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AUTHORS: Ugur ÜNAL

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#### Arařtırma Makalesi

## INTERNATIONALIZATION POLICIES OF TURKEY'S HIGHER EDUCATION AREA A RESEARCH ON TURKEY GRADUATES

**Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Uğur ÜNAL**

Kırgızistan-Türkiye Manas Üniversitesi, İletişim Fakültesi

*unalugur09@gmail.com*

ORCID ID: 0000-0003-0294-0082

### Abstract

The higher education which had elitist qualities until the 1950's has entered into a massification process under the influence of globalization. And with this momentum from elite education towards mass education, the higher education entered into an internationalization process during the times when the Cold War ended and thus began to transform into one of the most global phenomenon of the 21st century. Naturally, the neoliberal policies of the 1980's were what accelerated that momentum the most. The globalization race also escalated during those years and since then, serious steps have been taken towards the marketing of information in the field of higher education and, to that end, new education models have started to be produced.

With the global markets promoting financial power, new and highly effective inventions in technology and the introductory influence of the media, some countries have been able to create more appealing educational opportunities in the massification process of their higher education infrastructures. Consequently, a movement of migration towards those countries with better higher education institutions has begun. These developments have also transformed higher education into an organ of public diplomacy. In fact, certain countries, more particularly developed ones, started studies on how to strategically plan and maintain supporting their foreign policies by their graduate international students.

Surely, student mobility is usually from developing countries to those developed countries. However, developing countries have also joined this process and they have gravitated towards new structurings. As a country which has been sending students to developed countries and receiving students from developing ones for many years, Republic of Turkey is also trying to have a strong part in this process. The interest in Turkish universities started in the 1960's with international agreements and has gained acceleration since the 1990's with the raising interest from students from the Balkans and the Central Asia. It has been concluded that the historical, cultural, religious and linguistic bonds have been quite effective on this rise of interest.

"Türkiye Scholarships" that were founded in line with the afore-mentioned purposes has also started to become a brand. And this study is based on a research study conducted with the aim of testing the potency of this brand. This study focuses on Kyrgyzstan citizens that had studied in Turkey by means of Türkiye Scholarships. By presenting their structural qualities as well as identifying the levels of their relations with Turkey after graduation on the basis of quantitative and descriptive analysis, this study aims to determine -within the framework of this sampling-how successful Türkiye Scholarships has been in reaching its targets.

**Keywords:** Internationalization of Higher Education, Public Diplomacy, Educational Diplomacy, Student Mobility, Turkey Scholarships, Kyrgyzstan.

## TÜRKİYE’NİN YÜKSEKÖĞRETİMDE ULUSLARARASILAŞMA POLİTİKASI TÜRKİYE MEZUNLARI ÜZERİNE BİR ARAŞTIRMA

### Öz

1950’li yıllara kadar seçkin nitelik taşıyan yükseköğretim küreselleşmenin etkisi ile kitleselleşmeye başlamıştır. Elit eğitiminden kitle eğitimine doğru gelişen ivmesiyle de, özellikle Soğuk Savaş’ın sona erdiği dönemde uluslararasılaşmaya yönelik bir sürece girmiş ve 21. Yüzyılın en küresel olgularından biri haline dönüşmeye başlamıştır. Elbette bu ivmeye en büyük hızı kazandıran da 1980’li yılların neoliberal politikaları olmuştur. Küreselleşme yarışının hız kazandığı bu yıllardan itibaren yükseköğretim alanında da bilginin pazarlanmasına yönelik daha ciddi adımlar atılmış, bu amaçla yeni eğitim modelleri üretilmeye başlanmıştır.

Küresel pazarların mali gücü artırması, teknolojiadaki oldukça etkili yeni buluşlar ve medyanın da tanıtıcı etkisini daha da artıracak olanaklara sahip olması, bazı ülkelerin yükseköğrenim altyapılarını kitlelere açmada daha cazip eğitim olanakları yaratmalarına hizmet etmiştir. Bu şekilde de, dünyada yükseköğretim kurumları daha iyi olan bu ülkelere yönelik bir göç hareketi başlamıştır. Bu gelişmeler yükseköğretimi aynı zamanda bir kamu diplomasisi aracına da dönüştürme etkisi yaratmıştır. Öyle ki, özellikle gelişmiş ülkeler dış politikalarını mezun ettikleri uluslararası öğrencilerle desteklemeyi stratejik olarak planlamaya ve yürütmeye yönelik çalışmalar içerisine girmişlerdir.

Elbette öğrenci hareketliliği genellikle gelişmekte olan ülkelere gelişmiş olan bu ülkelere doğru gerçekleşmektedir. Ancak, bu süreçlere gelişmekte olan ülkeler de katılmaya başlamışlar ve bu uğurda yeni yapılanmalara yönelmişlerdir. Türkiye Cumhuriyeti de hem gelişmiş ülkelere yıllardır öğrenci gönderen hem de gelişmemiş ya da gelişmekte olan ülkelere öğrenci göçü alan bir ülke olarak bu süreçte güçlü bir rol edinme uğraşısı vermektedir. 1960’lı yıllarda uluslararası anlaşmalar yoluyla Türkiye’deki üniversitelere yönelik başlayan ilginin, 1990’lı yıllardan itibaren Balkan ve Orta Asya ülkeleri öğrencilerinin ilgisi ile hızlanmaya başlamasında tarih, kültür, din ve dil bağının oldukça etkili olduğu anlaşılmıştır.

Bu amaçlar doğrultusunda yürütülmeye başlanan ‘Türkiye Bursları’ bir markaya dönüşmeye başlamıştır. Bu çalışma da bu markanın etki gücünü sınamayı amaç edinen bir araştırmaya dayanmaktadır. Türkiye Bursları ile Türkiye’de yükseköğrenim görmüş Kırgızistan vatandaşlarının hem yapısal özelliklerini ortaya koyarak hem de mezun olduktan sonra Türkiye ile ilişkilerini hangi düzeylerde yürüttüklerini belirlemeye çalışarak, örnekleme çerçevesinde Türkiye Burslarının amacına ne oranda ulaştığını tespit etmeye yönelik olarak sayısal ve betimsel (descriptif) analize dayalı şekilde gerçekleştirilmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Yükseköğretimin Uluslararasılaşması, Kamu Diplomasisi, Eğitim Diplomasisi, Öğrenci Hareketliliği, Türkiye Bursları, Kırgızistan.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Globalization and technological advancements have led to a great number of significant changes in many fields, particularly in economy (Gürüz, 2011: 1). The process of internationalization of higher education is where the effects of globalization on education have started to be seen the most (Tezsürücü ve Bursalıoğlu, 2013). Student mobility that had been present in the international field for a long time has quite rapidly increased, and continues to increase particularly in higher education.

The commercial effect of the rapid internationalization of education and educational systems and the contributions of the financial benefits that this process has created on the country's economy continue to gradually increase. The effective role that the new interactive, online distance education (e-education) has started to play as well as the continuous increase in the number of existing face-to-face education activities greatly affected the momentum of change.

Today, the capability to pursue higher education without leaving your country should be seen as one of the most important contributions of technology. All these developments have led many countries to make an effort to diversify their education and training programs, enhance the quality of their current educational services and lower the costs of education per person.

Universities have started to open up bureaus in various countries, organize promotional programs and therefore to try to reach their target audience and get a share or multiply their shares from the market in question. Additionally, they set up language schools and educational institutions in some countries to provide the students with education and training services in their home countries. Many universities carry out joint activities and exchange programs in cooperation with foreign universities. These programs include various organizations such as exchange programs for students and faculty members, joint seminars, conferences, classes, modules, courses and multi-disciplinary events and activities. The European Union leads the most comprehensive programs. They carry out many academic and vocational training programs such as "Socrates", "Leonardo da Vinci" and "Erasmus," as well as cause-programs with social objectives such as "Youth" (Demirbaş, 2010: 44-77). The "Youth," which is one of the most important programs of EU, is an education and exchange program designed for young people between 15 and 25 to get to know each other better. It aims to support social integration, the freedom and ability to talk about problems, the fight against racism and discrimination and improve inter-cultural learning and interaction.

Higher education contributes to the modernization of the out-of-date information frames of countries through interactions, create a more pluralist atmosphere for dialog and improve inter-cultural intellectual and academic dialog as well as contributing to the social welfare. The higher education world has become a fundamental institutional actor which accelerates international interaction and change by means of research and development studies as well as social and technological innovation studies it carries out (Çetinsaya, 2014).

## **2. INTERNATIONALIZATION OF EDUCATION AND TÜRKİYE SCHOLARSHIPS**

International cooperation and exchange agreements in higher education have increased in number during the post-World War II period. These kinds of initiatives had actually started before the World War II. For instance, the Institute of International Education (IIE) was founded in the USA in 1919, and the British Council was established in 1934. However, the trend towards internationalism in higher education gained momentum and became widespread after the World War II (Kireşç, Bacanlı vd., 2016: 3).

The United States of America and the Soviet Union executed studies to promote international exchange and cooperation in the field of education in order to improve relationships with the other countries in the world and widen their spheres of influence. During these times, Europe was in no condition to invest in change and cooperation in the field of international education as it was going through a period of post-war reconstruction. While most of the scientists in Europe were victims of the war, America became a center of education. On the other hand, the Soviet Union focused its political, social and academic control on the Middle and Eastern European countries (Kireşci, Bacanlı vd., 2016: 3).

By 1980's, the global situation changed as Japan had emerged as a global economic power and the European Community had become stronger. Both Japan and European Community began to invest in research and development programs. The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1990's changed the situation even further. And today, the internationalization of higher education focuses on other factors. The European Commission, in particular, focuses on the European aspect in order to form a common regional identity in higher education. In this context, alongside investing in economic development and the economy of the future, tendencies towards adding an international dimension to individual development, research and education and institutionalization have caused the cultural function of the internationalization to be taken into consideration (Brooks and Waters, 2011).

The stage that the humankind has reached today is defined as the information era. In this era, information has become a currency that can be produced, sold and bought. Furthermore, with the development of information technologies, sustainable and humanitarian development strategies based on a higher-quality life philosophy that prioritizes people's welfare and investing in people in international scope have taken center stage. So much that, the productivity that speeds up the socioeconomic development process in today's world has been improving faster and more effectively than the technological advances so far. The continuity of investing in people also has some positive effects on social and cultural development (Aktan, 1998: 118-134). Within this framework, a need for a change in mentality arose in higher education. And these needs brought up the internationalization operations to the agenda as a soft power (Kalin, 2014).

Internationalization in higher education is associated with factors such as student and faculty exchanges, educational programs and teaching methods that have international dimensions and cooperation with international institutions in general (Knight, 2004). Internationalization of higher education on national, sectoral and institutional basis "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.” (Knight, 2008 in Kireşci, Bacanlı et. al., 2016: 2).

In this sense, it is clear that international higher education and international student mobility are very important in terms of the public diplomacy activities and promotions of nations. Public diplomacy is a relations management that countries execute using their soft powers. "Public diplomacy, which is also a form of intercultural communication, is an informative and promotional activity towards another country's public opinion and perception. Public diplomacy helps both cultural dialog and shaping the country image in the eyes of the public and governments and it sets out from the fact that a country's image and recognition are powers that can implement cultural interaction. In this respect, international student mobility is also an organ and a power of public diplomacy for nations." (Kaya, 2014: 10).

According to Joseph Nye, the soft power notion explains the accumulation, namely the culture, political opinion and policies of a country. A country's cinema, works of literature, architecture and cultural products, printed and visual media, higher education (universities, research centers etc.), non-governmental organizations, scientific and technological infrastructure, new invention capacity, tourism, economic cooperation platforms and diplomacy constitute its soft power (Kalin, 2014: 11).

It is clear that today developments such as globalization, economic cooperation and political interactions between countries and public diplomacy greatly affect nation brand. According to Yakupoğlu, (2014: 7-8) the competitive environment that thrives with globalization depends on the production of information and this competition exists in the field of higher education and is carried to a massive scale by means of economic factors. Thus, higher education has started to be used by states, universities and international companies as part of a marketing strategy in an economic respect.

Therefore, in today's information society that is created partly by globalization, the countries that inform and promote the most attract the biggest number of students. There are also factors that attract a student to study in another country, as well as the factors that push the student to study outside his/her own country. These factors that attract and push partly overlap. These factors are (Becker & Kolster, 2012: 10-15):

- The host country's comprehensive promotional campaign, the presence of an international student policy, the ability of the country to provide sufficient information on its educational institutions,
- The quality and prestige of its education, the presence of academic freedom,
- Mutual recognition of the home country and the host country diplomas,

- The cost of studying in the host country in terms of tuitions, scholarships, transportation and the cost of living,
- The management style of the higher education institutions,
- The crime rates, the presence of racial hate crimes and the safety level in the country,
- The number of international students in the country, the presence of international programs and the level of internationalization in terms of migration policies,
- The living, studying and working conditions in the country,
- The presence of relatives or friends in the host country, the geographical connections such as the proximity of the host country to the home country.

Today states present their higher education services as a brand that they can market together with their cultural, political, diplomatic, economic and social values in the international arena. Turkey also have opened its doors to many international students both in the pre-Republic and the Republic period and provided those students with scholarships as well as ensuring a high quality education. Starting from the 1960's, particularly, scholarships had been provided within the framework of the bilateral agreements signed with other states. The international student policy of Turkey was systematized for the first time in 1992 thanks to the incentives of late Turgut Özal, one of the former presidents of Turkey Republic, and a project titled "The Great Student Project" was initiated.

Established in 2010, Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB), takes on the task of coordinating the activities for Turkish citizens living abroad, related (sister) communities and international scholarship students studying in Turkey as well as developing services and activities carried out in these fields. With the efforts of this Presidency, the relations with Turkish citizens living abroad as well as the sister communities are strengthened and closer economic, social and cultural relations are established. ([www.ytb.gov.tr](http://www.ytb.gov.tr))

With the initiatives of YTB Presidency and the cooperation of other relevant agencies, the "Turkey Scholarships" program, a publicly funded scholarship program for successful international students was implemented in 2012 and higher education scholarships provided by Turkey for international students were updated. The objective of the program is to develop mutual relations between Turkey and other countries and contribute to the global wealth of information. Turkey Scholarships had received about 10 thousand applications in 2012 when it was first implemented, and in 2017, this number rose up to over 100 thousand. The number of applicant countries also nearly doubled up. Turkey Scholarships program does not only provide scholarships, but also university placement. This feature differentiates this program from other scholarship programs in the world. As well as a monthly scholarship, the program

offers plane tickets, contribution for tuition fees, general health insurance, student residence and Turkish language education. Additionally, the program aims that the students also benefit from social, cultural and academic programs and events organized within the period of their stay in Turkey ([www.turkiyeburslari.gov.tr](http://www.turkiyeburslari.gov.tr)). Scholarship students in Turkey are deemed as volunteer ambassadors of Turkey all over the world.

In this study, an exploratory drilling has been conducted on the Kyrgyzstan citizens that had studied at higher education institutions -mostly with scholarships- in Turkey, and their communication with Turkey after their graduation. This study aims to determine to what extent the educational opportunities that had been provided for Kyrgyzstan citizens in Turkey since the independence of their country in 1990's have implemented infrastructure for relations between Turkey and Kyrgyzstan, which have common linguistic, historic and ancestral roots. The findings explained below have been evaluated within the context of Turkey's soft power.

### **3. METHOD OF RESEARCH**

In this section titled method of research, the research model, research group, formation and implementation of the questionnaire form and statistical techniques used in data analysis are presented.

This research was conducted using questionnaire technique drawn upon the descriptive survey model in order to determine the current profiles of Kyrgyzstan citizens that studied in Turkey through the "Great Student Project" and "Turkey Scholarship" after Kyrgyzstan had gained its independence.

The research group consists of Kyrgyzstan citizens who studied at and graduated from various universities in Turkey with either the "Great Student Project" and "Turkey Scholarship" after the independence of Kyrgyzstan, starting from 1992-1993 academic year up to present day. According to the data obtained from "Egemendik Turkey Alumni Association" about 7,000 Kyrgyzstan citizens have completed their education in Turkey so far. "Egemendik Turkey Alumni Association" currently has 500 members. The database of the association was used in order for the data collection to be healthy and output to be more reliable in the implementation process of the research.

An online questionnaire that comprised of 16 questions was conducted by the researcher in order to determine the present profiles of Kyrgyzstan citizens that studied at and graduated from various universities in Turkey through the "Great Student Project" and "Turkey Scholarships" program.

The Turkey Graduates Profile questionnaire form was distributed among 400 members of "Egemendik Turkey Alumni Association." The 380 questionnaire forms that were filled by the Turkey graduates were analyzed. The data obtained from these 380 questionnaire forms that had been submitted were coded, their frequencies were calculated and the results were evaluated proportionately.

#### 4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

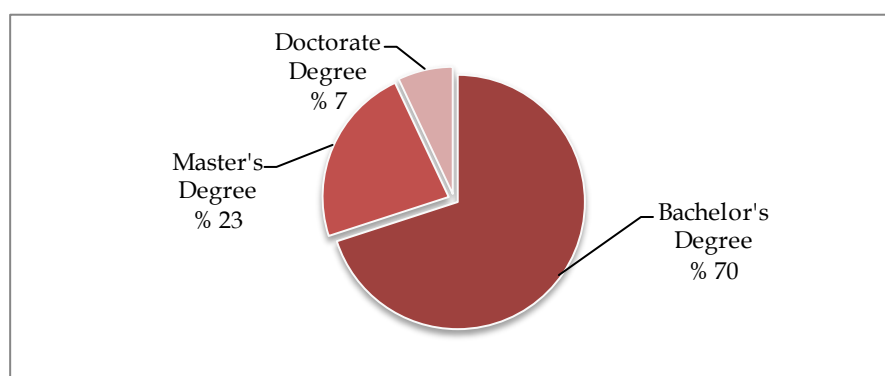
In the findings section of the research, there are statements exhibiting the present profiles of Kyrgyzstan citizens that studied in Turkey. The results of the collected data relating to Turkey Graduates were presented proportionately in tables, graphics and diagrams.

**Table 1.** Information on Demographic Features of the Respondents

Demographic Features		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	152	40
	Male	228	60
Marital Status	Married	262	69
	Single	118	31
	None	49	13
Number of Children	1 child	65	17
	2 children	160	42
	3 children	95	25
	4 children	11	3

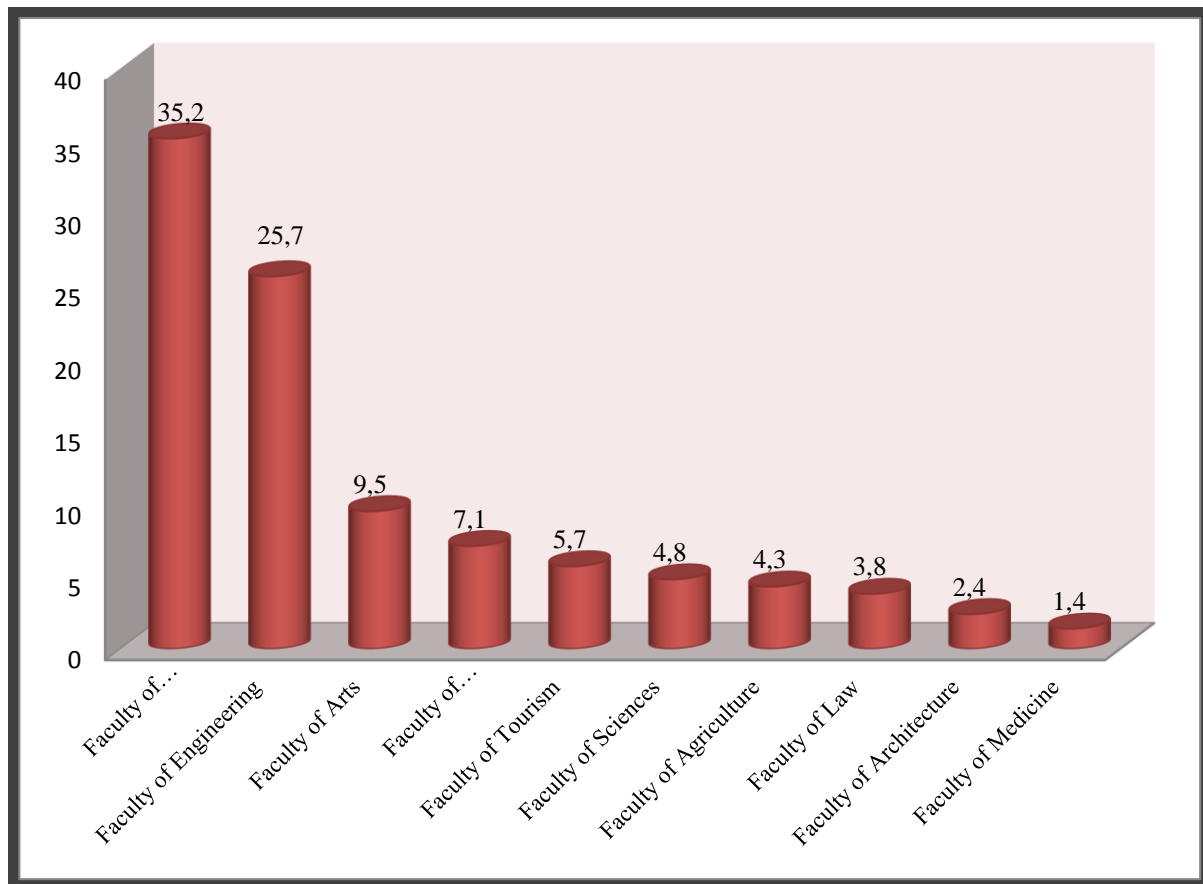
When looking at the gender ratio of the 380 graduates from Turkish scholarship programs that took part in the research, we see that 60% of the respondents are male and the 40% are female. When we look at the marital status of the Turkey graduates that took part in the research, we see that the 69% are married and the 31% are single. When looking at how many children the Turkey graduates that took part in the research have, we see that 42% of respondent have 2 children, 25% have 3 children, 17% have only 1 child, 3% have 4 children and 13% do not have any children.

**Graph 1.** The Type of Education Received in Turkey



When looking at the information on the type of education that the Turkey graduates taking part in the research had in Turkey, we see that 70% had a bachelor's degree, 23% had master's degree and 7% had a doctorate degree. In total, 30% of them had a postgraduate degree.

**Graph 2. Faculty/Department of the Graduates<sup>1</sup>**



When we look at the information given by Turkey graduates regarding the faculty/department they had graduated from, we conclude that the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences had the most number of students among the ones taking part in the research by 35,2%. Faculty of Engineering came second by 25,7%, Faculty of Fine Arts came third by 9,5% and the Faculty of Medicine gave the least number of graduates by 1,4%.

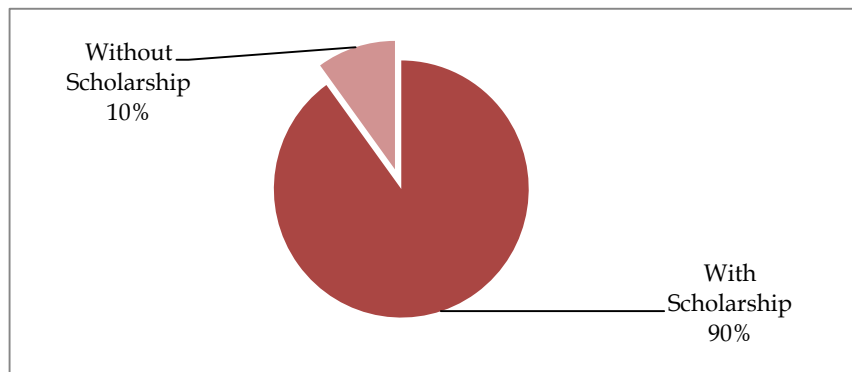
The respondents were asked at which university in Turkey they studied at and it was concluded that they respectively studied at the following universities.

<sup>1</sup> The respondents were asked to state the faculties and departments they had studied at. However, some respondents did not specify their faculties and some did not specify their departments. The specified data regarding the faculties and departments were systematized and the results were quoted as faculty names.

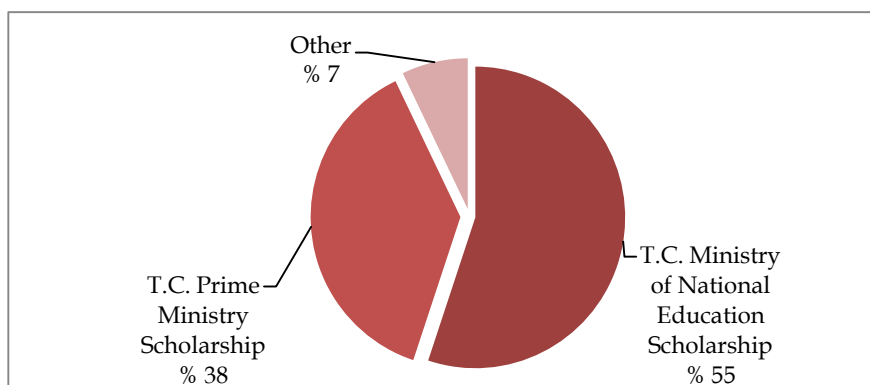
**Table 2.** The Universities that the Graduates Attended

Order	University
1	Istanbul University
2	Ankara University
3	Gazi University
4	Marmara University
5	Dokuz Eylül University
6	Hacettepe University
7	Middle East Technical University

It was concluded that the Turkey graduates that took part in the research had studied in a total number of 19 universities. The most preferred universities were picked out of these 19 universities, and the top seven (7) universities are indicated in the table. According to the results, Turkey graduates who took part in the research mostly attended the universities in the cities of Istanbul and Ankara.

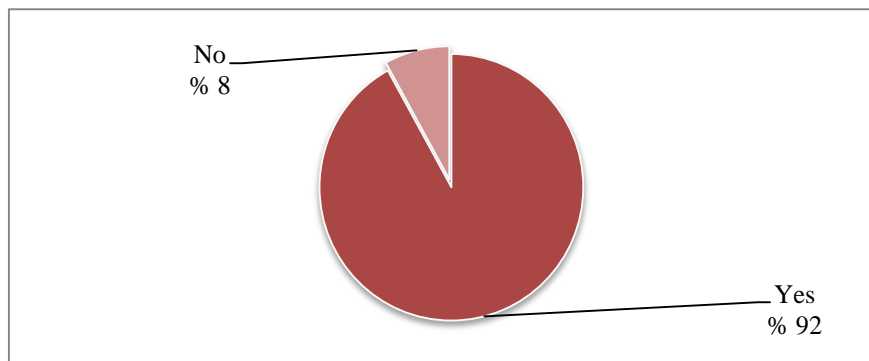
**Graph 3.** The Scope of Education

When the Turkey graduates who took part in the research were asked whether they had had scholarships or not, the 90% stated that they'd had scholarships and the 10% stated they had enrolled in a non-scholarship program. This ratio is the indicator of Turkey's support to education.

**Graph 4.** Scholarship Granted

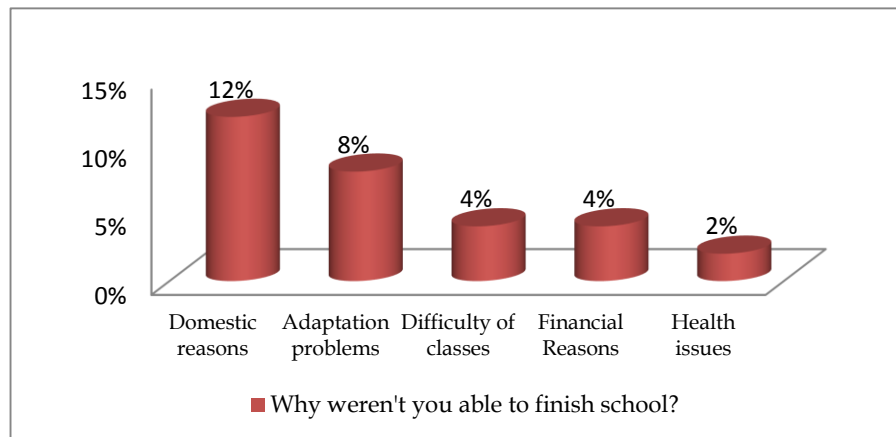
The types of scholarships granted were stated as the Ministry of National Education Scholarship by 55%, Turkey Republic Prime Ministry Scholarship by 38% and other scholarships constituted the 7% of the total. It is concluded that a 93% of the students had studied in Turkey by means of Turkish scholarships. This ratio once again presents the quantitative value of Turkey's policies in the field of education.

**Graph 5.** Completion of Education



When asked whether they had completed their education or not, the 92% of the respondents in the study (350 individuals) responded "yes," and the 8% (30 individuals) responded "no". The high number of graduates is striking, and this is an indication that Turkey has managed the process of this support mission well.

**Graph 6.** The Reasons Given by the Students who hadn't been able to Graduate

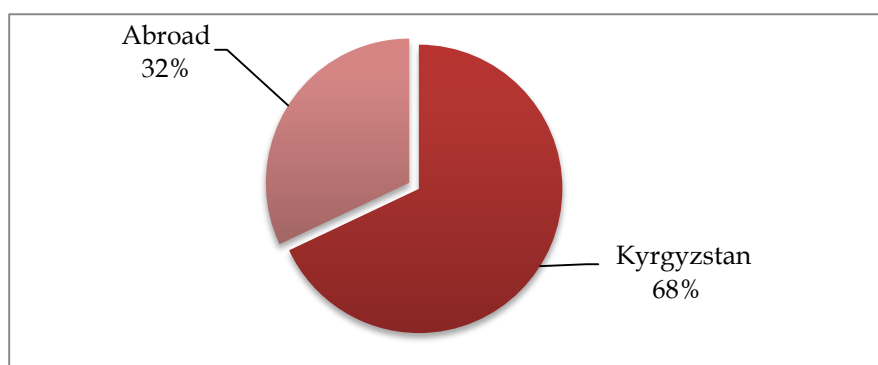


When asked about the reasons for not finishing their studies, 12% showed domestic reasons, 8% showed adaptation problems, 4% showed the difficulty of their classes, 4% showed financial difficulties and 2% showed health issues as the reason.

**Table 3.** The Graduation Dates of the Respondents

Years	N	Ratio (%)
1996	17	4.47
1997	16	4.21
1998	21	5.53
1999	17	4.47
2000	24	6.32
2001	18	4.74
2002	16	4.21
2003	19	5.00
2004	17	4.47
2005	19	5.00
2006	17	4.47
2007	18	4.74
2008	22	5.79
2009	16	4.21
2010	18	4.74
2011	20	5.26
2012	17	4.47
2013	16	4.21
2014	19	5.00
2015	18	4.74
2016	15	3.95
<b>Total</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>100</b>

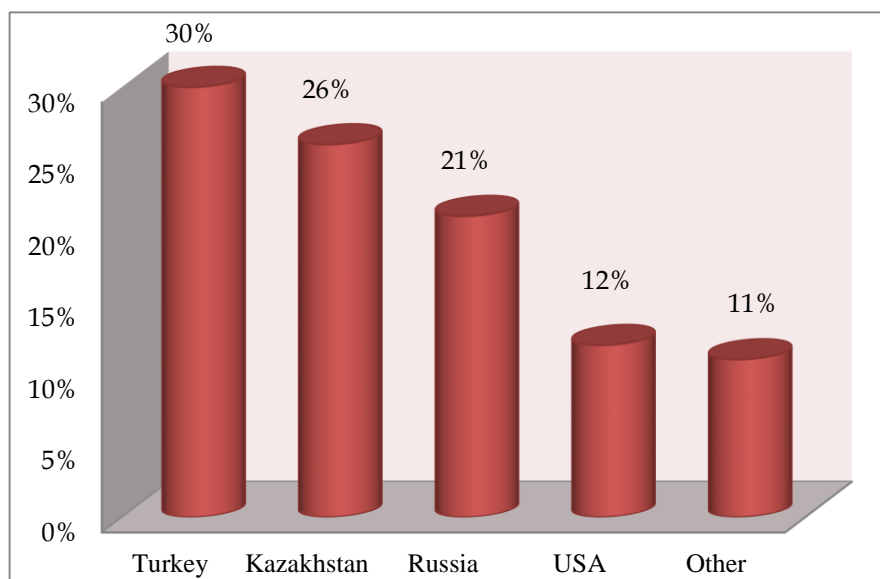
The graduates were also asked about the year they completed their studies, and as seen in Table 3, all the respondents graduated between the years 1996-2016. When looking at the ratio of students graduated each year within this twenty-year period, we see that the lowest graduation rate per year is 3,95% and the highest rate is 6,32%. Hence, a steady tendency was observed in this long term period and evaluated as a consequence of the efficiency of Turkey's result-oriented education policies.

**Graph 7.** Domestic / Foreign Residential Addresses of the Respondents

When we look at the current residential address of the respondents taking part in the research, we see that 68% (258 individuals) are in Kyrgyzstan and 32% (122 individuals) are abroad. Therefore, as a great majority of the respondents who studied at a university in

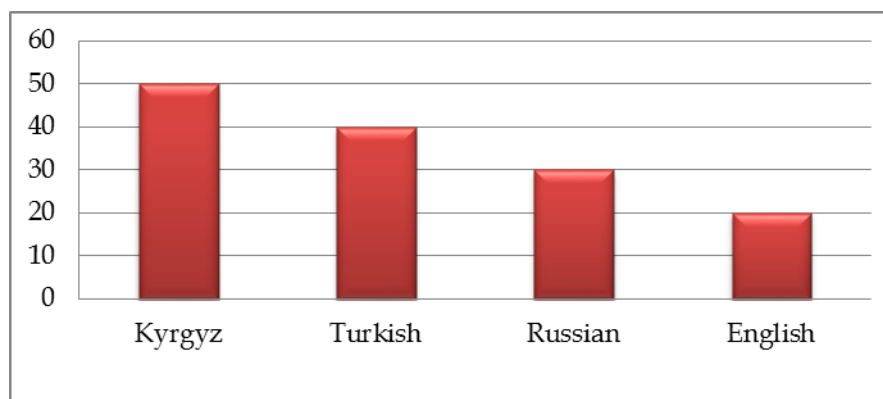
Turkey now resides in Kyrgyzstan (68%), this situation is viewed as a means to provide an infrastructure that will serve to promote cooperation between the two countries.

**Graph 8.**Range of Respondents Residing Abroad per Country



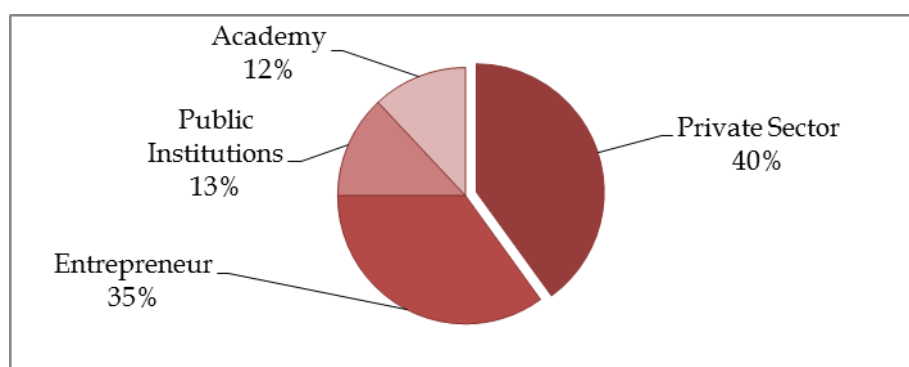
When the respondents living abroad were asked which country they lived in, it was concluded that they resided in 17 different countries in total. In the graphic above, we see that the Turkey graduates residing outside Kyrgyzstan live in the following countries: The 30% live in Turkey, the 26% live in Kazakhstan, the 21% live in Russia, the 12% live in the USA and the 11% live in other countries. Within the framework of these rates, it is observed that the 68% of the Kyrgyzstan citizens who had studied in Turkey returned to Kyrgyzstan after graduation and started working in their own countries, whereas the 30% that work abroad settled in Turkey. Therefore, the possibility of this situation to create a quality that will promote and stabilize cooperation between Turkey and Kyrgyzstan should be taken into consideration.

**Graph 9.** The Range of the Languages the Respondents Know the Best



When the Turkey graduates were asked in which language they express themselves better and more comfortably, the results naturally showed that they chose their mother tongues the most. Turkish came second, Russian came third and English came last in this evaluation. The fact that Turkish comes out as the second best known language after the mother tongue in this research bears great importance regarding the Russian and American struggles for existence in the region, and this also signifies the efficiency of Turkey's international education policies so far.

**Graph 10.** The Range of Turkey Graduates In Terms of Work Fields



When we look at the responses given by Turkey graduates to the question asked to determine which field they are currently working in, the 40% of the graduates said they were working in private sector, the 35% said they were entrepreneurs, the 13% replied public institutions and the 12% replied academic institutions.

It was revealed that most of the graduates in the research who work in private sector are in service industry, especially in banking and finance as well as top-end managing positions at certain businesses.

The 35 % of the graduates, again a great number of graduates, work as entrepreneurs. And the fields these entrepreneurs are most active are identified as construction, agricultural production, tourism and textile. When we look at the graduation years of the people working as entrepreneurs, these entrepreneurs turned out mostly to be the ones graduated in the first years, that is, the first students to study in Turkey by means of the program. It is possible to explain this with the increasing need for an entrepreneur profile in Kyrgyzstan's market due to the transition process to a free market economy following the independence of the country. Also, the fields that the entrepreneurs operate in -construction, agriculture, tourism etc.- are important sectors for Kyrgyzstan's development.

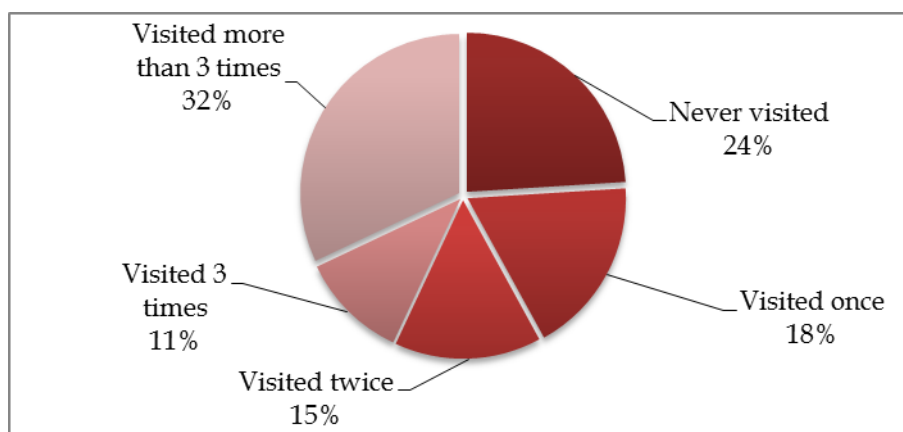
When asked about their business relations with Turkey, the entrepreneur graduates operating in Kyrgyzstan, the 80% of the graduates stated they have business relations with Turkey

and the 20% stated they work with other countries such as China and Russia. The entrepreneurs who have relations with Turkey stated that they visit Turkey at least once a year.

According to Graph 11, 13% of the graduates work at a public institution. It is observed that the Turkey graduates who work at a public institution have a say in Kyrgyzstan's top level management. One of the examples for this is that the Chairperson of Kyrgyzstan Republic's parliament is a Turkey graduate. Department Heads of Kyrgyzstan's Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as general managers in charge of civil aviation and energy are among Turkey graduates.

Also, a 12 % of Turkey graduates work in the academic field. It can be stated that, in terms of scientific activities in Kyrgyzstan, this rate expresses a significant qualitative contribution.

**Graph 11.** Information Regarding the Graduates' Visits to Turkey after Graduation



When we look at the frequency of the visits made by the graduates in the research to Turkey after graduation, we see that the 32 % visited Turkey more than 3 times and 24% never visited Turkey after graduation. When we look at the results on Graph 11 generally, we see that 76 % of the Turkey graduates visited Turkey at least once (1 time) after graduation. Therefore, according to these rates obtained from research data, it can be said that a majority of the respondents have a potential to continue their relations with Turkey after graduation.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In today's global climate, countries support work power and enable cultural interaction by attracting accomplished international students. 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.

It is observed that countries mostly allocate their scholarship programs to graduate students. Here, we are talking about a group of people with a certain level of academic education, which has an elementary or higher level of language and regarding their ages, matured. These groups which have relatively less costs benefit the country with their studies and research. These high quality groups should be targeted in terms of their long-term contribution to the country. Moreover, multilingualism and multiculturalism contribute to success and internationalism. The originality and quality of higher education and its institutions as a brand is very important. Thanks to them, the information produced here will also be original and have a high quality.

In Turkey, which has been accepting international students -whether through scholarships or their own means- since the 1960's, the outlook on international students is also within the framework of ideals such as cultural interaction, academic prosperity and public diplomacy. The perspective which started with the "Great Student Project" has been sustained through "Turkey Scholarships". Applications to these scholarships continue to increase each year. The fact that students are able to find jobs in their home countries after graduation is a significant indicator that the promotional strategy of Turkey Scholarships has reached its aims to a certain extent.

Transportation, city and university campus facilities, services such as housing and health which comprise the infrastructure of Turkey Scholarships are the most important arguments for the success of its promotion. Regulations and improvements to be made in these fields will affect promotion positively and rapidly. International students' satisfaction which is in the center of promotion bears great importance. The feedback provided by satisfied students will support the promotion and the development of Turkey Scholarships as a brand.

Important steps have been taken in order for Turkey to be an information and attraction center for international students through administrative, structural and academic regulations made on the basis of the Council of Higher Education and its subsidiary universities. These steps are going to help the information, ideas and products produced by higher education institutions gain a global value. Academic development and prosperity will stimulate scientific studies and productivity and this will benefit the country. Actually, the worldwide prestige of universities also depends on this. It also is the most important factor in the presentation process of Turkey Scholarships to the students.

Universities' participation to international fairs is also of great importance. Inter-university cooperation protocols also contribute greatly to escalating this momentum Turkey Republic's Embassies, TIKA (Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency) offices, foreign companies that have a connection with Turkey, Turkey graduates and active use of NGOs bear great importance in order to achieve these goals. Turkey graduates that

have significant positions and duties in their own countries are also highly beneficial for promotion. As they are the first-hand witnesses of Turkey Scholarships, it makes a great impact when they share their own experiences.

It is necessary to systematically implement the strategies that are effective in the promotion of Turkey Scholarships, which is the display of higher education of Turkish Republic. This is essential in making use of current potentials better to reach to the position of leading countries in internalization of higher education. It is of great importance that many actors in and outside of Turkey work together in a coordinated manner for the promotion strategies in question.

When we looked at the view in Kyrgyzstan, we saw about 7,000 Turkey graduates since the country's independence up to this day. The 60% of the graduates serve their country. They have a say in the country whether in public service, private sector or as entrepreneurs. And the rest of the graduates settled in 17 different countries in the world.

In the light of all these developments, it is possible to sum up the reflection of Turkey's educational diplomacy that started with the "Great Student Project" and continued with Turkey Scholarships on Kyrgyzstan under 4 main titles:

- ✓ It strengthens Turkey's image in Kyrgyzstan.
- ✓ It contributes to official relations between the two countries.
- ✓ It advances the commercial relations between the two countries.
- ✓ It strengthens the civil relations between the two countries.

About 7 thousand Kyrgyzstan citizens have studied at a higher education institution in Turkey since 1991, when Kyrgyzstan declared its independence. They portray leadership, innovativeness and success in their jobs as they received a world class education. They are also exemplary citizens before the community thanks to the occupational ethics they acquired. This increases the prestige of Turkey as the country that provides this education as well as Turkish people in the general public opinion of Kyrgyzstan. Turkey graduates became a source of hope for a bright future in the eyes of the public as Kyrgyzstan has been going through difficult times as a nation trying to find itself a place in the international arena. They plan their future with this sense of responsibility. In this sense, the educational opportunities that Turkey provided for thousands of young people in order to foster welfare in the future without missing out on the developments in the region have started to bring results.

It can be easily said that the Kyrgyzstan - Turkey education project that started in 1992 is the most important and extensive aspect of the relations between the two countries. There are still approximately 1500 Kyrgyzstan citizens studying in Turkey. According to UNESCO's data, Turkey comes second after Russia in terms of Kyrgyzstan citizens' choice

for higher education, followed by Germany, Kazakhstan and the United States of America (<http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Pages/international-student-flow-viz.aspx>).

Successful Turkish brands and products have been put on Kyrgyzstan market. Joint production areas have been opened up in Kyrgyzstan by Turkish businessmen and the products that are made in Kyrgyzstan and demanded by Turkey have been put on Turkish market by Turkish graduates. The number of Turkey graduates working as midlevel managers and senior executives at various companies operating in Kyrgyzstan's important sectors such as Mining, Agriculture-Livestock Breeding, Food, Banking and Finance, Technology and Tourism has been rising day by day. Turkey graduates have become respected and demanded members of the community and business life by adding value to those companies with the education they received and their work experience. There is now a "*Turkey Graduate*" brand in private sector and the business world in Kyrgyzstan. The situation is the same in the public service sector. There are Turkey graduates behind the most successful works and developments in institutions of great importance such as Presidency, Prime Ministry, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Economy and Directorate of Security.

According to the results of the analysis, 70% of the Kyrgyzstan citizens who graduated from universities in Turkey had a bachelor's degree and 30% had a postgraduate degree. They predominantly chose the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences (35,2%). Following this faculty, they were graduates of Faculty of Engineering (25,7%), Faculty of Arts (9,5%) and Faculty of Communication (7,1%). The majority of the respondents stated that they respectively graduated from Istanbul University, Ankara University, Gazi University, Dokuz Eylül University, Hacettepe University and Middle East Technical University. Therefore, it can be read that they completed their higher education in the most qualified universities in Turkey. The fact that 90% of the students had scholarships is of great importance in the sense that successful students chose Turkey to study in and the bond after graduation is most likely to be strong.

The fact that 68% of the respondents returned to their countries after graduation was also noted as a significant finding. As a result, because this rate means they will take part in the fields that will provide a link between Kyrgyzstan and Turkey more, it can be regarded as an indication that Turkey's educational diplomacy has reached its aim. It was observed that out of the respondents who did not return to Kyrgyzstan and settled abroad, 30% settled in Turkey, 26% settled in Kazakhstan, 21% settled in Russia and 12% settled in the USA. Again, the fact that the majority chose Turkey to live and work in can be read as a sign that connections and cooperation between Kyrgyzstan and Turkey might be long-term.

Moreover, Turkish language ranked second after their mother tongue, Kyrgyz, among the Turkey graduates who took part in the research; there was Russian in the third rank and English in the fourth rank. Therefore, their fluency in Turkish bear great significance in terms of both economic and socio-cultural relationships. According to the research results, the fact that 40% of the respondents work in private sector and the 35% are entrepreneurs serve to present the future potential in economic relations. The fact that 13% work in public service and 12% work in the academic field predicates a value in terms of joint working potentials. Furthermore, the fact that the rate of respondents that visited Turkey more than three times after graduation has reached up to a 32% corroborates all these indicators.

In order for the results of the research conducted specific to Kyrgyzstan to become widespread, the infrastructure that will ensure the internationalization of Turkish higher education must be made even stronger. In this context, the primary suggestions include incorporating international perspectives and matters to existing research centers and programs; promoting cooperation with international partners; generalization of research results through international networks and communication systems and sharing of information; forming a network of research institutes with regard to field of expertise; participation in international R&D programs and funds; enabling individual international mobility of researchers; paid leave opportunities for faculty members to attend to international activities; educating graduate students about the research; promoting relations between international business world, researchers and research institutes.

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