



NATIONAL REPORT ON UNIVERSITY LIFE LONG LEARNING: TURKEY

“Overview of the current situation with focus on learning and guidance”

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The term lifelong learning has been regarded as the natural offspring of globalization in a knowledge economy that was generated through competition, innovation, and rapid change. The idea is that through lifelong learning, adults are provided with more opportunities to learn and to enhance educational institutions in different forms and in this way universities act as service providers for the business and the industry (Jarvis, 2007). This report provides a brief overview about lifelong learning in universities in Turkey. It is not a comprehensive review and it involves the authors’ perspectives based on the related document and the literature. First, some basic legislation released under the name of lifelong learning are provided, next some statistical figures are shared and finally a critical analysis is provided to discuss the available applications.

Introduction

Lifelong learning has appeared in the literature for more than two decades and has become an important issue for the EU as well as other organizations such as World Bank and OECD. The European Commission initiative for about a decade tries to place all its educational programs in line with the idea for lifelong learning (European Commission, 2006). The idea to replace education or training with lifelong learning is that the development of the individual’s knowledge, skills, and identity does not rest primarily only on the educational institutions. It requires that individuals must see learning in the contexts of whole life course, and they should not be rooted only in one area of learning. Educational institutions and teachers need use their professional knowledge and experience in new and more versatile ways through interactions in educational institutions and workplaces so that they not only teach, but also supervise, coach, plan, mediate or coordinate (Rasmussen, 2009, pp 86-88). The early traces of official policy on lifelong education in Turkey have been set in 1973 through the Basic Education Law 1739 (Ministry of National Education-MONE, 1985). This legislation indicates that lifelong educational opportunities will be organized by various public and private bodies to help adults adapt to scientific, technological, economic, social and cultural development, to improve their technical and professional skills, to fill in the educational gaps such as literacy, health and nutrition. Lifelong education has been provided by a variety of institutions ranging from the universities to ministries.

Universities have an important role in lifelong education. Traditionally, universities used to be cited for two basic missions: research and teaching. They were regarded as the producers of scientific knowledge and providers of university education at different levels. However, the contemporary university also observes a third mission: sharing scientific



knowledge with the society and contribute to social and economic development in the society. The mission for the 21st Century universities includes that universities are centers for continuous learning, for technological transfer and research and development (R&D) process, and carry with them the mission to educate the learning society (Eurydice, 2011). The latter component that deals with the social dimension has been very crucial, especially, with the Council Resolution on modernization of universities for Europe's competitiveness and adopted a benchmark for tertiary attainment indicating that by 2020 the share of 30-40 year olds are at least 40%, and already some countries like Czech Republic and Slovakia have established Third Age Universities. Turkish universities are no exception in this mission. Rather than samples as third age education, earlier dropouts have been provided with opportunities. For instance, Law 6111 released in 25 February 2011, enables provision for students who dropped, left or failed during their tertiary education are provided with a continuous chance to become students in the higher education institution they used to be. Since the term, "continuous education" is mostly used in legislations and by universities themselves, the following section is reported under that subtitle.

Continuous Education in Turkish Universities

Higher Education **Law number 2547** that deals with continuous education **was released in 4 December, 1981 (the Gazette, number 17506, 1981)**. Under this Law Act 5 h underlines that higher education institutions are organized as such so that they responsible with the provision of formal, non-formal and **continuous and open-education, and Act 3J** highlights that Applications and Research centers within higher education institutions are responsible for the provision of application and research needs of diverse vocational areas, and be supportive for professional services through offering education and sustainable research in the area studied (Higher Education Council, 2007). They plan and offer courses, seminars and training programs for university students, public and private organizations, international institutions. Some these activities are determined based on the needs indicated by the receiver organizations and others are determined by the continuing education centers based on the common interest areas. The courses may be offered both on campus and out of campus, and there is a growing interest in providing continuing education through internet as well. In addition to services provided through continuing education centers, the universities also contribute to lifelong learning theory the consultancies they provide to various private and public organizations and NGOs. As a result of all these activities a close cooperation and interaction is established between the university community and the receiving organizations (Arslan, 2008).

Middle East Technical University in Ankara is to be one of the first universities in Turkey to establish a Continuous Education Center. The center was developed in order to "develop the cooperation of the university with public institutions to, private sector, and international institutions via offering continuing education programs in the fields on which

the university has excelled and is experienced, contributing to the development of Turkish industry and progress, and carrying out such services to the international arena” (Arslan, 2008, p.140). Many universities established centers for continuing education with flexible programs to provide lifelong learning opportunities for adult learners from various sectors in the society. These centers appear under different names such as “continuing education center,” “lifelong learning center,” “continuing education research and education.” These centers aim to contribute to Turkey’s competitiveness in all fields, strengthening human development, increasing social cohesion, ensuring regional development, and increasing quality and effectiveness in public services (GPA, 2007). These centers mostly serve individuals who aim to update their professional knowledge, look for career change and improve their perspectives through new knowledge and skills. In this sense, continuing education centers have important roles in establishing and keeping the communication and collaboration between universities and the society. By the year 2008 there were 34 centers actively offering services in state universities and 9 were available in private universities (see Table 1). They were established mainly as continuous education centers in state universities.

Table 1
Continuing Education Centers in Turkey, 2008

Centers	State Universities		Private Universities	
Continuing Education	24	70,6%	6	66,7%
Continuing Education Research and Application	4	11,8%	3	33,30%
Lifelong Learning	3	8,80%		
Entrepreneurship Research and Application	1	2,90%		
Informatics Continuing Education	1	2,90%		
Continuing Education and Program Development	1	2,90%		
Total	34	100%	9	100%

Source: Arslan, 2008.

In Turkey, as mentioned above, almost all the universities have “continuous education centers” contributing to LLL. These centers offer seminars, conferences and refresher courses to those who wish to be kept up to date in their profession or to those who would like additional skills and/or knowledge in a different field. Likewise, government institutions, private sector and increasingly nongovernmental organizations provide lifelong learning activities (YOK, 2007). These centers provide additional income beside the annual budget provided by the state. In that regard, each university has been capable of creating its own financial resources through such facilities according to the article 55 of Higher Education Law No. 2547. Afterwards, Law No. 5018 has brought a change in the administration of the income generated by the universities themselves.

According to Article 15 of Law No. 5018 incomes generated need to be registered as self-incomes in the budgets of higher education institutions, and the registered amount is to be used according to the proposed plan for how to use the income in excess of the estimated amount or how to fill in the deficit in relation to the expected amount. The universities are reserved about this since they lose their autonomy and flexibility of using

income generated by themselves. The implementation of the new law is closely followed by the state universities as it may result in a decrease of the state contribution to the total budget in universities where self-generated income is high (YOK, 2007a). The statistical figures in Table 2 have been drawn from the Turkish Statistical Institute databases, and reveal that universities have a crucial share in the provision of adult education for the professionals with degrees. While other organizations such as the municipalities are more offering non-formal training services for non-professionals or non-traditional learners to gain employability for above 15 year olds.

Table 2
Continuous Education Services in Universities, 2009

Institution	Number of Programs		Initiating Trainees		Finished Trainees		
		Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Universities	1 435	75 453	41 319	34 134	70 128	38 487	31 641
Ministry/and related organizations	6 236	353 403	253011	100 92	334616	238825	95 791
Municipalities	11 726	720 415	193289	527126	359116	93 012	266 104
Confederations or Unions	420	57 135	41 328	15 807	46 419	33 609	12 810
Total	19 817	1 20606	52847	677459	810279	403933	406346

Source: Yaygın Eğitim faaliyetleri [Continuous Education Activities], 2010, document retrieved November 2011 from http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreTablo.do?tb_id=14&ust_id=5

The Tertiary Education Strategy of Turkey report (YOK, 2007b) includes that the universities under the roof of lifelong learning are envisioned to serve under the following five themes;

1. Education service for the three dimensions stated above, and is offered in return for some monetary investment.
2. Health services: both training and provision of health services for the society, so that R&D is supported and sustained.
3. Public services for innovation for the industry and military security research. Some services may be in the form of training or certification programs, some consultancy work and some R&D.
4. Universities as a service provider in the underdeveloped regions of Turkey for human capital development and economic development and enable opportunities for entrepreneurship.
5. The last but not least sees the university as a place that holds a role as that of an advocacy. This mission aims at gaining the essential knowledge, skills, and competencies to alleviate the disadvantaged individuals to learn to learn their rights, protect a country's natural resources, environment, and the cultural heritage.

When we examine the trainings or certification program themes listed by the State Statistical Institute in 2010 with regard to those missions revealed above, a compatible approach with the themes above can be revealed from Table 3, especially, in relevance with programs on social sciences, business, and law, and health and relief care as the most offered programs for public service.

Table 3
Themes offered in Lifelong learning centers by universities, 2009

Programs	Number
General programs	115
Educational Sciences	130
Letters and Art	195
Social Sciences, Business and Law	476
Hard Science, math and computer	102
Engineering, production and civil issues	75
Agriculture and veterinary	19
Health and Relief Care	225
Services sector	98
Total	1 435

Source: TUIK, 2010, Yaygın Eğitim faaliyetleri, Document retrieved November 2011 from http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreTablo.do?tb_id=14&ust_id=5

Learning and Guidance in the framework of Lifelong Learning

Qualifications for non-formal or informal competences is not yet applicable in Turkey for access to first cycle degrees due to the lack of a favorable legal framework. It is not in the strategic agenda of HE in a foreseeable future (YOK, 2007). Yet, when the formal qualifications are considered they are listed in compliance with the 2006 Report Progress towards the Lisbon Objectives in Education and Training. The below descriptions have been downloaded from Higher Education Council homepage (YOK, 2009a). The qualifications framework for lifelong learning is stated as follows:

NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

National qualifications framework is a system, which includes definitions and approaches that are closest to countries' societal, cultural and economic realities. It is also a system in which degrees are given which are recognized by both national and international stakeholders and are also reachable and comparable.

European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF-LLL)

In the EQF-LLL system, learning outcomes for each level of education taking into account the lifelong learning principle are designed in terms of knowledge, skills and competences at eight levels.

Comparison of QF-EHEA and EQF-LLL

QF-EHEA and EQF-LLL differs in terms of geographical regions, aims and areas of implementation. EQF-LLL is designed for 27 EU member states, whereas QF-EHEA is designed for 45 member states of Bologna Process. Because EQF-LLL covers all cycles of lifelong learning, the working groups are in a wider context. In these working groups, representatives of ministries from all levels, representatives

from national authorities of higher education institutions and sectorial representatives participate. Descriptions and concepts in the EQF-LLL system differs from that of QF-EHEA because the former aims to develop a common framework for very different levels throughout lifelong learning and the latter being designed only for higher education. Level descriptors in each system are designed towards different implementations. In the EQF-LLL system, descriptors are more general and they may apply to all learning types in the context of lifelong learning. On the other hand, descriptors for QF-EHEA is designed only and as a whole for higher education (YOK, 2009a).

As it can be deduced, the trends in formal education are in line with the European Commission frameworks. Although some of those mentioned above may not be reflected in the descriptions of non-formal education at university level, the author predicts that university lifelong learning programs will be constructed similarly under the national qualifications framework for university lifelong learning with regard to the degrees offered in Turkey (see Table 4).

Table 4
National Qualifications Framework

NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN TURKEY (NQF-HETR)		
HIGHER EDUCATION LEVELS	HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS	VOCATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS
8,5 - 10 QF-EHEA : 3. LEVEL EQF-LLL : 8. LEVEL	DOCTORATE* PROFICIENCY IN MEDICINE* DOCTORATE IN ART (180-240 ECTS)*	510-600
5,5 - 6 QF-EHEA : 2. LEVEL EQF-LLL : 7. LEVEL	MASTER'S DEGREE (90-120 ECTS)*	330-360 MASTER'S DEGREE (90-120 ECTS)*
4 QF-EHEA : 1. LEVEL EQF-LLL : 6. LEVEL	BACHELOR'S DEGREE (240 ECTS)*	240 BACHELOR'S DEGREE (240 ECTS)*
2 QF-EHEA: SHORT CYCLE EQF-LLL: 5. LEVEL	ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE (120 ECTS)*	120 ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE (120 ECTS)* ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE (120 ECTS)*

Source taken from <http://tyyc.yok.gov.tr/?pid=31>.

1. Academic-oriented associate's degree educational programs which are related to or within undergraduate programs.
2. Vocational-oriented associate's degree educational programs which are related to or within undergraduate programs.
3. Vocational-oriented associate's degree educational programs of Vocational Higher Schools
4. Academic-oriented programs
5. Vocational-oriented bachelor's degree programs
6. Academic-oriented master's degree programs with or without thesis
7. Vocational-oriented master's degree programs with thesis or without thesis
8. Doctoral programs

Qualifications are described in the 8th cycles as can be deduced from Table 4. **Learning and guidance through formal education should help individuals develop theoretical and conceptual knowledge and cognitive and practical skills** in the area they study. The competences that students are expected to develop are not only limited to learning competences but also include **Competence to work independently and take responsibility, competence field specific competence, and communication and social**. For instance, the last competence may mainly require Use informatics and communication technologies with at least a minimum level of European Computer Driving License Advanced Level software knowledge. Thus, use of ICT is regarded as an important tool for lifelong learning and guidance (YOK, 2009b).

Lifelong learning is considered as one of the national priorities both in labor market and in education sector. One example for distance learning in higher education programs is that offered by the Anadolu University. One measure taken to encourage higher education institutions in developing lifelong learning paths, **“Second University” project** has been carried out by Anadolu University since 2001. The project enables the Associate and the Bachelor degree holders, and also the undergraduate students to be admitted to the distance-learning programs of Anadolu University. It is important to state that students can be placed in programs only after a very competitive centralized placement exam, and last year about 1.8 million people took the exam. The second university Project provides opportunities for all as students can apply without taking the university entrance exam. The Bachelor degree holders can apply to both two- or four-year distance-learning programs, while the Associate degree holders can be admitted only to the **two-year distance-learning programs**. Within the context of the project, current number of enrolment in various distance-learning programs of the university is over 40,000 (YOK, 2007a).

In addition to the above distance learning programs, the Second University project offers **Vocational education programs** at Associate degree levels to public officers from different institutions such as Ministry of Justice or Police Headquarters through special programs. These may also be offered with some **special arrangements to persons with disabilities and prisoners**. Lifelong learners can have access to course materials for open education that are available to public online as Open Educational Resources (YOK, 2007).

Another measure taken is to create opportunities for flexible learning paths in higher education is **evening education programs** offered by most of the universities in Turkey. In these programs, courses are held on evenings, thus, making it available for students who have different occupations and work full-time during the day. Statistics show that in the academic year 2007-2008, there were 357,000 students enrolled in the evening courses. Next measure is the **distance education programs** offered by other universities. At undergraduate level, currently 14 universities offer 32 different programs awarding short cycle degrees. At graduate level, 16 universities offer 40 different programs awarding second cycle degrees. Additionally, in the following academic year, for the first time Sakarya University planned to offer 3 distance education programs awarding for first cycle degree (YOK, 2007a).

More advanced universities offer **Internet based courses** in certain fields to the students of peripheral universities based on the protocols between participating HEIs and upon the approval of the National Committee for Informatics under CoHE (Council of Higher Education). The credits earned from these courses can be transferred to the formal HE programs. Another program in which courses are delivered by flexible methods is industrial Doctorate program in ceramics offered by Anadolu University. YOK report indicates that the



students studying in this program spend a quarter of their time working at the industrial sector (YOK, 2007a).

Quality in the framework of University Lifelong Learning

Lisbon Recognition Convention was signed on December 1, 2004 and this Convention has come into force on March 1, 2007. Related changes were made on the Regulation of Foreign Higher Education Qualifications in line with the Lisbon Recognition Convention and its Supplementary Documents. Recognition, Quality Assurance and Qualifications Framework are the actions the Higher Education Council is interested in **Formal higher education** and there are no descriptions for non-formal education at that level. In terms of quality, currently, each university in Turkey is preparing their annual strategic plans according to the Law on Public Financial Management and Control-No. 5018 since January 1, 2007. The actions for quality assurance have contributed to a more settled dialogue between the employers and the graduates. In addition to this, the starting of dialogue between Council of Higher Education and Vocational Qualifications Authority of Turkey. VQA was founded by law No: 5544 dated September 21, 2006. This authority is responsible for determining the principles of national qualifications in the vocational fields and executing activities related to monitoring, evaluation and certification (YOK, 2009c). The author predicts that cooperation between the universities and industry will promote development of new projects and developing national qualifications toward the recognition of non-formal or continuous education certification programs and recognize the qualifications acquired of experts in different areas as a pathway to be recognized for seeking degrees at lower level cycles, in other words, at associate cycles at college level.

Conclusion and Discussion

The national report on university lifelong learning provides some evidence that there is a growing interest in lifelong education that universities provide to various segments of the society, yet research is very little for the Turkish literature and requires more in-depth research for future implications. The review produced for this brief national report mainly cited two direct research studies on university continuing education centers by Arslan (2008) and Celik (2007), and some figures obtained from the State's Statistical Institute and Higher Education Council. The overview provides some evidence that the qualifications for lifelong learning are in line with the statements released for the European Commission 2006. The initial works are related to qualifications set for the eight-cycle. Non-formal education at university level has not been specified from lifelong learning perspectives yet. Nevertheless, there is a growing trend in developing programs such as the Second University Project," "Two-year Distance Learning programs. The former, also relates to vocational education programs at associate degree levels. Nevertheless, based on the Bologna Process Report (YOK, 2009c) continuous education or non-formal education is not yet included in the



strategic agenda of higher education for the near future (2007a) due to the traditional role of universities that are deeply involved in research and development processes.

One aspect in increasing quality within the higher education system is the Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement, Strategic Planning, Institutional Assessment (self-and environmental), and Periodic Review and Improvement. The processes require all higher education institutions to perform an annual institutional assessment (including self and environmental assessments), define and/or review their measurable strategic objectives within the context of their missions and strategic plans published and periodically review and improve them with the follow up procedures. As a result, universities prepare their self-assessment which includes evaluation results based on a set of performance indicators. The learning and guidance for lifelong learning are included in those indicators, where learning environments are required to expose a more student-centered approach (YOK, 2009c), and informational technology is a means for competing in a global knowledge economy.

To be concluded, it can be recognized based on the report provided that Turkish universities are also influenced by the globalization process, and as Jarvis (2007) put it, lifelong learning has become a new social movement, yet has also become a “commodity” which requires “learning to pay” (Ball, 1998, cited in Jarvis, 2007). Some of learning and guidance for university lifelong learning are in line with the elements taken from the European Commission’s documents such “Linking lifelong learning to the needs of the knowledge-based economy and society, Emphasis on new skills specifically information technology skills, emphasizing the use of ICT, in other words, existence of virtual classrooms (Rasmussen, 2009). This overview can be an initiative in conducting research on how university lifelong learning impacts service providers as researchers and educators, and buyers as practitioners of private and public enterprises and future qualification studies can be conducted to recognize adults’ non-formal learning and qualifications with the different degree cycles, especially at vocational-oriented programs.

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