacy has a crucial role to empower the impact and the usage of soft power. He then pointed out that "while soft power is practiced by multinational corporations and many institutions and organizations independent of governments, public diplomacy is practiced by states seeking to realize their own interests. The important issue in public diplomacy is the interests of states." [220] Then he continued by stating that "since no tangible result is demanded as a result of soft power practices, no tangible result can be achieved in terms of foreign policy objectives, while as a result of public diplomacy practices, tangible benefits are provided that will directly or indirectly affect the outcome of policies." [221] It could be inferred from these

[219] Haluk Karadağ, *Uluslararası İlişkilerde Yeni Bir Boyut Kamu Diplomasisi*, 3rd ed. (Ankara, Türkiye: Nobel, 2022), 55.

[220] Ibid.,56.

[221] Ibid.

statements that the author draws a strict line between the two concepts in terms of the actors. In soft power, the actors are not the government but the multinational corporations and institutions. In public diplomacy, the main actor is the government itself. The interests and goals of the government are crucial. Karadağ also highlighted that there are tangible benefits of actions of public diplomacy to the governmental policies. In short, he pointed out that public diplomacy is a goal-oriented form of soft power.

Having discussed the difference between soft power and public diplomacy, it is now necessary to define public diplomacy. The concept is defined by various scholars. It is first used by Edmund Gullion. He argued that

> Public diplomacy…deals with the influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies. It encompasses dimensions of international relations beyond traditional diplomacy; the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries; the interaction of private groups and interests in one country with another; the reporting of foreign affairs and its impact on policy; communication between those whose job is communication, as diplomats and foreign correspondents; and the process of intercultural communications.[222]

Hence, for him, public diplomacy shapes the foreign policy of the state by affecting the attitude of the citizens, the interaction between the private groups, and the public opinion in other states through media and intercultural communications. Similar to this view, for Rugh, public diplomacy is an action to reinforce the national interest of states by affecting other states.[223] Furthermore, according to Tuch, public diplomacy is a communication strategy to comprehend national objectives.[224] Correspondingly to these definitions, Cull defined the concept and categorized its practices. For him, public diplomacy is "the process by which international actors seek to accomplish the goals of their foreign policy by engaging with foreign publics and has gained

[222] Nicholas J. Cull, "'Public Diplomacy' Before Gullion: The Evolution of a Phrase," USC Center on Public Diplomacy, April 18, 2006, https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/blog/public-diplomacy-gullion-evolution-phrase.

[223] William A. Rugh, *Engaging the Arab & Islamic Worlds Through Public Diplomacy: A Report and Action Recommendations* (Washington, DC: Public Diplomacy Council, 2004).

[224] Hans N. Tuch, *Communicating with the World: US Public Diplomacy Overseas* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Pr, 1990).

international currency only since the end of the Cold War."[225] He listed the practices under five main elements which are "listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange diplomacy, and international broadcasting." [226]

Another definition is made by Karadağ. According to him, public diplomacy is "in addition to the official diplomatic channels used by a state in the execution of its foreign policy in the international environment, it is the whole of the activities of a state to ensure its national interests by positively influencing the target community and decision-makers by activating elements such as individuals, groups, companies, etc." [227] With this definition, Karadağ stated that public diplomacy is a strategy of the government to use both official and unofficial tools for the execution of its foreign policy. Hence, he emphasized that the presence and control of the government is crucial. He further stated that there are six formation and implementation steps within the scope of public diplomacy activities. These are "economic infrastructure, historical and cultural infrastructure, national and international media, persuasiveness in the international environment, technological infrastructure and use of technology, appropriate and adequate organization." [228] He pointed out that economy, history and culture are the infrastructure of public diplomacy, and the others are the steps of it. Based on these formation and steps, he stated that public diplomacy has seven main tools. These are cultural, educational, economic and social, technological, military, religious means and international organizations.[229]

Considering all these definitions, it can be asserted that there is no definition that a consensus achieved but the common point that most of the definitions pointed out is the use of governmental tools to have an impact on the public opinion of other states to promote the interest of the government. However, Leonard pointed out that this

[225] Nicholas J. Cull, "Public Diplomacy: Taxonomies and Histories," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (2008): 31–54, https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716207311952, 31.

[226] Ibid.

[227] Haluk Karadağ, *Uluslararası İlişkilerde Yeni Bir Boyut Kamu Diplomasisi*, 3rd ed. (Ankara, Türkiye: Nobel, 2022),25.

[228] Ibid., pp.42-44.

[229] Ibid., p.88.

cannot be the only objective; for him, public diplomacy is building relationships with other states through understanding them, including their culture, interests, and needs. By doing this, public diplomacy can obtain four main objectives. These are:

> increasing familiarity (making people think about your country and updating their images of it); increasing appreciation (creating positive perceptions of your country and getting others to see issues from your perspective); engaging people (encouraging people to see your country as an attractive destination for tourism and study and encouraging them to buy its products and subscribe to its values); and influencing people's behavior (getting companies to invest, encouraging public support for your country's positions, and convincing politicians to turn to it as an ally).[230]

Therefore, for Leonard, there are four main purposes of public diplomacy, which are increasing familiarity, increasing appreciation, engaging people, and lastly, influencing people's behavior. He further stated that to achieve these objectives, governments need to follow public diplomacy in three dimensions. These are "communication on day-to-day issues, strategic communication, and developing lasting relationships with key individuals through scholarships, exchanges, training, seminars, conferences, and access to media channels." [231] Therefore, Leonard drew a general overview of public diplomacy, its objectives, and actions. In short, to have a positive image of the country and to fulfill its objectives, governments need to follow these steps carefully. The following section will discuss one of the tools that governments use to create an attractive image of the country, which is education diplomacy.

3.3. Education Diplomacy

With the emergence of the concept of public diplomacy, the power concept of states gained a different dimension. States started to implement different international educational and cultural activities to ensure a positive image and reputation in the eyes of others, and they developed strategies in this respect.[232] Education diplomacy

[230] Mark Leonard, "Diplomacy by Other Means," *Foreign Policy*, no. 132 (2002): 48–56, https://doi.org/10.2307/3183455, 50.

[231] Ibid., 50-51.

[232] Mustafa YILMAZ and Elif PACOLARİ, "Kamu DİPLOMASİSİ ve Halkla İlişkiler Açısından Yunus Emre Enstitüsü'nün Kosova'daki Faaliyetlerinin Analizi," *Turkish Studies-Social Sciences* 14, no. 4 (2019): 1905–29, https://doi.org/10.29228/turkishstudies.23507, 1225.

is one of them. Through internationalization in education, governments aimed to make their countries one of the centers of attraction. For this goal, they tried to have an impact on people who will have a crucial role in the decision-making process in the future.[233] Although education diplomacy has recently emerged, the concept has been on the agenda of countries and experts as a crucial component of public diplomacy for a long time. For the last ten years, experts have laid their emphasis on the concept of education diplomacy.

Different scholars described the term in different ways, but the concept of education diplomacy emerged with the definition of Childhood Education International. According to them, education diplomacy is an advanced transformation tool that uses diplomatic skills among sectors and actors to solve education problems.[234] Furthermore, according to the Dictionary of International Relations and Diplomacy, education diplomacy can be defined as "diplomacy based on using educational issues such as educational exchange programs and cooperation between educational institutions to establish relations with other states."[235] According to Ntuli& Nyarambi, education diplomacy is the result of the necessities and process of globalization. Within this context, the concept is defined as the way to establish a relationship between individuals from different cultures.[236] Additionally, they claim that education diplomacy is a leadership field in which leaders need to develop their diplomatic skills to be effective. Indeed, these educated diplomats need to have good communication, negotiation, research, social, and cultural skills.[237]

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[233] Meltem Ünal Erzen, *Kamu Diplomasisi* (Beyazıt, İstanbul: Derin Yayınları, 2012), 129-130.

[234] "Education Diplomacy," Childhood Education International, July 21, 2023, https://ceinternational1892.org/education-diplomacy/. ; Lydia Bartram et al., "Education Diplomacy in Action: Touching Lives: Education Diplomacy in Service to Others," *Childhood Education* 91, no. 2 (February 25, 2015): 156–59, https://doi.org/10.1080/00094056.2015.1018797.

[235] Ercan Akar and Muharrem Gürkaynak, "An Evaluation of Türkiye's Education Diplomacy in the Context of Country Branding," *İletişim ve Diplomasi*, no. 7 (June 14, 2022): 137–64, https://doi.org/10.54722/iletisimvediplomasi.1109658, 143.; Ahmet Emin Dağ, *Uluslararası İlişkiler ve Diplomasi Sözlüğü*, 4th ed. (İstanbul: Vadi Yayınları, 2016), 142-143.

[236] Esther Ntuli and Arnold Nyarambi, "Learning in a Global Context: Education Diplomacy in Primary Grade Content Preparation," *Childhood Education* 91, no. 2 (February 25, 2015): 111–16, https://doi.org/10.1080/00094056.2015.1018789.

[237] Ibid.

Moreover, education diplomacy is not only dependent on the skills of the education leaders but also on other factors like the history, economy, culture, political and academic status of the country as well.[238] Other factors that have an impact on education diplomacy are the power sources and educational actors, which are higher education institutions and academics, researchers and research centers, language schools and teachers, non-governmental organizations, and administrators.[239] In addition to these factors, there are also various practices of education diplomacy. Some of them are foreign language teaching, scholarships, exchange programs, international universities and research centers, international conferences, symposiums, workshops, etc.[240]

Another definition is made by Kausbed, "educational diplomacy is the management of the activity of countries sending their own citizens abroad for study or cultural interaction and receiving foreign citizens in return for a certain period of time."[241] Therefore, the concept is defined through exchange programs and it is stated that these exchange programs provide cultural and educational exchange. From a different perspective, education diplomacy is also defined in a global perspective and the impact on countries through diplomacy is highlighted. Indeed "education diplomacy can be understood as the diplomatic skills and approaches that bridge understanding, solve education challenges, and promote transformative agendas that ensure equitable and inclusive, quality education."[242] Moreover, Akar and Gürkaynak analyze the concept of education diplomacy within three dimensions, which are education in the foreign policy of the state, education in an international context dimensions, which are education in the foreign policy of the state, education

[238] Nur Kırmızıdağ et al., *Yükseköğretimde Sınır-Ötesi Ortaklık Tecrübeleri: Ahmet Yesevi Üniversitesi Raporu.* (Ankara: Araştırma İnceleme Dizisi Yayın, 2012), 7-14.

[239] Metin Kaya, "Eğitim Diplomasisi: Kavramsal Bir Çerçeve," *Türkiye Eğitim Dergisi* 4, no. 1 (2019): 1–12, 6.

[240] Muharrem Ekşi, "Eğitim Diplomasisi," chapter, in *Klasik Diplomasiden Kamu Diplomasisine Yeni Yöntem ve Araçlar*, 1st ed. (Ankara: Nobel Akademik Yayıncılık, 2023), 361–71, 365.

[241] Elifnur Terzioğlu, "Yumuşak Güç Unsuru Olarak Eğitim Diplomasisi: Jean Monnet Burs Programı," *Kafkas Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, no. 31 (2023): 229–47, https://doi.org/10.56597/kausbed.1261866, 233.

[242] Yvette Murphy, "Education Diplomacy: The Two Sides of Innovation," *Childhood Education* 94, no. 3 (2018): 3–3, https://doi.org/10.1080/00094056.2018.1475742, 3.

in an international context, and international students. According to them, education diplomacy is the intersection of all these three dimensions. Indeed, within the first dimension, in recent times, education is used as a tool for foreign policy.[243] Through education, states manage their foreign relations and reflect their national interests to others. Within the second dimension, internationalization became a crucial point for states, especially for higher education institutions. This situation led to the active involvement of states and institutions to the internationalization process. Consequently, this led to the transformation of states according to the necessities of this process.[244] Within the third dimension, every year the number of students who would like to study abroad is increasing this led an increase in competition among students and states. For instance, states and higher education institutions try to diversify their education activities and implement different programs to attract international students to themselves.[245]

Considering the definitions in literature, Akar and Gürkaynak developed a new definition of education diplomacy. They defined the concept as "the total of all the activities in the field of education that a state undertakes and supports in coordination with other policy priorities, towards specific strategic goals, in order to communicate its ideas and sentiments to other countries and the world public opinion and to increase its attractiveness in this direction."[246] Therefore, the concept is defined as a tool to present national values and policies to other states through education. Education is a tool that is used to shape the others' mind about strategic political policies of a nation state. Another definition is made by Kaya. Education diplomacy

[243] William Benton, "Education as an Instrument of American Foreign Policy," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 366 (1966): 33–40.; Yana Ostashova, "Higher Education as a Soft Power Tool of State's Foreign Policy," *Proceedings of the International Conference Digital Age: Traditions, Modernity and Innovations (ICDATMI 2020)* 489 (2020): 259–65, https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.201212.053.

[244] Kyria Rebeca Finardi and Ramón Andrés Rojo, "Globalization, Internationalization and Education: What Is the Connection?," *IJAEDU- International E-Journal of Advances in Education* 1, no. 1 (April 18, 2015): 18–25, https://doi.org/10.18768/ijaedu.16488.

[245] Gülşen Yılmaz and Nezahat Güçlü, "Overview of International Student Mobility in Türkiye," *Yükseköğretim ve Bilim Dergisi* 11, no. 1 (2021): 245–56, https://doi.org/10.5961/jhes.2021.444.

[246] Ercan Akar and Muharrem Gürkaynak, "An Evaluation of Türkiye's Education Diplomacy in the Context of Country Branding," *İletişim ve Diplomasi*, no. 7 (June 14, 2022): 137–64, https://doi.org/10.54722/iletisimvediplomasi.1109658, 143.

is a multi-actor, multi-dimensional and multi-level education management strategy. Hence, it is carried out at both local and global level to solve educational problems through negotiations.[247]

Based on all these definitions from different perspectives, there are also some studies that focuses on the importance of education diplomacy. In a general sense, according to Vaxevaanidou, education diplomacy is crucial in terms of four issues which are; i) It is an important application area of soft power; ii) It includes various public diplomacy activities such as research, science, culture and language; iii) It attracts international students for staying in the host country; iv) It is important for both countries and educational institutions in terms of contributing to the internationalization process of higher education institutions.[248] With the recent developments through globalization, states reflect their national education policies as their international education policies. Therefore, global educational activities and policies rapidly increased, as well as a number of international students. Internationalization of these education policies became more important with education diplomacy, which is a sub-branch of public diplomacy. By conducting international educational activities, many states intend to enhance their own image in the eyes of other countries and to raise collaboration with other states. Therefore, through public diplomacy, specifically educational diplomacy, the purpose of states is to raise the sympathy of people in other countries and to strengthen their power and international relations with others.[249] Indeed, the authorities of states lay their emphasis on soft power through educational activities in their international affairs.

Due to its positive short-medium-long term economic, cultural, and humanitarian outcomes, education diplomacy is becoming more prominent on the agenda of

[247] Metin Kaya, "Eğitim Diplomasisi: Kavramsal Bir Çerçeve," *Türkiye Eğitim Dergisi* 4, no. 1 (2019): 1–12, 5.

[248] Maria Vaxevanidou, "Education as Public Diplomacy: How to Build an International Image in Education," *Journal of Media Critiques* 4, no. 14 (2018): 55–70.

[249] Ömer İnan, "A Research Study of the Effects of Education on Soft Power and Public Diplomacy: The Case of Iran International al Mustafa," *Bandırma Onyedi Eylül Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Araştırmaları Dergisi* 5, no. 1 (2022): 81–93, https://doi.org/10.38120/banusad.1104627, 82.; Murphy, "Education Diplomacy: The Two Sides of Innovation," *Childhood Education* 94, no. 3 (May 4, 2018): 3–3, https://doi.org/10.1080/00094056.2018.1475742, 3.

countries as a wide-ranging field, including international exchanges in the field of education, the ever-increasing number of international students, and bilateral and multilateral education cooperation, which has long been recognized as important. Hence, with the international education programs, increasing number of international students and bi/multilateral education cooperation, education diplomacy became one of the prominent points for states. In today's world, there is a wide range of communication tools and one of them is knowledge and it is perceived as a real power. Therefore, states have started to use education diplomacy in a more effective way, and the number of states investing in educational diplomacy is increasing day by day. Moreover, it is argued that "especially in the 21st century, with an interdisciplinary approach, the evaluation of new public diplomacy together with marketing and branding strategies increases the brand value of education and directs states to work in this field."[250] It can be inferred from this statement that education is also evaluated from a branding perspective. Branding in the field of education is becoming popular among states. In addition, due to the increase in interdependence, states need all these tools within the context of education.[251]

In light of the thoughts mentioned above, the concept of education diplomacy can be examined under three key aspects which are, cultural exchange and people to people connections; academic collaboration and network; diplomatic relations and nation-building. To commence with cultural exchange and people-to-people connections, education diplomacy enhances cultural exchange and understanding through international education by promoting the exchange of students, academics, and staff across borders. This international exchange gives a chance to experience different cultures and leads to the formation of a mutual understanding of differences in culture and consciousness about diversity. Indeed, through international education, beneficiaries can experience different cultures, perspectives, traditions, and values. Exchange programs and international education, connect beneficiaries, which create a mutual understanding and global perspective among people. Moreover, it can be

[250] Ercan Akar and Muharrem Gürkaynak, "An Evaluation of Türkiye's Education Diplomacy in the Context of Country Branding," *İletişim ve Diplomasi*, no. 7 (June 14, 2022): 137–64, https://doi.org/10.54722/iletisimvediplomasi.1109658, 158.

[251] Ibid.

argued that with international education, countries promote their own values through cultural exchange and provide an environment for the development of common values and civil dialogue. Indeed, government officials focus on education for economic growth and socio-cultural development, and enter into new formations in order to catch up with the speed of information in the information age.

"Countries see education, which is a soft power element, as the basic component of international exchange of information, building intellectual capital and maintaining competitiveness."[252] Hence, it is highlighted that governments lay their emphasis on education for the economic and cultural development of their society. For instance, according to Okunmuş, "The graduates are deemed as cultural ambassadors. Countries give information about their universities and scholarships online, through foreign representative offices, their campuses abroad, their academic partners (universities) and high schools operating abroad."[253] Thence, students who receive their education abroad have the opportunity to learn the culture and education of the host country. To put it differently, cultural and academic exchange programs are crucial for developing relations with foreign publics. Especially through international academic exchange programs, universities become the subject and the source of education diplomacy, also the tool for cultural exchange among states.[254]

In a general sense, international education and cultural exchange foster intercultural respect and understanding through cultural dialogue and interaction. Both cultural and educational exchange also affect the foreign policies and diplomatic relations of states by serving the national interest.[255] In this case, international exchange programs in higher education institutions are not the exception. Indeed, with

[252] Elifnur Terzioğlu, "Yumuşak Güç Unsuru Olarak Eğitim Diplomasisi: Jean Monnet Burs Programı," *Kafkas Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, no. 31 (2023): 229–47, https://doi.org/10.56597/kausbed.1261866, 235.

[253]Feng Rui-min, "Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistants Acting as Cultural Ambassadors on the Campus," *Sino-US English Teaching* 6, no. 3 (2009): 31–35.

[254] Gaye Aslı Sancar, *Kamu Diplomasisi ve Uluslararası Halkla Ilişkiler* (İstanbul: Beta Yayınları, 2012), 102.

[255] Emrah Aydemir, *Kamu Diplomasisi* (İstambul: Kalkedon Yayıncılık., 2018), 58.;Sheldon Himelfarb and Shamil Idriss, "Special Report Exchange 2.0," United States Institute of Peace, August 23, 2013, https://www.usip.org/publications/2011/05/exchange-20-0, 1.

international exchange programs, governments aim to explain the history, culture, and values of their country to international students and to gain their attention. Through international exchange programs, a real interaction between cultures emerges which contributes to a better understanding of the host country. When international students return to their own country with a greater appreciation towards the host country, they can influence others with the same appreciation about the host country.[256] All these shared ideas and values on an increase in the likelihood of cooperation, trade, and foreign relations between countries.

The second aspect of education diplomacy is diplomatic relations and nation-building. Education diplomacy, through international education and exchange programs, countries can influence and attract others. Hence, international education and exchange programs became a tool for showing the powerful side of the country, including its education system, academic success, and international view. This positive image of the country empowers the attractiveness and reputation of the country. Moreover, international partnerships among universities under exchange programs strengthen the diplomatic relations between countries. Collaboration in the academic field can contribute to diplomatic initiatives in other fields. Accordingly, educational programs or activities play a crucial role in the foreign policy-making process. Indeed, if someone receives an education from a school that supports international education, when s/he takes part in bureaucracy or academia, they mostly reflect the ideology of the country in which they took their education. Consequently, the country can reach the environment in favor of people who supply the education.[257]

Although international education programs are perceived as supra-political issues, in fact, they are used as hegemonic tools based on strategic aims and objectives of

[256] Jane Wanjira Waithaka and Patrick Maluki, "International Education Exchanges As A Public Diplomacy Instrument," *International Journal of Science Arts and Commerce* 1, no. 3 (2016): 1–8, 4.; Andreas Pacher, "The Ritual Creation of Political Symbols: International Exchanges in Public Diplomacy," *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 20, no. 4 (2018): 880–97, https://doi.org/10.1177/1369148118786043, 880.

[257] Ömer İnan, "A Research Study of the Effects of Education on Soft Power and Public Diplomacy: The Case of Iran International al Mustafa," *Bandırma Onyedi Eylül Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Araştırmaları Dergisi* 5, no. 1 (2022): 81–93, https://doi.org/10.38120/banusad.1104627, 82-84.

education diplomacy. In other words, states try to empower and spread their hegemony through education diplomacy. States aim to raise future leaders and opinion leaders through a kind of recruitment system for students.[258] Indeed, According to Ekşi, the goals of educational diplomacy are "to raise the leaders of the future, organic intellectuals, recruitment of the same and opinion leaders, recruitment of journalists, to determine with which concepts other countries will think, to determine how they will think, to shape the systematic of thinking in general, to spread and universalize the lifestyle and values of the country, to voluntarily build the soft power of hegemony with consent."[259] All these strategic goals are also described as an influence. The fact that the recruited students become intellectuals, opinion leaders, journalists, or leaders of their countries and that they voluntarily and spontaneously act in line with the interest of the country that they got their education within the framework of what they have acquired during their education makes them an impaxt.[260] Consequently, international education programs are a way to impact the future leaders of other states and to have hegemony in the new world order.

International education programs create an intimacy between students and universities and thus facilitate economic and political relations with students. For this reason, international education programs are seen as a form of diplomatic investment in future political relations.[261] Indeed, international students can contribute to the economy and culture of the country that they go to. Therefore, international students through international education programs are economic and human resources for states.[262] Furthermore, international students can share their experiences and positive impressions with others when they go back to their home country. After that, when

[258] Muharrem Ekşi, "Eğitim Diplomasisi," chapter, in *Klasik Diplomasiden Kamu Diplomasisine Yeni Yöntem ve Araçlar*, 1st ed. (Ankara: Nobel Akademik Yayıncılık, 2023), 361–71, 363.

[259] Ibid., 364.

[260] Ibid.,364-365.

[261] Sirke Mäkinen, "In Search of the Status of an Educational Great Power? Analysis of Russia's Educational Diplomacy Discourse," *Problems of Post-Communism* 63, no. 3 (2016): 183–96, https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2016.1172489, 185.

[262] Meryem Okumuş, "Dijital Ortamda Kültür Elçileri: Türkiye Mezunları," *Atatürk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 25, no. 3 (2021): 1114–31, https://doi.org/10.53487/ataunisosbil.958059, 1120.

these students reach a certain position at work, they will try to implement the good practices they have seen in their own countries. Additionally, these students will be eager to have close diplomatic relations with that country as well. In this way, the host country will be able to promote its own country on the spot and to express their national interest. Similarly, when students go to abroad for educational activities, they will have the chance to promote their own country. Consequently, international educational activities have a mutual benefit to both sides.[263]

Related to this understanding, the diplomatic relations aspect is also related to economic and workforce development. This understanding can be analyzed from two perspectives. First through international education and exchange programs, participants can benefit from the grant given on the basis of program rules. They can also benefit from the research collaborations and research materials that are proved through programs. Therefore, the grant and the supply of the materials support the economic situation of the participants. But at the same time, international participants can contribute to the local economy with their products. Relatedly, from the second perspective, international education or exchange programs enhance the development of the participants. With an international education, people can gain multifaceted skills that create global competitiveness among individuals in the workforce. Consequently, through education diplomacy through international education and exchange programs, people gain broader perspectives, different skills, and qualities, which creates a competitive workforce. Moreover, it is argued that the education system is the primary component of the welfare of a country because if a state has a working education system, it will have a better welfare level when compared with others. With a better welfare level, the country will be able to attract more students from abroad and promote its country and political perspective.

The number of countries that highlight the importance of exchange programs in the promotion of national interests has risen in recent years. For instance, Canada, China, Germany, Russia, the United States (U.S.), Türkiye, and Europe implement different exchange programs in higher education. Therefore, all these countries start to

[263] Nicholas John Cull, *Public Diplomacy: Lessons from the Past* (Los Angeles: Figueroa Press, 2009).

emphasize and use education as a tool to show their power and to influence other states on international relations and policies. Indeed, in history, some of the people who took part in decision-making processes or became politicians took their education abroad, and they reflected the policies or views of the country that they took their education on their decisions.[264] In other words, alumni of international education and exchange programs can become ambassadors of positive reputations and close relations. For instance, Mohamed Morsi, the former president of Egypt, Benazir Butto, Pakistan's Prime Minister and Masako, Japon Royal Princess received part of their education in the U.S. and they reflect the view of the U.S. on their decisions.[265] Moreover, international exchange programs create a positive public opinion and mutual understanding within societies, which leads to a reduction in potential conflict between states.[266] In short, by means of exchange programs, international students become a bridge between states, and prejudices are broken down.

The last aspect of education diplomacy is academic collaboration and networks. "Collaboration is the essential motif that is involved with the generation of soft power. The countries that participate in the most collaboration and networking maximize their benefit from educational and technological growth." [267] In this respect, education diplomacy through international education and exchange programs highlights academic cooperation and networks because it is asserted that cooperation or connection in exchange or in an education program may lead to

[264] Ömer İnan, "A Research Study of the Effects of Education on Soft Power and Public Diplomacy: The Case of Iran International al Mustafa," *Bandırma Onyedi Eylül Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Araştırmaları Dergisi* 5, no. 1 (2022): 81–93, https://doi.org/10.38120/banusad.1104627. ;Ercan Akar and Muharrem Gürkaynak, "An Evaluation of Türkiye's Education Diplomacy in the Context of Country Branding," *İletişim ve Diplomasi*, no. 7 (June 14, 2022): 137–64, https://doi.org/10.54722/iletisimvediplomasi.1109658, 152.

[265] Patti Peterson, *Diplomacy And Education: A Changing Global Landscape* (Washington: Internatıonal Higher Education, 2014), 5.

[266] Jane Wanjira Waithaka and Patrick Maluki, "International Education Exchanges As A Public Diplomacy Instrument," *International Journal of Science Arts and Commerce* 1, no. 3 (2016): 1–8, 2-3.; Meltem Özel, "International Exchange Programs in the Context of Educational Diplomacy: The Example of the Erasmus + Program," *The Turkish Online Journal of Design, Art and Communication* 11, no. 3 (2021): 943–66, https://doi.org/10.7456/11103100/012.

[267] Yune Leou-On, "International Networks and Soft Power: Sino-American Educational Collaboration," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2015, 1–27, https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2649709, 22.

different cooperation in different areas of education. For instance, Erasmus+ connections for student exchange can lead to an engagement in joint projects or diploma programs, research projects, or other partnerships. Therefore, a collaboration in a specific purpose can diverse and create a global impact. To express this in another way, "collaboration between individuals is the foundation behind education from the ancient academies to the medieval guilds; collaboration towards learning and development was one of the major tools utilized for the greatest effects."[268] Thence, collaboration is one of the touchstones of education. Beyond all this, connections in the academic field may lead to collaborations in other fields, too.

An academic collaboration between two universities can lead to a cultural or economic collaboration between these countries and strengthen state relations. To put it in another way, Education has an impact on business, technology, culture, and other fields related to soft power. Therefore, any academic collaboration or network has an effect on the power of a country. One of the ways to have such a powerful and qualified education is to have academic collaboration and networks. Consequently, these academic networks and collaboration become a strong force for expanding soft power.[269] Another impact of academic collaboration and network is brain drain. Through international collaborations among academics and students, people have the chance to find jobs in other countries because of their qualified workforce. For instance, "in the past two hundred years, the United States and the United Kingdom dominated academic discourse and thus found themselves leaders of worldwide innovation and development. This has been a central factor in their soft power dominance. Yet recently, many developing countries expressed strong interest in becoming hubs in the knowledge industry."[270] In brief, through academic collaborations, people can get education in other countries and have international networks. This gives a chance to the country that provides the education to dominate other countries through education as a soft power tool. Academic networks lead to collaboration, and consequently, academic collaboration initiates research

[268] Ibid., 3.

[269] Ibid., 4-5.

[270] Ibid.,3.

development. Therefore, the greater the connectivity, the more academic research in various fields. Respectively, through international education, academics have the chance to meet in common areas, and more interrelated people connect with each other, which constructs bonds and connections between people from different parts of the world. Academics from different parts of the world not only connect with the people from their departments, but also their networks become a bridge among different disciplines. Indeed, "people connected to internationally based scholars may come from a number of different networks. This leads to bridges across disciplines and scholarly networks previously non-existent."[271]

In conclusion, this chapter discussed the concept of education diplomacy, its importance in the International Relations field, and its key aspects. The concept of education diplomacy, in brief, is any policy or action that a state follows through education to increase its attractiveness and power in the eyes of others. The concept of education diplomacy is crucial in four senses, which are; i)it is an important application area of soft power; ii) It includes various public diplomacy activities such as research, science, culture, and language; iii) It attracts international students for staying in the host country; iv) It is important for both countries and educational institutions in terms of contributing to the internationalization process of higher education institutions. Education diplomacy has three key aspects, which are; cultural exchange and people-to-people connections, diplomatic relations and nation-building, academic collaboration and networking.

In short, all these theoretical discussions have revealed that the Erasmus+ program can be considered not only as an educational tool but also as a transnational interaction and diplomatic tool. Through these concepts, the Erasmus+ program is seen to have institutional and political significance beyond personal experiences. However, the question of to what extent these theoretical assumptions overlap with the practices of the Erasmus+ program in Türkiye and how they are embodied in the experiences of the actors (students, academics, Erasmus office staff) participating in this process can only be answered through analysis based on empirical data.

[271] Ibid.,11

Therefore, the next chapter will present the findings from the field research conducted at research universities in three different regions of Türkiye.

CHAPTER 4

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE ERASMUS PROGRAM TO THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF TURKISH HIGHER EDUCATION

This chapter will present the findings that emerged from the interviews conducted with all the participants to analyze the contribution of the Erasmus program to the internationalization of Turkish higher education. The findings will be shared under three main categories. Indeed, the first findings will be shared with the comparison of the data from three universities, which are Middle East Technical University, Ege University, and Atatürk University. Then, the findings will be illustrated according to three interview groups, which are students, academic staff, and Erasmus office staff. Lastly, the findings will be presented according to four main themes from the interviews. These themes are academic collaboration, cultural exchange and understanding, policy and institutional collaboration, soft power, and image building.

4.1. Three Research Universities' Approach to Internationalization in Turkish Higher Education

As stated in the methodology chapter; to analyze the contribution of the Erasmus program to the internationalization of Turkish higher education, interviews were conducted in three different research universities with students and academics participating in Erasmus Mobility and Erasmus Office Staff. Before explaining the details about the findings for each university separately, general information and findings need to be given. The first table (Table 3) shows the coding system. In the methodology part, it was stated that I prepared a codebook to analyze the interviews. I prepared the codes according to the answers of the participants. I decided on 46 codes according to the answers of the interviewees. I categorized all these codes

under seven categories. Then, I identified these categories under four main themes. The following part will discuss these themes, categories and codes.

Table 3. Coding system

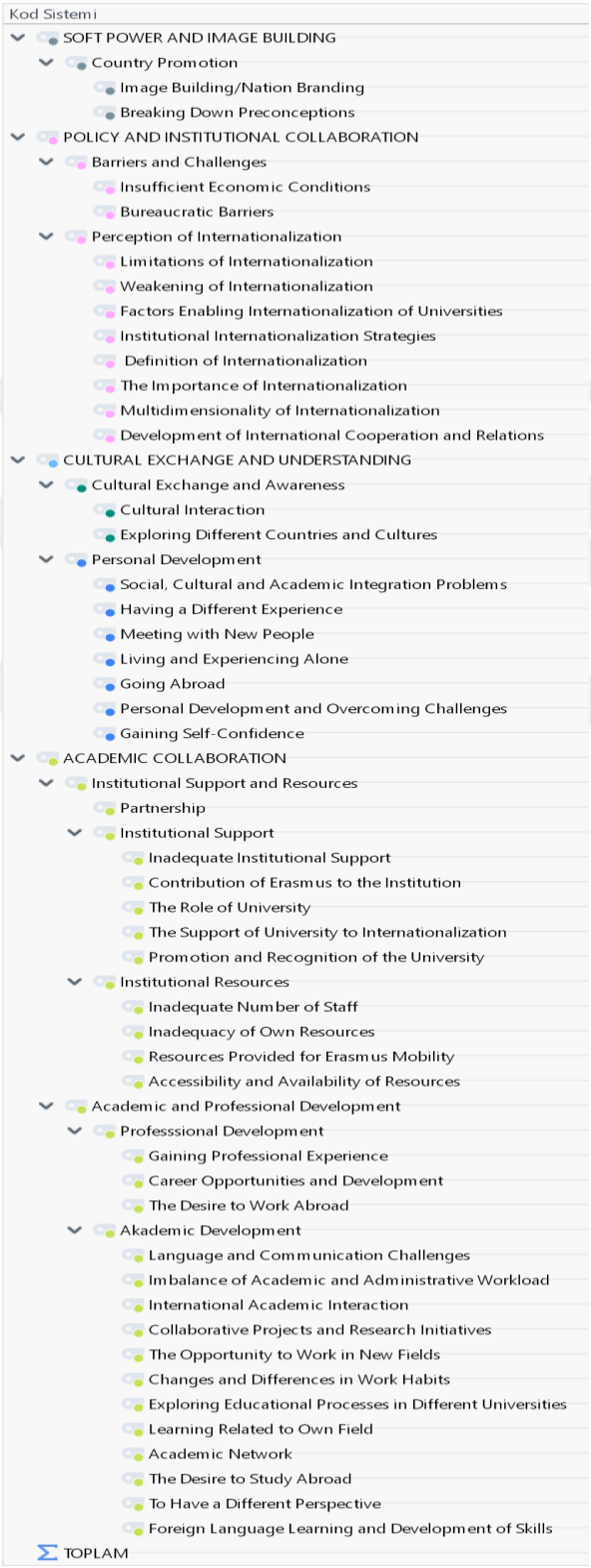
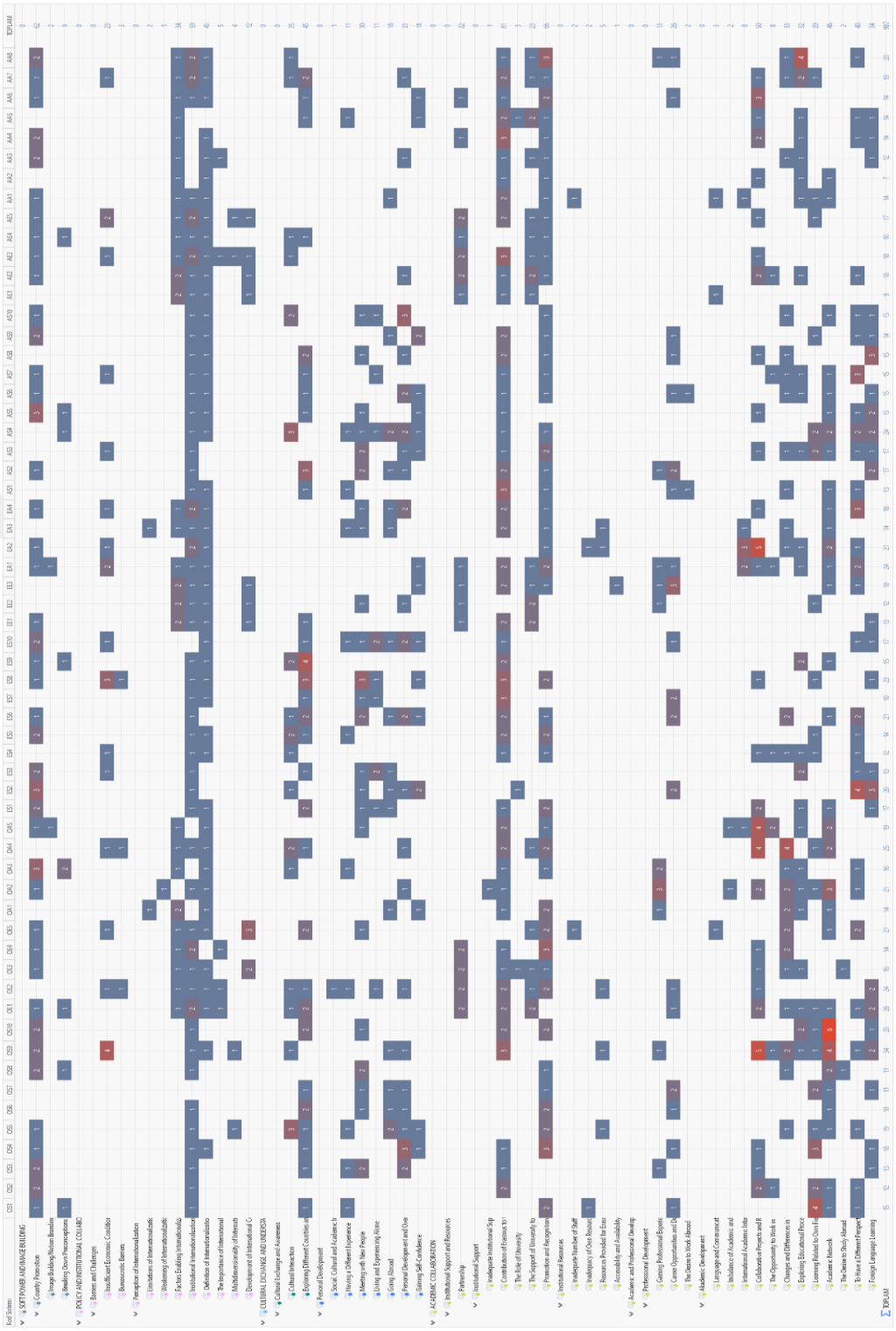


Table 4. Data from All Interviews



The following table (Table 4) shows all the interviews conducted with the participants. As it can be seen, for the anonymity, the names of the participants were coded. The first letter represents the university (O= Middle East Technical

University, E= Ege University, A= Atatürk University), the second letter represents the interviewee group (S=Student, A=Academic Staff, E= Erasmus Office Staff), and the number represents the order. The table shows all the responses of the participants. In total, among 63 participants, 987 codes emerged.

The colors represent the frequency of these codes used by each participant. The blue color represents the least used code, and the red color represents the most used codes. For instance, “academic network” is used mainly by the OS10 participant, with a frequency of 6. “Collaborative projects and research initiatives” code is used mostly by academic staff participants, like OA4, OA5, and EA2. In general, the top three most used codes are “contribution of Erasmus to the institution” with a frequency of 81, “promotion and recognition of the university” with a frequency of 66, and “country promotion” with a frequency of 62.

Regarding the data about universities in general (Table 5), the interviews made with the participants from Middle East Technical University (METU) were coded the most when compared with Ege and Atatürk Universities, with 359 codes in total. 282 codes were reached from the interviews from Ege University and 346 from Atatürk University. “Academic network” and “promotion and recognition of the university” are the most referred codes among interviewees from METU. Some of the least used codes are “image building/nation building,” “limitations of internationalization,” “weakening of internationalization,” and “social, cultural, and academic integration problems” among these METU participants. Regarding the participants from Ege University, “contribution of Erasmus to the institution” is the mostly specified code with a frequency of 25. Some of the least used codes are “image building/nation building,” “breaking down preconceptions,” “limitations of internationalization,” and “accessibility and availability of resources.” When the data from the participants from Atatürk University is analyzed, it can be stated that the “contribution of Erasmus to the institution” code is the mode used among the interviewees, with a frequency of 34. Some of the least used codes are “an inadequate number of staff,” “the role of the university,” and “international academic interaction.” Among all these three universities, “contribution of Erasmus to the institution” is the most referred code with a frequency of 81.

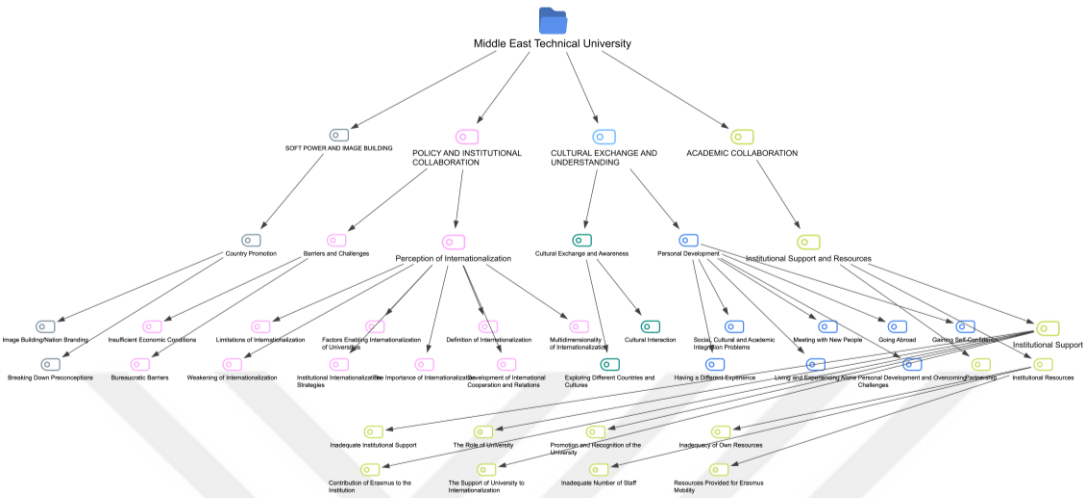
Table 5. Statistics of Coding from All Universities

Kod Sistemi	Middle East Technical University	Ege University	Atatürk University	TOPLAM
SOFT POWER AND IMAGE BUILDING				0
Country Promotion	22	18	22	62
Image Building/Nation Branding	1	1		2
Breaking Down Preconceptions	5	1	3	9
POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL COLLABORATION				0
Barriers and Challenges				0
Insufficient Economic Conditions	7	10	6	23
Bureaucratic Barriers	2	1		3
Perception of Internationalization				0
Limitations of Internationalization	1	1		2
Weakening of Internationalization	1			1
Factors Enabling Internationalization of Universities	10	9	15	34
Institutional Internationalization Strategies	18	18	23	59
Definition of Internationalization	11	14	20	45
The Importance of Internationalization	3		2	5
Multidimensionality of Internationalization	2		2	4
Development of International Cooperation and Relations	5	3	4	12
CULTURAL EXCHANGE AND UNDERSTANDING				0
Cultural Exchange and Awareness				0
Cultural Interaction	9	7	9	25
Exploring Different Countries and Cultures	15	16	14	45
Personal Development				0
Social, Cultural and Academic Integration Problems	1			1
Having a Different Experience	5	3	3	11
Meeting with New People	9	13	8	30
Living and Experiencing Alone	1	7	3	11
Going Abroad	6	7	5	18
Personal Development and Overcoming Challenges	12	8	13	33
Gaining Self-Confidence	3	7	8	18
ACADEMIC COLLABORATION				0
Institutional Support and Resources				0
Partnership	8	4	10	22
Institutional Support				0
Inadequate Institutional Support	1			1
Contribution of Erasmus to the Institution	22	25	34	81
The Role of University	1	1	1	3
The Support of University to Internationalization	6	6	11	23
Promotion and Recognition of the University	27	14	25	66
Institutional Resources				0
Inadequate Number of Staff	1		1	2
Inadequacy of Own Resources	1	1		2
Resources Provided for Erasmus Mobility	3	2		5
Accessibility and Availability of Resources		1		1
Academic and Professional Development				0
Professional Development				0
Gaining Professional Experience	8	3	2	13
Career Opportunities and Development	7	11	8	26
The Desire to Work Abroad			2	2
Akademic Development				0
Language and Communication Challenges	1		2	3
Imbalance of Academic and Administrative Workload	2			2
International Academic Interaction	1	6	1	8
Collaborative Projects and Research Initiatives	24	11	15	50
The Opportunity to Work in New Fields	4	2	2	8
Changes and Differences in Work Habits	19	5	9	33
Exploring Educational Processes in Different Universities	9	8	15	32
Learning Related to Own Field	17	4	8	29
Academic Network	27	9	10	46
The Desire to Study Abroad	2			2
To Have a Different Perspective	9	17	14	40
Foreign Language Learning and Development of Skills	10	8	16	34
TOPLAM	359	282	346	987

Analyzing the data in general, it is now necessary to discuss the data of universities separately. To start with METU, the following chart (Table 6) reflects the coding

hierarchy referred to by all participants from METU. The statistics about the usage rate will be explained in the following table.

Table 6. Coding Hierarchy of METU



The following table (Table 7) shows the coding of the responses of METU participants. The table shows that, in total, 359 codes were obtained from the responses. Among these responses, some participants addressed the “accessibility and availability of resources” and “the desire to work abroad” codes during their interviews. “Academic network” is the most referred code among all these METU participants, as stated before. Among the ten METU students, eight students referred to “country promotion” and “academic network” codes, and nine students referred to “institutional international strategies.” The table also shows the frequency of codes for each participant. For instance, the student who was coded as OS10 emphasized the “academic network” code during the interview with a frequency of six. Moreover, the table reflects that “bureaucratic barriers,” “limitations of internationalization,” “weakening of internationalization,” “development of international cooperation and relation,” “social, cultural and academic integration problems,” “partnership,” “the role of the university,” “inadequate number of staff,” “accessibility and availability of resources,” “the desire to work abroad,” “language and communication challenges,” “imbalance of academic and administrative workload,” “international academic interaction” codes never referred by METU students.

Regarding the Erasmus Office staff data, “factors enabling internationalization of universities,” “institutional international strategies,” and “promotion and recognition of the university” codes are used by all five staff members. “Limitations of internationalization”, “weakening of internationalization”, “multidimensionality of internationalization”, “inadequate institutional support”, “inadequacy of own resources”, “accessibility and availability of resources”, “gaining professional experiences”, “the desire to work abroad”, “imbalance of academic and administrative workload”, “international academic interaction”, “the opportunity to work in new fields” are the codes that were never referred by METU Erasmus Office staff.

Among these staff, the “development of international cooperation and relation” and “promotion and recognition of the university” codes are the most referred codes by some of the participants, with a frequency of 3.

Regarding the data about the interviews conducted with METU academic staff, “the definition of internationalization” and “the contribution of Erasmus to the internationalization” codes are referred to by all METU academic staff. According to the table, the academic staff, named OA4, mostly referred to “collaborative projects and research initiatives” and “changes and differences in work habits” codes with a frequency of four.

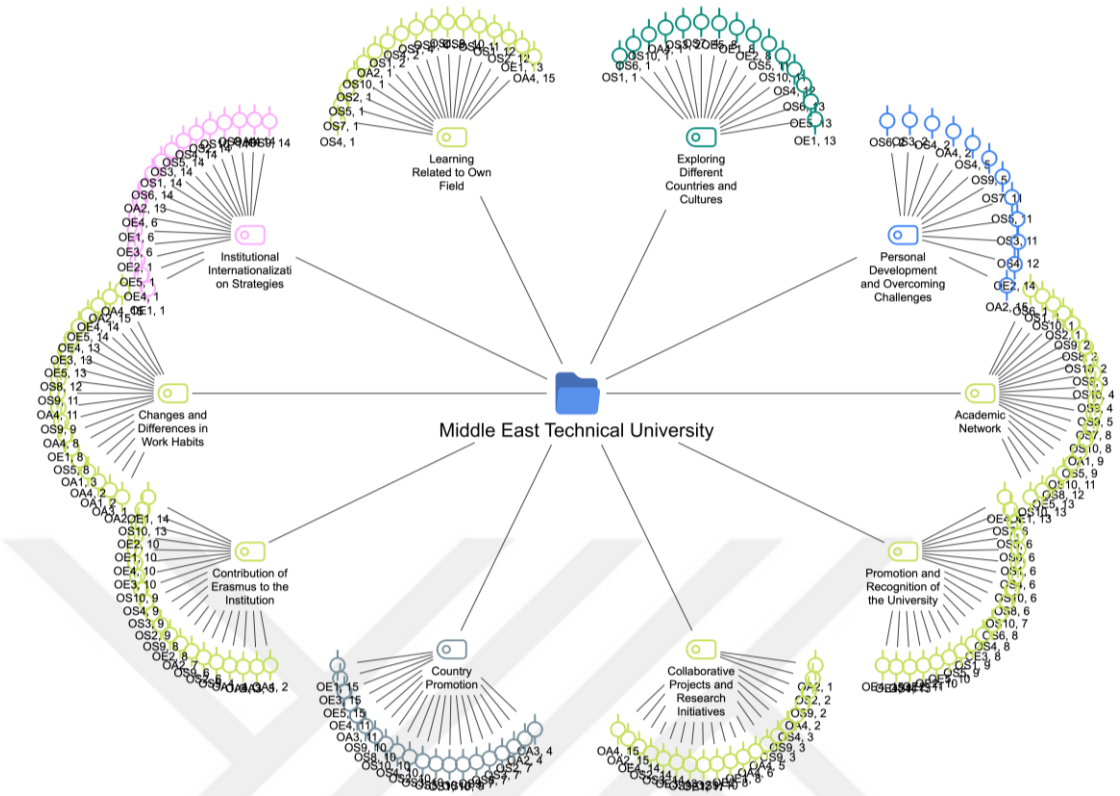
None of the “the importance of internationalization”, “multidimensionality of internationalization”, “development of international cooperation and relation”, “social, cultural and academic integration problems”, “living and experiencing alone”, “partnership”, “the role of the university,” “inadequate number of staff”, “inadequacy of own resources”, “accessibility and availability of resources”, “career opportunities and development”, “the desire to work abroad”, “language and communication challenges”, “the desire to study abroad”, “foreign language learning and development of skills” codes are used by METU academic staff. The most frequently used code is “collaborative projects and research initiatives,” with a frequency of 4 for OA4 and OA5 participants.

Table 7. Coding of the responses of METU participants



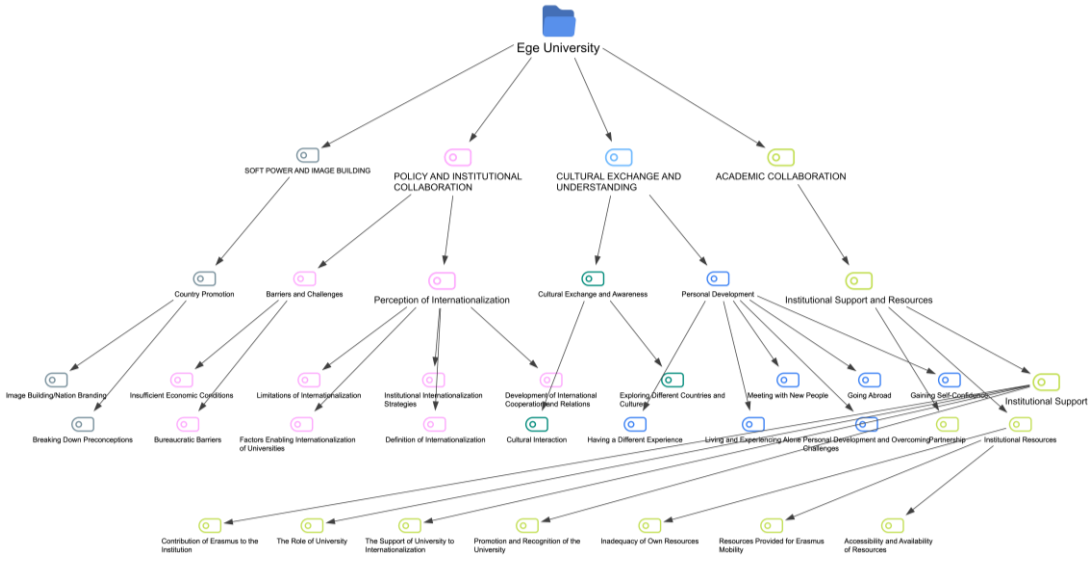
The following chart (Table 8) reflects the top ten most used codes among all METU participants. The chart shows which participant used the specific code, and the numbers reflect how many times this code was reflected by the interviewee. For instance, the "changes and differences in work habits" code is referred to by OA4 eight times and OS5 14 times.

Table 8. Top 10 most used Codes among METU participants



The chart below (Table 9) reflects the coding hierarchy referred to by all participants from Ege University. The statistics about the usage rate will be explained in the following table.

Table 9. Coding Hierarchy of Ege University



The following table (Table 10) shows the participants' responses from Ege University. The table shows that, in total, 282 codes were obtained from the responses. “Contribution of Erasmus to the institution” is the most referred code among all Ege University participants, with a frequency of 25. “Weakening of internationalization”, “the importance of internationalization”, “multidimensionality of internationalization”, “social, cultural and academic integration problems”, “inadequate institutional support”, “an inadequate number of staff”, “the desire to work abroad”, “language and communication challenges”, “imbalance of academic and administrative workload”, “the desire to study abroad” codes never referred by any participants from Ege University. Almost every participant pointed out “institutional internationalization strategies” and “definition of internationalization” codes.

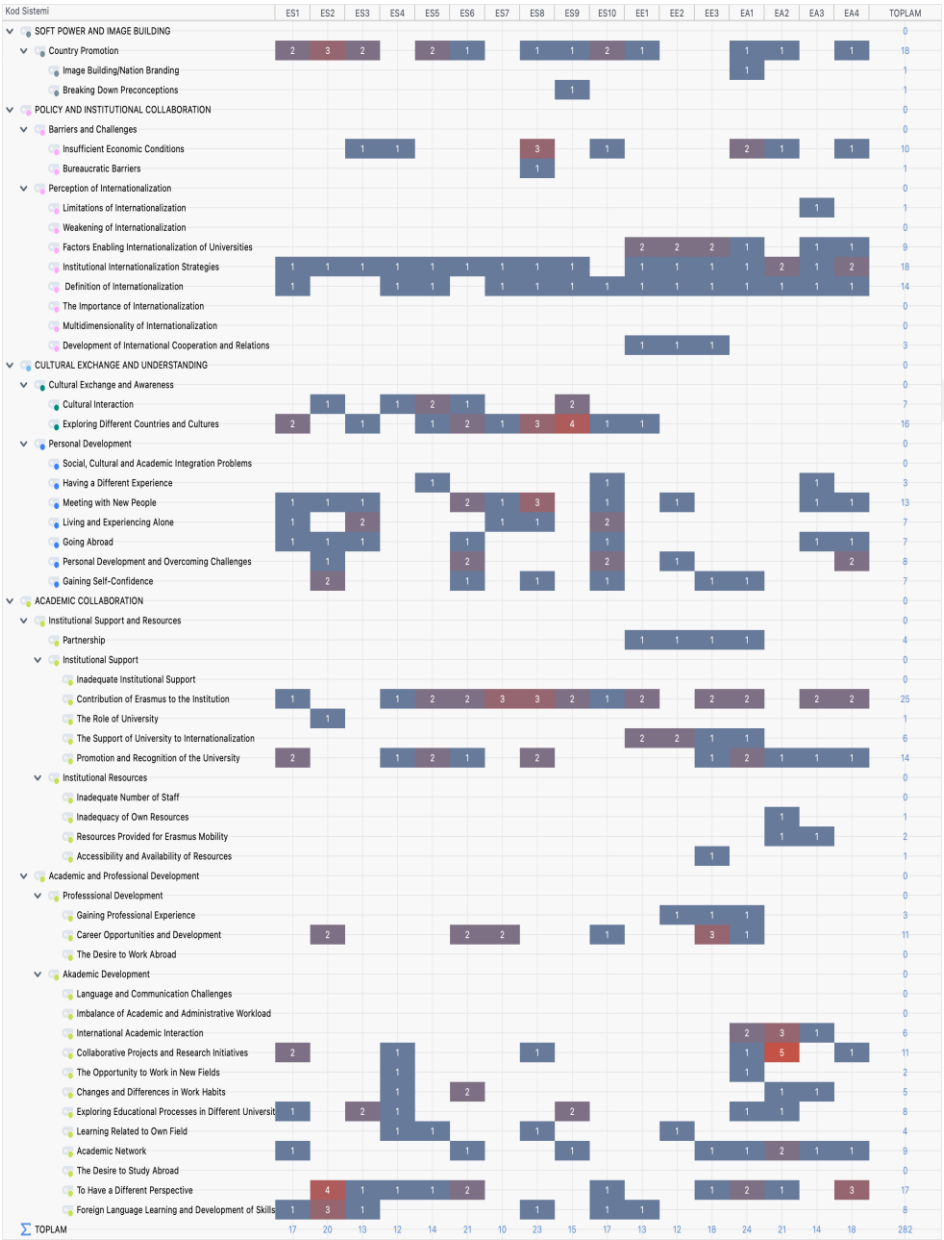
Regarding the Ege University students, 9 students among them referred to “institutional internationalization strategies,” and 8 of them referred to “contribution of Erasmus to the institution” and “country promotion.” According to the table, some of the students emphasized some of the codes more than the other. For instance, while the student named ES9 highlighted the code “exploring different countries and cultures” with a frequency of 4, the student named ES2 pointed out the “to have a different perspective” code with the same frequency. Almost all of the students mentioned the “institutional internationalization strategies” code once. Furthermore, any of the Ege University students referred to the following codes; “image building/nation branding”, “limitations of internationalization”, “weakening of internationalization”, “factors enabling internationalization of universities”, “the importance of internationalization”, “multidimensionality of internationalization”, “social, cultural and academic integration problems”, “development of international cooperation and relation”, “partnership”, “inadequate institutional support”, “the support of the university to the internationalization”, “an inadequate number of staff”, “inadequacy of own resources”, “resources for Erasmus mobility”, “accessibility and availability of resources”, “gaining professional experience”, “the desire to work abroad”, “language and communication challenges”, “imbalance of academic and administrative workload”, “international academic interaction”, “the desire to study abroad”.

When the data about the interview with Ege University Erasmus Office staff is analyzed, all three participants highlighted the “factors enabling internationalization of universities”, “institutional internationalization strategies”, “definition of internationalization”, “partnership”, “development of international cooperation and relation”, “the support of the university to internationalization” codes either with the frequency of two or one. None of them mentioned any issue about the following codes; ““image building/nation branding”, “breaking down preconceptions”, “insufficient economic conditions”, “bureaucratic barriers”, “limitation of internationalization”, “weakening of internationalization”, “the importance of internationalization”, “multidimensionality of internationalization”, “cultural interaction”, “social, cultural and academic integration problems”, “having a difference experience”, “living and experiencing alone”, “going abroad”, “inadequate institutional support”, “the role of university”, “inadequate number of staff”, “inadequacy of own resources”, “resources provided for Erasmus mobility”, “the desire to work abroad”, “language and communication challenges”, “imbalance of academic and administrative workload”, “international academic interaction”, “collaborative projects and research initiatives”, “the opportunity to work in new fields”, “changes and differences in work habits”, “exploring education process in different universities”, “the desire to study abroad”.

When data about the interviews with Ege University academic staff is analyzed, it can be stated that the “collaborative projects and research initiatives” code is specifically highlighted by one of the academic staff, who was named EA2 with a frequency of 5. Indeed, from EA2’s interview, 21 codes were reached, and almost one-quarter of the interviewees referred to this code. Apart from this, according to the table, some of the codes are focused on by all academic staff interviewees. These codes are “institutional internationalization strategies,” “definition of internationalization,” “promotion and recognition of the university,” and “academic network.” None of these academics pointed out the following codes; “breaking down preconceptions”, “bureaucratic barriers”, “weakening of internationalization”, “the importance of internationalization”, “multidimensionality of internationalization”, “development of international cooperation and relations”, “cultural interaction”, “exploring different countries and cultures”, “social, cultural and academic

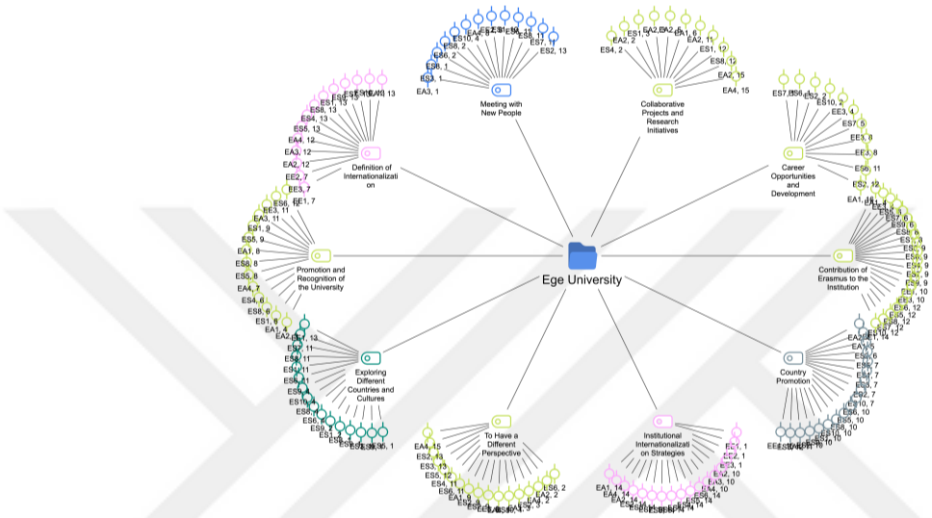
integration problems", "having a difference experience", "living and experiencing alone", "inadequate institutional support", "the role of the university", "inadequate number of staff", "accessibility and availability of resources", "the desire to work abroad", "language and communication challenges", "imbalance of academic and administrative workload", "learning related to won field", "the desire to study abroad", "foreign language learning and development of skills". In short, 77 coding of academic staff among 282 coding from Ege University, which means almost one-third of the coding belongs to academic staff.

Table 10. Coding of the responses of Ege University participants



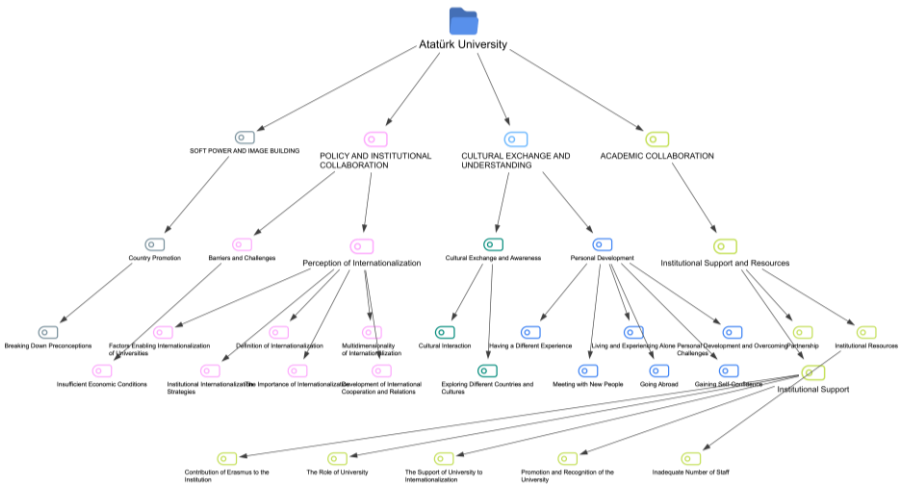
The following chart (Table 11) reflects the top ten most used codes among all Ege University participants. As stated for METU, the chart shows which participant used the specific code, and the numbers reflect how many times this code was reflected by the interviewee. The "contribution of Erasmus to the institutions" code is mostly referred to as code. The last mostly used code is "career opportunities and development".

Table 11. Top 10 most used Codes among Ege University participants



The last university that will be analyzed in detail is Atatürk University. The following chart (Table 12) reflects the coding hierarchy referred to by all participants from Atatürk University. The statistics about the usage rate will be explained in the following table.

Table 12. Coding Hierarchy of Atatürk University



The following table (Table 13) shows the interview results conducted with Atatürk University participants. From the interviews, 346 codes had emerged. Like Ege University, “contribution of Erasmus to the institution” is the most highlighted code among Atatürk University participants, with a frequency of 34. The second most used code is the “promotion and recognition of the university,” with a frequency of 25. Apart from this, “institutional internationalization strategies” and “definition of internationalization” codes were also referred to by almost every participant in the interview. The following codes were not referred to by any of the participants; “bureaucratic barriers”, “limitations of internationalization”, “weakening of internationalization”, “social, cultural and academic integration problems”, “inadequate institutional support”, “inadequacy of own resources”, “resources provided for Erasmus mobility”, “accessibility and availability of resources”, “imbalance of academic and administrative workload”, “the desire to study abroad”.

When the table is analyzed in a detailed way, Atatürk University students all of the students referred to the “institutional international strategies” code, 9 of them referred to the “promotion and recognition of the university” code, and 8 of them referred to the “definition of internationalization” and “foreign language learning and development of skills” codes. Some of the students highlighted some of the codes more than others. For example, student AS1 emphasized the “contribution of Erasmus to the institution” code with a frequency of three, and the student, named AS2, emphasized the “exploring different countries and cultures” code with the same frequency. While student AS4 highlighted the code “cultural interaction” with a frequency of 3, student AS5 emphasized the “image building/nation branding” code with the same frequency. Moreover, none of the Atatürk University students pointed out the following codes; “breaking down preconceptions”, “bureaucratic barriers”, “limitations of internationalization”, “weakening of internationalization”, “factors enabling internationalization of universities”, “the importance of internationalization”, “multidimensionality of internationalization”, “development of international cooperation and relations”, “social, cultural and academic integration problems”, “partnership”, “inadequate institutional support”, “the role of the university”, “the support of the university to the internationalization”, “an inadequate number of staff”, “inadequacy of own resources”, “resources provided for Erasmus

mobility", "accessibility and availability of resources", "language and communication challenges", "imbalance of academic and administrative workload", "international academic interaction", "the desire to study abroad".

Regarding the data about the interviews with Erasmus Office staff, it can be stated that all the participants highlighted the following codes: "factors enabling internationalization of universities," "institutional internationalization strategies," "definition of internationalization," "partnership," "the support of the university to internationalization." One of the staff, named AE3, referred to the "contribution of Erasmus to the institution" code more than the others with a frequency of three. Any of these participants referred to "breaking down preconceptions", "bureaucratic barriers", "limitations of internationalization", "weakening of internationalization", "social, cultural and academic integration problems", "having a different experience", "meeting with new people", "living and experiencing alone", "going abroad", "gaining self-confidence", "inadequate institutional support", "the role of the university", any code under "institutional resources" and "professional development" categories, "imbalance of academic and administrative workload", "international academic interaction", "changes and differences in work habits", "the desire to study abroad", "academic network", "foreign language learning and development of skills" codes during their interviews.

The data of Atatürk University academic staff is examined, and it can be asserted that "factors enabling internationalization of universities," "contribution of Erasmus to the institution," and "promotion and recognition of the university" codes were used by all of the eight academics. Some of the participants highlighted some of the codes more than others. For instance, the academic staff named AA8 emphasized the "exploring educational processes in different universities" code with a frequency of 4 and the "promotion and recognition of the university" code with a frequency of three. AA4 underlined the codes "contribution of Erasmus to the institution" with the frequency of three, "country promotion," and "the opportunity to work in new fields" with the frequency of two. However, some of the codes were not referred to by any of the academic staff participants. These codes were "image building/nation branding", "breaking down preconceptions", "bureaucratic barriers", "limitations of

internationalization", "weakening of internationalization", "multidimensionality of internationalization", "development of international cooperation and relations", "social, cultural and academic integration problems", "meeting with new people", "living and experiencing alone", "inadequate institutional support", "inadequacy of own resources", "resources provided for Erasmus mobility", "accessibility and availability of resources", "the desire to work abroad", "imbalance of academic and administrative workload", "the opportunity to work in new fields", "the desire to study abroad". In short, almost one-third of the overall coding of the interviews with three universities belongs to Atatürk University, with 346 codes in total.

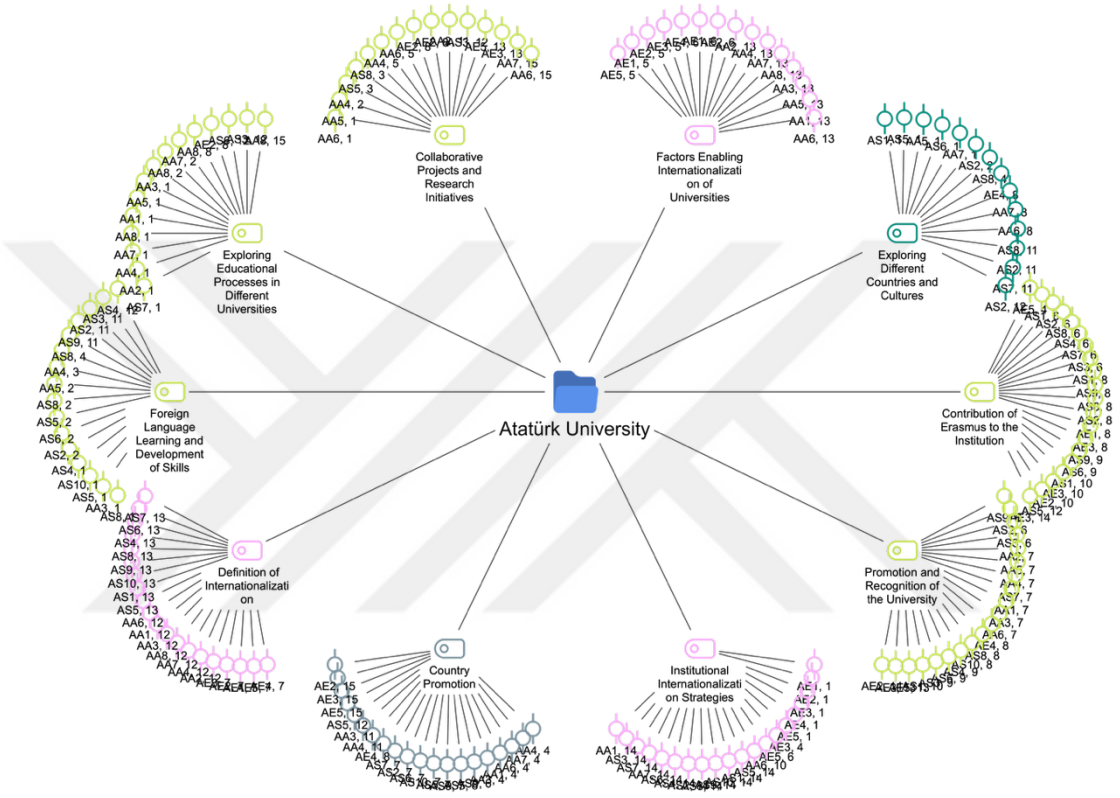
Table 13. Coding of the responses of Atatürk University participants



The following chart (Table 14) reflects the top 10 most used codes among all Atatürk University participants. As stated for METU and Ege University, the chart shows which participant used the specific code, and the numbers reflect how many times

this code was reflected by the interviewee. Similar to Ege University statistics, the "contribution of Erasmus to the institutions" code is mostly referred to by Atatürk University participants, too. But also, the "promotion and recognition of the university" code is also referred to by most of the interviewees.

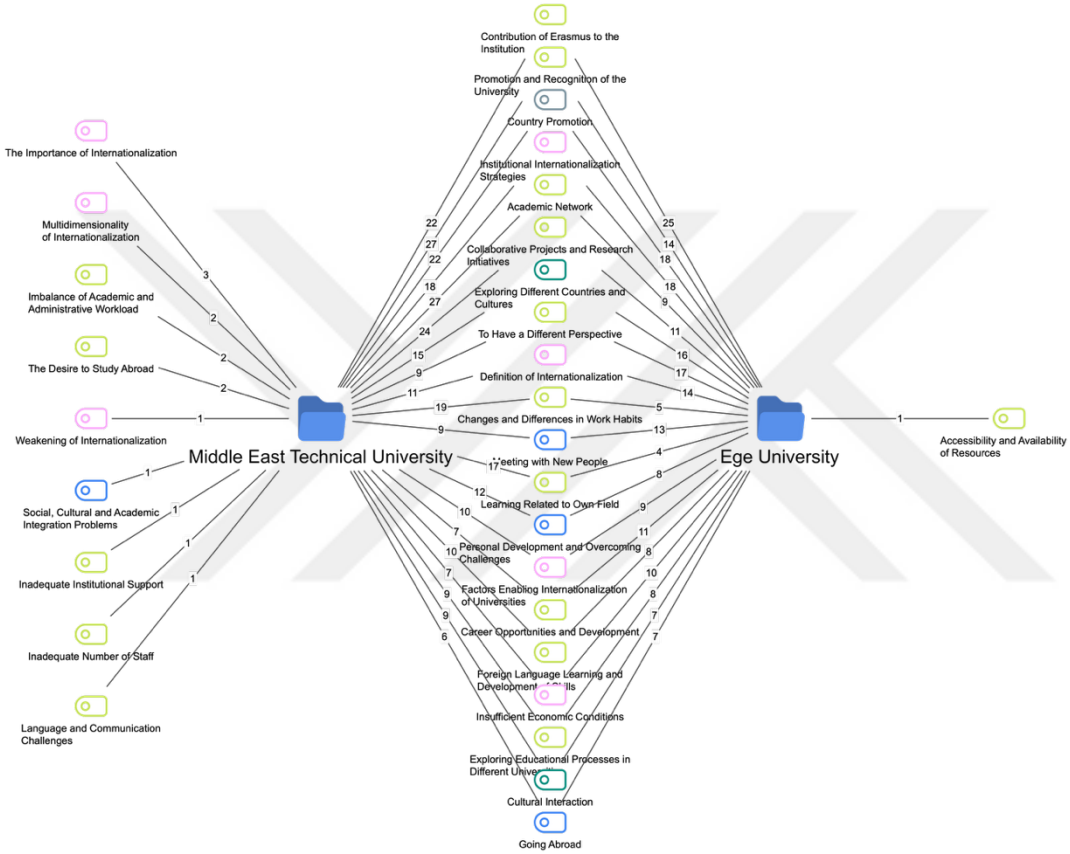
Table 14. Top 10 most used Codes among Atatürk University participants



Before expressing the findings about the three interviewee groups, the similarities and differences between universities about coding should be discussed. To start with the comparison between METU and Ege University, the following chart (Table 15) reflects the common and different codes that were reflected by the participants from these universities. Indeed, according to the chart, 20 codes were referred to by both of the universities, including "academic network," "contribution of Erasmus to the institution," and "to have a different perspective" codes. The "Accessibility and availability of resources" code was the only code referred to by Ege University participants but not by participants from METU. However, according to the chart, nine codes were only referred by METU participants. These codes were "the

importance of internationalization", "multidimensionality of internationalization", "imbalance of academic and administrative workload", "the desire to study abroad", "weakening of internationalization", "social, cultural and academic integration problems", "inadequate institutional support", "an inadequate number of staff", "language and communication challenges".

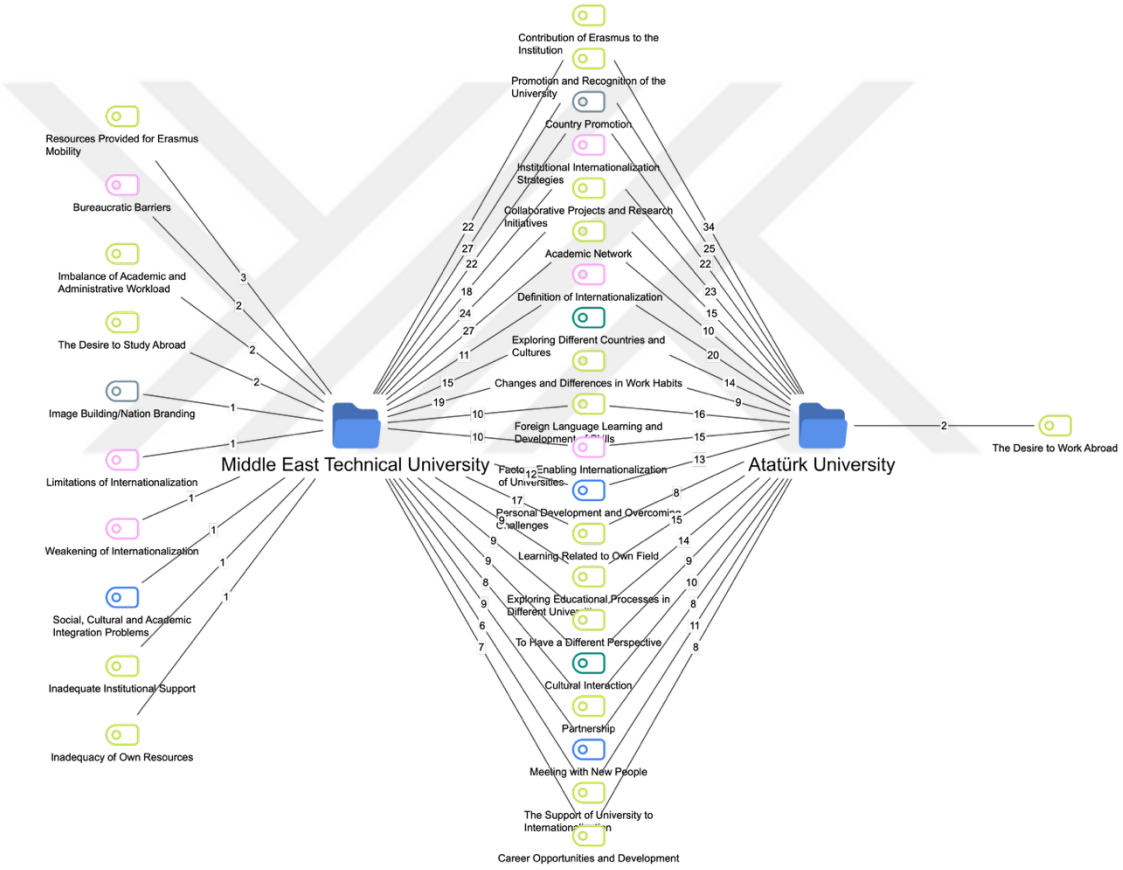
Table 15. Comparison between METU and Ege University



The following chart (Table 16) shows the common and different codes that were referred by the interviewees from METU and Atatürk University. As can be seen, 20 codes were referred by both universities. Some of the codes are "institutional internationalization strategies," "learning related to own field," "cultural interaction," and "partnership." The "Contribution of Erasmus to the institution" code is the most highlighted code by both universities. The METU participants referred to this code with a frequency of 22, and Atatürk University participants referred to it with a frequency of 34. On the one hand, the "desire to work abroad" code was the only code referred to by Atatürk University participants but not by participants from

METU. On the other hand, ten codes were only referred by METU interviewees but not by Atatürk University participants. These were “resources provided for Erasmus mobility,” “bureaucratic barriers,” “imbalance of academic and administrative workload,” “the desire to study abroad,” “image building/ nation building,” “limitations of internationalization,” “weakening of internationalization,” “social, cultural and academic integration problems,” “inadequate institutional support,” “inadequacy of own resources.”

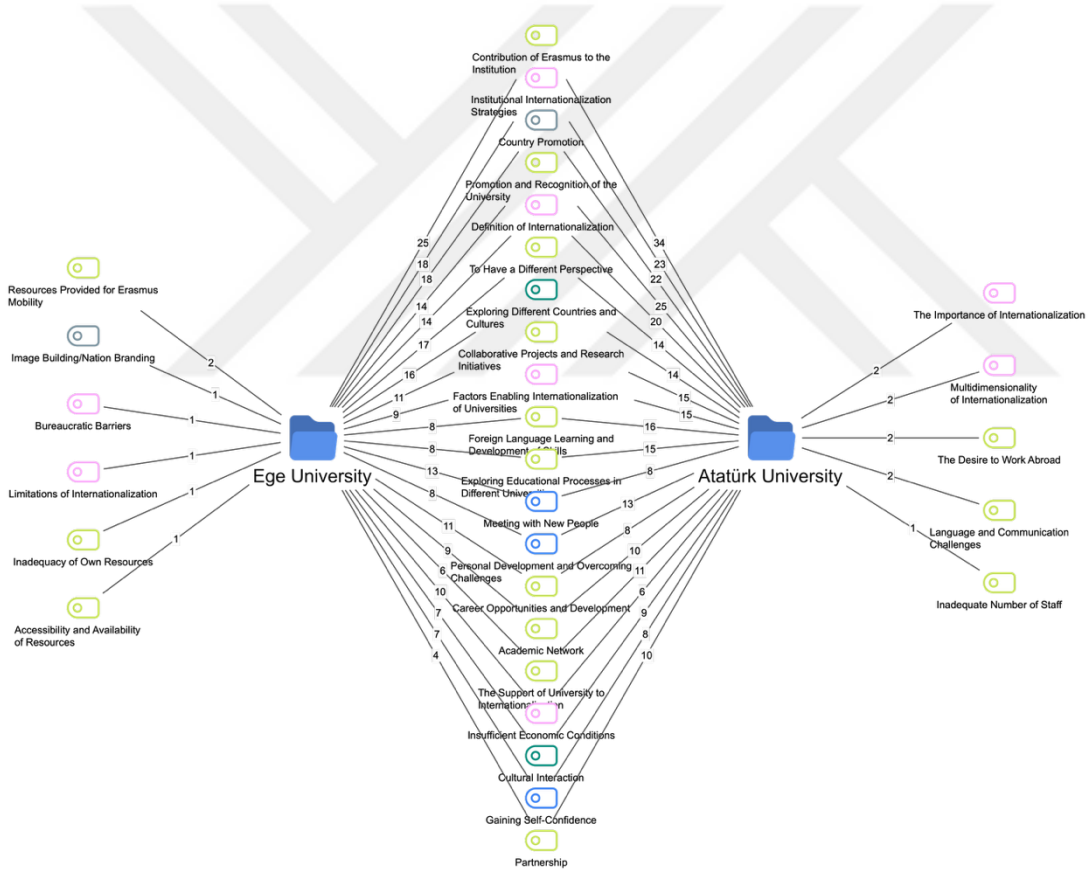
Table 16. Comparison between ME8TU and Atatürk University



Lastly, the following chart (Table 17) reflects the coding similarities and differences referred to by the participants from Ege University and Atatürk University. The chart shows that 20 codes were referred to by both of the universities in common. The “Contribution of Erasmus to the institution” code is the most pointed out by Ege and Atatürk universities, with a frequency of 25 and 34, respectively. “Partnership,” “cultural interaction,” “academic network,” “collaborative projects and research

initiatives," and "to have a different perspective" codes are some of the commonly referred codes by both universities. "The importance of internationalization," "multidimensionality of internationalization," "the desire to work abroad," "language and communication challenges," and "inadequate number of staff" codes are highlighted by only interviewees from Atatürk University. Some codes were only referred to by participants from Ege University. These codes are "resources provided for Erasmus mobility," "image building/nation branding," "bureaucratic barriers," "limitations of internationalization," "inadequacy of own resources," and "accessibility and availability of resources."

Table 17. Comparison between Ege and Atatürk University



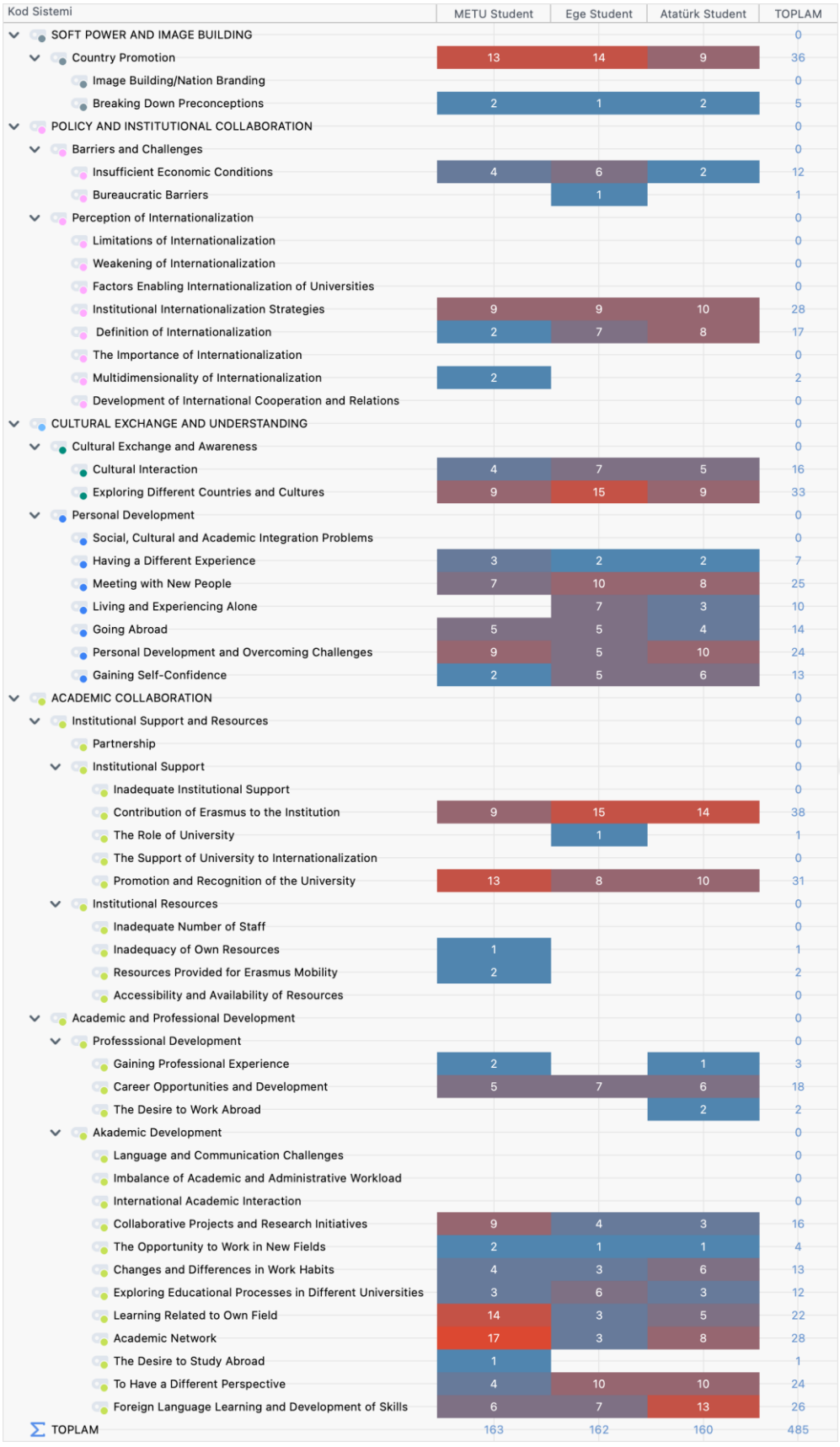
4.2. Findings from Three Interviewee Group

The following part will discuss the findings by comparing the interviewee groups separately. Three tables will be shared to reflect the responses of the students, academic staff, and Erasmus Office staff separately.

4.2.1. Students' Approach to Internationalization in Turkish Higher Education: Country Promotion and Exploring Different Cultures

To start with comparing findings about the students, the following table (Table 18) reflects students' responses from three universities with the usage frequencies. According to the table, 485 codes frequency emerged from the interviews with students from METU, Ege, and Atatürk Universities. The table shows that all three universities have almost the same coding frequency. For instance, the total coding frequencies for METU, Ege University, and Atatürk University are 163, 162, and 160, respectively. "Contribution of Erasmus to the institution" is the most referred code among all students, with the highest frequency of 38. The "Country promotion" code is the second most commonly used code with a frequency 36. "Exploring different countries and cultures" code is the third most used code with the frequency 33. Any student never used some of the codes. These codes are "image building/nation branding," "limitation of internationalization," "weakening of internationalization," "factors enabling internationalization of universities," "the importance of internationalization," "development of international cooperation and relations," "social, cultural and academic integration problems," "partnership," "inadequate institutional support," "the support of the university to internationalization," "inadequate number of staff," "accessibility and availability of resources," "language and communication challenges," "imbalance of academic and administrative workload," "international academic interaction." Some codes were emphasized by some students more than others. For instance, among METU students, the codes "academic network" with a frequency of 17, "learning related to own field" with a frequency of 14, "country promotion," and "promotion and recognition of the university" with a frequency of 13 are the most referred codes. Among Ege University students, the top three highlighted codes are "exploring different countries and cultures" with a frequency of 15, "contribution of Erasmus to the institution" with a frequency of 15, and "country promotion" with a frequency of 14. Regarding Atatürk University students, the "contribution of Erasmus to the institution" code with the frequency of 14 and the "foreign language learning and development of skills" code with the frequency of 13 are the most referred codes.

Table 18. Students' Responses from Three Universities



Kod Sistemi	METU Student	Ege Student	Atatürk Student	TOPLAM
SOFT POWER AND IMAGE BUILDING				0
Country Promotion	13	14	9	36
Image Building/Nation Branding				0
Breaking Down Preconceptions	2	1	2	5
POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL COLLABORATION				0
Barriers and Challenges				0
Insufficient Economic Conditions	4	6	2	12
Bureaucratic Barriers		1		1
Perception of Internationalization				0
Limitations of Internationalization				0
Weakening of Internationalization				0
Factors Enabling Internationalization of Universities				0
Institutional Internationalization Strategies	9	9	10	28
Definition of Internationalization	2	7	8	17
The Importance of Internationalization				0
Multidimensionality of Internationalization	2			2
Development of International Cooperation and Relations				0
CULTURAL EXCHANGE AND UNDERSTANDING				0
Cultural Exchange and Awareness				0
Cultural Interaction	4	7	5	16
Exploring Different Countries and Cultures	9	15	9	33
Personal Development				0
Social, Cultural and Academic Integration Problems				0
Having a Different Experience	3	2	2	7
Meeting with New People	7	10	8	25
Living and Experiencing Alone		7	3	10
Going Abroad	5	5	4	14
Personal Development and Overcoming Challenges	9	5	10	24
Gaining Self-Confidence	2	5	6	13
ACADEMIC COLLABORATION				0
Institutional Support and Resources				0
Partnership				0
Institutional Support				0
Inadequate Institutional Support				0
Contribution of Erasmus to the Institution	9	15	14	38
The Role of University		1		1
The Support of University to Internationalization				0
Promotion and Recognition of the University	13	8	10	31
Institutional Resources				0
Inadequate Number of Staff				0
Inadequacy of Own Resources	1			1
Resources Provided for Erasmus Mobility	2			2
Accessibility and Availability of Resources				0
Academic and Professional Development				0
Professsional Development				0
Gaining Professional Experience	2		1	3
Career Opportunities and Development	5	7	6	18
The Desire to Work Abroad			2	2
Akademic Development				0
Language and Communication Challenges				0
Imbalance of Academic and Administrative Workload				0
International Academic Interaction				0
Collaborative Projects and Research Initiatives	9	4	3	16
The Opportunity to Work in New Fields	2	1	1	4
Changes and Differences in Work Habits	4	3	6	13
Exploring Educational Processes in Different Universities	3	6	3	12
Learning Related to Own Field	14	3	5	22
Academic Network	17	3	8	28
The Desire to Study Abroad	1			1
To Have a Different Perspective	4	10	10	24
Foreign Language Learning and Development of Skills	6	7	13	26
TOPLAM	163	162	160	485

4.2.2. Academic Staff's Approach to Internationalization in Turkish Higher Education: Contribution of Erasmus and Collaborative Projects

The following table (Table 19) shows the responses of academic staff from METU, Ege, and Atatürk Universities with the reference frequency. As can be seen from the table, the total code frequency of all academic staff from three universities is 286. "Contribution of Erasmus to the institution" is the code most commonly used by all academic staff, with the highest frequency being 26.

Half of this frequency belongs to academic staff from Atatürk University. "Collaborative projects and research initiatives" is the second most used code with a frequency of 25. Almost half of this frequency belongs to academic staff from METU. "Promotion and recognition of the university" is the third commonly used code with a frequency of 22. Again, half of this frequency belongs to academic staff members of Atatürk University.

Furthermore, "multidimensionality of internationalization," "development of international cooperation and relations," "social, cultural and academic integration problems," "living and experiencing alone," "accessibility and availability of resources," "the desire to work abroad," and "the desire to study abroad" codes were not used by any academic staff participant. Nineteen codes were referred to by all university academic staff participants, like "having a different experience," "gaining professional experience," and "changes and differences in work habits" codes. Some codes were only referred to by one university academic staff.

For instance, "breaking down preconceptions," "bureaucratic barriers," "inadequate institutional support," and "imbalance of academic and administrative workload" codes were only mentioned by academic staff from METU. "Inadequacy of own resources" and "resources provided for Erasmus mobility" codes were only referred to by Ege University academic staff. "An inadequate number of staff," "language and communication challenges," and "foreign language learning and development of skills" codes were only highlighted by academic staff from Atatürk University.

Table 19. Academic Staff's Responses from Three Universities

Kod Sistemi	METU Academic Staff	Ege Akademic Staff	Atatürk Akademic Staff	TOPLAM
SOFT POWER AND IMAGE BUILDING				0
Country Promotion	5	3	9	17
Image Building/Nation Branding	1	1		2
Breaking Down Preconceptions	2			2
POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL COLLABORATION				0
Barriers and Challenges				0
Insufficient Economic Conditions	1	4	1	6
Bureaucratic Barriers	1			1
Perception of Internationalization				0
Limitations of Internationalization	1	1		2
Weakening of Internationalization	1			1
Factors Enabling Internationalization of Universities	5	3	8	16
Institutional Internationalization Strategies	2	6	6	14
Definition of Internationalization	5	4	7	16
The Importance of Internationalization			1	1
Multidimensionality of Internationalization				0
Development of International Cooperation and Relations				0
CULTURAL EXCHANGE AND UNDERSTANDING				0
Cultural Exchange and Awareness				0
Cultural Interaction	3		2	5
Exploring Different Countries and Cultures	1		4	5
Personal Development				0
Social, Cultural and Academic Integration Problems				0
Having a Different Experience	1	1	1	3
Meeting with New People	1	2		3
Living and Experiencing Alone				0
Going Abroad	1	2	1	4
Personal Development and Overcoming Challenges	2	2	2	6
Gaining Self-Confidence	1	1	2	4
ACADEMIC COLLABORATION				0
Institutional Support and Resources				0
Partnership		1	2	3
Institutional Support				0
Inadequate Institutional Support	1			1
Contribution of Erasmus to the Institution	7	6	13	26
The Role of University			1	1
The Support of University to Internationalization	1	1	5	7
Promotion and Recognition of the University	6	5	11	22
Institutional Resources				0
Inadequate Number of Staff			1	1
Inadequacy of Own Resources		1		1
Resources Provided for Erasmus Mobility		2		2
Accessibility and Availability of Resources				0
Academic and Professional Development				0
Professsional Development				0
Gaining Professional Experience	6	1	1	8
Career Opportunities and Development		1	2	3
The Desire to Work Abroad				0
Akademic Development				0
Language and Communication Challenges			1	1
Imbalance of Academic and Administrative Workload	2			2
International Academic Interaction	1	6	1	8
Collaborative Projects and Research Initiatives	10	7	8	25
The Opportunity to Work in New Fields	2	1		3
Changes and Differences in Work Habits	9	2	3	14
Exploring Educational Processes in Different Universities	4	2	11	17
Learning Related to Own Field	2		2	4
Academic Network	8	5	2	15
The Desire to Study Abroad				0
To Have a Different Perspective	2	6	3	11
Foreign Language Learning and Development of Skills			3	3
TOPLAM	95	77	114	286

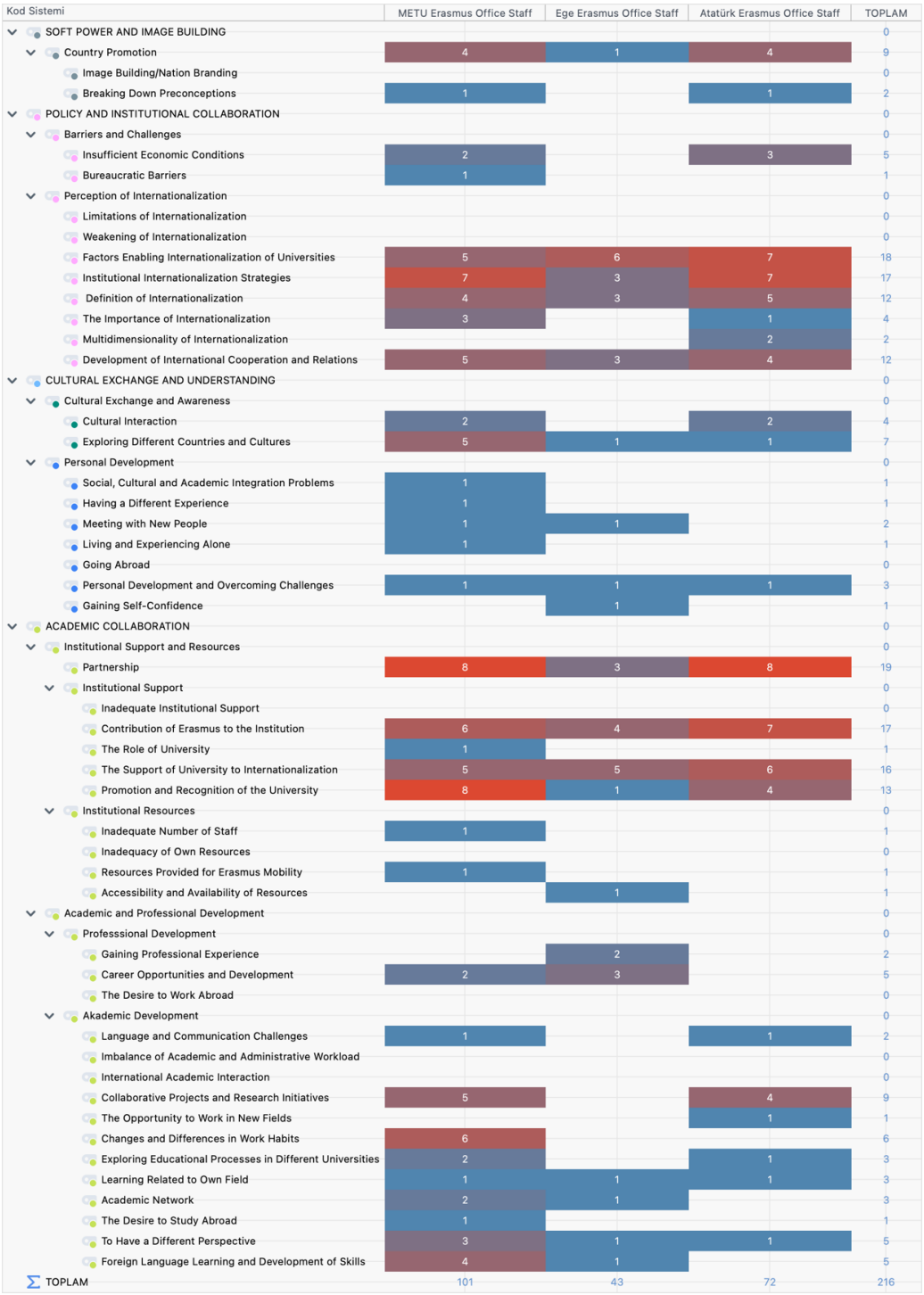
4.2.3. Erasmus Offices Staff ‘s Approach to Internationalization in Turkish Higher Education: Partnership and Institutional Strategies

The following table (Table 20) demonstrates the responses and frequencies of the referred codes of Erasmus office staff from three universities. The total frequency of codes referred by Erasmus office staff is 216. Different from the distribution of code frequencies of responses of students and academic staff, the responses of the Erasmus office staff vary. For instance, the total code frequency of Erasmus Office staff from METU is 101, from Ege University, is 43, and from Atatürk University 72. Among the responses, the “partnership” code is the most referred code, with a frequency of 19.

Almost all of this frequency belongs to the responses of METU and Atatürk University Erasmus office staff. The second commonly used code by the participants is “factors enabling internationalization of universities,” with a frequency of 18. The third most used code by Erasmus office staff is “contribution of Erasmus to the institution,” with a frequency of 17. Some of the codes were not referred by any Erasmus office staff from any university.

These codes are “image building/nation branding,” “limitations of internationalization,” “weakening of internationalization,” “going abroad,” “inadequate institutional support,” “the desire to work abroad,” “imbalance of academic and administrative workload,” “international academic interaction.” 13 codes, such as “country promotion,” “development of international cooperation and relations” and “exploring different countries and cultures,” were highlighted by all Erasmus Office staff from three universities. “Bureaucratic barriers,” “social, cultural and academic integration problems,” “having a different experience,” “living and experiencing alone,” “inadequate number of staff,” and “resources provided for Erasmus mobility” codes were only referred to by Erasmus Office staff from METU. “Gaining self-confidence,” “accessibility and availability of resources,” and “gaining professional experience” codes were only referred to by Erasmus Office staff from Ege University. No code was highlighted by only Erasmus Office staff from Atatürk University.

Table 20. Erasmus Office Staff's Responses from Three Universities



Kod Sistemi	METU Erasmus Office Staff	Ege Erasmus Office Staff	Atatürk Erasmus Office Staff	TOPLAM
SOFT POWER AND IMAGE BUILDING				0
Country Promotion	4	1	4	9
Image Building/Nation Branding				0
Breaking Down Preconceptions	1		1	2
POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL COLLABORATION				0
Barriers and Challenges				0
Insufficient Economic Conditions	2		3	5
Bureaucratic Barriers	1			1
Perception of Internationalization				0
Limitations of Internationalization				0
Weakening of Internationalization				0
Factors Enabling Internationalization of Universities	5	6	7	18
Institutional Internationalization Strategies	7	3	7	17
Definition of Internationalization	4	3	5	12
The Importance of Internationalization	3		1	4
Multidimensionality of Internationalization			2	2
Development of International Cooperation and Relations	5	3	4	12
CULTURAL EXCHANGE AND UNDERSTANDING				0
Cultural Exchange and Awareness				0
Cultural Interaction	2		2	4
Exploring Different Countries and Cultures	5	1	1	7
Personal Development				0
Social, Cultural and Academic Integration Problems	1			1
Having a Different Experience	1			1
Meeting with New People	1	1		2
Living and Experiencing Alone	1			1
Going Abroad				0
Personal Development and Overcoming Challenges	1	1	1	3
Gaining Self-Confidence		1		1
ACADEMIC COLLABORATION				0
Institutional Support and Resources				0
Partnership	8	3	8	19
Institutional Support				0
Inadequate Institutional Support				0
Contribution of Erasmus to the Institution	6	4	7	17
The Role of University	1			1
The Support of University to Internationalization	5	5	6	16
Promotion and Recognition of the University	8	1	4	13
Institutional Resources				0
Inadequate Number of Staff	1			1
Inadequacy of Own Resources				0
Resources Provided for Erasmus Mobility	1			1
Accessibility and Availability of Resources		1		1
Academic and Professional Development				0
Professional Development				0
Gaining Professional Experience		2		2
Career Opportunities and Development	2	3		5
The Desire to Work Abroad				0
Akademic Development				0
Language and Communication Challenges	1		1	2
Imbalance of Academic and Administrative Workload				0
International Academic Interaction				0
Collaborative Projects and Research Initiatives	5		4	9
The Opportunity to Work in New Fields			1	1
Changes and Differences in Work Habits	6			6
Exploring Educational Processes in Different Universities	2		1	3
Learning Related to Own Field	1	1	1	3
Academic Network	2	1		3
The Desire to Study Abroad	1			1
To Have a Different Perspective	3	1	1	5
Foreign Language Learning and Development of Skills	4	1		5
TOPLAM	101	43	72	216

4.3. Findings about Themes

Having discussed the findings from interviewee groups, it is necessary to express the findings about themes. As stated before, four main themes emerged when the data

from the interviews conducted in three universities with the students, academic staff, and Erasmus Office staff was analyzed. These are academic collaboration, cultural exchange and understanding, policy and institutional cooperation, soft power, and image building. The findings about these themes will be detailed in the following section. However, before moving to this part, general data should be given. The graph below (Figure 1) shows the general statistics about the four themes. For instance, more than half of the coding (54 percent) from the interviews belongs to academic collaboration with a frequency of 534. The least referred code is soft power and image building, with seven percent of the overall coding with a frequency of 73. Cultural exchange, understanding, and policy and institutional collaboration are referred at the same rate, with 19 percent of the overall coding frequency of 192 and 188, respectively.

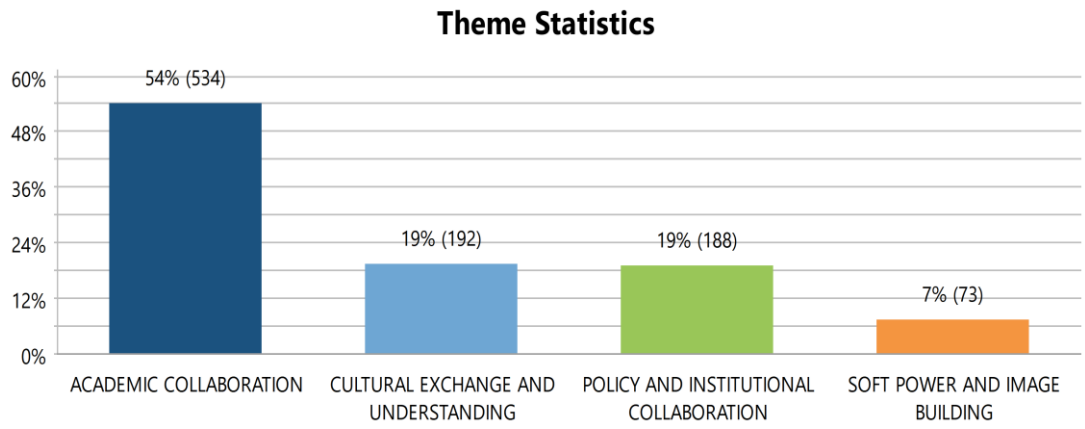
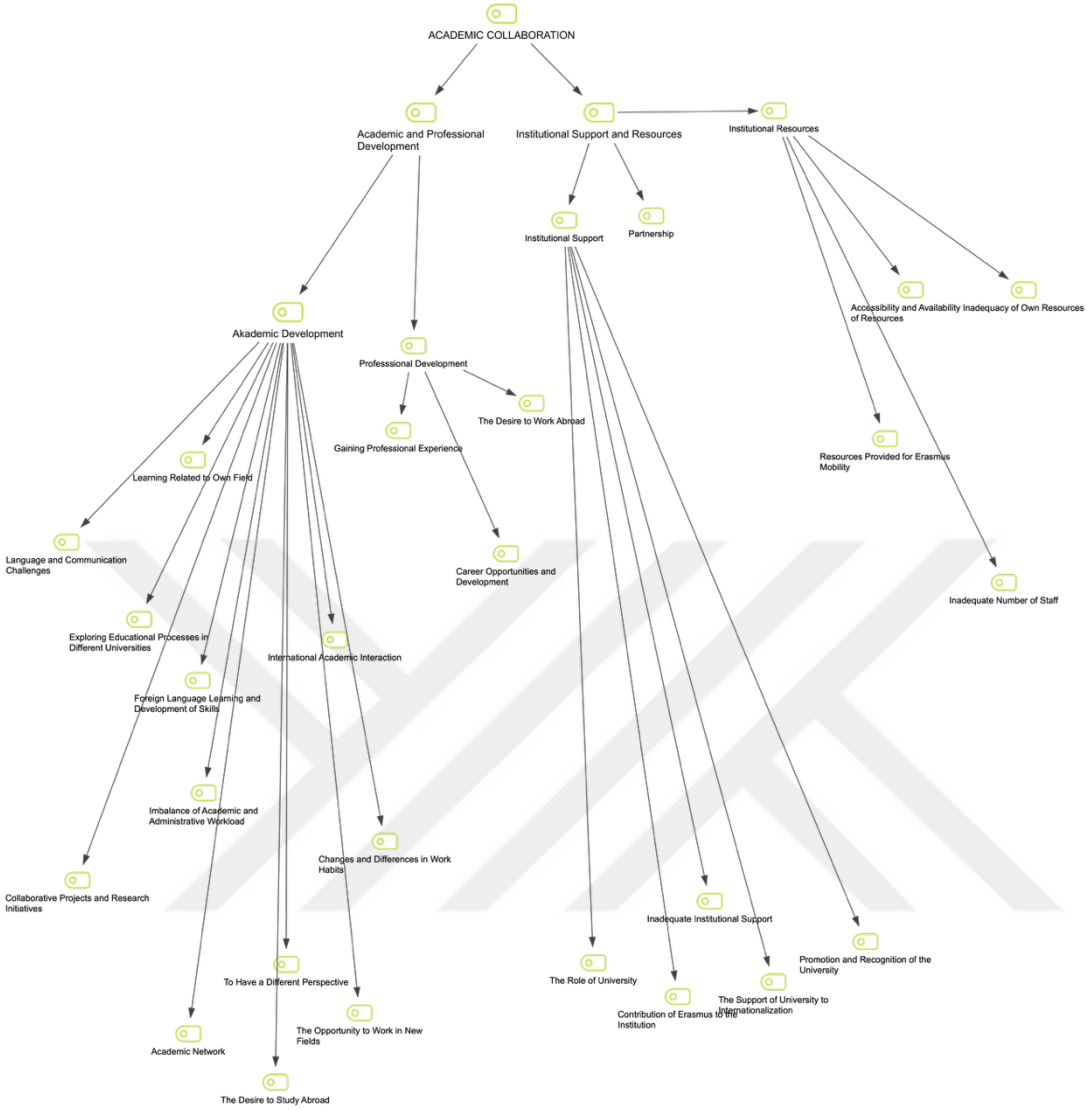


Figure 1. Theme Statistics

4.3.1. Findings about Academic Collaboration

The following chart (Table 21) reflects the coding hierarchy. Under the academic collaboration theme, there are two main categories: "academic and professional development" and "institutional support and resources." The chart also shows the categories under each of these categories. For instance, under the "academic and professional development" category, there are two main categories which are "academic development" and professional development." Under the "institutional support and resources" category, there are three main codes which are "institutional support," "partnership" and "institutional resources."

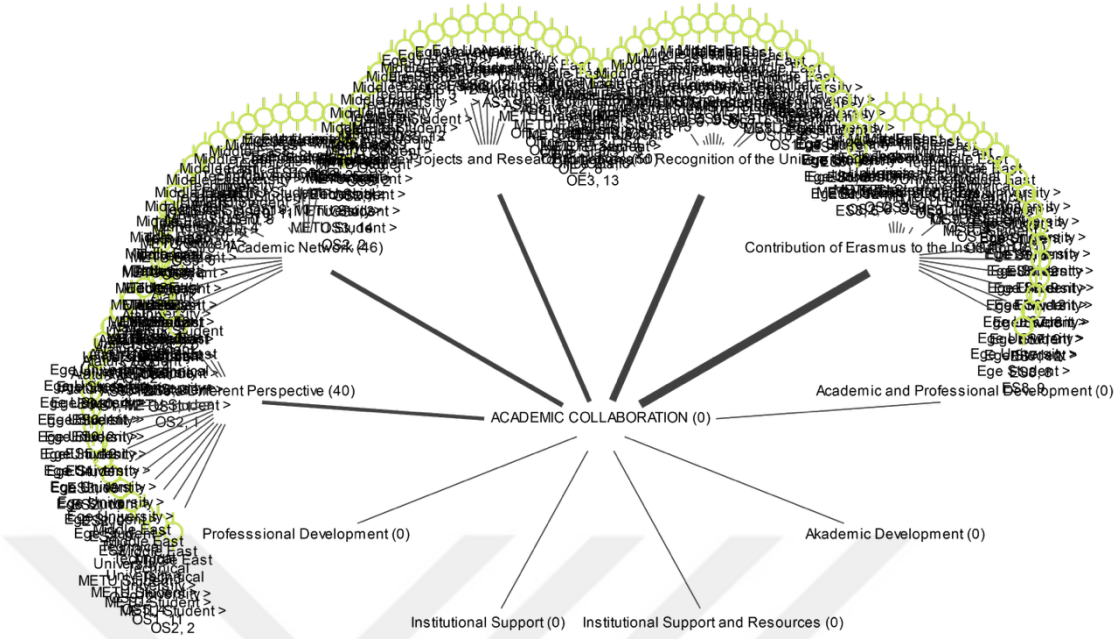
Table 21. Coding Hierarchy of Academic Collaboration Theme



The following chart (Table 22) represents the ten codes most referred to under the "academic collaboration" theme among all participants. Although it appears that five codes were not referred to by any participants, they are categories of the used codes. Therefore, they are seen as codes that are not referred to.

The thickness of the lines indicates the frequency of referred codes. For instance, the most referred code is "contribution of Erasmus to the institution," with a frequency 81 among other codes. The least referred code is "to have a different perspective," with a frequency of 40. The chart also shows the ten participants who most referred to these codes.

Table 22. Top 10 codes referred under Academic Collaboration Theme



The following graph (Figure 2) presents the interview data about the "academic collaboration" theme. According to the graph, the "academic and professional development" category is used almost twice as much as "institutional support and resources," with 61 percent referred code with a total frequency of 328. The "Institutional support and resources" category is referred to with a frequency of 206, and its percentage is 39 percent.

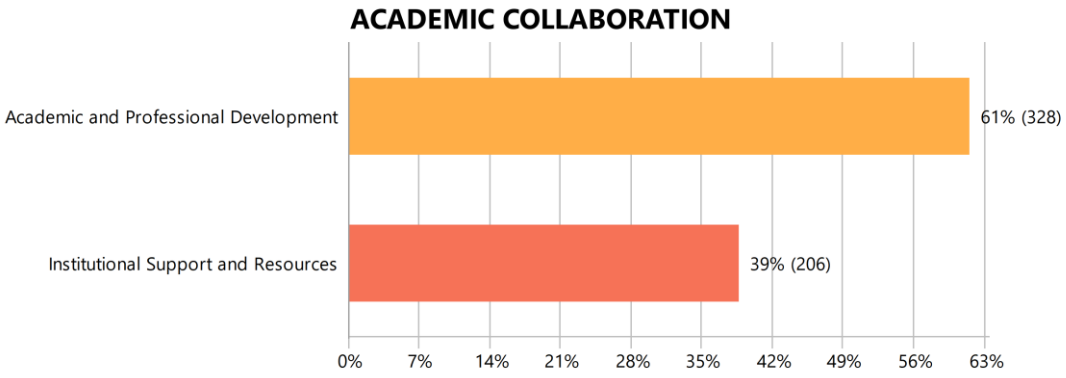


Figure 2. Statistics about Academic Collaboration

When the categories are examined in detail, the following graph shows the data about the "academic and professional development" category. According to the

graph below, (Figure 3) the most significant share belongs to the "academic development" code, with 88 percent. The "professional development" code was only referred to 41 times, which accounts for 13 percent of the total coding under the "academic and professional development" title.

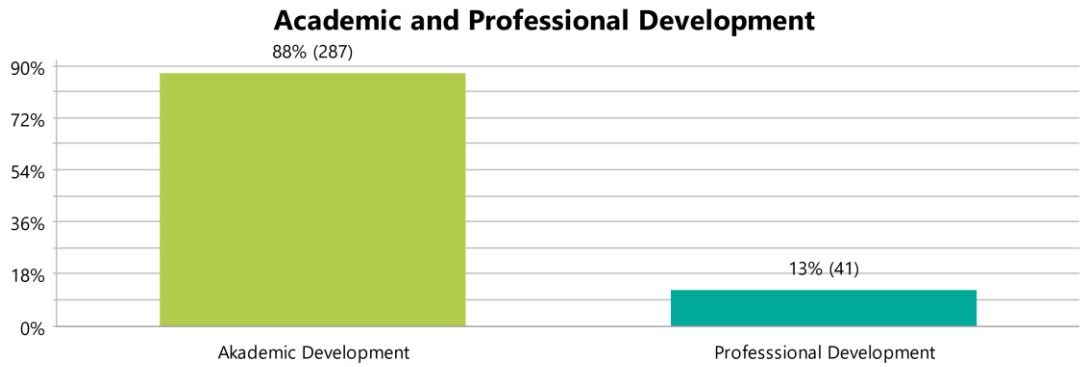


Figure 3. Statistics about Academic and Professional Development

The following graph (Figure 4) demonstrates the referred codes under the "institutional support and resources" category. The most significant share is "institutional support," with 84 percent among other codes. The second referred code is "partnership," with a frequency of 22 and a percentage of 11. The least referred code is "institutional resources," with a frequency of ten and a rate of five.

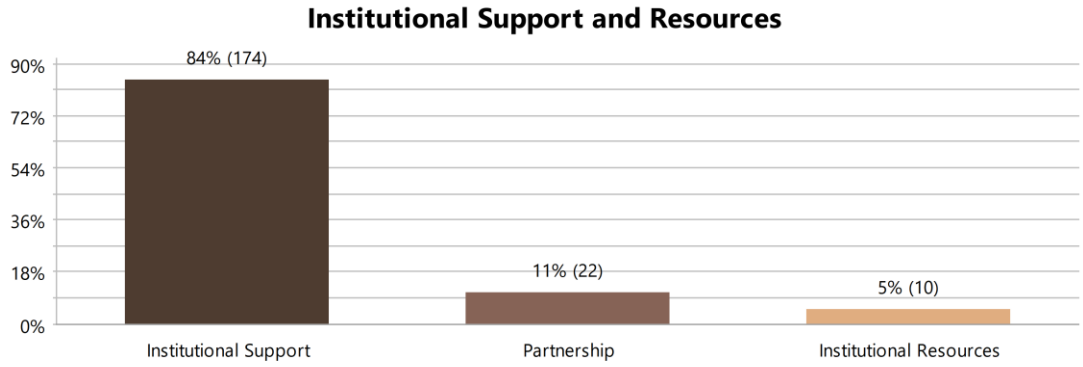


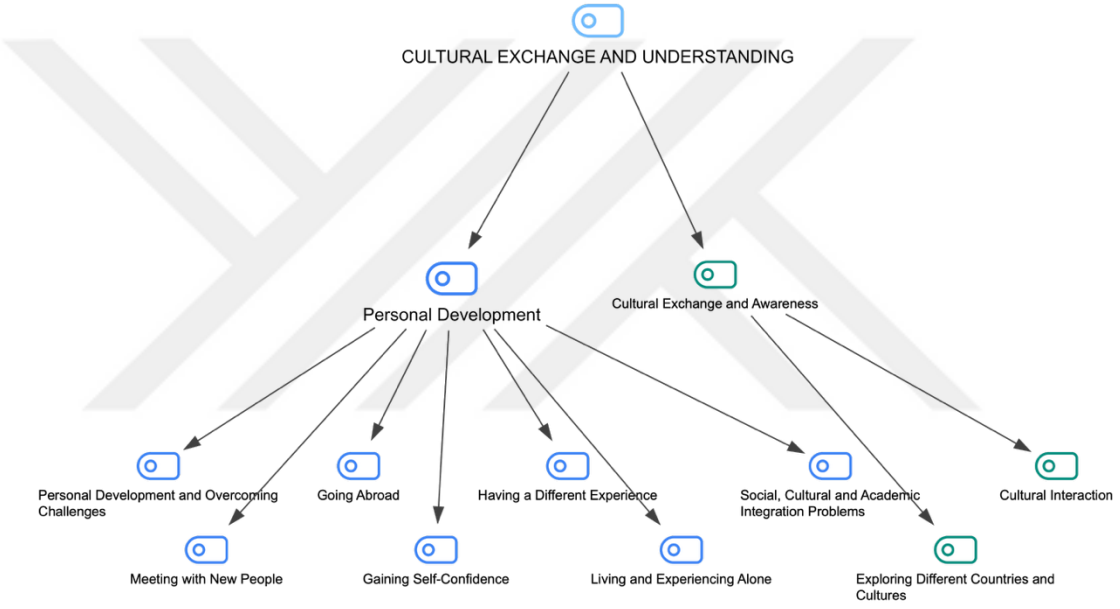
Figure 4. Statistics about Institutional Support and Resources

4.3.2. Findings about Cultural Exchange and Understanding

The second theme that emerged from the interviews is "cultural exchange and understanding." The following diagram (Table 23) shows the code hierarchy for the

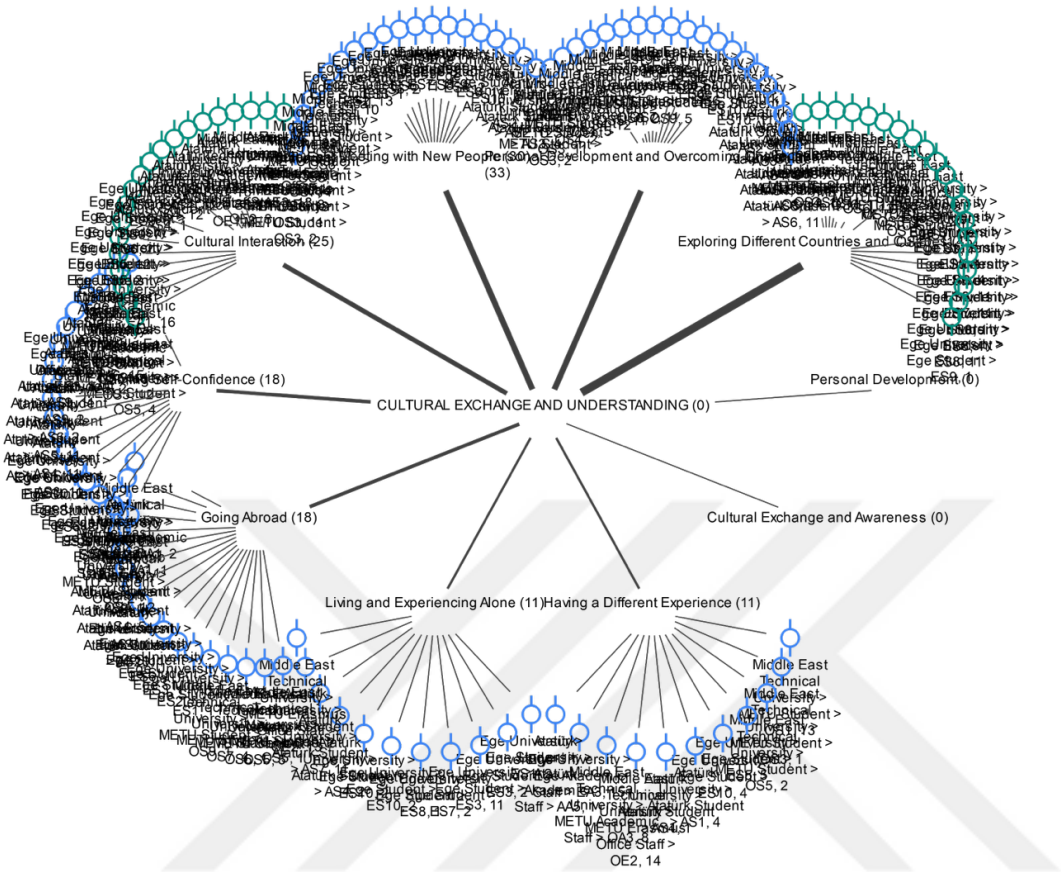
“cultural exchange and understanding” theme. Under this theme are two main categories: "personal development” and “cultural exchange and awareness.” The chart also reflects the codes under each of these categories. Indeed, under the “cultural exchange and awareness” category, there are two codes, which are “exploring different countries and cultures” and “cultural interaction” codes. Under the “personal development” category, there are seven codes, like “personal development and overcoming challenges,” “gaining self-confidence,” and “living and experiencing alone.”

Table 23. Coding Hierarchy of Cultural Exchange and Understanding Theme



The following chart (Table 24) shows the 10 codes most referred to under the “cultural exchange and understanding” theme. Similar to the previous theme, two codes, “cultural exchange and awareness” and “personal development,” were not referred to by any participants. They are categories of this “cultural exchange and understanding” theme, and the codes are placed under these categories. Therefore, the graph only reflects the codes referred to by all participants. The thickness of the lines indicates the frequency of referred codes. For instance, the most referred code is “exploring different countries and cultures.” The least referred codes are “living and experiencing alone” and “having a different experience,” with a frequency of 11. The chart also shows the ten participants who referred to these codes the most.

Table 24. Top 10 Codes Referred Under Cultural Exchange and Understanding Theme



The following graph (Figure 5) shows statistics about the theme of "cultural exchange and understanding" in categories. Indeed, 64 percent of the coding under this theme belongs to the personal development category, with a frequency of 122 codings. 36 percent of the coding of "cultural exchange and understanding" belongs to the cultural exchange and awareness category, with a frequency of 70.

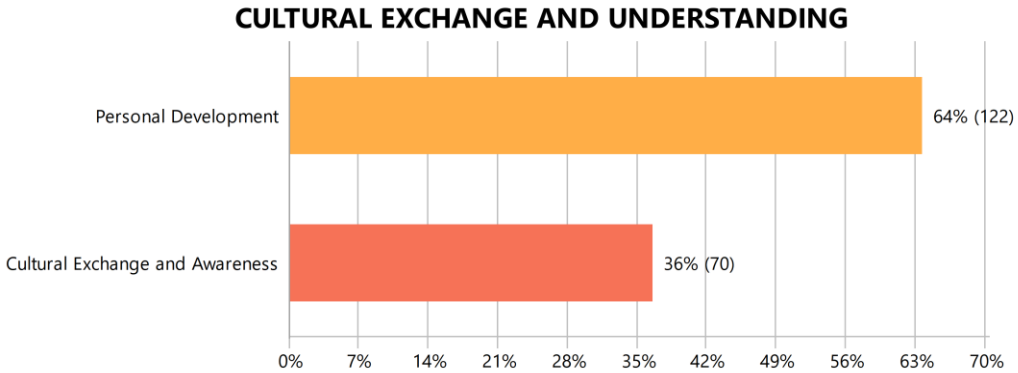


Figure 5. Statistics about Cultural Exchange and Understanding

The following two graphs (Figure 6 and Figure 7 respectively)show detailed data about each category separately. The first graph illustrates the coding information under the “cultural exchange and awareness” category. According to the graph, the most significant share belongs to the “exploring different countries and cultures” code with 64 percent. 36 percent of the coding belongs to the “cultural interaction” code with a referred frequency 25.

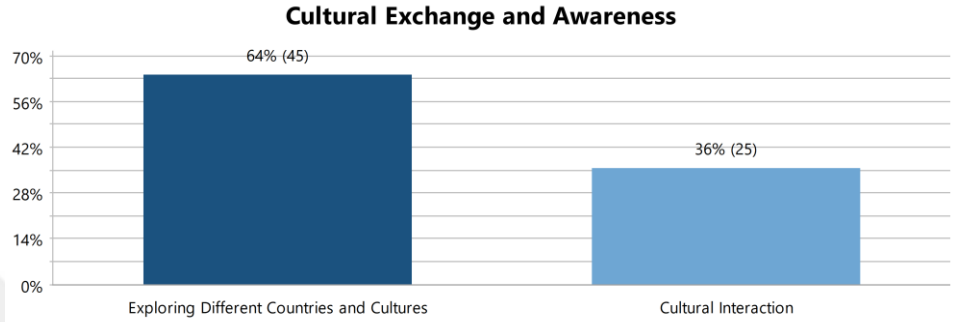


Figure 6. Statistics about Cultural Exchange and Awareness

The following graph (Figure 7) displays the codes under the “personal development” category. As can be seen from the graph, there are seven codes, which are “personal development and overcoming challenges,” “meeting with new people,” “going abroad,” “gaining self-confidence,” “having a different experience,” “living and experiencing alone,” “social, cultural and academic integration problems.” Among these codes, the most referred code is “personal development and overcoming challenges,” with a 27 percent referred percentage. The second most preferred code is “meeting with new people,” with a frequency of 30. The least referred code is “social, cultural and academic integration problems,” with one percent.

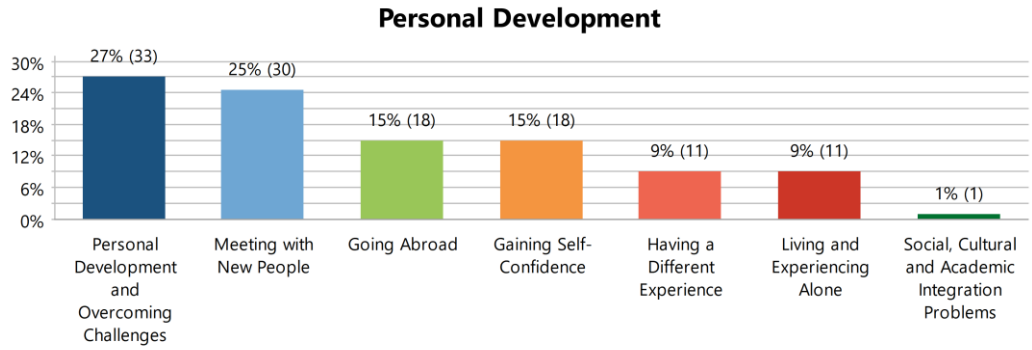


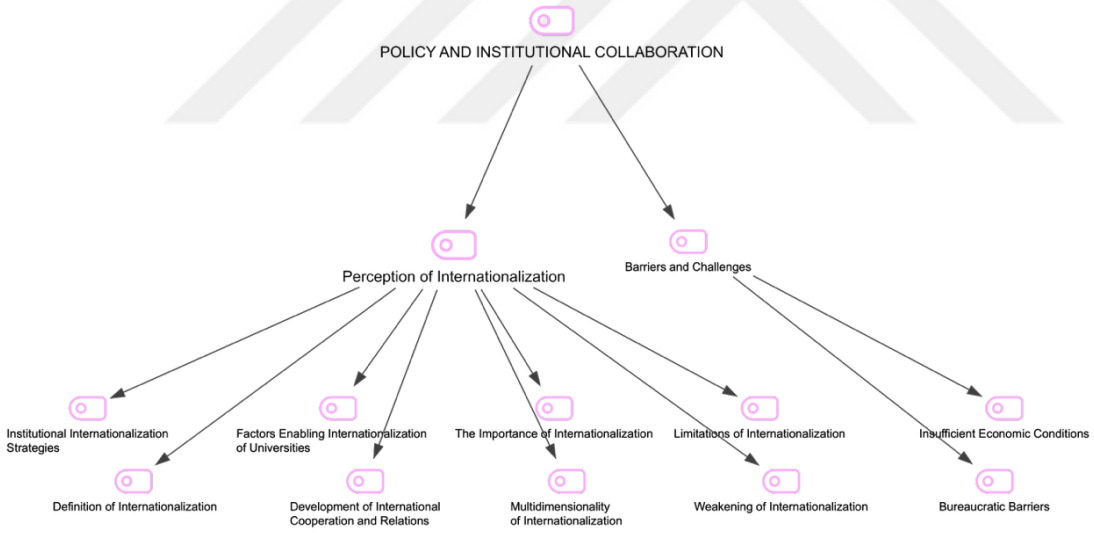
Figure 7. Statistics about Personal Development

4.3.3. Findings about Policy and Institutional Collaboration

The third theme from the interviews is “policy and institutional collaboration.” The following diagram (Table 25) shows the code hierarchy for this theme. The chart shows two main categories under this theme: "perception of internationalization” and “barriers and challenges.”

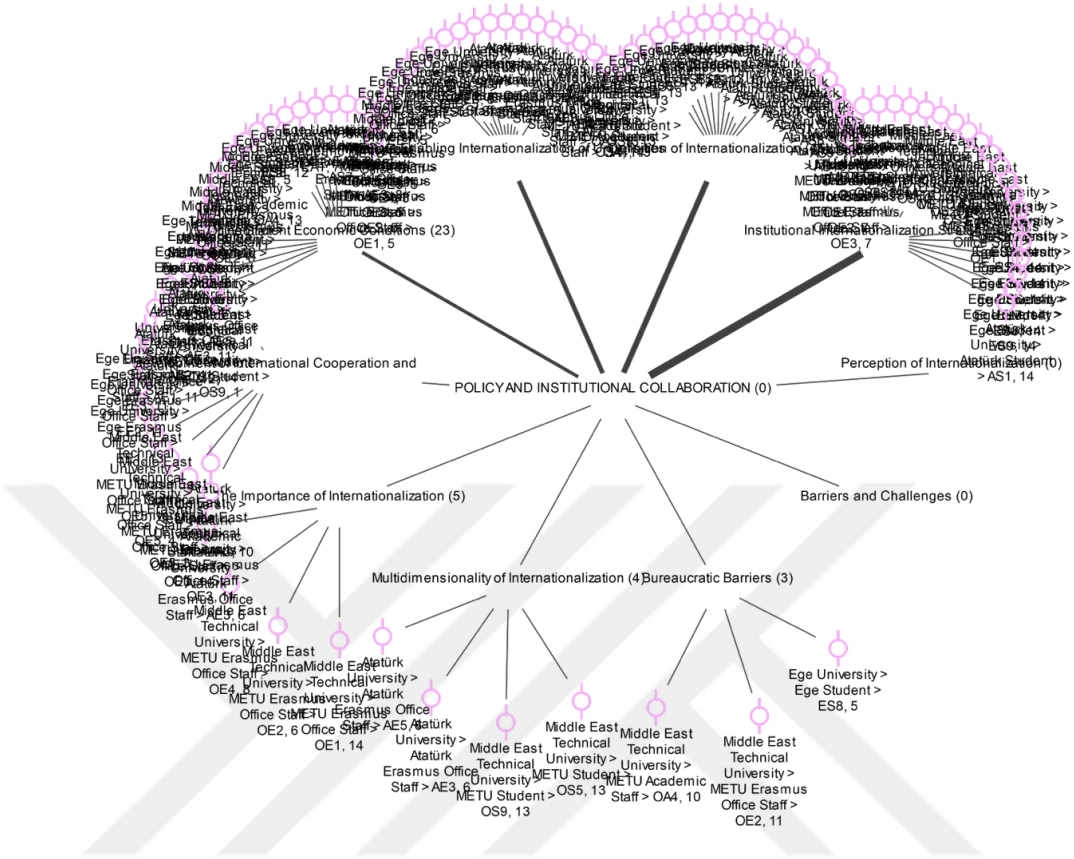
The chart also reflects the codes under each of these categories. Indeed, under the “barriers and challenges” category, there are two codes, which are “insufficient economic conditions” and “bureaucratic barriers” codes. Under the “perception of internationalization” category, there are eight codes, like “development of international cooperation and relations,” “definition of internationalization,” and “the importance of internationalization.”

Table 25. Coding Hierarchy of Policy and Institutional Collaboration Theme



The following chart (Table 26) shows the ten codes most frequently referred to under the “policy and institutional collaboration” theme. Similar to the previous themes, the thickness of the lines indicates the frequency of referred codes. For instance, the most frequently referred to code is “institutional internationalization strategies.” The least commonly referred code is “bureaucratic barriers,” with a frequency of three. The chart also reflects the participants who referred to these codes the most.

Table 26. Top 10 Codes Referred Under the Policy and Institutional Collaboration Theme



The following graph (Figure 8) shows statistics about the "policy and institutional collaboration" theme in terms of categories. Indeed, according to the graph, 84 percent of the coding under this theme belongs to the "perception of internationalization" category, with 162 codings per theme. 14 percent of the coding under this theme belongs to the "barriers and challenges" category, with 26 codings per theme.

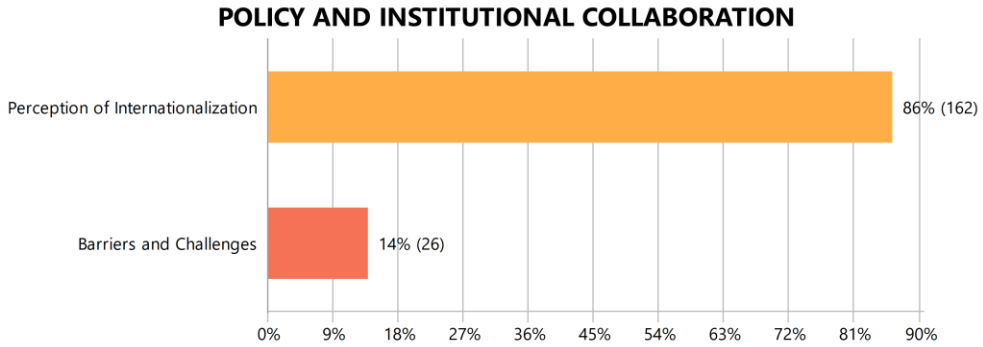


Figure 8. Statistics about Policy and Institutional Collaboration

The following two graphs (Figure 9 and Figure 10 respectively) show the detailed data about each category separately. The first graph illustrates the coding information under the "barriers and challenges" category. According to the graph, the most significant share belongs to the "insufficient economic conditions" code with 88 percent. 12 percent of the coding belongs to the "bureaucratic barriers" code with a referred frequency of three.

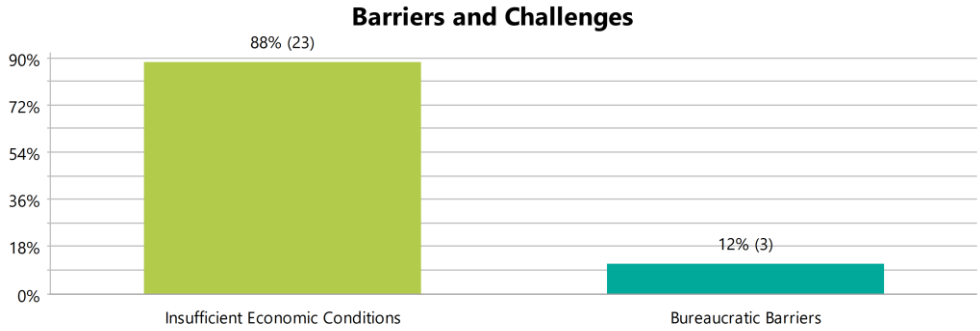


Figure 9. Statistics about Barriers and Challenges

The following graph (Figure 10) displays the codes under the "perception of internationalization" category. As can be seen from the graph, there are eight codes under this theme, including "institutional internationalization strategies," "multidimensionality of internationalization," and "weakening of internationalization" codes. Among these codes, the most referred code is "institutional internationalization strategies," with a 36 percent referred percentage. The second most referred code is "definition of internationalization" with the frequency of 45. The least referred codes are "limitations of internationalization" and "weakening of internationalization with one percent.

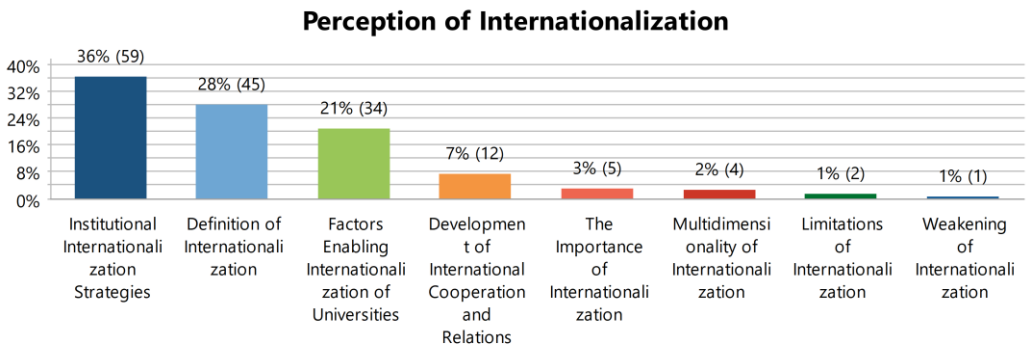
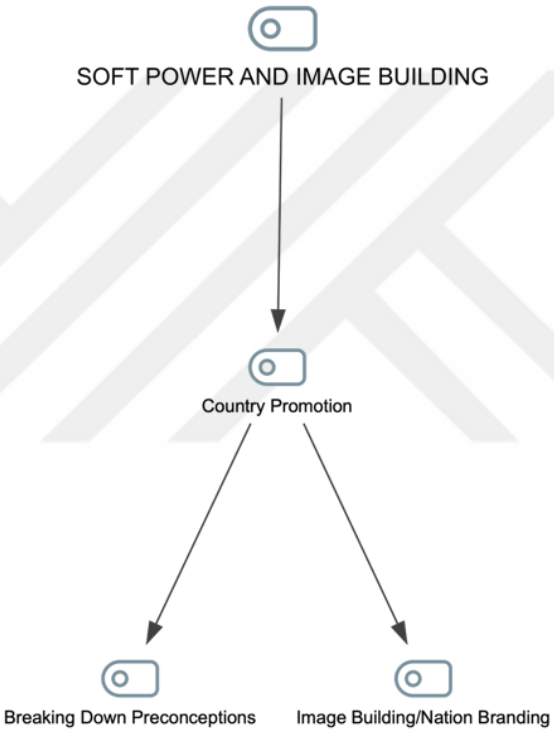


Figure 10. Statistics about Perceptions of Internationalization

4.3.4. Findings about Soft Power and Image Building

The last theme that emerged from the interviews is “soft power and image building.” The following diagram (Table 27) shows the code hierarchy for this theme. As seen from the chart, one main category under this theme is “country promotion.” The chart also reflects the codes under this category: “breakdown of perceptions” and “image building/nation branding.”

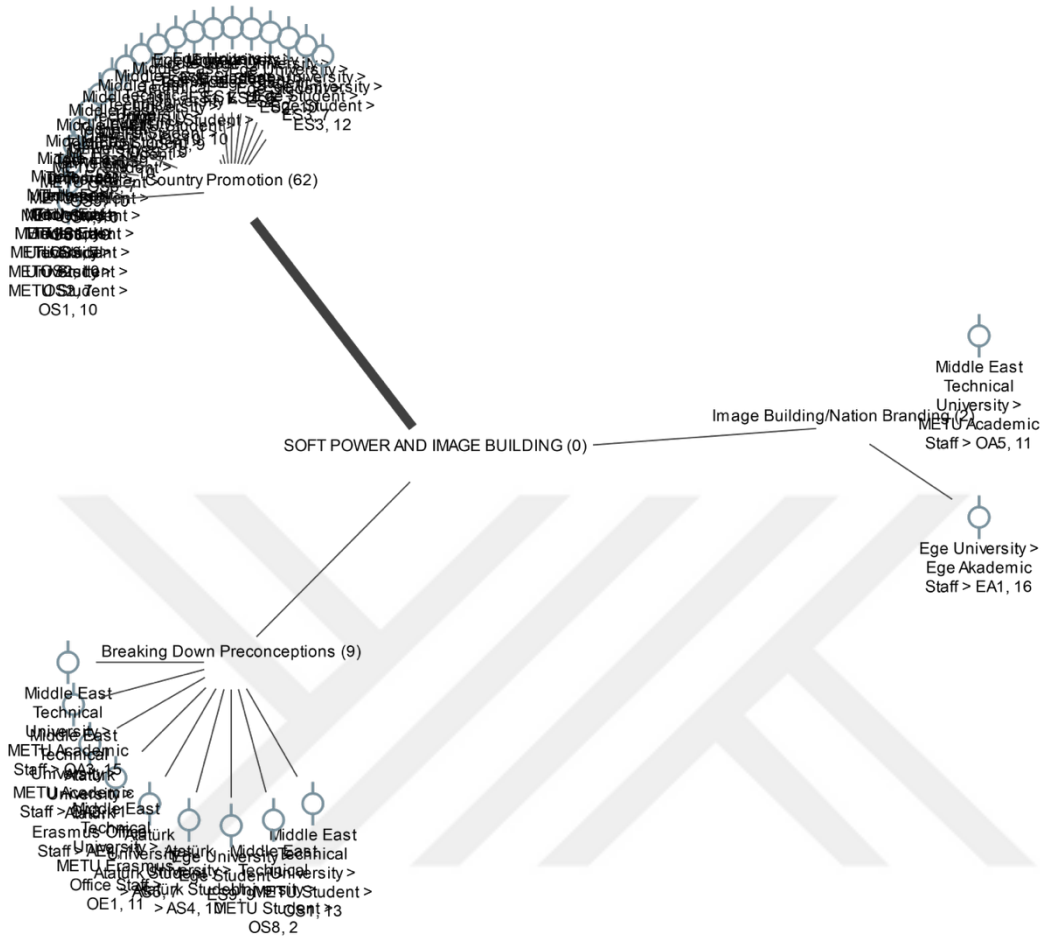
Table 27. Coding Hierarchy of Soft Power and Image Building



The following chart (Table 28) shows the three codes most frequently referred to under the “soft power and image building” theme. Similar to the previous themes, the thickness of the lines indicates the frequency of referred codes.

The most frequently referred code is “country promotion,” with a frequency of 62. The second most commonly referred code is “breaking down preconceptions.” The least frequently referred code is “image building/nation branding,” with a frequency of two. The chart also reflects the participants who referred to these codes the most.

Table 28. Top Three Codes Referred under the Soft Power and Image Building Theme



The following graph (Figure 11) shows the statistics about this theme in terms of category. The only category is "country promotion" and, therefore, referred 100 percent by the participants under this theme.

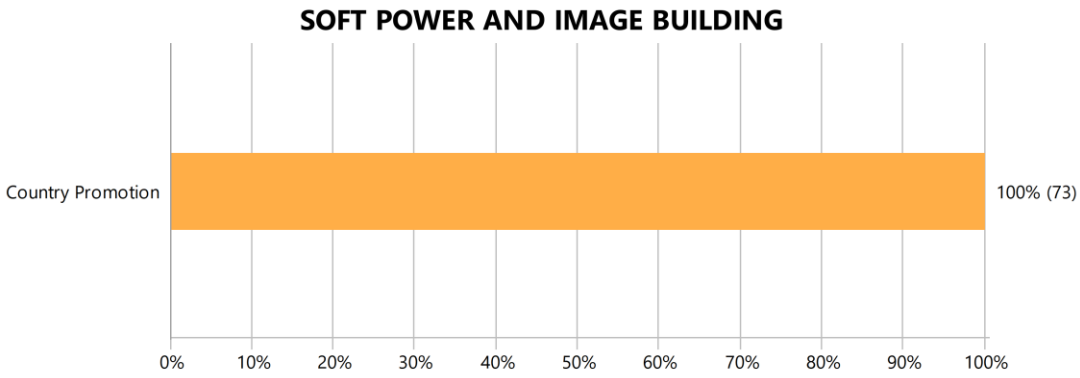


Figure 11. Statistics about Soft Power and Image Building

The following graph (Figure 12) shows detailed data about this category. It illustrates that the most significant share belongs to the “breaking down preconceptions” code, with 82 percent. Under this category, 18 percent of the coding belongs to the “image building/nation branding” code, with a referred frequency of two.

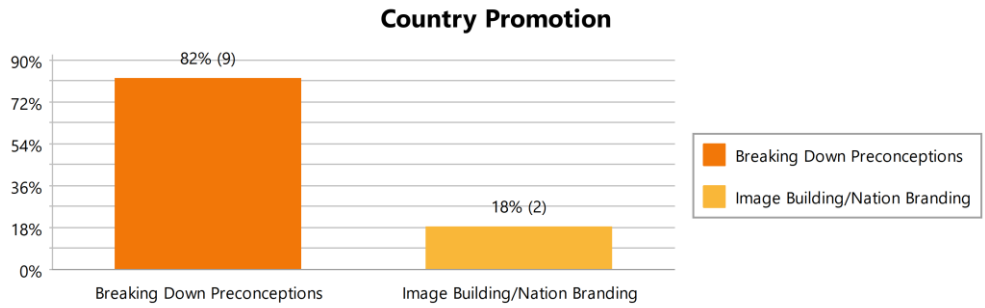


Figure 12. Statistics about Country Promotion

In short, four main themes had emerged from the interview: 1) academic collaboration, 2) cultural exchange and understanding, 3) policy and institutional collaboration, 4) soft power, and image building. The findings from the interviews conducted with all the participants revealed that more than half of the coding (54 percent) from the interviews belongs to academic collaboration. Cultural exchange, understanding, and policy and institutional collaboration are referred at the same rate, with 19 percent of the overall coding. The least referred code is soft power and image building, with seven percent of the overall coding. Among METU and Ege University participants, cultural exchange, understanding theme is the mostly referred one. Policy and institutional collaboration theme is the most used one among Atatürk University participants. Among all participants from three universities top three most used codes are “contribution of Erasmus to the institution”, “promotion and recognition of the university,” and “country promotion”. “Academic network” code is the most referred code among all these METU participants. “Contribution of Erasmus to the institution” code is the most referred code among all Ege and Atatürk University participants. This code is also the most referred come among all students and academic staff from three universities.

In the next section, the themes obtained from these interviews will be analyzed in relation to the concept of educational diplomacy, which is the theoretical ground of

the study. This discussion will provide an assessment of how Erasmus+ program has assumed a diplomatic function and contributed to internationalization in higher education in the Turkish context.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION FROM THE EDUCATION DIPLOMACY PERSPECTIVE

As stated at the beginning of this study, the purpose of this research is to analyze the contribution of Erasmus+ mobility to the internationalization of Turkish higher education institutions and to analyze it from an education diplomacy perspective. In line with this purpose, interviews were conducted with students, academic staff, and Erasmus Office staff from three research universities. The key findings from these interviews, referred to as main themes, are used to inquire about the experts' views of them. The interview results showed that among all participants, the "academic collaboration" theme was the most prominent theme of the interviews. The mostly referred code was "contribution of Erasmus to the institution." This code was also the most referred code among all students and academic staff from all three universities. But among Erasmus Office staff from these universities, the "partnership" code was the most referred. Among METU participants, the most referred codes were "academic network" and "promotion and recognition of the university." "Contribution of Erasmus to the institution" is the most referred code among Ege and Atatürk University interviewees. The following section will discuss these findings emerged from the interviews under education diplomacy.

5.1. Discussion on Academic Collaboration

To start with the academic collaboration theme, as stated, this is the most prominent theme of the interviews. The findings of the interview showed that most of the participants from all three research universities think that the Erasmus program has contributed to the internationalization of Turkish higher education institutions in terms of academic collaboration. The results show that the contribution of Erasmus mobilities to the internationalization of Turkish higher education institutions in terms

of academic collaboration occurs in two main areas: institutional support and resources as well as academic and professional development. These findings are in line with the literature. Regarding institutional support and resources, the findings reflected that there are three main impacts of Erasmus's mobility on the internationalization process: partnership, institutional support, and institutional resources. To start with the partnership issue, the literature states that international partnerships among universities under exchange programs, like the Erasmus+ program, strengthen the relations between countries.[272] Therefore, the participants, especially the Erasmus Office staff of the research universities, highlight that there is an interrelated relationship between partnerships and countries. It is argued that, on the one hand, the partnerships are established according to the participants' preferences. Still, on the other hand, these partnerships are established according to the diplomatic relations between countries. For instance, one of the Erasmus Office staff from METU, named OE4, stated that

> In our non-European Erasmus program, Asia and Far Asia region was a priority due to the university's strategic plan. This was both in the strategic plan and a priority of the university administration. After the September 11 attacks in the early 2000s, we, as a unit, made a geographical paradigm shift in internationalization. Both mentally and in terms of programs. While in previous periods, countries such as North America, Canada, the USA, Australia and Japan were at the forefront, after the September 11 attacks, the focus shifted to Asia and Far Asia. It has also been observed that the intensity of cooperation and the number of activities and collaborations in previous periods have decreased. For example, this decrease was replaced by cooperation in Malaysia, Indonesia and Taiwan. When I tried to develop cooperation with China in 2001, there was no interest, but now we can make agreements with any institution in China. Our cooperation with China has intensified a lot and it has become one of the prominent countries. But we have always maintained our geographical diversity, for example, with South American countries. We added Cuba, Colombia, and Brazil and developed cooperation with other countries. Our geographical concentration shifted to Asia and Far Asia.

Therefore, the shifts in partnership regions not only depends on the preferences of the participants but also the diplomatic and political issues of the countries according to the interviewees.

[272]Ömer İnan, "A Research Study of the Effects of Education on Soft Power and Public Diplomacy: The Case of Iran International al Mustafa," 82-84.

Regarding institutional support, among the participants, the contribution of Erasmus to the institution, the support of the university to internationalization, and the promotion and recognition of the university points come into prominence. This result reminds us of the idea of branding in the literature in the education discipline. As mentioned in the theory chapter, branding strategy is a new perspective on addressing education under public diplomacy. Indeed, standing out in education and consequently being a brand in the education field became crucial not only at the institutional level but also at the state level.[273] States held different activities for international students under the education diplomacy framework for branding in education. Therefore, the findings of the interviews with the participants from research universities reflect that the exchange of students and staff through the Erasmus program states try to brand their countries and universities. This can be observed by the participants, too. Indeed, as the findings show, participants think the Erasmus program contributes to the institution's internationalization, promotion, and recognition. Hence, under the Turkish government's strategy, states try to promote and brand their education system through the Erasmus mobility program.

For instance, one of the academic staff, named OA5, stated that "it is especially important for the recognition of METU in international indexes. In a way, when we go there, we also represent our university. They get information about the studies carried out here at METU. It raises the awareness of other researchers. Therefore, another contribution to this institution is that the number of publications will increase thanks to potential future projects, and our potential to publish in better journals will increase. All of these are ultimately a contribution for METU." In this statement, the academic staff highlights the contribution of Erasmus to the institution from recognition of the university perspective. The academic staff pointed out that through Erasmus mobility, they had the chance to initiate projects and publish new articles in qualified journals. Consequently, all these developments contribute to the institution. Another academic staff from Ege University, named EA1, asserted that "our university is one of the research universities. Therefore, internationalization is one of

[273] Ercan Akar and Muharrem Gürkaynak, "An Evaluation of Türkiye's Education Diplomacy in the Context of Country Branding," *İletişim ve Diplomasi*, no. 7 (June 14, 2022): 137–64, https://doi.org/10.54722/iletisimvediplomasi.1109658, 158.

the most important goals. When we return, we reflect on such experiences in our own education processes, and we also talk about what more can be done with the institutions we go to cooperate with the university and whether more comprehensive projects can be done. Therefore, I think it provides a serious socialization process in terms of introducing ourselves to the universities we go to and the institutional culture of Ege University." Different from the previous view, the academic staff highlighted the contribution of Erasmus to the institution from the perspective of the development of teaching methods. The academic staff argue that, with Erasmus mobility, they have the chance to observe different teaching methods and apply them in their universities.

Students also think that the Erasmus program contributes to the institution. For instance, one student from Ege University, named as ES7, said that "long-term effects increase the recognition and awareness of universities. We represent our university there. We offer a good perspective. We show an example of which university we come from with our behavior. We represent an institution much more than a country, so it can have such a positive effect in the long run." Another student from METU, named OS9, stated, "The people who go within the scope of Erasmus are generally successful profiles. In other words, there is already a successful profile at METU, but the people who are more successful within it go because of the selection criteria. Therefore, the fact that more qualified people go abroad helps to increase the popularity and recognition of METU. At the master's and doctoral level, I think that the profile of METU develops through those people since people who want to experience it generally go. Therefore, I think that the image of METU is drawn from the profile of the students who go abroad, and its recognition increases." When these statements are considered, it can be argued that as students, they think that they represent their universities. Their positive impression would positively contribute to their institution. They think that through their success and good impression, the university would contribute to the popularity and recognition of the university. Indeed, among students, there is a common understanding that the Erasmus program contributes to the branding of the institution.

One of the Erasmus office staff from Atatürk University, coded as AE1, stated that:

> In the short term, projects and studies between lecturers in other universities and our lecturers can also be articles. In the short term, these contribute to the internationalization of universities and help our universities to reach a better position in world rankings. In the long term, on these established collaborations, for example, in the case of Atatürk University, we have a relationship with universities in America for years and there is the influence of the American university in the establishment of Atatürk University. It still supports us to establish close relations and cooperation with universities in America. In fact, we can say that short-term benefits spread over the long term. We can say that it contributes not only to international culture but also to the university's own culture.

With these sentences, the staff pointed out that through Erasmus mobilities, staff had the chance to collaborate with other staff from other universities, contributing to the ranking and recognition of the universities. The staff also mentioned that these short-term Erasmus mobilities impact long-term results. Another Erasmus office staff from METU, named OE1, mentioned that "during my mobility programs, I met with colleagues from different parts of the world, and we had many meetings and discussions about possible solutions and improvements to the problems of international programs. I had the chance to see what other institutions are doing in international programs, and it was also good to see best practices. When I return from these programs, I share my experiences, discussions, and best practices with my colleagues and university administrations, which in the long run can lead to the transfer of these best practices and knowledge to my institution." Therefore, the staff asserted that the Erasmus mobility program contributes to the institution by applying good practice examples. Erasmus programs allow the participants to share different practices that contribute to the institution a lot.

The last impact that is mentioned by the participants is institutional resources. As stated in the findings chapter, this impact is much less referred to by the interviewees when compared with institutional support. This result shows that most of the participants think that the contribution of Erasmus to the internationalization of Turkish higher education under academic collaboration theme is institutional support rather than institutional resources. Related to this interpretation, participants specifically referred to the resources provided for Erasmus's mobility and availability of resources. For instance, one of the academic staff from Ege University, named EA2, stated that "in Türkiye, it is a great burden to go abroad in

economic terms. Erasmus handles this in a very nice and stable way; the payments are very clear. You can do the programming very easily." Many participants specifically underlined the grant provided for the Erasmus program and the support of universities for these resources. These results are compatible with the literature.

As discussed in the theoretical framework chapter, through international education and exchange programs, participants can benefit from the grant given due to program rules. They can also benefit from the research collaborations and research materials that are provided through programs.[274] Consequently, both the interviewee findings and the literature highlight that through the Erasmus program, participants can benefit from the grant and the materials that are provided. Although very few, some participants emphasized the inadequacy of a number of staff and own resources. For instance, one of the Erasmus office staff from Atatürk University, named AA1, stated that "the foreign affairs offices can be a bit insufficient. Actually, the Erasmus office is keen on these issues, but there are some problems because the number of staff is not enough." Hence, s/he argues that although the university has enough budget or the will to develop its partnership, they do not have enough staff to work. Consequently, this hurts the internationalization of the university. Apart from this point, another Erasmus office staff from METU, named OE5, argued that "in terms of bilateral agreements, the insufficiency of academics and the lack of connections abroad are a big obstacle to internationalization. They do not own the agreement." Hence, s/he argued that the inadequacy of the academic staff in terms of initiating a partnership affects the internationalization of the institution in a native way. In short, under the institutional support and resources category, three main impacts were mentioned by the participants, which are partnership, institutional support, and institutional resources. Regarding academic and professional development, two main impacts of Erasmus on the internationalization of Turkish higher education are highlighted by the participants. These are academic development and professional development. To start with academic development, this is the mostly referred impact by the participants under this category. Regarding this impact, the findings showed that the interviewees highlighted some specific issues as the contribution of Erasmus

[274] Nicholas John Cull, *Public Diplomacy: Lessons from the Past* (Los Angeles: Figueroa Press, 2009).

to the internationalization of Turkish higher education institutions. These issues are academic networks, collaborative projects and research initiatives, having different perspectives, foreign language learning, changes in work habits, and exploring educational processes in different universities. These points are also visible in the literature. Indeed, as discussed in the theoretical framework chapter, one of the aspects of education diplomacy is academic collaboration and networks. Under this aspect, these impacts are mentioned. For example, regarding academic networks, having different perspectives, and collaborative projects and research initiatives impacts, Yune Leou-On stated that collaboration is one of the crucial cornerstones of soft power, and institutions can maximize their benefit from this collaboration for educational development.[275] In addition, it is stated that academic networks lead to collaboration, and consequently, academic collaboration initiates research development. Therefore, the greater the connectivity, the more academic research in various fields. [276]

For example, the student named OS8 argued that "I think my career has been helped by the acquaintance I have made with academics. If I work in an office someday, I think these connections and acquaintanceships will help me." Thence, the student highlighted that through Erasmus mobility, s/he had the chance to have the network for his/her future work. Another student, named OS9, highlighted a similar point by saying that

> On the one hand, I can say that it impacted my career in terms of academic network. Of course, this is not something I can reap the fruits of right away, but I met academics there, and we discussed my research topics and their research topics. We found some common points. I think this can pave the way for any academic work I can do with them in the future, such as post-doctoral training, book project, or congress organization for longer-term academic mobility.

Therefore, the student argued that with the Erasmus mobility, s/he had the opportunity to meet with the academic staff who work in a similar field and to get feedback about the research. The student also had the opportunity to work

[275] Leou-On, "International Networks and Soft Power: Sino-American Educational Collaboration", 22.

[276] Ibid.,11

collaboratively in the future. In other words, there was the idea that Erasmus mobility networks expend and open a way for different cooperation.

Regarding foreign language learning, the findings showed that through Erasmus's mobility, they had the chance to develop and learn a foreign language. This point is also pointed out in the literature. For instance, according to Vaxevaanidou, education diplomacy is crucial in four respects, as stated in the theory chapter. Language is one of these respects. [277] Therefore, language learning is one of the crucial points for education diplomacy. The interview findings showed that although language learning is crucial for staff and students whose instruction language is not English, participants from universities with English language instruction also highlight the contribution of Erasmus mobility to their foreign language development. For instance, the student named OS3 stated that "the impact on my career was on English. It affected my cultural English. Although English was my language of instruction, I did not use it in daily life. It was effective on English in daily life." S/he supported the idea that Erasmus mobility contributed to practicing the English language.

The findings showed that it was not only about English learning but also foreign language learning for some students. For example, one student from Ege University, named ES2, stated that "my goal was to make my Spanish completely professional. My Erasmus mobility was all about Spanish." Therefore, one of the purposes of some participants is to learn a second language for professional purposes. The same student also expressed that "especially in Türkiye, in places that do not provide English education, they are far away from speaking English. But this is not the case in European countries; they can easily speak English. And when you see this, it creates a competitive environment, and you say, 'I can speak like this too,' and you strive. Diversity is always good. In Spain, I tried very hard to speak a lot and participate in the lessons." Therefore, in universities whose instruction language is Turkish, students have the chance to develop their foreign language through Erasmus mobilities.

[277] Maria Vaxevanidou, "Education as Public Diplomacy: How to Build an International Image in Education," *Journal of Media Critiques* 4, no. 14 (2018): 55–70.

Changes in work habits and exploring educational processes in different universities are other impacts that were inferred from the interviews. This point is also visible in the literature. Indeed, as discussed in the theory chapter, Cull pointed out that international students can share their experiences and positive impressions with others when they go back to their home country. After that, when these students reach a certain position at work, they will try to implement the good practices they have seen in their own countries. Additionally, these students will be eager to have close diplomatic relations with that country. In this way, the host country will be able to promote its own country on the spot and to express their national interest.[278] Therefore, considering this theoretical explanation as a practice, the results of the interviews supported the theoretical perspective that, through Erasmus mobilities, participants implement these good practices. As a further step, after applying these practices, they, at the same, develop their diplomatic relations with the host country which have a mutual benefit.

Among the participants, it was argued that through Erasmus mobilities, they had the chance to observe different practices and teaching methods. Therefore, after realizing their mobility, they can share and try to practice these different applications. Similarly, through Erasmus mobilities, participants have the chance to observe the educational process in different universities to practice in their own institutions. For example, one of the students from METU, named OS5, said that "the work discipline here was different. My working order was reflected there, and their order was reflected to me. We mutually contributed to each other with the students." Another student from METU, highlighted that "for example, a student can see completely different teaching system at the university they go to, and when they become an academician in the future, they can apply the same things in their department, or they can measure and weigh what they cannot apply, what is good and what is bad. In short, the participant provides students with a projection for the future." An academic staff from METU, named OE4, also stated that "it was useful in adapting and applying the examples we saw there. Or I think it was also useful for us to see that we are more advanced than them in some areas." Therefore, all these statements

[278] Nicholas John Cull, *Public Diplomacy: Lessons from the Past* (Los Angeles: Figueroa Press, 2009).

reflect that participating in Erasmus mobility helps them to practice new working habits and teaching systems. After their mobility, they can apply these practices in their universities or their future careers. Another academic staff from Ege University, EA3, argued that "it can have an important impact for faculty members to be subjected to comparative analysis in other settings so that self-criticism can be made or to see new training techniques so that they are not observed." Therefore, s/he highlights that mobility not only contributes to the application of good practices but also to the self-criticism of the participants. They, as the participants, have the chance to compare different practices. Regarding exploring educational processes in different universities impact, one of the students from METU, named OS10, highlighted that s/he had the chance to observe different practices in the host university and share it with the supervisor in the home university. S/he thinks that after exploring different educational processes, these good practices can also be initiated in their universities. S/he expressed this by stating that

> For example, Humboldt University offers its students the opportunity to attend free workshops. In fact, universities in Berlin have formed a consortium. Within the scope of this consortium, various universities organize different workshops on weekends. The aim is to contribute to the thesis studies of doctoral students. Some are paid, and some are free of charge. Humboldt pays for its students from its own budget. In this way, everyone knows what each other is working on in their PhD, and it is a very interactive process. I gave feedback to my supervisor that this could be done.

Moreover, an academic staff from Ege University stated that experiencing different practices gives a chance to compare both universities. S/he expressed this by saying that "it is very useful to observe how the same trainings are given abroad. It is good to see how the professors there teach and their syllabi. Seeing and experiencing it on site opens other doors and worlds for you. You get the chance to compare your shortcomings and excesses." Similarly, a student from Atatürk University expressed that "students have the opportunity to compare their education quality and school with other universities. Because while the education system in Europe is quite different, the education system in Türkiye is very theoretical. At least students who realize this can act accordingly and shape their future careers accordingly." Hence, s/he highlights that exploring educational processes in different universities allows

students to decide on their future careers and act accordingly. In short, in terms of the academic development impact of Erasmus mobility, the highlighted issues are academic networks, collaborative projects, and research initiatives, having different perspectives, foreign language learning, changes in work habits, and exploring educational processes in different universities.

When we move to the professional development impact of the Erasmus mobility program, the interviews showed that the impact is visible in two main subjects: gaining professional experience and career opportunities and development. To start with gaining professional experience, the interviewees highlighted that through their Erasmus mobilities, they can have the chance to experience different professional skills. This result is also parallel to the literature. It is stated by Batey that "The shrinking world and new global realities require a different set of skills for the education community. More than ever, preservice teachers need significant cross-cultural experiences that enable them to teach with, work with, and continue to learn from people different from themselves. Education diplomacy may be another tool for improving education practices, policies, and opportunities in the teacher preparation classroom."[279] Thence, it is highlighted that by experiencing an international education environment, the participant will be able to learn new issues and develop new educational opportunities. This view is similar to the perspective of the participants. For instance, one of the academic staff from METU, named OA2, said that

> In Türkiye, of course, I gave lectures during my doctorate and master's degree. There were different experiences, but it has been a long time. Again, I wanted to see how I lecture to foreign students and how I can communicate with them, and I wanted to test whether there is a disconnect in myself in this regard. Also, since I work in urban planning, we need to get to know and experience a different city in every place I go to, to see their own practices there, to see different actors. I also act within the framework of a research question such as what municipalities do and how is participation in local governance.

[279] Batey, Jacqueline J. 2013. "Education Diplomacy: Global Diplomacy Awareness Developed Through Short-Term International Internships." *Childhood Education* 90 (1): 77–80. doi:10.1080/00094056.2014.872524.

Therefore, the academic staff pointed out that form her/him gaining experience in her/him field is crucial. S/he had the chance to test her/himself about teaching skills. Seeing different city planning in different countries was very important for the professional career of the academic staff. Another academic staff from METU, named OA3, stated, “It is a bit different when you teach there in person. You become half guest than a guest. I had two lessons with the same group and one with the lecturers, so I had the chance to see different groups. So, you are directly involved in the process. That perspective changes immediately. It was very nice and exciting. At the same time, I had the chance to observe that students can adopt a new teacher in a short time and that the students are the same.” Thence, the academic staff could be able to self-test about his/her teaching abilities. S/he thinks that giving a lecture not only helps her/him to gain professional experience but also to observe other students to compare the students in Türkiye. Another academic from Atatürk University, named AA8, stated that

> It is also a unique opportunity for people like me who want to be involved in different activities in terms of education. In the long run, it affects them positively. Because teaching only one type of student will be a sticking point for self-development. However, experiencing this in other societies is different and positive in terms of developing different educational activities. Therefore, I think it positively affects career development for academic staff in the long run.

Hence, the academic staff highlights that in the long run, participating in the Erasmus mobility is an opportunity to develop him/herself in professional life through developing different educational activities. Consequently, the academic staff think this is a positive contribution of Erasmus mobility to their career in the long run.

When we move to the impact of career opportunities and development under professional development, the results from the interviews showed that realizing Erasmus’s mobilities contributed to the careers of the participants. This point is also visible in the literature. Indeed, Giles Scott-Smith, stated that

> The exchange experience will be valued most by the participant because of its uniqueness. The levels of cross-border contact are now so high that it is difficult to appreciate how any form of exchange can offer something extra,

> but this is vital to making its effects stick. It can be related to the opportunity to gain new knowledge and skills otherwise unavailable locally. This can be combined with absorbing and appreciating a new cultural environment, where first-hand experience will always have a greater effect than second-hand knowledge. For other types of exchange, there could be a prestige factor in being invited, which may also involve obtaining access to persons or institutions that would otherwise be either closed off or accessible only via more formal routes. The importance of youth here cannot be overstated, but this needs to be clarified. Access and prestige can always have some impact, but an exchange will have the greatest impact if it takes place both before the host nation is already familiar to the participant and offers openings and opportunities that the participant can utilize for their own personal and/or professional benefit afterwards. The initial contact, if well managed and well timed, can have a long-lasting effect.[280]

Therefore, it is highlighted that an international interaction gives the participant a great opportunity. Exchange can be a prestige factor and provide access to people or institutions that people cannot do by their efforts. Also, it is argued that well-managed and well-timed interactions can have a long-lasting impact. This idea is very common, especially among students. For instance, the student named OS7 from METU argued that thanks to Erasmus Mobility, they had the chance to find good job opportunities by saying that "Erasmus creates an international door to continue their academic life. Or they can have job opportunities." Indeed, a student from Atatürk University, named AS2, expressed this with the sentence, "since I worked in Europe, it was easier for me to find a job in Türkiye." This was a similar case for the student from Ege University, named ES10. The student expressed that

> In terms of career, when I added that I studied at a school abroad to my CV, the confidence of the companies in my foreign language skills increased, and it had a positive effect on their perspectives. In other words, knowing that I know a foreign language and have the experience of being abroad and living there on my own, I have gained an advantage because they think that I am more confident and more comfortable with foreignness.

Therefore, there is a common understanding among Erasmus students that participating in an Erasmus mobility program has a positive contribution to their career opportunities and development. Another student, named ES7, from Ege University, pointed out a specific advantage of the Erasmus mobility. For him/her,

[280] Giles Scott-Smith, *Exchange Programs and Public Diplomacy*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2020), 43.

the purpose of attending Erasmus Mobility is to find a career opportunity in Germany by introducing him/herself physically. The student expressed this view by stating that “Honestly, I went for potential future career opportunities in Germany. I have been there once and had the chance to go again. I also wanted to do my PhD at the university I went to. There was a research group there, a group related to my field of study. I wanted to introduce myself there and be a trail for my future studies and doctoral studies.” Therefore, Erasmus’s mobility allows the participants to develop skills for contributing to their careers. Shortly, participating in an Erasmus mobility program changed people’s whole life, as a student named AS1 from Atatürk University, stated.

Considering the statements of the participants and the literature, the specialists from Turkish National Agency declared the similar arguments. For example, the specialists, named as NA2, argued that “the program facilitates the sharing of knowledge and resources through collaborations and joint studies with universities abroad while raising standards and improving the quality of education.” Thence, the expert emphasized the development of quality of education through academic exchange. Regarding this point, the expert named as NA3, states that “such exchange programs improve cooperation. I think the mobility programs contributes to making an effort to turn it into different projects, like KA2 projects or capacity building. Most of these are related to staff mobility.” Therefore, s/he highlighted that exchange programs can lead to initiation and development of different international projects. In other words, academic collaborations emerge through exchange programs.

In short, the Erasmus+ program has become a cornerstone for internationalizing Turkish higher education institutions by fostering academic collaboration. Participants consistently emphasized that the program supports academic and professional development by enabling the creation of academic networks, initiating collaborative projects, and encouraging the exchange of best practices. Moreover, Erasmus mobilities have contributed to institutional growth, such as increasing international publications and introducing innovative teaching methods. Despite these benefits, some participants highlighted challenges, such as limited institutional resources and insufficient staff, which hinder the program’s full potential.

5.2. Discussion on Cultural Exchange and Understanding

The second theme that emerged from the interviews was cultural exchange and understanding. According to the participants, the contribution of Erasmus mobility to the internationalization of Turkish higher education occurred in two main areas: cultural exchange and awareness and personal development. Therefore, it is perceived that the Erasmus mobility program gives a chance to experience different cultures and leads to the formation of a mutual understanding of differences in culture and consciousness about diversity. Indeed, through international education, beneficiaries can experience different cultures, perspectives, traditions, and values. To start with the cultural exchange and awareness impact, participants highlighted cultural interaction and explored different countries and cultural points. Therefore, interviewers pointed out that involving in an Erasmus mobility program gives them a chance to interact with different cultures and to explore different cultures. For instance, one of the students from METU, named OS9, stated that “the fact that they have experienced different social environments is another achievement. This will help them gain a more pluralistic perspective. Because the environments we go to are usually very international environments. They get to know different cultures and learn how different cultures should be tolerated. This helps them develop a more pluralistic and balanced approach.” The student highlights that realizing Erasmus's mobility contributes to having a plural perspective about different cultures. These points are also visible in the literature. For instance, as stated in the theoretical framework chapter, cultural exchange and people-to-people connections are aspects of education diplomacy. Under this theme, it is argued that through international education and exchange programs, people can interact with different cultures and develop an understanding that fosters intercultural respect and understanding through cultural dialogue and interaction. Indeed, with international exchange programs, governments aim to explain the history, culture, and values of their country to the international students and to gain their attraction. Through international exchange programs, a real interaction between cultures emerges, contributing to a better understanding of the host country. When international students return to their own country with a greater appreciation towards the host country, they can influence

others with the same appreciation about the host country.[281] All these shared ideas and values increase the likelihood of cooperation, trade, and foreign relations between countries. About this point, an Erasmus staff from METU, named OE5, highlighted that

> The most important point is multiculturalism. Getting to know the cultures of the people coming and going. Internationalization is not just going and taking or giving lectures. Today, you can listen to many lectures or topics on the internet better than the lecturers. The only purpose of the university is not to give lectures. Therefore, studying abroad at university is multiculturalism, gaining a new horizon.

Hence, the staff emphasizes that institutions' internationalization should not be perceived as an academic advantage but as a gain for different cultures. Participants of Erasmus mobilities can have the chance to experience different cultures. Students from Ege University and Atatürk University, named ES9 and AS10, respectively, pointed out that through Erasmus mobility, they had the chance to introduce their own culture and be aware of other cultures. They stated that "Erasmus aims to bring different cultures together. Many countries are trying to ensure diversity. In this context, I think it can be good at spreading Turkish culture to other countries." "Since cultural exchange occurs in some way on both sides, both sides are aware of each other's existence. They understand what their differences and similarities are. At least it contributes to each other as an idea." Hence, they had the chance to compare cultures and get involved in a multicultural environment. These statements support the literature. For instance, as stated before, according to Okunmuş, "the graduates are deemed as cultural ambassadors. Countries give information about their universities and scholarships online, through foreign representative offices, their campuses abroad, their academic partners (universities), and high schools operating abroad."[282] Therefore, students who receive their education abroad can learn the culture and education of the host country. Put it differently, cultural and academic

[281] Jane Wanjira Waithaka and Patrick Maluki, "International Education Exchanges As A Public Diplomacy Instrument," *International Journal of Science Arts and Commerce* 1, no. 3 (2016): 1–8, 4.; Andreas Pacher, "The Ritual Creation of Political Symbols: International Exchanges in Public Diplomacy," *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 20, no. 4 (2018): 880–97, https://doi.org/10.1177/1369148118786043, 880.

[282]Feng Rui-min, "Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistants Acting as Cultural Ambassadors on the Campus," *Sino-US English Teaching* 6, no. 3 (2009): 31–35.

exchange programs are crucial for developing relations with foreign publics. Especially through international academic exchange programs, universities become the subject and the source of education diplomacy, also the tool for cultural exchange among states.[283] Therefore, the literature argues that an international interaction of people enhances cultural exchange, which fosters the bilateral relations between states. [284]

Regarding personal development, the results of the interviews showed that participants could be able to have a different experience, meet with new people, live and experience alone, develop themselves personally, overcome challenges, and gain self-confidence. All these gains are personal development under a cultural exchange. This point is also emphasized in the literature. Indeed, Bhatta and Young stated that

> Relationship building is one of the foundations of education diplomacy. Reciprocal relationships decrease the potential for unequal distribution of power. In addition, we gain cultural understanding from getting to know people from different countries, cultures, and perspectives. Diverse perspectives, cultural empathy, intercultural fluency, and a new understanding of human relationships are part of what a person learns from international experience and educational diplomacy. The relationships built among people help cultivate a more positive dialogue that, in turn, strengthens one's ability to negotiate decisions about upholding human rights, conserving the planet's resources, and moving toward mutually acceptable solutions to common challenges, thereby creating a more just and peaceful world. Education diplomacy fosters the understanding that everyone is a teacher and learner in the process. This type of diplomatic process also provides opportunity for personal and group empowerment, enabling people to bring their voice to inform decisions.[285]

It could be inferred from this statement that through international mobilities, people can meet with different people and develop cultural understanding and empathy.

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[283] Gaye Aslı Sancar, *Kamu Diplomasisi ve Uluslararası Halkla Ilişkiler* (İstanbul: Beta Yayınları, 2012), 102.

[284] Emrah Aydemir, *Kamu Diplomasisi* (İstambul: Kalkedon Yayıncılık., 2018), 58.;Sheldon Himelfarb and Shamil Idriss, "Special Report Exchange 2.0," United States Institute of Peace, August 23, 2013, https://www.usip.org/publications/2011/05/exchange-20-0, 1.

[285] Bishnu Bhatta and Deborah Young, "Partnership for Sustainable Development Nepal and the Promotion of Education Diplomacy," essay, in *Education Diplomacy in Action*, ed. Georgianna Duarte and Ekaterina Strekalova-Hughes (Washington: Association for Childhood Education International, 2015), 23–34, 27-28.

Consequently, these relationships foster a more positive dialogue and the ability to negotiate on issues and solve common problems. Hence, education diplomacy, through international mobilities, promotes an understanding that everyone is a teacher and a student and provides opportunities for personal and group empowerment.

Considering this theoretical perspective, when the interviews were analyzed under personal development impact, the participants argued that realizing an Erasmus mobility gave them the chance to have a different experience. For instance, one of the Erasmus staff from METU, named OE2, stated that “my Erasmus experience was very useful for my personal development because I experienced living abroad in a different cultural environment with a different language.” Therefore, for her/him, it was a different experience to live in a different culture. Similarly, one of the students from Atatürk University, named AS4, said that “living in a culture other than the one I grew up in, in a language I don't speak, with people I have never met, was one of my greatest experiences.” Therefore, experiencing life in a different culture was a great opportunity for the student.

Moreover, the participants also emphasized that Erasmus mobility gave a chance to them to meet with new people. They expressed their opinions about this opportunity as a development of their social networks and skills. For example, students from METU, Ege, and Atatürk University, named OS8, ES6, and AS5, respectively, shared their views with the following statements: “In this way, I met a lot of people both as an academic and a student during my Erasmus period.” “My social skills have improved more through communication with people raised in different cultures.” and “I got to know people from different universities and gained a different vision.” Therefore, social development and gaining new visions are some of the contributions of Erasmus mobility to the participants.

Another point that was pointed out by the participants about the contribution of Erasmus is to live and experience alone. They state that living and experiencing alone develops their personality and helps them to face challenges alone. For example, students from Ege University, named ES3 and ES10, respectively, stated

that “living abroad on my own and dealing with the bureaucracy had a positive impact on me personally. Even though I had difficulties there, I had the chance to experience situations such as coping with problems and asking for help in a language I do not know.” And “You take care of everything on your own. You are directly involved in a different culture in many events, such as transportation, accommodation, and food. You become more assertive and sociable. When there is a problem, instead of waiting for a solution from someone else, you learn to cope with the problems yourself and be solution-oriented.” Therefore, they highlight that through Erasmus mobility, they had the chance to cope with the challenges alone. Another student from Atatürk University, named as AS4, asserted that “personally, while I was in Erasmus, I lived on my own. I had to take care of everything myself. I gained a small perspective on the difficulty of life in the future. Living in such an environment, you must meet your own needs.” The student highlights that being alone through Erasmus’s mobility contributes to her/his life in the future and develops his/her character. Related to this point, some of the participants highlighted that through Erasmus mobility, they had the chance to develop themselves personally and overcome challenges. For instance, the students named OS2 and OS6, respectively, from METU stated that “it has a great impact on personal social development. Erasmus contributes more to personal development than lectures.” And “my tolerance for personal development was much lower when I first arrived. I learned to tolerate differences much better.” The Erasmus mobility gave them to discover their character and develop their personality and social life. A student named AS3 from Atatürk University expressed these contributions in detail through the following sentences:

> I see a huge difference in my personal development. I was more of a complaining person, dissatisfied with the work I was doing in life. But when I went there, I realized that our conditions here were much, much better. We were working comfortably. We don't value our work, but people value their work very much and care about it. Everyone tries to do their job properly. Since I came here, I am not a person who avoids work. I think I work in a more energetic and motivated way. At the same time, people there spend as much time as they need with the people around them. But we spend all our time on the people around us. Since I came here, I have tried to spend more time for myself and do things for myself. When I went there, I could spend time and realize what I wanted. I had a lot of time to think there.

It can be inferred from this statement that the participant had the chance to compare his/her life with others in other countries and decide about his/her actions in Türkiye. S/he had the chance to observe the lifestyle of others and to apply these differences in his/her life. Similar to students, academic staff also think that Erasmus's mobility contributes to their personal development. For example, one of the academic staff from METU, named OA2, stated that "psychologically, it can help people overcome the feeling of being fixed and closed in a certain place and develop a common idea with the problems of the world as a much more international citizen. In other words, I think it will impact becoming a world citizen and finding common solutions to world problems." Therefore, the academic staff pointed out that realizing an Erasmus mobility gave him/her the opportunity to realize world citizenship and think that some of the problems or cases are global and solutions should be found globally. S/he thinks that realizing international citizenship is one kind of personal development.

As a last point, participants think that through realizing Erasmus's mobility, they gained self-confidence in various areas, including social relations, teaching in a different place, and living alone and abroad. For example, some of the students from Ege and Atatürk University, named ES10, AS3, and AS9, respectively, expressed their opinion by stating that "knowing that I had the experience of being abroad and living there alone, I gained an advantage by realizing that I was both more self-confident and more comfortable with foreignness." "Socially, people's self-confidence increases." "It is important for personal development in terms of gaining self-confidence. I lived and worked in a country whose language and culture I did not know. I met the people there and made friends, which gives me self-confidence." An academic staff from METU, OS1, expressed his/her opinion about this issue by stating that "the biggest contribution of Erasmus is your confidence when you lecture at another university." Therefore, the academic staff gained self-confidence by lecturing in a different country and university. S/he had the chance to have this unique experience and to observe his/her abilities and capabilities. In short, according to the participants' perspectives, one of the contributions of Erasmus mobilities to the internationalization of Turkish higher education institutions is personal development. Under this impact, interviewees highlighted that they had the

chance to have a different experience, meet new people, live and experience alone, develop themselves personally, overcome challenges, and gain self-confidence. These points also support the literature.

Regarding this theme, specialists also indicated their view. For instance, the specialist named as NA2, stated that "in terms of cultural exchange and understanding, Erasmus+ programs both help participants who go abroad to learn about other cultures and develop tolerance and sensitivity towards them. Foreign participants who come to our country have the chance to get to know Turkish culture and thus increase mutual understanding." With this statement, s/he pointed out that Erasmus's mobility contributes to the tolerance and sensitivity of the participants through getting information about different cultures. Similarly, another expert, named as NA3 said that "regarding the theme of cultural exchange, student mobility has the highest impact. Erasmus provides an opportunity for students to go abroad for the first time in their lives and experience the international environment." Therefore, s/he emphasized that an exchange through Erasmus+ program gives an opportunity to the participants to learn different culture and environment. In a nutshell, specialists from Turkish National Agency also supported the statements of the interviewees and the literature.

In short, the program is critical in promoting cultural awareness and mutual understanding among participants. Through Erasmus, individuals experience diverse cultures firsthand, which fosters tolerance and a broader worldview. Participants often noted how the program encouraged them to challenge stereotypes, embrace cultural diversity, and represent their home institutions positively. Many also highlighted how these experiences contributed to their personal growth, helping them build resilience, improve social skills, and gain the confidence to navigate new environments independently.

5.3. Discussion on Policy and Institutional Collaboration

The third theme that emerged from the interviews which were conducted with the participants from three research universities was policy and institutional

collaboration. Under this theme, two sub-themes were highlighted, which were barriers and challenges and the perception of internationalization. The participants touch upon the impact of collaborations and their Erasmus mobilities on policy framework and institutional partnerships. To start with barriers and challenges, two main points were emphasized, which were insufficient economic conditions and bureaucratic barriers. Participants pointed out the role of institutional partnerships and policy frameworks and addressed the barriers and challenges standing in the way of these partnerships. Regarding insufficient economic conditions, interviewees state that the economic conditions of Türkiye and themselves were insufficient to realize international mobility. Therefore, the grant that participants received from the Erasmus budget was a great opportunity for them not only to realize their mobility but also to develop international cooperation. For instance, one of the students METU, named as OS9, stated that

> If we think in the current economic conditions, we cannot realize this international outreach by spending very serious money in the current economic conditions. I mean that not all PhD students can be sent abroad and do their research abroad. Or we cannot bring a person from abroad whenever we want. In this case, in this current economic situation, we need to do something else. And that is to establish more connections with universities abroad. The university can do this centralized, or each unit can develop connections abroad on its own behalf. These connections can be in every sense. It can be through conferences, student agreements, mobility within the scope of a lecturer, or mobility within a consortium. Almost all academic activities we do can open up collaborations abroad. Academic activity is, by its very nature, always an open interaction. Therefore, each unit of the university needs to identify its priorities and find partners accordingly, and the university needs to provide support in finding potential partners. The university itself can also rebuild these partnerships. Individually, people should have more international experience, more international networks, and more international publication strategies by taking advantage of activities such as Erasmus and TÜBİTAK. This both increases the profile of academics in Türkiye and creates a basis for future studies. It would be more appropriate to do internationalization through collaborations.

Therefore, it could be inferred from this statement that the student highlighted five main points. First, it is not possible to realize international mobility or research under these existing economic conditions in Türkiye. Second, to compensate for this, universities should take certain steps to have more networks and partnerships. Third, individuals can also achieve these networks through activities like conferences,

student and academic mobility, or consortiums. Fourth, the academic staff should gain more international experience and network by realizing more international mobilities. Fifth, the internationalization of universities is more applicable through international collaborations. Similarly, another student from Atatürk University, named AS3, stated that "if Erasmus did not give us grants and did not have an institutional identity, we would not have been able to realize this mobility, so Erasmus is a good tool. Although I work, I could not go abroad alone with the current economic situation." Therefore, the student highlights that due to the insufficient economic conditions in Türkiye, the Erasmus grant is a great opportunity for realizing international mobility. Moreover, an academic staff from Ege University, named EA2, pointed out the same point by stating "I would like to participate in Erasmus again because the financial grant is an important support. In Türkiye, it is a big burden to go abroad economically. Erasmus takes care of this in a very nice and stable way; the payments are very clear." The literature addresses some of the key points that were pointed out by the participants in terms of the impact of insufficient economic conditions. As Altbach and Teichler emphasized, economic barriers are one of the significant challenges to international mobility in countries that have restricted economic resources, like Türkiye.[286] Hence, due to insufficient economic conditions, students or staff could not realize international mobility. Therefore, the grant given through the Erasmus program provides an opportunity for these economically disadvantage groups to realize international mobility.

When the bureaucratic barriers were considered, there was very little emphasis on this point by the participants. This point was only referred to by the interviewees from METU. For instance, one of the Erasmus Office staff from METU, named OE2, highlighted the difficulties that participants face during their visa application process. The staff pointed out that some delays in the visa process may result in a negative impact on bilateral relations between universities and countries. The staff expressed this view by stating that "as Turkish citizens need a visa to go to Europe, Erasmus travelers (mostly for internships) sometimes create problems with the

[286] Philip G. Altbach and Ulrich Teichler, "Internationalization and Exchanges in a Globalized University," *Journal of Studies in International Education* 5, no. 1 (2001): 5–25, https://doi.org/10.1177/102831530151002, 12.

relevant consulates/embassies, which has the potential to negatively affect the bilateral relations between the HEIs in question, as well as the relations between the two countries and between the EU and Türkiye." This point was also pointed out in the literature. Kevin Stringer, in his discussion, stated that "The application of a specific visa policy can affect international relations between states at a personal (individual applicant), group (tourists, businessmen, students, government officials) or intergovernmental level."[287] Hence, he emphasizes that visa process is crucial for international relations. He further stated that "visa often allow regimes to make policy statements that cannot be expressed by other diplomatic means. This small dimension of consular work should not be overlooked by future policymakers in their continual review of possible operational options to implement in the foreign policy field of international relations." [288] From this statement, it could understand that the visa process is a way to express diplomatic opinions of states to others. Therefore, as he states, "visa diplomacy and the use of the visa as a diplomatic instrument appears to be a successful approach when used for recognition purposes and to convey publicly a move towards greater cooperation." [289]

As Stringer pointed out, since the visa process is used as a tool for expressing political views, this process can be used as a diplomacy tool for further bilateral collaborations or specific concerns. Similar to the statement of the participant from METU, a problem in the visa process can affect bilateral relations between both universities and countries. Therefore, participants are also aware of the cruciality of the visa process and its impact on international relations. Considering these views, it can be stated that delays or difficulties during the visa process can have a negative impact on the timing of the mobilities of the participants and the relations between institutions. These disruptions can create obstacles for future exchange mobilities. Consequently, this may hinder the diplomatic and cultural relations between states. When the perception of internationalization sub-theme is considered, the interviewees' responses reflected that this is one of the most referred codes among

[287] Kevin D. Stringer, *The Visa Dimension of Diplomacy* (The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Relations, 2004), 8.

[288] Ibid., 27.

[289] Ibid.

them. Participants touched upon the following points: limitations of internationalization, weakening of internationalization, factors enabling internationalization of universities, institutional internationalization strategies, definition of internationalization, the importance of internationalization, multidimensionality of internationalization, development of international cooperation and relations. Among them, most factors enabling the internationalization of universities and institutional internationalization strategies were highlighted, which are the main points that this research wanted to emphasize. To start with the factors enabling the internationalization of universities, according to the statements of the interviewees, various factors enable the internationalization of universities. One of the factors is the academic and institutional quality of the institution. Indeed, one of the participants from METU, named OE2, argued that "I think one of the most important factors is the academic and institutional quality of the institution. If your institution is academically and institutionally reputable on international platforms, with research activities and quality alumni representing the university abroad, it will have very few problems establishing bilateral international collaborations on mobility programs and research projects." Therefore, if an institution is qualified both academically and institutionally, it would be inevitable for the institution to internationalize. OE2 additionally stated that

> The international and national context in which you live has a profound impact on the internationalization of a university. Just these last three years are enough as an example. You are running your projects smoothly and increasing the internationalization of your HEI, and then there is a global pandemic; all mobility has stopped or, at best, negatively affected. Then, you are slowly recovering. Shortly after, a war breaks out between Russia and Ukraine, and now your partners there (i.e., projects and mobilizations) are negatively affected. Before the region is reshaped, this time, you have a major earthquake that deeply affects your organization and your projects.

Therefore, as the participant stated, not only quality but also the international or national context is crucial as a factor in the internationalization of universities. Unexpected events could disrupt the internationalization of institutions. Another Erasmus office staff member from METU, OE1, listed the factors of internationalization below.

> The number of international participants and agreements, the language of instruction, academic background, and networks of the teaching staff are also an important part of institutional internationalization. In addition, faculty members' publications in international journals, research collaborations with institutions abroad, membership in international consortia, and awards in international rankings are important indicators of internationalization. In addition to these activities and efforts, domestic internationalization is equally important in international strategies. Improving the English proficiency of administrative staff and encouraging their participation in international programs (such as the Erasmus+ staff training mobility program) is also very important to internationalize the university campus.

Hence, according to the staff, internationalization factors are the number of international participants and agreements, the instruction language, the academic background, international publications, research collaboration, and the network of the academic staff. Lastly the academic quality of the administrative staff plays an important role in the internationalization of universities. These factors were also highlighted by the participants from Ege and Atatürk University.

Moreover, another factor is the importance that Higher Education Institutions attach to internationalization and the strategies and annual plans they establish for this. This is pointed out by an Erasmus office staff from METU named OE3. The participant stated that

> Another factor is the importance that Higher Education Institutions attach to internationalization and the strategies and annual plans they establish. In other words, it is one of the most important elements of internationalization that internationalization does not only happen when there is a demand from a country but also when our higher education institution acts within the framework of an annual plan to find partners that will contribute to internationalization and to increase the existing collaborations to the same level or even to a higher level.

In short, according to the statements of the participants, factors that enable the internationalization of higher education institutions are the academic and institutional quality, the international and national context in which people live, mobility programs, the number of international participants and agreements, the English language of instruction, academic background, research collaboration and network of the teaching staff, international publications of the faculty members, membership in

international consortia and awards in international rankings of universities, the English proficiency of administrative staff and their participation in international programs and lastly, the importance that Higher Education Institutions attach to internationalization. These factors are also stated in the literature. For instance, regarding academic and institutional quality, for the progress of internationalization of higher education, this quality is necessary for surviving in the global world. As Knight stated in her article, "There is a perceptible shift from an emphasis on a high-quality academic experience for students/teachers to one where high academic standards are key for branding purposes to compete domestically and internationally."[290]

Furtherly, with Altbach, Knight emphasized that for reaching a global confidence, standard and partnership in higher education, multidimensional quality assurance is a necessity. They expressed this view by stating that "social confidence in higher education demands giving priority to defining the roles and responsibilities of all players involved in quality assurance—including individual institutions and providers, national quality-assurance systems, nongovernmental and independent accreditation bodies, professional associations, and regional or international organizations.

Their roles defined, these players must collaborate to build a system that ensures the quality and integrity of cross-border education."[291] Therefore, through domestic and international programs, higher education institutions must ensure their academic and institutional quality differently. Regarding international and national context, as the participants highlighted, the international and national context of higher education institutions play a crucial role in constructing their approach to internationalization. De Wit also highlights this point. He stated that global cases influence the international partnership and priorities of the institutions. Also, he stated that

[290] Jane Knight, "Internationalization Remodeled: Definition, Approaches, and Rationales," *Journal of Studies in International Education* 8, no. 1 (2004): 5–31, https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315303260832, 26.

[291] Philip G. Altbach and Jane Knight, "The Internationalization of Higher Education: Motivations and Realities," *Journal of Studies in International Education* 11, no. 3–4 (2007): 290–305, https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315307303542, 302.

regional policies and public attitudes about internationalization affect universities about their international cooperation and attitudes.[292]

According to the participants, one of the factors that enables the internationalization of higher education institutions is mobility programs. This point is also stressed by some scholars. It is argued that mobility programs promote intercultural exchange and collaborative thinking and learning. For instance, Teichler expressed that, especially with the initiation of the Erasmus program, European integration and Europeanization ideas emerged. He stated that these mobility programs allowed students to gain international skills and experience.[293] Moreover, Feifei Wang and Yi Wang emphasized that mobility programs have a crucial role in internationalization in higher education. They stated that, on the one hand, mobility programs improved the learning abilities of students through international practices; on the other hand, these programs enhance international relationships and cooperation by contributing to their international networks. [294]

As participants highlighted, the number of international participants and agreements and networks are crucial for internationalization. This is also mentioned in literature, for instance, as de Wit argued education cooperation "educational cooperation can be considered as a form of diplomatic investment in the future political relations and that the cultural and academic agreements signed between countries can contribute to the strengthening and advancement of the political and economic relations of the nations."[295] Hence, for the internationalization process, international agreements, networks, and collaborations play an important role in diplomatic relations. About

[292] Hans de Wit, *Trends, Issues and Challenges in Internationalisation of Higher Education* (Amsterdam: Centre for Applied Research on Economics & Management, School of Economics and Management of the Hogeschool van Amsterdam, 2011).

[293] Ulrich Teichler, "The Changing Debate on Internationalisation of Higher Education," *Higher Education* 48, no. 1 (July 2004): 5–26, https://doi.org/10.1023/b:high.0000033771.69078.41, 22.

[294] Feifei Wang and Yi Wang, "International Student Mobility and Internationalization of Higher Education in Hungary and China," *Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education* 14, no. 2 (2022), https://doi.org/10.32674/jcihe.v14i2.3572.

[295] Hans de Wit, *Internationalization of Higher Education in the United States of America and Europe: A Historical, Comparative, and Conceptual Analysis* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 85.

this point, as the participants also highlighted, the literature also stated that some of the academic factors for the internationalization of higher education institutions are internationalized research and teaching, expansion of the academic horizon, institution-building, and improvement of academic quality and standards.[296] In short, achieving international academic standards, being on the top lists of international rankings, and developing of academic skills of scholars, academic and institutional quality, the international and national context, mobility programs, international agreements, and the English language of instruction, can be shown as academic rationales for the internationalization of higher education. Another point derived from the interviews was the institutional internationalization strategies under the perception of internationalization sub-theme. The participants suggested five main strategies for internationalizing higher education institutions: increasing student and staff mobility, improving cooperation, improving the quality of education, increasing recognition and visibility, and, lastly, strengthening institutional capacity.

Regarding increasing student and staff mobility strategy, interviewees, such as OS1, OS3, ES5, ES6, EE3, AE2, and AS4, argued that higher education institutions should aim to attract more international students and staff to ensure the diversity of students from different countries, to use exchange programs such as Erasmus, Mevlana, Farabi effectively and to increase their number. In addition, increasing the international experience of academics is also an important strategy. The responses of the participants support the literature. Indeed, it is argued that mobility programs are one of the primary elements of internationalization. Through these mobility activities, participants had a chance to be involved in cultural exchange, professional growth, and international cooperation. One of the authors that support this idea is Teichler. He indicated that mobility programs, like Erasmus, are a tool for an international network and international understanding among participants. [297] In addition to this view, de Wit asserted that through mobility programs, participants could develop their global competencies to survive in a globalized workforce. By

[296] Akbar Zolfaghari, Mohammad Shatar Sabran, and Ali Zolfaghari, "Internationalization of Higher Education: Challenges, Strategies, Policies and Programs," *US-China Education Review* 6, no. 5 (2009): 1–9, 3.

[297] Ulrich Teichler, "The Changing Debate on Internationalisation of Higher Education," *Higher Education* 48, no. 1 (2004): 5–26, https://doi.org/10.1023/b:high.0000033771.69078.41.

realizing these mobilities, participants gain a chance to have a diverse perspective and be involved in collaborative research. [298]

Regarding the development of collaborations, the participants suggest that inter-university collaborations, joint projects, the development of joint education and research programs, and the establishment of international networks should be prominent strategies. For instance, one of the students from METU, named OS9, stated that "each unit of the university needs to identify its own priorities and areas of study and find partners in that direction, and the university needs to support finding potential partners. Individuals should have more international experience, more international networks, and more international publication strategies by taking advantage of programs such as Erasmus and TÜBİTAK (Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye). It would be more appropriate to do internationalization through collaborations." Therefore, the student highlights the crucial role of international networks and partnerships. Moreover, it is recommended by one academic staff from Ege University, named EA2, to benefit from the experiences of pioneering universities such as METU and to cooperate with them. Collaborations and partnerships of higher education institutions are an opportunity for enhanced resources, knowledge and research. This is mentioned in the book written by Knight. She pointed out that through research collaborations and partnerships, universities could be able to expand their networks and strengthen their study areas, and consequently, members of these institutions could develop themselves.[299] Moreover, together with Altbach, Knight suggested that through collaboration, universities can focus on global issues collectively and enhance their impact on these issues.[300] In short, both the participants and the literature highlight the cruciality of international collaboration of higher education institutions as an internationalization strategy.

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[298] Hans de Wit, *Trends, Issues and Challenges in Internationalisation of Higher Education* (Amsterdam: Centre for Applied Research on Economics & Management, School of Economics and Management of the Hogeschool van Amsterdam, 2011).

[299] Jane Knight, *Higher Education in Turmoil: The Changing World of Internationalization* (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2008).

[300] Philip G. Altbach and Jane Knight, "The Internationalization of Higher Education: Motivations and Realities," *Journal of Studies in International Education* 11, no. 3–4 (2007): 290–305, https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315307303542.

Strategies such as expanding English language education, employing foreign faculty members, offering scholarships and accommodation opportunities, and organizing social cohesion activities were emphasized by the participants as strategies to improve the quality of education. For instance, one of the Erasmus offices staff from Atatürk University, named AE1, stated that "In my opinion, to improve internationalization, Turkish universities should: 1) increase the number of international students and staff 2) increase the number of courses offered in English and, if necessary, employ international staff for this purpose." According to this statement, to improve the quality of education, employment of international staff in universities and English should be a medium of instruction in universities. These points are mentioned in the literature, too.

Indeed, an enhanced educational quality is crucial for increasing the number of incoming international students and staff. For instance, Knight asserted that "if the institution has taken an integrative and sustainable approach to internationalization, then a very broad range of policy and procedure statements would be implicated ranging from quality assurance, planning, finances, staffing, faculty development, admission, research, curriculum, student support, contract and project work, and so forth."[301] Therefore, for internationalization, institutions need to develop policies including quality assurance, finance, staff, research, and students. Rumbley, Altbach, and Reisberg emphasized similar points from a different perspective by stating that "internationalization is affecting what, how, where, and from whom students learn; how higher education institutions and systems conceive of their missions and roles; how research is carried out and disseminated; and how fundamental paradigms of cooperation and competition in higher education are understood and elaborated."[302] Hence, these scholars highlight that internationalization impacts the education quality. Through internationalization, the quality of education, the learning ability of the students, cooperation, and competition of universities change accordingly.

[301] Jane Knight, "Internationalization Remodeled: Definition, Approaches, and Rationales," *Journal of Studies in International Education* 8, no. 1 (2004): 5–31, https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315303260832, 16.

[302] Laura E. Rumbley, Philip G. Altbach, and Liz Reisberg, "Internationalization within the Higher Education Context," essay, in *The SAGE Handbook of International Higher Education*, ed. Darla K. Deardorff et al. (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE, 2012), 3–26, 23.

Regarding increasing recognition and visibility, the participants stated that increasing the recognition and visibility of universities through participation in international events, fairs, visits abroad, collaborations, and joint projects can be among the important strategies. For example, one of the Erasmus office staff from METU, named as OE1, stated that "To enhance internationalization, Turkish universities should encourage participation in international education fairs, staff weeks and university visits abroad; and work in close cooperation with Turkish authorities involved in higher education, such as Council of Higher Education, the Turkish National Agency, embassies and education attaché offices, and international education organizations such as the British Council." Therefore, for the recognition and visibility of institutions, universities should attend international events and have close relations with Turkish authorities in higher education. This view is also mentioned in literature. It is said that international networks and attending international events contribute to the visibility of higher education institutions. Indeed, Hazelkorn, in her book emphasized that the visibility and active participation of higher education institutions is vital for attracting international participants and collaboration. The visibility of an institution may draw an image on the other institutions for its leadership and success, which may attract them for close relations and network.[303] In addition to this aspect, Knight, in her article, argued that the efforts that will be provided for the visibility of the institutions need to be compatible with the strategic goals of the institutions for their long-lasting reputation them in the global education field.[304] In short, both the literature and interviewees suggested that one of the strategies of the higher education institutions for internationalization is increasing their recognition and visibility.

Regarding strengthening institutional capacity, participants highlighted strategies for strengthening institutional capacity, such as employing staff specialized in internationalization, increasing budget resources, and ensuring the support and coordination of university administration. For instance, one of the academic staff

[303] Ellen Hazelkorn, *Rankings and the Reshaping of Higher Education: The Battle for World-Class Excellence* (New York, Secaucus: Palgrave Macmillan Springer distributor, 2016).

[304] Jane Knight, "Updated Definition of Internationalization," *International Higher Education*, no. 33 (2015): 2–3, https://doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2003.33.7391.

from Ege University, named EA1, stated "Internationalization means that we should go abroad more and there should be more exchange of professors in terms of academic years. This number is very low in state universities. At state universities, we cannot bring and employ professors abroad. Therefore, my biggest recommendation is to increase the budget. More budget should be provided. How nice it would be to bring a prestigious lecturer from abroad to listen to the students. I think the real internationalization can be achieved through such side tools." Hence, as the academic staff mentioned, to strengthen the institutional capacity, people need to realize international mobilities, and higher education institutions need to increase the budget resources for these mobilities. As the participants highlighted, the institutional capacity of the institutions, including administrative support and financial resources, is one of the strategies that higher education institutions follow for developing their international activities under internationalization. This is highlighted in literature, too. For instance, Qiang mentioned that institutions must build their institutional capacity to manage and enlarge their international programs.[305] Hence, for the sustainability of their internationalization process, their capacity is crucial. Furthermore, Brandenburg and de Wit stated that to adapt to the developments in international practices and to meet the needs of participants, universities need to develop their institutional capacities and facilities.[306] By doing this, institutions can have better networks and increase international participation and cooperation. Briefly, strengthening the institutional capacity is one of the strategies under the internationalization of universities.

Similar to other themes, this theme is also asked to the specialists from Turkish National Agency for their opinion. The specialist, named as NA2, argued that "the positive effects of the program are evident in terms of completing the modernization process of higher education institutions in Türkiye to align them with the EU education policies and adopt international education standards." Hence, s/he pointed out that through the Erasmus+ program, higher education institutions can improve

[305] Zha Qiang, "Internationalization of Higher Education: Towards a Conceptual Framework," *Policy Futures in Education* 1, no. 2 (2003): 248–70, https://doi.org/10.2304/pfie.2003.1.2.5.

[306] Uwe Brandenburg and Hans de Wit, "The End of Internationalization," *International Higher Education*, no. 62 (2011): 15–17, https://doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2011.62.8533.

their policies and act according to EU standards. Different from this view, another expert, named as NA3, stated that “you envisage the construction of a common university and therefore you make many things common. From the administrative structure to the academic calendar, the system that allows professors and students to easily take courses from one another in the partner universities. This is possible with a common policy. The way to such things will be possible through collaborations such as Erasmus.” It could be inferred from these statements that the expert emphasizes the importance and interrelation between projects under the Erasmus+ program for the internationalization process of the universities. As s/he stated, an initiation at one specific project may lead to other opportunities that contribute to the development of the internationalization process of the institutions. Indeed, the expert emphasizes the contribution of the Erasmus+ program to the self-development of the participants and the image of the country.

In short, Erasmus has not only facilitated mobility but has also strengthened institutional policies and international partnerships. It has encouraged Turkish universities to adopt strategic approaches to internationalization by fostering long-term collaborations with global institutions. However, participants identified significant barriers like Türkiye’s economic constraints and bureaucratic challenges like visa delays. These obstacles often disrupt mobility processes and strain relations between institutions. Nevertheless, the program is widely seen as a strategic tool for fostering global engagement and addressing these systemic challenges.

5.4. Discussion on Soft Power and Image Building

The last theme from the interviews is soft power and image building. Under this theme, the sub-theme, named country promotion, is highlighted. Under this sub-theme, two main categories are pointed out: image building/nation building and breaking down preconceptions. Regarding country promotion, participants highlighted three main points.

The first point is that the Erasmus program is important in the short term in terms of emphasizing Türkiye's commitment to Europe and its place in Europe. For instance,

one of the Erasmus staff from METU, named OE4, stated, "I think that the increase in the Erasmus program will increase the bilateral cooperation and recognition between Türkiye and the EU. I think it has a serious importance in breaking prejudice because Erasmus has a great importance in terms of Europe's understanding of how much capacity our higher education has." Thence, it is argued that for the relations between Türkiye and Europe, these exchange mobility programs play a crucial role. Moreover, an academic staff from Ege University, named EA1, stated "Erasmus is very important for maintaining our ties with the EU. Erasmus is one of the factors that preserves the organic bond in our EU process, which is problematic in the short term. Therefore, in the short term, the fact that our Erasmus students are going abroad is important in terms of our commitment to Europe and underlining that our country's place is in Europe." Hence, the academic staff emphasized the necessity of the Erasmus program for the place of Türkiye in Europe and for the bilateral relations. In literature, it is argued that the Erasmus program is used as a tool to foster European identity. For instance, this idea is highlighted by Papatsiba. She expressed that the Erasmus program encourages the European aspects of higher education and enhances the European belonging of the participants.[307] Indeed, for instance, in the Turkish case, Turkish participants in the Erasmus mobility program emphasize European values and the contribution of the Erasmus program to developing these values. Additionally, participants expressed that through international mobilities of the participants, Türkiye's image was developed. This point is pointed out in the literature. According to Altbach and Knight, governments utilize international education programs as soft power instruments to show that they share certain regional values and strengthen their position within certain regions.[308] Therefore, the Erasmus mobility program allows Türkiye to express its values and political standing to others to enhance its diplomatic ties and its profile in the eyes of Europe.

[307] Vassiliki Papatsiba, "Making Higher Education More European through Student Mobility? Revisiting EU Initiatives in the Context of the Bologna Process," *Comparative Education* 42, no. 1 (2006): 93–111, https://doi.org/10.1080/03050060500515785.

[308] Philip G. Altbach and Jane Knight, "The Internationalization of Higher Education: Motivations and Realities," *Journal of Studies in International Education* 11, no. 3–4 (2007): 290–305, https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315307303542.

The second point that is expressed by participants is that the Erasmus program enables people from different countries to come together, recognize differences, and get rid of prejudices. For instance, one of the students from METU, named OS8, pointed out that "I got rid of personal development and prejudices and preconceptions. People came together from different parts of the world from different nations. It helped me see and recognize the differences and eliminate those prejudices." Therefore, the student emphasizes that the recognition of differences helps them to diminish biases and act accordingly. Similarly, one academic staff from METU, OA3, stated that "Erasmus is effective for breaking prejudices. It was a good opportunity to get to know and break down prejudices. One-to-one contact is valuable in that sense." Hence, the academic staff emphasized the importance of direct interaction of participants for the breaking down of prejudices. Similar to these statements, in literature, it is pointed out that the Erasmus mobility program promotes cross-cultural interaction and respect by allowing students from several cultures and countries to study and live together. According to Sigalas, the Erasmus mobility program encourages participants to understand and value cultural diversity and promote mutual respect.[309] Similarly, Oborune, expressed that these Erasmus mobility experiences are important to reduce biases because such international activities enable participants to have close relations with others from different backgrounds.[310] Therefore, through the Erasmus mobility program, participants can develop cultural awareness and become open-minded for differences.

The third point that is highlighted by the participants is that the Erasmus program can contribute to breaking prejudices against Türkiye and improving the image of Türkiye. For example, one of the academic staff from METU, OA3, stated that "there is a lot of prejudice against Türkiye, and there should be more Erasmus mobility to break this prejudice and improve the image of Türkiye." Similarly, a student from Atatürk University, named AS5, expressed that "unfortunately, there is

[309] Emmanuel Sigalas, "Cross-Border Mobility and European Identity: The Effectiveness of Intergroup Contact during the Erasmus Year Abroad," *European Union Politics* 11, no. 2 (2010): 241–65, https://doi.org/10.1177/1465116510363656.

[310] Karina Oborune, "Becoming More European after Erasmus? The Impact of the Erasmus Programme on Political and Cultural Identity," *Epiphany* 6, no. 1 (2013), https://doi.org/10.21533/epiphany.v6i1.60.

a prejudice against Turks and Muslims in many European countries. We should be a good example as much as we can and act accordingly." Therefore, the participants emphasized that by giving international students firsthand information about Turkish culture and society, Erasmus has the potential to enhance the image of Türkiye. This is highlighted in the literature, too. For instance, according to Kristine Mitchell, direct exposure to Türkiye through the Erasmus exchange might transform people's attitudes. Furthermore, she expressed that through Erasmus mobility programs, a direct interaction of participants would have a positive impact on the perspectives of others and change public opinion.[311] Therefore, the Erasmus mobility program allows Türkiye to highlight its cultural diversity, diminish prejudices, and encourage a positive image of the country.

As stated before, the results of these emerged themes were shared with the specialists from Turkish National Agency. Similar to the statements and literature, specialists also pointed out the role of Erasmus+ program on the soft power and image building of Türkiye. One of the specialists, named as NA2, stated that "in terms of soft power and image building, it is possible to say that the cultural contacts, successful works and positive performance of the people participating in the mobility through the program are very effective. In this way, a positive perception is created for our country in the international arena." Therefore s/he said that the interaction during Erasmus mobility have an impact on changing the image of Türkiye in the eyes of others. Another expert, named as NA3, pointed out that "people in Europe have judgments about Türkiye. This is how they can experience how compatible these judgments are with reality. It is important to remove these prejudices through one-to-one contact with people." Therefore, the specialist highlighted the importance of interaction of people physically to diminish the prejudices on the eyes of Europeans about Türkiye.

Erasmus+ is a powerful instrument for enhancing Türkiye's soft power and international image. It allows participants to show Turkish culture, education, and

[311] Kristine Mitchell, "Student Mobility and European Identity: Erasmus Study as a Civic Experience?," *Journal of Contemporary European Research* 8, no. 4 (2012), https://doi.org/10.30950/jcer.v8i4.473.

values, which helps dispel prejudices and strengthen ties with other nations, particularly Europe. The program also reinforces Türkiye's position as a committed partner in global higher education, emphasizing its dedication to European integration. By enabling direct cultural and academic exchange, Erasmus+ helps participants build bridges across diverse communities, contributing to a more positive perception of Türkiye in international contexts.

In a nutshell, all these four themes are evaluated one of the specialists from the Turkish National Agency, who is named as NA1. S/he pointed out that

> The Erasmus Program is a program that serves all 4 intertwined themes. The Erasmus Program can be seen as a soft power tool in terms of both promoting the culture of the country through the participants going abroad and being experienced by the Erasmus participants coming to our country. It is also a soft power element in terms of projecting a positive image of the EU. The Program serves a process in which the people of different countries can come into direct contact with each other, and as a result of mutual interaction, prejudices are broken down, the attractiveness of our country increases, international cooperation is facilitated, education policies are transformed and reforms are experienced in order to adapt to processes such as Bologna and the European Higher Education Area.

Considering this statement and the arguments of all participants from all three universities, it could be argued that the contribution of Erasmus+ to the internationalization process of Turkish higher education institutions under these four main themes is undeniable. It is demonstrated that every step taken under the Erasmus+ program enriches the internationalization of the universities.

In short, the discussion within the framework of the concept of educational diplomacy revealed that the Erasmus+ program is not only limited to individual and institutional gains; it is also a diplomatic tool in Türkiye's relations with countries. The comparison of the findings with the theoretical framework has shown that the Erasmus+ program has created a multi-layered internationalization process in the Turkish context and that this process has academic, cultural, political and identity dimensions. In the light of all these findings and interpretations, the next and final chapter will discuss the overall conclusions of the thesis in a holistic manner and evaluate the contribution of the study to the literature.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this thesis has examined the Erasmus program's contribution to Turkish higher education's internationalization. The analysis focused on three state Turkish universities: Atatürk University, Ege University, and Middle East Technical University. The thesis argued that Erasmus+ Program contributes to the internationalization of the Turkish higher education through learning mobility under four main themes which are soft power and image building, policy and institutional collaboration, cultural exchange and understanding, and academic collaboration from education diplomacy perspective. Since this study is a case study, the use of primary sources is vital because the interviews conducted with the Erasmus mobility program participants and the Erasmus office staff provide a crucial reflection of the program's contribution to the internationalization process of Turkish higher education. The analysis from the education diplomacy perspective was essential to understand the bilateral relations between Türkiye and the EU in terms of education. Therefore, the use of primary sources, the selection of Turkish research universities, and analysis from a theoretical perspective enhance the findings, distinguishing this study from the others.

Now, turning to the details of the thesis chapters, the introduction chapter makes a general introduction to the topic by giving the scope and objective of the thesis. Also, the chapter gives detailed information about the methodology of this thesis. The chapter gives detailed information about the research design, population sampling, data collection method, data analysis, ethical considerations, and research limitations. It was stated that this research is qualitative research that used a structured interview with the academic staff, students who realized the Erasmus mobility program, and Erasmus Office staff from three research universities in

Türkiye, which are Atatürk, Ege, and Middle East Technical University. The research aimed to analyze the Erasmus mobility program's contribution to the internationalization process of Turkish higher education institutions between 2015 and 2023. Thematic analysis was conducted using the MAXQDA 24 software tool. This research method was used to understand the program's effectiveness from different perspectives.

The literature review chapter discusses the internationalization of higher education as a conceptual framework after the introduction. This chapter discusses the definition of the concept, the history of the internationalization of higher education, the rationales for the internationalization of higher education, the internationalization of higher education in Europe, the internationalization of higher education in Türkiye, Erasmus Program, and the internationalization of higher education. In the definition of internationalization of higher education part it is asserted that there is no standard definition of the concept that all scholars accept. The concept is defined differently according to the different perspectives of the scholar. Concerning the history of the concept, it is stated that the history could be categorized under four main periods: the period until the 18th century, the period between the 18th and World War II, the period between World War II and the Cold War, and the period between the Cold War and today. In the rationales part, it is argued that there are four main rationales for the internationalization of higher education: political, economic, academic, and social-cultural. The historical development of the process is discussed under the internationalization of higher education in Europe. The history of the process was analyzed under five main phases.

The first phase includes the incidental cooperation between 1951 and 1972. The second phase reflects the initiation of the European collaboration in education between 1972 and 1977. Between 1977 and 1986, the third phase, the initiated cooperation, was implemented, and different international education programs were held based on intergovernmental cooperation. The fourth phase, between 1986 and 1993, consists of the second stage of the previous period. The only difference is that all these steps are taken according to the EU directions while implementing education programs. The last phase includes the period between 1993 and 1995. It is

argued in the thesis that although the process was complicated and unclear, Europeanization became the touchstone of the internationalization process of Europe. Higher education in Europe developed according to different educational programs through internationalization.

The internationalization of higher education in Türkiye session asserted that the process includes not only the international mobility of students or staff but also the standardization of universal education, the recognition process of degrees from different universities, scholarship or degree-seeking programs, the Bologna Process, etc. All these steps aimed to raise the number of international students and staff, international mobilities, international standards, and qualified education. Most of all, to make Türkiye the center of attraction through higher education for better international relations. In other words, in the context of soft power, the most important motivation is to train potential future leaders. Türkiye wants to draw a favorable profile of the country in the eyes of future leaders when they come to Türkiye to study and then return to their countries for close international relations. In this chapter, the last points were the Erasmus Program and the internationalization of higher education. In this section, the Erasmus program is introduced in detail.

In the theoretical framework chapter, the concept of soft power, public diplomacy and education diplomacy was examined. Soft power is defined as the ability of a state to achieve what it wants without using hard power tools. Unlike hard power, its sources are culture, foreign policy, education, politics, beauty, and brilliance. Therefore, states can have power and influence over other states without force, money, or territory. When the public diplomacy is considered, it was stated that although the concept of public diplomacy is used interchangeably with soft power, this is not the case because there is a very subtle difference between soft power and public diplomacy, which is the role of the government. Within public diplomacy, there is the presence and interest of government but for soft power, there is no government. Moreover, public diplomacy is a goal-oriented form of soft power. Although various scholars defined public diplomacy from different perspectives, there is no definition that a consensus achieved. However, the common point that most of the definitions pointed out is the use of governmental tools to have an impact

on the public opinion of other states to promote the interest of the government. In line with these states, under the education diplomacy part, the importance of the concept in the International Relations field and its key aspects were discussed. Education diplomacy is defined as any policy or action that a state follows through education to increase its attractiveness and power in the eyes of others. The concept of education diplomacy is crucial in four senses, which are: i)it is an important application area of soft power; ii) It includes various public diplomacy activities such as research, science, culture, and language; iii) It attracts international students for staying in the host country; iv) It is essential for both countries and educational institutions in terms of contributing to the internationalization process of higher education institutions. Education diplomacy has three key aspects: cultural exchange and people-to-people connections, diplomatic relations and nation-building, academic collaboration, and networking.

The following chapter examined the Erasmus program's contribution to Turkish higher education's internationalization under three main points. The first findings from three research universities, Atatürk University, Ege University, and Middle East Technical University (METU), were shared. Second, findings from three interviewee groups were examined: students, academic staff, and Erasmus Office Staff. Lastly, findings about four main themes were discussed. Four main themes had emerged from the interview: 1) academic collaboration, 2) cultural exchange and understanding, 3) policy and institutional collaboration, 4) soft power, and image building. The findings from the interviews conducted with all the participants revealed that more than half of the coding (54 percent) from the interviews belongs to academic collaboration. Cultural exchange, understanding, and policy and institutional collaboration are referred at the same rate, with 19 percent of the overall coding. The least referred code is soft power and image building, with seven percent of the overall coding. Among METU and Ege University participants, cultural exchange, understanding theme is the mostly referred one. Policy and institutional collaboration theme is the most used one among Atatürk University participants. Among all participants from three universities top three most used codes are “contribution of Erasmus to the institution”, “promotion and recognition of the university,” and “country promotion”. “Academic network” code is the most referred

code among all these METU participants. “Contribution of Erasmus to the institution” code is the most referred code among all Ege and Atatürk University participants. This code is also the most referred come among all students and academic staff from three universities.

The last chapter before conclusion focused on a discussion of the findings. The chapter made an overall evaluation of the findings from an education diplomacy perspective. The discussion was made under four main themes, which were inferred from the interviews conducted with the students and academic staff who realized Erasmus mobility and Erasmus office staff, i) soft power and image building, ii) policy and institutional collaboration, iii) cultural exchange and understanding, iv) academic collaboration.

Although these results were reached from the interviews and literature, as stated at the beginning, there are some limitations of the study. These are using purpose sampling, subjectivity of the responses, the sampling size of the data and the focused period of the research. For overcoming these challenges, in addition to Erasmus Offices and Erasmus participants, international students, staff and international student offices of the universities can be involved in the study as sample, the number of the participants from each sampling group can be increased, participant type can be changed, and period can be extended.

When the contribution of Erasmus mobility program to the internationalization of Turkish higher education institutions, the Erasmus Program significantly contributes to the internationalization of Turkish higher education through learning mobility. When the contribution is analyzed under education diplomacy four main themes had emerged from the study which are soft power and image building, policy and institutional collaboration, cultural exchange and understanding, and academic collaboration. The theoretical background has been the main reference point for evaluating the findings of the interviews that were conducted with the participants from research universities in Türkiye. The concept of educational diplomacy is a fundamental analytical tool to understand the multi-layered contribution of the Erasmus+ program at the national and international level to the internationalization

process of higher education. The concept is considered as an important component of public diplomacy strategies. The themes show that the Erasmus+ program is not a program limited to individual experiences, but rather a multidimensional tool that can be integrated into Türkiye's cultural representation capacity in the international arena and its foreign policy vision.

The soft power and image-building theme declared that the Erasmus mobility program was one of the instruments for Türkiye's soft power and international image. Under this theme, three main points were highlighted. The first point was that the Erasmus program is essential in the short term in terms of emphasizing Türkiye's commitment to Europe and its place in Europe. Participants' second point is that the Erasmus program enables people from different countries to come together, recognize differences, and eliminate prejudices. The third point that the participants highlighted was that the Erasmus program can contribute to breaking prejudices against Türkiye and improving the image of Türkiye.

Under the policy and institutional collaboration theme, it was stated that the Erasmus mobility program contributed to institutional policies and partnerships. It is pointed out that the Erasmus mobility program encourages Turkish higher education institutions to develop strategic collaborations. However, some of the participants underlined the barriers like Türkiye's economic constraints and bureaucratic challenges like visa delays. They stated that these barriers negatively impacted the bilateral relations between universities and states. Nevertheless, the program is widely seen as a strategic tool for fostering global engagement and addressing these systemic challenges.

The Erasmus mobility program played a crucial role in promoting cultural awareness and mutual understanding among participants. This is highlighted in cultural exchange and understanding theme. Through Erasmus mobility, participants had the chance to experience different cultures, which led them to develop their tolerance, to broaden their perspective, to challenge stereotypes, embrace cultural diversity, and to represent their home institutions positively. It is emphasized that the Erasmus mobility program contributed to the personal development of the participants and

helped them increase their self-confidence to navigate new environments independently, build resilience and social skills. In the academic collaboration theme, it was argued that the Erasmus+ program is one of the cornerstones of the internationalization of Turkish higher education institutions by fostering academic collaboration. Participants stated that the program promotes both academic and professional development by facilitating academic networks, cooperation, and projects. These activities contribute to the development of higher education institutions, too. Although these are the positive consequences of the Erasmus mobility program, some participants also pointed out the challenges of it. For instance, they mentioned that there is a lack of staff or there is limited institutional resources. These challenges prevent the program from reaching its full potential.

This thesis offers an interdisciplinary and critical contribution to the existing literature by analyzing the contribution of the Erasmus+ program to internationalization process in higher education in the context of educational diplomacy. Existing studies have generally focused on the points like the contribution of the program to the students or cultural adaptation issues within the Erasmus+ program. This study focuses on diplomatic functions of the Erasmus+ program to the internationalization of Türkiye through education. It examines the application of education as a foreign policy tool in the context of internationalization in higher education and adds theoretical depth. In addition, the literature generally emphasizes western-centered studies. Internationalization in higher education in Türkiye has not been sufficiently studied in the context of the Erasmus+ program which is another factor that distinguishes this study from others. Considering Türkiye's historical relations with Europe, its accession process and cultural position, the function of the Erasmus+ program and internationalization in higher education in this context has much more political meanings. In this respect, the thesis serves as an important bridge between educational studies and international relations and public diplomacy literature.

Considering the contribution of this thesis to the literature, it is seen that the contribution of the Erasmus+ program to internationalization in higher education goes beyond being a student exchange program. Accordingly, the diplomatic role of

the Erasmus+ program should be better emphasized in higher education policies and strategies should be developed in accordance with this role. First of all, considering the existing literature and interviews, the capacity of Erasmus offices in universities should be increased. This is necessary not only for more efficient management of the administrative process, but also for intercultural relations, country and institution visibility, and stronger diplomatic relations. Moreover, in order to further strengthen internationalization in higher education, an institutional memory needs to be created where beneficiaries can share their experiences in order to better articulate the contribution of the Erasmus+ program to individuals, society and the country and to create awareness and continuity. Furthermore, in order to carry out this internationalization process more effectively from a diplomatic point of view, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, YÖK and universities should adopt a more coordinated approach, because Erasmus+ program should be seen not only as an education but also as a public diplomacy tool in terms of internationalization, which will contribute to Türkiye's international image management.

In light of literature on this topic, as a future study a comparative study of the impact of Erasmus+ mobility program to the internationalization process in higher education institutions in contrast with different international scholarship programs, like Fullbright and Chevening. Assessing the different international scholarship programs through comparison would reflect different practices. Another comparative study would be also followed as a future study. For instance, comparative research on the analysis of the effect of Erasmus+ program to the internationalization process in Turkish higher education as an education diplomacy tool in contrast with a state from European Union. Evaluation of divergences in different practices from education diplomacy perspective would give a broader understanding on the topic. Lastly, further research on decolonization of internationalization in higher education would be followed. As stated before, there are some discussions on decolonization of the concept of internationalization of higher education. Based on this discussion, a critical study would be conducted about Erasmus+ mobility program in the context of non-western countries. A discussion on whether Erasmus+ program strengthen Eurocentrism or opens a way for a broader intercultural dialogue. In short, this study focused on the contribution of Erasmus mobility program to the internationalization

of Turkish higher education institutions. It was argued that Erasmus+ Program contributes to the internationalization of the Turkish higher education through learning mobility under four main themes which are soft power and image building, policy and institutional collaboration, cultural exchange and understanding, and academic collaboration from education diplomacy perspective.

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APPENDICES

A. ANNEXES

Interview Questions for Academic Staff Who Realized Erasmus+ Mobility

1. What was your purpose/motivation for participating in the Erasmus+ mobility program?
2. How would you evaluate the impact of your Erasmus+ mobility on yourself and your career?
3. How would you evaluate the impact of your Erasmus+ mobility on your institution?
4. Did you feel like a representative of Turkey when you went abroad? If yes, how?
5. Have you initiated any international projects with colleagues from other European countries?
6. If you have participated in an EU project, why did you choose this partner/country for the project?
7. Do you think that Erasmus+ mobility in general has helped to spread the popularity of your institution in the world?
8. Would you like to participate in Erasmus+ mobility or other EU projects again? And why?
9. How would you compare the internationalization steps of your university with the university where you carried out the mobility?
10. What are your suggestions for the development of EU/Erasmus+ projects in universities?
11. How would you explain the impact of EU/Erasmus+ projects on bilateral/multilateral relations between universities and countries?
12. How would you define internationalization in higher education institutions?
13. What are the factors that enable a university to internationalize?

14. What should be the internationalization strategy of a university?

15. What are the short-term and long-term effects of Erasmus+ program on Turkish universities?

Interview Questions for Students Who Realized Erasmus+ Mobility

1. What was your motivation for participating in Erasmus mobility?

2. What was the impact of your Erasmus mobility on your personal development and career?

3. Have you considered being part of any international scientific project with other students from European countries?

4. Would you like to participate in Erasmus mobility or other EU projects again? If yes, why?

5. Would you like to study/work in another country? Why?

6. Do you think Erasmus helped to spread the popularity of your institution outside European countries?

7. Did you feel like a representative of Turkey when you went abroad? If yes, how?

8. What do you think about the idea that Erasmus is a tool to spread your university's international educational activities to other parts of the world?

9. How would you describe the impact of your mobility on your home university?

10. How would you describe the impact of your mobility on bilateral relations between Turkey and the host country?

11. How would you assess the impact of the Erasmus mobility on participating students in general?

12. What are the short-term and long-term impacts of Erasmus mobility on Turkish Higher Education Institutions?

13. Given your Erasmus mobility and the impact of your mobility on you, how would you define internationalization in universities?

14. What should be the internationalization strategy of a university?

Interview Questions for Staff Who Work at the Erasmus Offices

1. What are the internationalization strategies of your institution?

2. From which European regions/countries do you mostly find partners for Erasmus partnership and how is your cooperation process carried out?

3. Is there a specific region you prioritize when finding Erasmus partners?

4. How would you describe the scope of international programs followed by your office and their contribution to the internationalization process of your institution (mobility, projects, voluntary projects, etc.)?

5. What are the factors that enable a university to internationalize?

6. What are your suggestions on ways to improve the internationalization process in Turkish universities?

7. How would you define internationalization in higher education institutions?

8. What are the short- and long-term effects of Erasmus partnerships and mobility on Turkish universities?

9. Do the authorities of your university include the development of Erasmus partnerships for the exchange of students and staff? If yes, what are the concrete steps they are taking?

10. Do you think Erasmus partnerships help to spread the popularity of your institution outside European countries?

11. How would you describe the impact of Erasmus partnerships on bilateral/multilateral relations between Turkish and European universities?

12. Have you participated in any of the Erasmus mobility program? If yes:

a. What was your motivation for participation?

b. How can you evaluate the contribution of your mobility to yourself / your institution in terms of internationalization?

c. Did you feel like a representative of Turkey abroad? If yes, how?

Interview Questions for Experts from Turkish National Agency

1. How would you define internationalization in higher education?

2. What is the contribution(s) of the Erasmus+ program to the internationalization of higher education institutions in Turkey?

3. What are your observations about the short- and long-term effects of Erasmus+ learning and teaching mobility on the participants?

4. What do you think about the impact of the experiences abroad of Turkish students and academic staff benefiting from the program on Turkey's image in the international arena?

5. How do you assess the impact of the Erasmus+ program on the research capacity of higher education institutions in Turkey and their integration into international cooperation projects?

6. How do you evaluate the Erasmus+ program in terms of the relations of higher education institutions in Turkey with the European Union countries?

7. What role does the Erasmus+ program play in increasing the visibility and recognition of Turkish higher education institutions in Europe?

8. How do you think student and academic staff mobility under the program serves the internationalization objectives of the Turkish higher education system in the long term?

9. Within the scope of the study, I interviewed students and academic staff participated in the Erasmus+ mobility program and Erasmus office staff. In this context, 4 main themes came to the fore. These are soft power and image building; cultural exchange and understanding; academic cooperation and institutional partnerships; policy and institutional cooperation. How do you assess the impact of the Erasmus+ program on these four themes in terms of its contribution to the internationalization of Turkish higher education institutions?

10. What suggestions can you make to increase the contribution of the Erasmus+ program to the internationalization of higher education institutions in Turkey?

11. What changes should be made in the internal policies and practices of higher education institutions in Turkey to increase the contribution of the Erasmus+ program to internationalization?

12. What steps can be taken to make Turkey more competitive internationally within the framework of the Erasmus+ program?

B. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE

UYGULAMALI ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ
APPLIED ETHICS RESEARCH CENTER

ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ
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15 MAYIS 2023

Konu: Değerlendirme Sonucu

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlgi: İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın Doç.Dr. Işık Kuşçu Bonnenfant

Danışmanlığını yürüttüğünüz Nur Seda Temur'un ***"Yükseköğretimde Uluslararasılaşmanın Dönüştürücü Gücü: Türkiye'deki Araştırma Üniversiteleri Örneği"*** başlıklı araştırmanız İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülerek **0267-ODTUİAEK-2023** protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır.

Bilgilerinize saygılarımla sunarım.

Prof. Dr. Ş. Halil TURAN
Başkan

Prof.Dr. İ. Semih AKÇOMAK
Üye

Doç. Dr. Ali Emre Turgut
Üye

Doç. Dr. Şerife SEVİNÇ
Üye

Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Murat Perit ÇAKIR
Üye

Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Süreyya ÖZCAN KABASAKAL
Üye

Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Müge GÜNDÜZ
Üye

C. CURRICULUM VITAE

Nur Seda TEMUR

Education

- **Bachelor's Degree (2013–2016):**
  Bilkent University, Faculty of Economics, Administrative and Social Sciences, Department of International Relations
  Minor: Political Science
- **Master's Degree (2017–2019):**
  Middle East Technical University (METU), Department of International Relations
  Thesis: *The Korean War and Turkish-American Relations*
- **Ph.D. (2019–2025):**
  Middle East Technical University (METU), Department of International Relations
  Dissertation: *Transformative Power of the Internationalization of Higher Education: The Case of Research Universities in Türkiye*

Academic Positions

- Lecturer, METU, Office of International Cooperations, 2022–Present
- Lecturer, Atatürk University, Office of International Relations, 2021–2022
- Research Assistant, METU, Department of International Relations, 2019–2021
- Research Assistant, Kastamonu University, Department of International Relations, 2018–2019, 2017–2018
- Research Assistant, METU, Department of International Relations, 2018

Publications

Articles:

- *U.S. Foreign Policy Towards Taiwan: Obama vs. Trump*, Alınteri Journal of Social Sciences, 2020
- *The Impact of EU's New Pact on Migration Diplomacy*, Journal of International Relations Studies, 2024

Books & Book Chapters:

- The Issue of Education of Second-Generation Turkish Students in Germany Temur N.S. ASEAD 7.Uluslararası Sosyal Bilimler Sempozyumu Bildiriler Kitabı, Türkoğlu, İrfan, Editör, Astana Yayınları, Ankara, ss.366-375,2021
- Securitization of the EU's Migration Policy After 2015 European Refugee Crisis Temur N.S. The Different Approaches of Academic Disciplines to the Phenomenon of Migration, Meryem BULUT, Ceren AKSOY UGIYAMA, Kadriye ŞAHİN, Editör, Bilgin Kültür Sanat Yayınları, Ankara, ss.259-270,2021
- U.S. Foreign Policy Towards Taiwan: Obama vs. Trump, Temur N.S. Ambiguity and Commitment: US Foreign Policy Toward Taiwan, 1949-2023, Sabella Abidde, Editör, Springer, 2025

Encyclopedia Entries (Migration Encyclopedia, Nobel Publishing, 2023):

- Replacement Migration
- Transnational Migration Theory
- Migration Diplomacy

Conferences

- AB'nin Yeni Göç ve Sığınma Paktının Türkiye ile Göç Diplomasisine Etkisi, Temur N.S. VIII. Mülkiye Uluslararası İlişkiler Kongresi, 2024, Ankara, Türkiye
- ABD Dışişleri Bakanlarındaki Cinsiyet Farklılıklarının Amerikan Dış Politikasına Etkisi, Temur N.S. 7. Siyaset Bilimi ve Uluslararası İlişkiler Kongresi, 2024, Trabzon, Türkiye, s.148.
- Eğitim Diplomasisi Çerçevesinde Erasmus+ Programı ve Yükseköğretimde Uluslararasılaşma: Türkiye'deki Araştırma Üniversiteleri Örneği, Temur, N.S. Siyasi İlimler Derneği 3. Ulusal Siyaset Bilimi Kongresi, 2024, İstanbul, Türkiye, ss.87-88.
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- The Impact of EU's New Pact on Migration Diplomacy Temur N.S. The Migration Conference 2021, London, İngiltere, 06 Temmuz 2021, cilt.1, ss.221-223 I .
- The Issue of Educatıon of Second-Generation Turkish Students In Germany, Temur N.S. 7th International Symposium on Social Sciences organized by Eurasian Journal of Social and Economic Research (ASEAD), Ankara, Türkiye, 10Nisan2021, cilt.1, ss. 366-372
- Securitization of the EU's Migration Policy After 2015 European Refugee Crisis Temur N.S. International Migration Researches Congress (ICOMIR2021), Ankara, Türkiye, 20 Mayıs 2021, cilt.1, ss.259-270
- 2011 Yemen Crisis Temur N.S. Doğu Batı ile Buluşuyor:Küreselleşme ve Uluslararasılaşma, Trabzon, Türkiye, 26 -27 Ekim 2017, ss.83

Awards

- METU Teaching Performance Award, June 2021

Language Skills

- Turkish : Native, English: Advanced, German: Beginner

Computer Skills

- Microsoft Office Suite (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Access)
- MAXQDA24

Certificates

- International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma
- IGCSE Certificate
- MAXQDA24 Program Certificate
- TÜBİTAK 2237-A Scientific Training Participation Certificate (Environmental Security Workshop)

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D. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Küreselleşmenin yükselişiyle birlikte, yükseköğretimde uluslararasılaşma 21. yüzyılda dünyada büyük önem kazanmıştır. Knight'ın belirttiği gibi, "Uluslararasılaşma yükseköğretim dünyasını değiştiriyor, küreselleşme ise uluslararasılaşma dünyasını değiştiriyor." Bu bağlamda, küreselleşme dünyayı etkilerken, uluslararasılaşma bu etkiye verilen bir yanıt olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. Devletler arası etkileşim yoluyla, uluslararasılaşma dört yönlü bir yanıt olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır: kültürel, akademik, ekonomik ve siyasi. Bu tez, akademik kaygılara odaklanacak ve Türkiye örneği üzerinden uluslararasılaşmanın akademik dünyadaki etkisini vurgulayacaktır.

Türk yükseköğretim kurumlarının Erasmus hareketliliklerine, ortaklıklarına ve AB projelerine katılmasıyla birlikte, Türkiye ile Avrupa arasında eğitim diplomasisinde bir gelişme beklentisi oluşmuştur. Bu bağlamda, bu tez şu soruya odaklanacaktır: Erasmus+ Programı, eğitim diplomasisi perspektifinden bakıldığında, 2021-2023 yılları arasında Türkiye yükseköğretiminin uluslararasılaşma politikalarına nasıl katkı sağlamıştır? Bu soruya yanıt olarak savım şudur: Erasmus+ Programı, Türkiye yükseköğretiminin uluslararasılaşmasına, eğitim diplomasisi perspektifinden bakıldığında, öğrenme hareketliliği yoluyla dört ana tema üzerinden katkı sağlamaktadır: yumuşak güç ve imaj inşası, politika ve kurumsal işbirliği, kültürel değişim ve anlayış, akademik işbirliği.

Bu çerçevede analiz, görüşmeler yoluyla yapılacaktır. Türkiye'deki araştırma üniversiteleri arasından her seviyeden üç devlet üniversitesi örnekleme amacıyla incelenecektir: Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi, Ege Üniversitesi ve Atatürk Üniversitesi. Bu üniversitelerin seçilmesindeki amaç, Türkiye'nin farklı bölgelerinden üniversiteleri kapsayarak daha sağlıklı sonuçlar elde etmektir. Erasmus hareketlilik programına katılmış öğrenciler, akademik personel ve Uluslararası İlişkiler Ofislerinde çalışan personel ile yapılan görüşmeler, Erasmus programının

Türkiye yükseköğretiminin uluslararasılaşmasına katkısını aydınlatacaktır. Bu bulgular, Erasmus hareketlilik programının, AB projelerinin ve Türkiye yükseköğretim kurumlarının uluslararası ortaklıklarının etkisine dair genel bir değerlendirme sunacaktır. Resmî belgeler ve ikincil kaynaklar, Türkiye'nin uluslararasılaşma politikaları ve Avrupa ile ilişkileri hakkında detaylı bilgi sağlayacaktır.

Bu noktada, bu tezi diğer çalışmalardan ayıran unsur, birincil kaynaklara dayanması ve Türkiye örneğini Uluslararası İlişkiler perspektifinden analiz etmesidir. Bu tez, Erasmus programının Türkiye yükseköğretiminin uluslararasılaşma süreci üzerindeki etkisini ortaya koymak amacıyla, yapılan görüşmeler ve resmi belgelerden elde edilen verilerle literatüre katkı sunacaktır. Aynı zamanda, saha araştırması yaparak ve araştırma üniversitelerine odaklanarak bu uygulamaların bir örneğini sunacaktır.

Yükseköğretimin uluslararasılaşma sürecini tartışmak için öncelikle bu kavramın tanımlanması gereklidir. Çünkü Heleta ve Chasi'nin de belirttiği gibi, tanımlar "düşüncelerimizi, dünya görüşümüzü, vizyonlarımızı, stratejilerimizi, politikalarımızı, planlarımızı, uygulamalarımızı ve faaliyetlerimizi şekillendirebilir." Bu nedenle, kavram farklı akademisyenlerce farklı şekillerde tanımlanmıştır. Ancak, de Wit'in de vurguladığı gibi, yükseköğretimin uluslararasılaşması konusunda herkesin üzerinde uzlaştığı ortak bir tanım henüz yoktur.

Literatürdeki tüm tartışmalar göz önüne alındığında, Erasmus+ programının genellikle öğrenci hareketliliği, akademik başarılar ya da kişisel gelişim açısından ele alındığı; dış politika veya diplomasi gibi daha geniş siyasi ve kültürel bağlamlardaki rolünün ise çok sınırlı biçimde incelendiği söylenebilir. Türkiye'de yapılan çalışmaların çoğu belirli üniversitelerle sınırlı olup, genellikle nicel verilerle genel eğilimleri incelemektedir. Bu bağlamda, Erasmus'un yükseköğretimin uluslararasılaşmasına bir diplomatik araç olarak katkısını değerlendiren, çok aktörlü saha verisine dayalı, bölgesel çeşitliliği içeren ve kuramsal çerçeveye oturtulan nitel analizlere ihtiyaç duyulmaktadır.

Erasmus+ Programı, yükseköğretimin uluslararasılaşma sürecinin temel bileşenlerinden biridir. Amacına ve hedeflerine geçmeden önce programın

kökeninden söz edilmelidir. Program adını ünlü filozof Desiderius Erasmus'tan almıştır. Aynı zamanda "Avrupa Topluluğu Üniversite Öğrencileri Hareketlilik Eylem Programı"nın İngilizce kısaltmasıdır. Erasmus+ Programı, AB'nin en bilinen ve önemli eğitim girişimlerinden biridir. Program ilk kez 1987 yılında Avrupa Birliği tarafından başlatılmıştır. İlk ismi sadece "Erasmus" olan program, sadece öğrenci hareketliliği ve işbirliğine odaklanmaktaydı. 15 Haziran 1987 tarihinde, 87/327/EEC sayılı kararla Erasmus Programı başlatılmış ve 5 ana hedef belirlenmiştir:

1. Cinsiyet eşitliğini gözeterek öğrencilere değişim imkânı sağlayarak giden öğrenci sayısını artırmak,
2. Yükseköğretim kurumları arasında uluslararası işbirliğini teşvik etmek,
3. Nitelikli eğitim için akademik personel değişimini desteklemek,
4. Toplumlar arası iletişimi artırmak,
5. İş dünyası için nitelikli mezunlar yetiştirmek.

Başlangıçta program sadece Avrupa ülkeleri arasındaki öğrenci hareketliliğine odaklanmıştı. Erasmus; hareketlilik, işbirliği ve ağ kurma ile özdeşleşmiştir. Program üç temel ana eylem altında toplanmıştır:

1. Bireylerin öğrenme hareketliliği,
2. Kurumlar arası işbirliği,
3. Politika geliştirme ve işbirliğine destek.

Programın tarihsel gelişimine bakıldığında:

- 1987–1994: Erasmus olarak başladı,
- 1995–2006: Socrates I ve II Programları altında devam etti,
- 2007–2013: Hayat Boyu Öğrenme Programı (LLP) kapsamında yürütüldü. Bu dönemde Erasmus'un yanı sıra Comenius (okullar), Leonardo da Vinci (mesleki eğitim) ve Grundtvig (yetişkin eğitimi) gibi programlar da kapsandı.

2014 yılında Erasmus+ adını alan program, eğitim ve öğretimin yanı sıra gençlik, spor ve diğer faaliyetleri de kapsayacak şekilde genişledi. Erasmus+, Erasmus, Grundtvig, Leonardo da Vinci, Comenius, Erasmus Mundus, Tempus, Alfa, Edulink ve Gençlik programlarını tek çatı altında topladı. Yeni hedefler şunlardı:

1. Yaş ya da eğitim geçmişi fark etmeksizin bireyleri desteklemek,
2. Kişisel gelişimi teşvik etmek,

3. İstihdam olanaklarını artırmak.

Bu hedefler doğrultusunda Erasmus+ programı üç temel ana eylem üzerinden uygulanmaktadır:

- Bireylerin Öğrenme Hareketliliği: Eğitim, staj, gönüllülük, kişisel ve mesleki gelişim, gençlik temelli öğrenme faaliyetlerini içerir.
- Kurumlar ve Kuruluşlar Arasında İşbirliği: Eğitim kurumları, iş dünyası, gençlik organizasyonları, yerel yönetimler ve STK'larla işbirliğini kapsar.
- Politika Geliştirme ve İşbirliğine Destek: Bilim temelli politika üretimi, iyi uygulamaların paylaşımı, reformların desteklenmesi ve AB dışı ülkelerle ortaklıkların teşviki amaçlanır.

Programa katılabilecek uygun ülkeler AB üyesi ülkeler veya programla ilişkili üçüncü ülkelerdir. Türkiye de bu ülkeler arasında yer almaktadır.

2021–2027 Erasmus+ Dönemi ve Öncelikleri

Erasmus+ yedi yıllık döngüler halinde uygulanır. 2021–2027 dönemi için Avrupa Komisyonu dört temel öncelik belirlemiştir:

1. Kapsayıcılık ve çeşitlilik,
2. Dijital dönüşüm,
3. Çevre ve iklim değişikliğiyle mücadele,
4. Demokratik yaşama katılım ve yurttaşlık bilinci.

Bu önceliklere göre tasarlanan üç ana eylem:

- Bireylerin hareketliliği: Öğrenciler, öğretim üyeleri, spor personeli, DiscoverEU, sanal değişim projeleri gibi uygulamalar.
- Kurumlar arası işbirliği: Ortaklık projeleri, Mükemmellik Ortaklıkları, Yenilik Ortaklıkları, Kapasite Geliştirme Projeleri, Erasmus Mundus vb.
- Politika desteği ve işbirliği: Politika reformlarına destek, iyi uygulama paylaşımı, AB dışı ülkelerle ortaklıklar.

Sonuç olarak, ülkeler yükseköğretim kurumlarını uluslararasılaştırmak için çeşitli adımlar atmıştır. Bu adımlardan biri de değişim programlarıdır. Erasmus+, dünyanın birçok bölgesinde yürütülen en popüler değişim programıdır. Üniversiteler için

Erasmus+, farklı ülkelerden üniversitelerle yakın ilişki kurma yoludur. Kısaca Erasmus+, yükseköğretimde uluslararası anlayış geliştirme aracıdır.

Yukarıda özetlenen literatür tartışmaları dikkate alındığında, Erasmus+ programı çoğunlukla öğrenci hareketliliği, akademik başarılar ya da kişisel gelişim gibi alanlarda ele alınmakta; diplomasi ya da dış politika gibi daha geniş siyasal ve kültürel bağlamlardaki rolü çok az incelenmektedir. Türkiye'de yapılan araştırmalar belirli üniversitelerle sınırlı olup genellikle nicel verilere dayanmaktadır. Bu nedenle Erasmus'un yükseköğretimin uluslararasılaşmasındaki diplomatik rolünü değerlendiren, bölgesel çeşitliliği kapsayan, çok aktörlü saha verisine dayalı nitel analizlere ihtiyaç vardır.

Bu tez, Erasmus+ programını yalnızca bir öğrenci değişim programı olarak değil, aynı zamanda Türkiye'nin yükseköğretim politikalarıyla örtüşen ve dış politikasının kamu diplomasisi stratejileriyle bütünleşen bir eğitim diplomasisi aracı olarak kavramsallaştırması bakımından literatürdeki diğer çalışmalardan ayrılmaktadır. Bu çerçevede, eğitim diplomasisi kavramı ilişkisel bir şekilde ele alınmakta ve Erasmus+ programının yükseköğretimin uluslararasılaşmasına katkısı bu kuramsal temel üzerinden değerlendirilmektedir. Bu yaklaşım, Erasmus+ programını bireysel deneyimlerin yanı sıra kurumsal ve ulusal çıkarların da kesiştiği çok katmanlı bir alan olarak konumlandırmakta ve literatürdeki mevcut yaklaşımlara eleştirel ve özgün bir alternatif sunmaktadır.

Tezin öne çıkan bir diğer yönü ise, öğrenciler, akademisyenler ve Erasmus ofisi çalışanları gibi çok aktörlü saha verilerinin kullanılmasıdır. Yalnızca öğrencilerin değil, Erasmus ofisi çalışanlarının ve akademisyenlerin deneyimlerinin de analiz edilmesi, Erasmus+ programının çok katmanlı yapısını anlamada önemli bir derinlik kazandırmaktadır. Ayrıca, bu aktörlerle yapılan derinlemesine mülakatlar Türkiye'nin coğrafi ve kurumsal çeşitliliğini temsil eden üç farklı bölgesinde (Ankara, Erzurum ve İzmir) gerçekleştirilmiş ve böylece mekânsal çeşitliliğin Erasmus+ uygulamaları üzerindeki etkileri görünür kılınmıştır.

Yöntemsel olarak, tezdeki analizler nitel veri analiz yazılımı olan MAXQDA24 kullanılarak gerçekleştirilmiştir. Tematik analizle elde edilen veriler, ilgili temaların

eğitim diplomasisi teorisiyle ilişkilendirilmesi sayesinde veri ile kuram arasında güçlü bir bağ kurulmasını sağlamıştır. Bu yönüyle çalışma, literatürdeki ampirik boşlukları doldurmakla kalmayıp yöntemsel ve kuramsal düzeyde de özgün katkılar sunmaktadır. Kısacası, bu tez Erasmus+ programını yükseköğretimde uluslararasılaşma dinamiklerinin çok boyutlu bir bileşeni olarak değerlendirmekte ve programın sadece bireysel kazanımlar üretmekle kalmayıp, aynı zamanda bir ülkenin uluslararası görünürlüğünü artıran diplomatik bir mekanizma olarak işlev gördüğünü ortaya koymaktadır. Bu çok katmanlı yaklaşımla tez, eğitim politikaları, dış politika ve uluslararasılaşma süreçleri arasındaki boşluğu doldurmayı hedeflemekte ve mevcut literatürde önemli bir eksikliği gidermektedir.

Literatürde görüldüğü üzere, Erasmus+ programının uluslararasılaşma süreçlerindeki diplomatik ve stratejik boyutları yeterince ele alınmamaktadır. Özellikle Erasmus+ programının kamu diplomasisi, yumuşak güç ve eğitim diplomasisi gibi uluslararası ilişkiler literatüründe önemli yere sahip kavramlarla olan ilişkisi derinlemesine incelenmemiştir. Bu durum, Erasmus+ programının yalnızca bir eğitim politikası değil, aynı zamanda bir dış politika aracı olarak da değerlendirilmesi gerektiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Bu nedenle, bir sonraki bölümde Erasmus+'un çok boyutlu doğasını daha iyi analiz edebilmek amacıyla, çalışmanın kuramsal temelini oluşturan eğitim diplomasisi, yumuşak güç ve kamu diplomasisi kavramları detaylı bir şekilde ele alınacaktır. Böylece saha bulguları yalnızca betimleyici değil, aynı zamanda kuramsal olarak da tartışılabilecektir.

Kamu diplomasisi kavramının ortaya çıkmasıyla birlikte devletlerin güç kavramı farklı bir boyut kazanmıştır. Devletler, başkalarının gözünde olumlu bir imaj ve itibar sağlamak amacıyla çeşitli uluslararası eğitim ve kültürel faaliyetler yürütmeye başlamış ve bu doğrultuda stratejiler geliştirmişlerdir. Eğitim diplomasisi de bunlardan biridir. Eğitimde uluslararasılaşma yoluyla hükümetler, ülkelerini çekim merkezlerinden biri haline getirmeyi amaçlamıştır. Bu hedef doğrultusunda, gelecekte karar alma süreçlerinde önemli rol oynayacak kişiler üzerinde etki yaratmaya çalışmışlardır. Eğitim diplomasisi henüz yeni ortaya çıkmış olsa da, kavram uzun zamandır devletlerin ve uzmanların kamu diplomasisinin önemli bir

bileşeni olarak gündemindedir. Son on yıldır uzmanlar eğitim diplomasisi kavramına vurgu yapmaktadır.

Farklı akademisyenler terimi farklı şekillerde tanımlamış olsa da, eğitim diplomasisi kavramı Childhood Education International'ın tanımıyla öne çıkmıştır. Buna göre eğitim diplomasisi, eğitim sorunlarını çözmek için sektörler ve aktörler arasında diplomatik beceriler kullanan ileri düzey bir dönüşüm aracıdır. Bu bağlamda eğitim diplomasisi üç temel bileşenden oluşur: i) sorunların belirlenmesi, ii) iş birliği içinde hedeflerin belirlenmesi, iii) tanımlanan sorunun çözümü için çalışma yürütülmesi.

Ayrıca, Uluslararası İlişkiler ve Diplomasi Sözlüğü'ne göre eğitim diplomasisi, "eğitim değişim programları ve eğitim kurumları arasındaki iş birliği gibi eğitimle ilgili konuların kullanılması temeline dayanan ve diğer devletlerle ilişkiler kurmayı amaçlayan diplomasi" olarak tanımlanabilir. Ntuli ve Nyarambi'ye göre ise eğitim diplomasisi, küreselleşmenin zorunlulukları ve sürecinin bir sonucudur. Bu bağlamda kavram, farklı kültürlerden bireyler arasında ilişki kurma biçimi olarak tanımlanır. Ayrıca, eğitim diplomasisinin etkili olabilmesi için liderlerin diplomatik becerilerini geliştirmesi gereken bir liderlik alanı olduğunu ileri sürerler. Bu eğitimli diplomatların iyi iletişim, müzakere, araştırma, sosyal ve kültürel becerilere sahip olmaları gerekmektedir.

Eğitim diplomasisi sadece eğitim liderlerinin becerilerine bağlı olmayıp, aynı zamanda ülkenin tarihsel, ekonomik, kültürel, siyasi ve akademik durumuna da bağlıdır. Eğitim diplomasini etkileyen diğer faktörler ise güç kaynakları ve eğitim aktörleridir; bunlar yükseköğretim kurumları, akademisyenler, araştırmacılar ve araştırma merkezleri, dil okulları ve öğretmenler, sivil toplum kuruluşları ve yöneticilerdir. Bunlara ek olarak, eğitim diplomasisinin çeşitli uygulamaları da vardır; yabancı dil öğretimi, burslar, değişim programları, uluslararası üniversiteler ve araştırma merkezleri, uluslararası konferanslar, sempozyumlar, atölyeler vb.

Kausbed'in yaptığı başka bir tanıma göre, "eğitim diplomasisi, ülkelerin kendi vatandaşlarını eğitim ya da kültürel etkileşim için yurt dışına göndermeleri ve karşılığında yabancı vatandaşları belli bir süreliğine kabul etmeleri faaliyetlerinin

yönetimidir.” Bu nedenle kavram, değişim programları üzerinden tanımlanır ve bu programların kültürel ve eğitsel değişim sağladığı belirtilir. Farklı bir açıdan bakıldığında, eğitim diplomasisi küresel bir perspektiften tanımlanır ve ülkeler üzerindeki diplomatik etkisi vurgulanır. Eğitim diplomasisi, “anlayışı köprüleyen, eğitimle ilgili sorunları çözen ve adil, kapsayıcı, kaliteli eğitimi güvence altına alan dönüştürücü gündemleri teşvik eden diplomatik beceriler ve yaklaşımlar” olarak anlaşılabilir.

Akar ve Gürkaynak ise eğitim diplomasisi kavramını üç boyutta analiz eder: devletin dış politikasında eğitim, uluslararası bağlamda eğitim ve uluslararası öğrenciler. Onlara göre eğitim diplomasisi, bu üç boyutun kesişim noktasıdır. İlk boyutta, günümüzde eğitim dış politika aracı olarak kullanılmaktadır. Devletler eğitim yoluyla dış ilişkilerini yönetmekte ve ulusal çıkarlarını başkalarına yansıtmaktadır. İkinci boyutta, uluslararasılaşma özellikle yükseköğretim kurumları için kritik bir hal almıştır. Bu durum, devletlerin ve kurumların uluslararasılaşma sürecine aktif katılımını sağlamıştır. Sonuçta, devletler bu sürecin gerekliliklerine göre dönüşmüştür. Üçüncü boyutta ise yurt dışında eğitim görmek isteyen öğrenci sayısı her yıl artmaktadır; bu durum öğrenciler ve devletler arasında rekabeti artırmıştır. Örneğin devletler ve yükseköğretim kurumları, uluslararası öğrencileri çekmek için eğitim faaliyetlerini çeşitlendirmeye ve farklı programlar uygulamaya çalışmaktadır.

Literatürdeki tanımlar dikkate alındığında, Akar ve Gürkaynak eğitim diplomasisi için yeni bir tanım geliştirmiştir. Kavramı, “bir devletin diğer politika öncelikleriyle koordinasyon içinde, belirli stratejik hedeflere yönelik, fikirlerini ve duygularını diğer ülkelere ve dünya kamuoyuna iletmek ve bu doğrultuda çekiciliğini artırmak amacıyla eğitim alanında yürüttüğü ve desteklediği tüm faaliyetlerin toplamı” olarak tanımlamışlardır. Bu nedenle kavram, ulusal değerlerin ve politikaların eğitim yoluyla diğer devletlere sunulması için bir araç olarak tanımlanır. Eğitim, bir ulus devletin stratejik politikaları hakkında başkalarının zihnini şekillendirmek için kullanılan bir araçtır. Kaya’nın yaptığı başka bir tanıma göre ise eğitim diplomasisi, çok aktörlü, çok boyutlu ve çok katmanlı bir eğitim yönetim stratejisidir. Bu nedenle, eğitim diplomasisi hem yerel hem de küresel düzeyde müzakereler yoluyla eğitim sorunlarını çözmeyi amaçlar.

Farklı bakış açılarından bu tanımlar temelinde, eğitim diplomasisinin önemine odaklanan bazı çalışmalar da vardır. Genel anlamda, Vaxevaanidou'ya göre eğitim diplomasisi dört açıdan kritik öneme sahiptir: i) yumuşak gücün önemli bir uygulama alanıdır; ii) araştırma, bilim, kültür ve dil gibi çeşitli kamu diplomasisi faaliyetlerini içerir; iii) ev sahibi ülkede kalmak üzere uluslararası öğrencileri çeker; iv) hem ülkeler hem de eğitim kurumları açısından yükseköğretim kurumlarının uluslararasılaşma sürecine katkı sağlar. Küreselleşmenin getirdiği son gelişmelerle devletler ulusal eğitim politikalarını uluslararası eğitim politikaları olarak yansıtmaktadır. Bu nedenle, küresel eğitim faaliyetleri ve politikaları hızla artmış ve uluslararası öğrenci sayısı çoğalmıştır. Bu eğitim politikalarının uluslararasılaşması, kamu diplomasisinin bir alt dalı olan eğitim diplomasisi ile daha da önem kazanmıştır. Uluslararası eğitim faaliyetleri yürüten birçok devlet, kendi imajını diğer ülkeler nezdinde artırmayı ve diğer devletlerle iş birliğini geliştirmeyi hedeflemektedir. Bu nedenle, kamu diplomasisi, özellikle eğitim diplomasisi aracılığıyla, devletlerin amacı diğer ülkelerdeki insanların sempatisini kazanmak ve güçlerini, uluslararası ilişkilerini güçlendirmektir. Gerçekten de devlet yetkilileri, uluslararası ilişkilerinde eğitim faaliyetleri yoluyla yumuşak güce önem vermektedir.

Eğitim diplomasisi, kısa, orta ve uzun vadeli ekonomik, kültürel ve insani olumlu sonuçları nedeniyle, uzun zamandır önemi kabul edilen eğitim alanındaki uluslararası değişimler, giderek artan uluslararası öğrenci sayısı ve ikili ile çok taraflı eğitim iş birliklerini kapsayan geniş bir alan olarak ülkelerin gündeminde giderek daha fazla öne çıkmaktadır. Bu nedenle, uluslararası eğitim programları, artan uluslararası öğrenci sayısı ve ikili/çok taraflı eğitim iş birlikleri ile eğitim diplomasisi devletler için önemli bir odak noktası haline gelmiştir. Günümüzde iletişim araçları çeşitlilik göstermekte ve bunlardan biri olan bilgi gerçek bir güç olarak algılanmaktadır. Dolayısıyla devletler, eğitim diplomasisini daha etkili bir şekilde kullanmaya başlamış ve bu alana yatırım yapan devlet sayısı gün geçtikçe artmaktadır. Ayrıca, "özellikle 21. yüzyılda disiplinler arası bir yaklaşımla, yeni kamu diplomasisinin pazarlama ve marka stratejileriyle birlikte değerlendirilmesi, eğitimin marka değerini artırmakta ve devletleri bu alanda çalışmaya yönlendirmektedir" denilmektedir. Bu ifadeden, eğitimin aynı zamanda bir marka perspektifinden de değerlendirildiği çıkarılabilir. Eğitim alanında marka oluşturma, devletler arasında giderek

yaygınlaşmaktadır. Ayrıca, karşılıklı bağımlılığın artmasıyla devletlerin eğitim bağlamında tüm bu araçlara ihtiyacı bulunmaktadır.

Yukarıda belirtilen görüşler ışığında, eğitim diplomasisi kavramı üç ana açıdan incelenebilir: kültürel değişim ve insanlar arası bağlantılar; akademik iş birliği ve ağlar; diplomatik ilişkiler ve ulus inşası. Kültürel değişim ve insanlar arası bağlantılarla başlamak gerekirse, eğitim diplomasisi, öğrenciler, akademisyenler ve personelin sınır ötesi değişimini teşvik ederek uluslararası eğitim yoluyla kültürel değişim ve anlayışı artırır. Bu uluslararası değişim farklı kültürleri deneyimleme imkânı sunar ve kültürler arasındaki farklılıkların karşılıklı anlaşılması ile çeşitlilik bilincinin oluşmasına yol açar. Gerçekten de uluslararası eğitim sayesinde faydalanıcılar farklı kültürleri, bakış açılarını, gelenekleri ve değerleri deneyimleyebilirler. Değişim programları ve uluslararası eğitim, faydalanıcıları birbirine bağlayarak insanlar arasında karşılıklı anlayış ve küresel perspektif yaratır. Ayrıca, uluslararası eğitimle ülkeler kendi değerlerini kültürel değişim yoluyla tanıtır ve ortak değerlerin gelişimi ile sivil diyalog için ortam sağlar. Gerçekten de hükümet yetkilileri, ekonomik büyüme ve sosyo-kültürel gelişim için eğitime odaklanmakta ve bilgi çağında bilgi hızına ayak uydurmak için yeni yapılanmalara girmektedir.

"Ülkeler, yumuşak güç unsuru olan eğitimi, bilgi değişiminin temel bileşeni, entelektüel sermaye inşası ve rekabet gücünün korunması olarak görmektedir." Bu nedenle, hükümetlerin toplumlarının ekonomik ve kültürel gelişimi için eğitime önem verdiği vurgulanmaktadır. Örneğin, Okunmuş'a göre, "Mezunlar kültürel elçiler olarak kabul edilir. Ülkeler üniversiteleri ve bursları hakkında bilgiyi çevrimiçi, yabancı temsilcilikler, yurtdışındaki kampüsler, akademik partnerler (üniversiteler) ve yurtdışında faaliyet gösteren liseler aracılığıyla sağlar." Böylece, yurtdışında eğitim alan öğrenciler, ev sahibi ülkenin kültürünü ve eğitimini öğrenme fırsatı bulur. Başka bir deyişle, kültürel ve akademik değişim programları, yabancı kamuoylarıyla ilişkilerin geliştirilmesi açısından çok önemlidir. Özellikle uluslararası akademik değişim programları aracılığıyla üniversiteler eğitim diplomasisinin konusu ve kaynağı, ayrıca devletler arası kültürel değişim aracı haline gelir.

Genel olarak, uluslararası eğitim ve kültürel değişim, kültürel diyalog ve etkileşim yoluyla kültürlerarası saygı ve anlayışı artırır. Hem kültürel hem de eğitim değişimi,

ulusal çıkarlar doğrultusunda devletlerin dış politikalarını ve diplomatik ilişkilerini etkiler. Bu durumda, yükseköğretim kurumlarındaki uluslararası değişim programları istisna değildir. Hükümetler, uluslararası değişim programları aracılığıyla ülkelerinin tarihini, kültürünü ve değerlerini uluslararası öğrencilere anlatmayı ve onların ilgisini çekmeyi amaçlar. Uluslararası değişim programları sayesinde kültürler arasında gerçek bir etkileşim oluşur ve bu da ev sahibi ülkenin daha iyi anlaşılmasına katkı sağlar. Uluslararası öğrenciler evlerine döndüklerinde, ev sahibi ülkeye karşı daha büyük bir takdirle dönerler ve bu takdiri başkalarına da yansıtarak etki yaratabilirler. Tüm bu paylaşılan fikir ve değerler, ülkeler arasındaki iş birliği, ticaret ve dış ilişkilerin artma olasılığını yükseltir.

Eğitim diplomasisinin ikinci yönü diplomatik ilişkiler ve ulus inşasıdır. Eğitim diplomasisi sayesinde, uluslararası eğitim ve değişim programları aracılığıyla ülkeler başkalarını etkileyebilir ve kendilerine çekebilirler. Bu nedenle, uluslararası eğitim ve değişim programları, ülkenin eğitim sistemi, akademik başarısı ve uluslararası bakışı da dahil olmak üzere güçlü yanlarını göstermek için bir araç haline gelmiştir. Ülkenin bu olumlu imajı, çekicilik ve itibarını güçlendirir. Ayrıca, değişim programları kapsamındaki üniversiteler arası uluslararası ortaklıklar ülkeler arasındaki diplomatik ilişkileri kuvvetlendirir. Akademik alandaki iş birliği, diğer alanlardaki diplomatik girişimlere katkı sağlayabilir. Buna göre, eğitim programları ve faaliyetleri dış politika yapım sürecinde önemli bir rol oynar. Gerçekten de, uluslararası eğitimi destekleyen bir okuldan eğitim alan biri, bürokraside veya akademide görev aldığında, genellikle eğitim aldığı ülkenin ideolojisini yansıtır. Sonuç olarak, ülke, eğitimi sağlayanların lehine bir çevreye ulaşabilir.

Uluslararası eğitim programları üst-politik meseleler olarak algılansa da, aslında eğitim diplomasisinin stratejik amaçları ve hedefleri doğrultusunda hegemonik araçlar olarak kullanılmaktadır. Başka bir deyişle, devletler eğitim diplomasisi aracılığıyla hegemonyalarını güçlendirmeye ve yaymaya çalışmaktadır. Devletler, öğrenciler için bir tür eleman temini sistemiyle geleceğin liderlerini ve kanaat önderlerini yetiştirmeyi hedeflemektedir. Gerçekten de Ekşi'ye göre, eğitim diplomasisinin hedefleri "geleceğin liderlerini, organik entelektüelleri, aynı fikirli ve kanaat önderlerini, gazetecileri yetiştirmek, diğer ülkelerin hangi kavramlarla

düşüneceğini belirlemek, nasıl düşüneceklerini tayin etmek, genel düşünce sistematiğini şekillendirmek, ülkenin yaşam biçimi ve değerlerini yaymak ve evrenselleştirmek, yumuşak güç hegemonisini rızayla gönüllü olarak inşa etmek"tir. Tüm bu stratejik hedefler, aynı zamanda bir Truva atı eylemi olarak da tanımlanmaktadır. Eğitimi alan öğrencilerin entelektüel, kanaat önderi, gazeteci ya da kendi ülkelerinin liderleri haline gelmesi ve gönüllü olarak, eğitimleri süresince kazandıkları bilgi ve değerler çerçevesinde eğitim aldıkları ülkenin çıkarları doğrultusunda hareket etmeleri, onları birer Truva atı yapmaktadır. Sonuç olarak, uluslararası eğitim programları, diğer devletlerin geleceğin liderleri üzerinde etki kurmanın ve yeni dünya düzeninde hegemonya sağlamanın bir yolu olarak görülmektedir.

Uluslararası eğitim programları, öğrenciler ile üniversiteler arasında bir yakınlık oluşturur ve böylece öğrencilerle ekonomik ve siyasi ilişkilerin gelişmesini kolaylaştırır. Bu nedenle uluslararası eğitim programları, gelecekteki siyasi ilişkiler için diplomatik bir yatırım olarak değerlendirilmektedir. Uluslararası öğrenciler gittikleri ülkenin ekonomisine ve kültürüne katkı sağlayabilir. Dolayısıyla uluslararası öğrenciler, devletler için ekonomik ve insan kaynağıdır. Ayrıca, uluslararası öğrenciler ülkelerine döndüklerinde deneyimlerini ve olumlu izlenimlerini başkalarıyla paylaşabilirler. Daha sonra iş hayatında belli bir konuma geldiklerinde, gördükleri iyi uygulamaları kendi ülkelerinde uygulamaya çalışacaklardır. Buna ek olarak, bu öğrenciler, eğitim aldıkları ülkeyle yakın diplomatik ilişkiler kurmaya da istekli olacaklardır. Böylece ev sahibi ülke, kendi çıkarlarını ve ülkesini yerinde tanıtma fırsatı bulacaktır. Benzer şekilde, öğrenciler eğitim amaçlı yurt dışına gittiklerinde kendi ülkelerini tanıtma şansı elde ederler. Sonuçta, uluslararası eğitim faaliyetleri her iki taraf için karşılıklı fayda sağlar.

Bu anlayışa bağlı olarak, diplomatik ilişkiler boyutu ekonomik ve işgücü gelişimiyle de bağlantılıdır. Bu durum iki açıdan incelenebilir. Birincisi, uluslararası eğitim ve değişim programları aracılığıyla katılımcılar, program kuralları gereği verilen burslardan faydalanabilirler. Ayrıca programlar kapsamında sağlanan araştırma iş birliklerinden ve araştırma materyallerinden yararlanabilirler. Böylece burs ve materyal desteği, katılımcıların ekonomik durumunu destekler. Aynı zamanda

uluslararası katılımcılar, ürettikleri ürünlerle yerel ekonomiye katkıda bulunabilirler. İkinci açıdan ise uluslararası eğitim ya da değişim programları katılımcıların gelişimini artırır. Uluslararası eğitimle bireyler, işgücünde küresel rekabet yaratacak çok yönlü beceriler kazanabilirler. Sonuç olarak, eğitim diplomasisi aracılığıyla uluslararası eğitim ve değişim programları, bireylerin daha geniş perspektifler, farklı beceriler ve nitelikler kazanmasını sağlayarak rekabetçi bir işgücü oluşturur. Ayrıca, eğitim sisteminin bir ülkenin refahının temel bileşeni olduğu ve işleyen bir eğitim sistemine sahip olan ülkelerin diğerlerine göre daha yüksek refah düzeyine ulaşacağı ileri sürülmektedir. Daha yüksek refah düzeyiyle ülke, daha fazla uluslararası öğrenci çekebilir ve ülkesini ve politik perspektifini tanıtabilir.

Son yıllarda ulusal çıkarların tanıtımında değişim programlarının önemini vurgulayan ülkelerin sayısı artmıştır. Örneğin Kanada, Çin, Almanya, Rusya, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri (ABD), Türkiye ve Avrupa, yükseköğretimde farklı değişim programları uygulamaktadır. Dolayısıyla tüm bu ülkeler eğitimi bir güç gösterme ve diğer devletleri uluslararası ilişkiler ve politikalar üzerinde etkileme aracı olarak kullanmaya başlamıştır. Tarihte karar alma süreçlerinde yer alan veya politikacı olan bazı kişilerin yurtdışında eğitim aldığı ve kararlarında eğitim aldıkları ülkenin politika ve görüşlerini yansıttığı bilinmektedir. Başka bir deyişle, uluslararası eğitim ve değişim programları mezunları, olumlu imajlar ve yakın ilişkiler için elçi olabilirler. Örneğin, Mısır'ın eski Cumhurbaşkanı Muhammed Mursi, Pakistan Başbakanı Benazir Butto ve Japonya Kraliyet Prensesi Masako eğitimlerinin bir kısmını ABD'de almış ve kararlarında ABD'nin görüşünü yansıtmışlardır. Ayrıca uluslararası değişim programları, toplumlarda olumlu bir kamuoyu ve karşılıklı anlayış yaratır; bu da devletler arasındaki potansiyel çatışmaların azalmasına yol açar. Kısacası, değişim programları aracılığıyla uluslararası öğrenciler devletler arasında bir köprü olur ve önyargılar yıkılır.

Eğitim diplomasisinin son boyutu akademik iş birliği ve ağlardır. "İş birliği, yumuşak gücün oluşumuyla bağlantılı temel motiftir. En çok iş birliği ve ağ oluşturan ülkeler, eğitim ve teknolojik gelişmeden azami faydayı sağlarlar." Bu bağlamda, uluslararası eğitim ve değişim programları aracılığıyla eğitim diplomasisi akademik iş birliği ve ağları ön plana çıkarır çünkü değişim veya eğitim

programındaki iş birliği ya da bağlantının, eğitim alanında farklı iş birliklerine yol açabileceği iddia edilir. Örneğin, Erasmus+ öğrenci değişim bağlantıları ortak projeler, diploma programları, araştırma projeleri veya diğer ortaklıklara dönüşebilir. Dolayısıyla, belirli bir amaçla başlayan iş birliği çeşitlenebilir ve küresel bir etki yaratabilir. Başka bir ifadeyle, "bireyler arasındaki iş birliği, eski akademilerden Orta Çağ loncalarına kadar eğitimin temelini oluşturur; öğrenme ve gelişme yolunda iş birliği, en büyük etkilerin sağlanması için kullanılan başlıca araçlardan biridir." Bu nedenle iş birliği, eğitimin mihenk taşlarından biridir. Tüm bunların ötesinde, akademik alandaki bağlantılar diğer alanlarda da iş birliklerine yol açabilir.

İki üniversite arasındaki akademik iş birliği, bu ülkeler arasında kültürel veya ekonomik iş birliğine dönüşebilir ve devletler arası ilişkileri güçlendirebilir. Başka bir deyişle, eğitim, iş dünyası, teknoloji, kültür ve diğer yumuşak güçle ilgili alanlarda etkiye sahiptir. Bu nedenle herhangi bir akademik iş birliği ya da ağ, bir ülkenin gücünü etkiler. Güçlü ve nitelikli bir eğitim için akademik iş birliği ve ağlara sahip olmak önemlidir. Sonuç olarak, bu akademik ağlar ve iş birlikleri yumuşak gücü genişletmek için güçlü bir güç haline gelir. Akademik iş birliği ve ağların diğer bir etkisi ise beyin göçüdür. Akademisyenler ve öğrenciler arasındaki uluslararası iş birlikleri sayesinde insanlar, nitelikli iş gücüne sahip olmaları nedeniyle başka ülkelerde iş bulma şansına sahip olur. Örneğin, "son iki yüz yılda ABD ve İngiltere akademik söylemi domine ederek dünya çapında yenilik ve gelişmenin lideri olmuşlardır. Bu, yumuşak güç hakimiyetlerinin merkezi bir unsuru olmuştur. Ancak yakın zamanda birçok gelişmekte olan ülke bilgi endüstrisinin merkezi olma konusunda güçlü bir ilgi göstermiştir." Kısaca, akademik iş birlikleri sayesinde insanlar başka ülkelerde eğitim alma ve uluslararası ağlara sahip olma imkânı bulur. Bu da eğitimi sağlayan ülkeye, eğitimi yumuşak güç aracı olarak kullanarak diğer ülkeler üzerinde hakimiyet kurma şansı verir.

Akademik ağlar iş birliğine yol açar ve dolayısıyla akademik iş birliği araştırma gelişimini başlatır. Bağlantı ne kadar fazla olursa, farklı alanlarda o kadar çok akademik araştırma yapılır. Buna paralel olarak, uluslararası eğitimle akademisyenler ortak alanlarda buluşma fırsatı yakalar ve daha çok ilişkili kişiler birbirine bağlanarak dünyanın farklı bölgelerinden insanların arasında bağlar ve bağlantılar

kurulur. Dünyanın farklı yerlerinden akademisyenler yalnızca kendi bölümlerinden insanlarla değil, aynı zamanda ağları farklı disiplinler arasında bir köprü oluşturur. Gerçekten de, "uluslararası akademisyenlerle bağlantılı kişiler çeşitli ağlardan olabilir. Bu, daha önce var olmayan disiplinler ve akademik ağlar arasında köprüler kurulmasına yol açar."

Eğitim diplomasisi kavramı kısaca, bir devletin başka ülkeler nezdinde cazibesini ve etkisini artırmak amacıyla eğitim yoluyla izlediği her türlü politika veya eylem olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Eğitim diplomasisi kavramı dört açıdan önemlidir: i) yumuşak gücün önemli bir uygulama alanıdır; ii) araştırma, bilim, kültür ve dil gibi çeşitli kamu diplomasisi faaliyetlerini içerir; iii) uluslararası öğrencilerin ev sahibi ülkede kalmasını teşvik eder; iv) hem ülkeler hem de eğitim kurumları için yükseköğretimin uluslararasılaşma sürecine katkı sunması açısından önemlidir. Eğitim diplomasisinin üç temel yönü vardır: kültürel değişim ve insanlar arası bağlar, diplomatik ilişkiler ve ulus inşası, akademik iş birliği ve ağ kurma.

Tüm bu kuramsal tartışmalar, Erasmus+ programının yalnızca bir eğitim aracı değil, aynı zamanda ulusötesi etkileşim ve diplomatik bir araç olarak değerlendirilebileceğini göstermektedir. Bu kavramlar ışığında, Erasmus+ programı kişisel deneyimlerin ötesinde kurumsal ve siyasi bir anlam kazanmaktadır. Ancak, bu kuramsal varsayımların Türkiye'deki Erasmus+ uygulamalarıyla ne ölçüde örtüştüğü ve bu sürece katılan aktörlerin (öğrenciler, akademisyenler, Erasmus ofisi çalışanları) deneyimlerinde nasıl somutlaştığı ancak ampirik veriye dayalı analizle yanıtlanabilir. Bu nedenle, bir sonraki bölümde Türkiye'nin üç farklı bölgesindeki araştırma üniversitelerinde yürütülen saha araştırmasından elde edilen bulgular sunulacaktır.

Görüşmelerden elde edilen verilere göre dört ana tema öne çıkmıştır: 1) akademik iş birliği, 2) kültürel değişim ve anlayış, 3) politika ve kurumsal iş birliği, 4) yumuşak güç ve imaj inşası. Tüm katılımcılarla yapılan görüşmelerde ortaya çıkan kodlamaların %54'ü akademik iş birliği temasıyla ilgilidir. Kültürel değişim ve anlayış ile politika ve kurumsal iş birliği temaları ise eşit oranla, toplam kodlamanın %19'unu oluşturmaktadır. En az atıf yapılan tema ise %7 ile yumuşak güç ve imaj inşasıdır. ODTÜ ve Ege Üniversitesi katılımcıları arasında en çok referans verilen

tema kültürel değişim ve anlayıştır. Atatürk Üniversitesi katılımcıları arasında ise en çok vurgulanan tema politika ve kurumsal iş birliği olmuştur. Üç üniversiteden tüm katılımcılar arasında en çok atıf yapılan üç kod "Erasmus'un kuruma katkısı", "üniversitenin tanıtımı ve tanınması" ve "ülke tanıtımı"dır. ODTÜ katılımcıları arasında "akademik ağ" kodu en fazla atıf yapılan kod olmuştur. Ege ve Atatürk Üniversitesi katılımcıları arasında en çok atıf yapılan kod ise "Erasmus'un kuruma katkısı"dır. Bu kod, üç üniversiteden tüm öğrenci ve akademik personel arasında da en çok atıf yapılan koddur.

Bu tez, Erasmus+ programının Türkiye yükseköğretiminin uluslararasılaşmasına olan katkısını incelemektedir. Çalışmanın odak noktası, Atatürk Üniversitesi, Ege Üniversitesi ve Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi olmak üzere üç devlet araştırma üniversitesidir. Tez, Erasmus+ programının eğitim diplomasisi perspektifiyle, yumuşak güç ve imaj inşası, politika ve kurumsal iş birliği, kültürel değişim ve anlayış, akademik iş birliği olmak üzere dört ana tema çerçevesinde Türkiye yükseköğretiminin uluslararasılaşmasına katkıda bulunduğunu savunmaktadır. Bu çalışma bir vaka çalışması olduğu için birincil kaynakların kullanımı hayati öneme sahiptir. Erasmus hareketlilik programına katılan öğrenciler, akademisyenler ve Erasmus ofisi çalışanlarıyla yapılan görüşmeler, programın Türkiye yükseköğretiminin uluslararasılaşma sürecine katkısını anlamak açısından önemli yansımalar sunmuştur. Eğitim diplomasisi perspektifiyle yapılan analiz, Türkiye-AB arasındaki eğitim ilişkilerini ikili düzeyde anlamak açısından önemlidir. Bu bağlamda, birincil kaynakların kullanımı, araştırma üniversitelerinin seçimi ve kuramsal çerçeveyle yapılan analiz, çalışmanın bulgularını güçlendirmekte ve bu çalışmayı diğerlerinden ayırmaktadır.

Tez bölümlerinin detaylarına geçecek olursak; giriş bölümü, tezin kapsamı ve amacı hakkında genel bir tanıtım yapar. Ayrıca, bu bölüm tezin metodolojisi hakkında ayrıntılı bilgi verir. Araştırma tasarımı, örneklem seçimi, veri toplama yöntemi, veri analizi, etik hususlar ve araştırma sınırlamaları bu bölümde ayrıntılı olarak ele alınmıştır. Bu araştırmanın nitel bir çalışma olduğu, Türkiye'deki üç araştırma üniversitesi olan Atatürk, Ege ve ODTÜ'den Erasmus hareketliliği programına katılan akademik personel, öğrenciler ve Erasmus ofisi personeli ile yapılandırılmış

görüşmeler kullanılarak yürütüldüğü belirtilmiştir. Araştırmanın amacı, 2015-2023 yılları arasında Erasmus hareketlilik programının Türkiye yükseköğretim kurumlarının uluslararasılaşma sürecine katkısını analiz etmektir. Tematik analiz, MAXQDA 24 yazılımı kullanılarak yapılmıştır. Bu araştırma yöntemi, programın etkinliğini farklı perspektiflerden anlamak için tercih edilmiştir.

İkinci bölüm, literatür taramasından oluşur ve girişin ardından yükseköğretimin uluslararasılaşmasını kavramsal bir çerçeve olarak tartışır. Bu bölümde, kavramın tanımı, yükseköğretimin uluslararasılaşmasının tarihçesi, uluslararasılaşmanın gerekçeleri, Avrupa'da yükseköğretimin uluslararasılaşması, Türkiye'de yükseköğretimin uluslararasılaşması, Erasmus Programı ve yükseköğretimin uluslararasılaşması konuları ele alınmıştır. Yükseköğretimin uluslararasılaşması kavramının tanımıyla ilgili olarak; kavramın tüm akademisyenler tarafından kabul edilen standart bir tanımının olmadığı gösterilmiştir. Kavram, akademisyenlerin farklı bakış açılarına göre değişik şekillerde tanımlanmaktadır. Kavramın tarihçesiyle ilgili olarak ise dört ana döneme ayrılabileceği belirtilmiştir: 18. yüzyıla kadar olan dönem, 18. yüzyıl ile İkinci Dünya Savaşı arasındaki dönem, İkinci Dünya Savaşı ile Soğuk Savaş arası dönem ve Soğuk Savaş'tan günümüze kadar olan dönem. Uluslararasılaşmanın gerekçeleri bakımından dört ana gerekçe olduğu savunulmaktadır: politik, ekonomik, akademik ve sosyal-kültürel. Sürecin tarihsel gelişimi Avrupa'daki yükseköğretimin uluslararasılaşması bağlamında beş ana aşama altında analiz edilmiştir.

Birinci aşama, 1951-1972 yılları arasındaki tesadüfi iş birliğini kapsar. İkinci aşama, 1972-1977 yılları arasında Avrupa'daki eğitim iş birliğinin başlatılmasıdır. 1977-1986 arasındaki üçüncü aşama, başlatılan iş birliğinin uygulanmasıdır ve hükümetlerarası iş birliğe dayalı farklı uluslararası eğitim programları yürütülmüştür. Dördüncü aşama, 1986-1993 yılları arasında önceki dönemin ikinci aşamasıdır; tek fark, tüm bu adımların AB yönlendirmeleri doğrultusunda atılmasıdır. Son aşama, 1993-1995 yıllarını kapsar. Bu dönem, daha önceki programların geliştirilmesi ve tek bir programda birleştirilmesi ile karakterize edilir. Son olarak, Türkiye'de yükseköğretimin uluslararasılaşması incelenmiş ve yükseköğretim alanında

uluslararasılaşmaya yönelik mevcut çalışmaların Türkiye'de hala sınırlı olduğu belirtilmiştir.

Üçüncü bölümde ise Erasmus+ Programı ve Türkiye yükseköğretiminin uluslararasılaşmasına katkısı tartışılmıştır. Bölümde Türkiye'nin yükseköğretimde uluslararasılaşma alanında yaşadığı zorluklar ve Erasmus+ Programı'nın bu alandaki önemi üzerinde durulmuştur. Ayrıca, programın temel yapısı, amaçları ve Türkiye'deki uygulanışı detaylandırılmıştır. Erasmus hareketlilik programı, öğrenciler, akademisyenler ve idari personel için hem yurtdışında öğrenim görme hem de öğretim ve eğitim imkânları sunarak Türkiye yükseköğretiminin uluslararasılaşma kapasitesini artırmıştır. Ayrıca, Erasmus+ programının Türkiye'nin dış politika hedefleriyle uyumlu bir şekilde kamu diplomasisi aracı olarak kullanılması, Türkiye'nin uluslararası alandaki imajını güçlendirmiştir. Sonuç olarak, bu tez Erasmus+ programının Türkiye yükseköğretiminin uluslararasılaşmasına çok boyutlu katkı sağladığını göstermiştir. Program, akademik iş birliği ve ağ kurma, kültürel değişim ve anlayış, politika ve kurumsal iş birliği ile yumuşak güç ve imaj oluşturma alanlarında önemli etkiler yaratmaktadır. Bu çok katmanlı etki, programın yalnızca bireysel öğrenci ve akademisyen hareketliliğiyle sınırlı kalmadığını, aynı zamanda Türkiye'nin uluslararası ilişkilerinde eğitim diplomasisi bağlamında stratejik bir araç olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır.

Dördüncü bölüm bulgulara odaklanmıştır. Bu bölüm, Erasmus programının Türkiye yükseköğretiminin uluslararasılaşmasına katkısını üç ana başlık altında incelemiştir. İlk olarak, Atatürk Üniversitesi, Ege Üniversitesi ve Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi (ODTÜ) olmak üzere üç araştırma üniversitesinden elde edilen bulgular paylaşılmıştır. İkinci olarak, üç farklı görüşmeci grubundan elde edilen bulgular incelenmiştir: öğrenciler, akademik personel ve Erasmus Ofisi personeli. Son olarak, dört ana tema etrafında elde edilen bulgular tartışılmıştır. Görüşmelerden ortaya çıkan dört ana tema şunlardır: 1) akademik iş birliği, 2) kültürel değişim ve anlayış, 3) politika ve kurumsal iş birliği, 4) yumuşak güç ve imaj oluşturma. Tüm katılımcılarla yapılan görüşmelerden elde edilen bulgular, görüşmelerdeki kodlamaların %54'ünün akademik iş birliği temasıyla ilgili olduğunu göstermiştir. Kültürel değişim, anlayış ile politika ve kurumsal iş birliği temaları ise toplam

kodlamaların %19'arını oluşturmuştur. En az atıf yapılan tema ise toplam kodlamaların %7'siyle yumuşak güç ve imaj oluşturmadır. ODTÜ ve Ege Üniversitesi katılımcıları arasında en çok atıf yapılan tema kültürel değişim ve anlayıştır. Atatürk Üniversitesi katılımcıları arasında ise politika ve kurumsal iş birliği teması en çok kullanılan temadır. Üç üniversitenin tüm katılımcıları arasında en çok kullanılan ilk üç kod "Erasmus'un kuruma katkısı", "üniversitenin tanıtımı ve tanınması" ve "ülke tanıtımı"dır.

ODTÜ katılımcıları arasında "akademik ağ" en çok atıf yapılan koddur. Ege ve Atatürk Üniversitesi katılımcıları arasında ise "Erasmus'un kuruma katkısı" kodu en çok kullanılan koddur. Bu kod, üç üniversitenin tüm öğrencileri ve akademik personeli arasında da en çok atıf yapılan koddur.

Beşinci bölüm, bulguların tartışılmasına odaklanmaktadır. Bu bölümde, bulgular eğitim diplomasisi perspektifiyle genel olarak değerlendirilmiştir. Tartışma, Erasmus hareketliliğini gerçekleştiren öğrenciler, akademik personel ve Erasmus ofisi çalışanlarıyla yapılan görüşmelere dayanarak dört ana tema altında yapılmıştır:

1. Yumuşak güç ve imaj inşası
2. Politika ve kurumsal iş birliği
3. Kültürel değişim ve anlayış
4. Akademik iş birliği

Yumuşak Güç ve İmaj İnşası temasında, Erasmus hareketlilik programının Türkiye'nin yumuşak gücünün ve uluslararası imajının araçlarından biri olduğu ifade edilmiştir. Bu tema altında üç temel nokta öne çıkmıştır:
İlk olarak, Erasmus programı, Türkiye'nin Avrupa'ya bağlılığını ve Avrupa içindeki yerini vurgulamak açısından kısa vadede önemli bir araçtır.
İkinci olarak, program farklı ülkelerden bireyleri bir araya getirerek farklılıkların tanınmasını ve önyargıların ortadan kaldırılmasını sağlamaktadır.
Üçüncü olarak ise, Erasmus programının Türkiye'ye yönelik önyargıların kırılmasına ve Türkiye'nin imajının iyileştirilmesine katkı sunduğu belirtilmiştir.

Politika ve Kurumsal İş Birliği temasında, Erasmus hareketlilik programının kurumsal politikalara ve ortaklıklara katkı sağladığı ifade edilmiştir. Programın, Türk

yükseköğretim kurumlarını stratejik iş birlikleri geliştirmeye teşvik ettiği vurgulanmıştır. Ancak bazı katılımcılar, Türkiye'nin ekonomik kısıtlamaları ve vize gecikmeleri gibi bürokratik engellerin bu süreci olumsuz etkilediğini belirtmiştir. Bu engellerin, üniversiteler ve devletler arasındaki ikili ilişkileri olumsuz etkilediği ifade edilmiştir. Buna rağmen program, küresel etkileşimi teşvik eden stratejik bir araç olarak yaygın şekilde kabul edilmektedir.

Kültürel Değişim ve Anlayış temasında, Erasmus hareketlilik programının kültürel farkındalık ve karşılıklı anlayışı teşvik etmede önemli bir rol oynadığı öne sürülmüştür. Katılımcılar, farklı kültürleri deneyimleme şansı bularak hoşgörülerini geliştirmiş, bakış açılarını genişletmiş, stereotiplere meydan okumuş, kültürel çeşitliliği benimsemiş ve geldikleri kurumları olumlu şekilde temsil etmişlerdir. Programın bireysel gelişime katkı sağladığı, katılımcıların özgüven kazandığı, yeni ortamlarda bağımsız hareket etme, dayanıklılık ve sosyal beceriler geliştirme açısından etkili olduğu vurgulanmıştır.

Akademik İş Birliği temasında ise Erasmus+ programının, akademik iş birliğini teşvik ederek Türkiye'deki yükseköğretim kurumlarının uluslararasılaşmasının temel taşlarından biri olduğu ifade edilmiştir. Katılımcılar, programın akademik ağlar, iş birlikleri ve projeleri kolaylaştırarak hem akademik hem de mesleki gelişimi desteklediğini belirtmişlerdir. Bu faaliyetlerin, yükseköğretim kurumlarının gelişimine de katkı sunduğu ifade edilmiştir. Bununla birlikte, bazı katılımcılar programın zorluklarına da değinmişlerdir. Örneğin, personel eksikliği veya kurumsal kaynakların yetersizliği gibi durumlar, programın tam potansiyeline ulaşmasını engellemektedir.

Kuramsal arka plan, Türkiye'deki araştırma üniversitelerinden katılımcılarla yapılan görüşmelerin değerlendirilmesinde temel referans noktası olmuştur. Eğitim diplomasisi kavramı, Erasmus+ programının hem ulusal hem uluslararası düzeyde yükseköğretimin uluslararasılaşma sürecine yaptığı çok katmanlı katkıyı anlamada temel bir analitik araç olarak kullanılmıştır. Bu kavram, kamu diplomasisi stratejilerinin önemli bir bileşeni olarak kabul edilmektedir. Bu bağlamda görüşmelerden elde edilen dört ana tema, yükseköğretimde uluslararasılaşma

uygulamalarını yansıtmaktadır. Bu temalar, Erasmus+ programının yalnızca bireysel deneyimlerle sınırlı bir program olmadığını; aksine Türkiye'nin uluslararası alandaki kültürel temsil kapasitesine ve dış politika vizyonuna entegre edilebilecek çok boyutlu bir araç olduğunu göstermektedir.

Bu tez, Erasmus+ programının yükseköğretimdeki uluslararasılaşma sürecine eğitim diplomasisi bağlamında yaptığı katkıları analiz ederek mevcut literatüre disiplinlerarası ve eleştirel bir katkı sunmaktadır. Mevcut çalışmalar genellikle programın öğrencilere katkısı ya da kültürel uyum gibi konulara odaklanmıştır. Bu çalışma ise Erasmus+ programının Türkiye'nin uluslararasılaşmasına olan diplomatik işlevine odaklanmakta ve eğitimin dış politika aracı olarak kullanımını yükseköğretimdeki uluslararasılaşma bağlamında inceleyerek kuramsal derinlik kazandırmaktadır. Ayrıca, literatürün genelinde Batı-merkezli çalışmalar öne çıkarken, Türkiye'de yükseköğretimin Erasmus+ bağlamındaki uluslararasılaşması yeterince çalışılmamıştır. Bu yönüyle bu çalışma, mevcut literatürden ayrılmaktadır. Türkiye'nin Avrupa ile tarihsel ilişkileri, AB'ye katılım süreci ve kültürel konumu göz önüne alındığında, Erasmus+ programı ve yükseköğretimde uluslararasılaşma bu bağlamda çok daha fazla politik anlam taşımaktadır. Bu açıdan tez, eğitim çalışmaları ile uluslararası ilişkiler ve kamu diplomasisi literatürü arasında önemli bir köprü işlevi görmektedir.

Tezin literatüre yaptığı katkılar göz önüne alındığında, Erasmus+ programının yükseköğretimdeki uluslararasılaşmaya katkısının, yalnızca bir öğrenci değişim programı olmanın ötesine geçtiği görülmektedir. Buna göre, Erasmus+ programının diplomatik rolü yükseköğretim politikalarında daha fazla vurgulanmalı ve bu role uygun stratejiler geliştirilmelidir. Öncelikle mevcut literatür ve görüşmeler dikkate alındığında, üniversitelerdeki Erasmus ofislerinin kapasitesi artırılmalıdır. Bu yalnızca idari sürecin daha verimli yönetimi için değil, aynı zamanda kültürlerarası ilişkiler, ülke ve kurum görünürlüğü ve daha güçlü diplomatik ilişkiler açısından da gereklidir. Ayrıca, yükseköğretimdeki uluslararasılaşmayı daha da güçlendirmek için, Erasmus+ programının bireylere, topluma ve ülkeye katkısını daha iyi ifade edebilmek, farkındalık yaratmak ve süreklilik sağlamak amacıyla faydalanıcıların deneyimlerini paylaşabilecekleri kurumsal bir hafıza oluşturulmalıdır. Bununla

birlikte, uluslararasılaşma sürecinin diplomatik açıdan daha etkili yürütülebilmesi için, Dışişleri Bakanlığı, YÖK ve üniversitelerin daha koordineli bir yaklaşım benimsemeleri gerekmektedir; çünkü Erasmus+ programı yalnızca bir eğitim aracı değil, aynı zamanda Türkiye'nin uluslararası imaj yönetimine katkı sunacak bir kamu diplomasisi aracı olarak da görülmelidir.

Tezin sınırlılıklarına ve bu sınırlılıklara yönelik önerilere geçecek olursak, çalışmanın başında da belirtildiği gibi dört temel sınırlılık mevcuttur:

1. Amaçlı örnekleme kullanımı: Bu örnekleme stratejisi, verilerin genellenebilirliğini sınırlayabilir. Örneklem, Erasmus hareketlilik programına katılan tüm katılımcıları ya da Türkiye'deki Erasmus ofisi personelinin tamamını temsil etmediği için genelleme yapılması sınırlı kalabilir. Gelecek çalışmalarda, uluslararası öğrenciler, personel ve üniversitelerin uluslararası öğrenci ofisleri de örnekleme dâhil edilerek yükseköğretimdeki uluslararasılaşma süreci farklı açılardan incelenebilir. Ayrıca Fullbright ve Chevening gibi diğer uluslararası burs programları Erasmus+ ile karşılaştırılabilir.
2. Yanıtların öznel olması: Veriler katılımcıların bireysel deneyimlerine dayandığı için öznel ve yanlı olabilir. Bu da Erasmus programına dair analizlerin doğruluğunu etkileyebilir. Bu sınırlılığı azaltmak için örneklem büyütülebilir. Örneğin, her gruptan daha fazla katılımcı alınabilir. Ayrıca araştırma üniversitesi sayısı artırılarak çalışmanın doğruluğu ve çeşitliliği artırılabilir.
3. Örneklem büyüklüğü: Veriler hedeflenen gruptan toplanmış olup çeşitli deneyim ve bakış açılarını yansıtmayabilir. Gelecek çalışmalarda yalnızca Türk üniversitelerinden giden öğrenciler, personel ve Erasmus ofisleriyle değil; gelen öğrenciler, personel ve yurtdışındaki üniversitelerin Erasmus ofisleriyle de görüşülerek daha derinlikli bir analiz yapılabilir. Ayrıca projelerin, ekonomik ve siyasi etkilerinin de incelendiği daha geniş kapsamlı araştırmalar yapılabilir.
4. Odaklanılan zaman aralığı: Bu araştırma 2021-2023 yılları arasındaki Erasmus hareketliliklerini ele aldığı için, bu dönem öncesi veya sonrasındaki değişimleri yansıtmayabilir. Gelecek çalışmalarda zaman aralığı

genişletilebilir. Örneğin 2014-2020 Erasmus dönemini de kapsayan bir karşılaştırma yapılabilir.

Sonuç olarak, Erasmus hareketlilik programı, öğrenme hareketliliği yoluyla Türkiye'deki yükseköğretimin uluslararasılaşmasına önemli katkı sağlamaktadır. Eğitim diplomasisi bağlamında yapılan analizlerde dört ana tema öne çıkmıştır:

1. Yumuşak güç ve imaj inşası
2. Politika ve kurumsal iş birliği
3. Kültürel değişim ve anlayış
4. Akademik iş birliği

Bu çerçevede, Erasmus+ programı yalnızca bir değişim programı değil, aynı zamanda Türkiye'nin dış politikasını ve uluslararası görünürlüğünü destekleyen stratejik bir araç olarak değerlendirilmektedir.

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