

## INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION OF TURKEY

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**Purpose.** In the light of modern topicality, the purpose of the actual study was to present the following issues: a brief overview of higher education in Turkey; revealing of educational challenges and opportunities; description of learner-centered teaching; learning resources and student support provision; place of life-long learning at the universities of Turkey and also computational thinking strategy analysis. **Methodology.** This article presents a critical review of the modern strategies of higher education in Turkey. After reviewing the actual and potential problems of tourism education, and their causes, the study then considers teaching strategies, that refer to the system, structure, processes, techniques, methods, and procedures that a teacher employs in the classroom during instruction to assist student learning. The paper then explores that teaching and learning strategies may include whole-class performance-based assessments, a series of individual and group activities to accommodate learning rates and styles and different abilities, skills, and understandings that allow each student to participate and succeed. The survey indicates that the Turkish university students use their personal and social capabilities to cooperate and collaborate effectively with peers in learning activities, to assess their own abilities, susceptibilities, and peers' strengths so that they can develop a range of interpersonal skills such as teamwork, negotiation, communication, and leadership. **Results.** In the frame of the research we have concluded that tertiary education in Turkey is an essential part of the solution for Turkey offering opportunities to students who complete secondary education to go on to further educational opportunities and better job possibilities in the future. Moreover, we have made the summaries that while tertiary education can provide pathways to future opportunities, it can, if overly constrained, also be a bottleneck for some students and further exacerbate equity concerns. To add, the final result have witnessed that in Turkish universities the acquisition of knowledge and skills are actively promoted by methods such as involving students in independent problem solving, project-based learning, teamwork, and independent learning assignments which are aimed at professional competences increase in the modern environment. **Originality.** For the first time, we have carried out the integrated research on the interrelated modern strategies in higher education of Turkey that can be useful for Ukrainian scope as well. **Practical value.** Finally, in this article, we have mentioned that innovative strategies at Turkish universities will instill innovation and creativity among students in receiving information from their teachers in the classroom, at different stages of their tertiary education of Turkey, and help them to develop creative thinking, and help teachers to multiple innovative methods of teaching. To be precise, student-centered learning can be implemented by means of conversation topics «Business»: «Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?» at the universities of Ukraine as well.

**Key words:** higher education, Turkey, challenges and opportunities, strategies, learner-based teaching, graduate knowledge and skills, international standards.

## СУЧАСНІ СТРАТЕГІЇ ВИЩОЇ ОСВІТИ ТУРЕЧЧИНИ

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Представлено критичний огляд сучасних стратегій вищої освіти Туреччини. Ознайомившись із актуальними та потенційними проблемами туристичної освіти та їх причинами, у дослідженні розглянуто стратегії викладання, що стосуються системи, структури, процесів, прийомів, методів та процедур, які вчитель використовує в класі під час навчання для надання допомоги студенту у навчанні. Досліджено, що стратегії викладання та навчання можуть включати оцінки, орієнтовані на результати роботи в цілому класі, серію індивідуальних та групових заходів, що дозволяють враховувати рівень навчання, стилі, різні здібності, навички та розуміння, що дозволяють кожному студенту брати участь та досягти успіху. Дослідження вказує на те, що студенти використовують свої особисті та соціальні можливості, щоб ефективно спілкуватися з однолітками в навчальній діяльності, оцінювати власні здібності, сприйнятливість та сильні сторони ровесників, щоб вони могли розвивати цілий спектр міжособистісних навичок, таких як робота в команді, переговори, спілкування та лідерство. Зважаючи на актуальність сучасності, метою цього дослідження було представити наступні питання: короткий огляд вищої освіти Туреччини; виявлення освітніх викликів та можливостей; опис навчання, орієнтованого на студентів; навчальні ресурси та забезпечення підтримки студентів; роль безперервної освіти в університетах Туреччини, а також аналіз стратегії обчислювального мислення. Таким чином, у цій статті ми згадували, що інноваційні стратегії в турецьких університетах сприятимуть розвитку інноваціям та творчості серед студентів в отриманні інформації від своїх викладачів у класі на різних етапах їх вищої освіти Туреччини та допоможуть їм розвивати творче мислення, допомагаючи вчителям у численних інноваційних методах навчання. Вперше ми провели комплексне дослідження взаємопов'язаних сучасних стратегій у вищій освіті Туреччини, яке може бути корисним і для української сфери. Практичне значення дослідження полягає в тому, що інноваційні стратегії в турецьких університетах допоможуть студентам розвивати творче мислення, а вчителям у розробці численних інноваційних методів навчання. Якщо бути точним, студентоцентроване навчання, можна реалізувати за допомогою тем для бесіди «Бізнес»: «Чи згодні ви чи не згодні з наступними твердженнями?» в університетах України.

**Ключові слова:** вища освіта, Туреччина, виклики та можливості, стратегії, студентоцентроване навчання; знання та вміння випускників, міжнародні стандарти.

**PROBLEM STATEMENT.** Higher education in Turkey, research and innovation play a crucial role in supporting social cohesion, economic growth and global competitiveness. Given the desire for European societies to become increasingly knowledge-based, higher education is an essential component of socio-economic and cultural development.

At the same time, an increasing demand for skills and competences requires higher education to respond in new ways.

Broader access to higher education in Turkey is an opportunity for higher education institutions to make use of increasingly diverse individual experiences. Responding to diversity and growing expectations for higher education in Turkey requires a fundamental shift in its provision; it requires a more student-centred approach to learning and teaching, embracing flexible learning paths and recognising competences gained outside formal curricula. In addition, in Turkey higher education institutions themselves also become more diverse in their missions, mode of educational provision and cooperation, including of internationalisation, digital learning and new forms of delivery. The role of quality assurance is crucial in supporting higher education systems and institutions in Turkey in responding to these changes while ensuring the qualifications achieved by students and their experience of higher education remain at the forefront of institutional missions.

In the light of modern topicality, the purpose of the actual study was to present the following issues: a brief overview of higher education in Turkey; revealing of educational challenges and opportunities; description of learner-centred teaching; learning resources and student support provision; place of life-long learning at the universities of Turkey and also computational thinking strategy analysis [1].

**MATERIALS AND RESEARCH. A Brief Overview of Higher Education in Turkey.** In 1981, in accordance with the new Higher Education Law, the administration of higher education in Turkey was comprehensively restructured. The system thereby became centralized, with all higher education institutions tied to the Council of Higher Education [1, 2].

After this restructuring, all higher education institutions were designed as universities. Expansion of higher education throughout the country was achieved, application to higher education was centralized, and a central university exam and placement were introduced. In addition to state universities, non-profit foundation universities started to be established since 1984 [1, 2, 3].

In part, the answer to the question I have posed can be found embedded in the very concept of strategy itself. As *Whipp* points out, the term strategy has military origins and is derived from the Greek word for generalship. Its meaning evolved to encompass a coherent set of actions intended to achieve a specific military objective. conducted in the presence of the opposition. Strategy now constitutes an important weapon in the armoury of the modern manager because strategy and planning have become inextricably linked. At its simplest strategic planning may be understood as an approach to establishing the long term future of an organisation and then moving that organisation in an appropri-

ate direction to achieve the future state to which its members, or at least its key members, aspire [3, 4].

As *Schendel and Hofer* note, strategic planning is concerned with: the entrepreneurial work of the organisation, with renewal and growth, with developing and utilising the strategy to guide the organisation's operations. This emphasises the connection between strategy, planning and the future development of the organisation. Strategic planning is thus the integration of an organisation's major goals, policies and actions into a cohesive whole. It consists of: a list of actions so ordered as to attain over a particular time period, certain desired objectives derived from a careful analysis of the internal and external factors likely to affect the organisation, which will move the organisation from where it is now to where it wants to be [5].

As *Johnson and Scholes* considers strategic planning, therefore, can best be understood as matching the activities of an organisation to its environment and its resource capabilities. It has been argued that, at universities, strategic planning is a key management process which draws together institutional values and goals and provides a framework for improving the deployment of resources and the quality of provision [3, 4].

**Educational Challenges and Opportunities.** Education and skill levels in Turkey lag international standards, including the European Union. As highlighted in figures and discussion in a later section of the paper on access and equity, results of international tests show poor performance for many students in Turkey and participation in secondary education, as well as tertiary education, is low by international standards. Significant disparities also exist in educational quality and access by gender, social and economic group, and geographic location. For example, 40 percent of 20 to 24 year olds in Turkey had a secondary degree in 2005. The rates are lower for girls and for certain regions.

While educational attainment and skill levels are low in Turkey, at the same time, private returns to education are high. There are positive impacts for secondary education as well as tertiary education. In addition, the positive impact of education on earnings is even more visible for females than for males.

Increasing educational attainment and performance at all levels of education is key to Turkey's successful entry and integration into the EU in future years. As indicators of educational quality and access are much lower in Turkey than for EU countries, Turkey faces an even greater challenge in achieving these goals than countries already in the European Union. The issues of educational access and quality are intertwined at all levels of education, with opportunities at one level affecting the education occurring earlier as well as later. Expanding and reforming secondary and tertiary education in a balanced and coordinated way will be more effective than focusing predominantly or sequentially on one level of education.

Tertiary education is an essential part of the solution for Turkey offering opportunities to students who complete secondary education to go on to further educational opportunities and better job possibilities in the future. While tertiary education can provide pathways to future opportunities, it can, if overly constrained, also be a

bottleneck for some students and further exacerbate equity concerns. In addition, options to reform vocational and technical education need to be coordinated across secondary and tertiary education so that all students in secondary education have strong general skills with more technical education and training occurring in later years of secondary education or early years of tertiary education [3, 4]

The representative higher education organisations such as YÖK, the Inter-University Council and the Rectors' Committee, together with the university community, business and industry representatives and organisations such as TÜSİAD, must be at the forefront of defining the role of the university in modern Turkey, in a dialogue with society at large. With the Bologna process and the Lisbon agenda, universities have been assigned a key role in the "knowledge society", where human potential is the driver of modernisation and development. To exploit this potential, the right conditions have to be created so that individual creativity and commitment are encouraged. Autonomy is a self-evident principle in regard to academic freedom. It is necessary to allow for diversity between institutions and to improve efficiency in the use of resources. It is also important as a precondition if creativity and innovation are to flourish. In the field of higher education this means that universities will need autonomy to make their own decisions about internal affairs but in accordance with a national strategy and vision. Turkey has taken huge steps to expand its "knowledge production" in just a few decades by establishing scores of universities to cover large parts of the country [3, 4, 6, 7].

The next step is a qualitative one: not just in the formal sense that quality assurance will be understood and functioning in order to foster a quality culture, but much more fundamentally, in that the definition of the university in Turkey will become at once broader and narrower. Broader in the sense that the university will be understood – by society, and not only by those involved in higher education – not just as a generator of knowledge and research, but as a player in the social and economic development of regions, the nation and the global community. Narrower in the sense that the current all-encompassing and one-size-fits-all approach to legislating for and governing universities will give way to a regulatory environment that will encourage universities to cater to defined publics, and where the individual profile of each university will be able to emerge. Both concepts will have to be recognized and understood by society at large. A dialogue between universities and businesses and industry, communities and society will be established as a permanent feature in this knowledge-based society. Universities, YÖK and the many other organizations involved in higher education, must open up communication channels with society to make this development happen [5, 6–9].

**Learner-Centered Teaching.** Mass education and the need to provide large numbers of graduates with employable skills require a change to more interactive learning methods. The acquisition of knowledge and skills is promoted by methods such as involving students in independent problem solving, project-based learning, teamwork, and independent learning assign-

ments. It is vital that the academic staff have ready access to training programmes in the new teaching methods. Promote outcome-based learning alongside traditional teaching methods, by revisiting existing curricula to incorporate transmitting skills and competences for the four levels of postsecondary/ higher education. Set up a university unit, for example in teacher-training faculties, to organise staff development programmes for disseminating the new teaching methods [3, 4].

Student-centred learning and teaching plays an important role in stimulating students' motivation, self-reflection and engagement in the learning process. This means careful consideration of the design and delivery of study programmes and the assessment of outcomes. The implementation of student-centred learning and teaching plays the following important functions:

- respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths;
- considers and uses different modes of delivery, where appropriate;
- flexibly uses a variety of pedagogical methods;
- regularly evaluates and adjusts the modes of delivery and pedagogical methods;
- encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher;
- promotes mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship;
- has appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints.

Considering the importance of assessment for the students' progression and their future careers, quality assurance processes for assessment take into account the following:

- assessors are familiar with existing testing and examination methods and receive support in developing their own skills in this field;
- the criteria for and method of assessment as well as criteria for marking are published in advance;
- the assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. students are given feedback, which, if necessary, is linked to advice on the learning process;
- where possible, assessment is carried out by more than one examiner;
- the regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstances;
- assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures;
- a formal procedure for student appeals is in place [1, 3, 7, 9].

**Learning Resources and Student Support.** For a good higher education experience, institutions provide a range of resources to assist student learning. These vary from physical resources such as libraries, study facilities and IT infrastructure to human support in the form of tutors, counsellors and other advisers. The role of support services is of particular importance in facilitating the mobility of students within and across higher education systems.

The needs of a diverse student population (such as mature, part-time, employed and international students as well as students with disabilities), and the shift towards student-centered learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing the learning resources and student support.

Support activities and facilities may be organized in a variety of ways depending on the institutional context. However, the internal quality assurance ensures that all

resources are fit for purpose, accessible, and that students are informed about the services available to them.

In delivering support services the role of support and administrative staff is crucial and therefore they need to be qualified and have opportunities to develop their competences [1, 6, 8].

Student-centered learning can be realized during studying the discipline “English for Specific Purposes” during the personal speaking on *conversation topics* “**Business**”: “*Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?*” (Table 1).

Table 1 – Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

1.	It doesn't matter whether you enjoy your job or not as long as it's a well-paid job.
2.	Self-employment is more stimulating than working for a large organisation.
3.	Social networks have rapidly become communication tools for many companies. They will be further developed for business in the future.
4.	Innovation is different from invention.
5.	In the future most companies will be online companies. There will be fewer offices and more call centres.
6.	Anyone who has contact with a customer is a salesperson - and that includes the person who answers the phone!
7.	Small companies can adapt more quickly to changes in the market place than large corporations.
8.	Companies become more efficient as they grow in size.
9.	More time is wasted during meetings than during any other business activity.
10.	It is impossible to have a successful career and a happy family life.
11.	It is impossible for young people to find a (good) job today without help from someone.
12.	Qualifications are more important today than ever before.
13.	A successful salesperson knows the strengths and weaknesses of competing products.
14.	Small companies cannot offer employees opportunities for promotion.
15.	There is more creativity in multinational companies than in small firms.
16.	Some companies do not adhere to proper rules of conduct.
17.	It is dishonest for companies to avoid paying income tax in the countries where they are established.
18.	Men and women are not always treated equally in the workplace.
19.	Whenever possible, employees should be allowed to choose their own working hours.
20.	Technology has changed business methods to the detriment of human relations.

**Computational Thinking Strategy.** Computational thinking is a powerful approach to thinking and problem solving. It involves breaking large problems down into smaller ones (decomposition), recognizing how these relate to problems that have been solved in the past (pattern recognition), setting aside unimportant details (abstraction), identifying and developing the steps that will be necessary to reach a solution (algorithms) and refining these steps (debugging). Such computational thinking skills can be valuable in many aspects of life, ranging from writing a recipe to share a favorite dish with friends, through planning a holiday or expedition, to deploying a scientific team to tackle a difficult challenge like an outbreak of disease.

The aim is to teach students to structure problems so they can be solved. Computational thinking can be taught as part of mathematics, science and art or in other settings. The aim is not just to encourage children to be computer coders, but also to master an art of thinking that will enable them to tackle complex challenges in all aspects of their lives [4, 9].

The Turkey's focus at present is to deal with its young population and thus life-long learning has not been among its priorities. Nevertheless, life-long learning is present in most universities, either as a means to generate funding by providing it as a service to the ex-

ternal community or for social reasons, or both. However, credits are not given for these programmes. So, students may: use ECTS for adult education and community-led programmes in order to promote life-long learning in the community at large; consider life-long learning as a business opportunity that yields valuable financial and social returns, and consequently be more proactive and market-oriented in relation to life-long learning; integrate life-long learning programmes with vocational programmes [4, 6, 8, 10, 11].

According to the Bologna Process report on the subject of life-long learning, participants found that the country's focus at present is to deal with its young population and thus life-long learning was not among its priorities. Nevertheless, in addition to the country's one open and distance learning university, which was not the subject of any of the 17 IEP reviews, life-long learning is present in most universities. They offer such programmes either as a means to generate funding by providing them as a service to the external community, or for social reasons, or both. Offerings are invariably demand-led. On the other hand, participants commented that the fees charged were too high to be affordable by as many people as would otherwise be interested in taking courses. They also noted that the programmes do not lead to an award of credits [6, 9, 12].

*Relevance of Graduate Knowledge and Skills to Employment.* Related to outcome-based teaching and learning is another issue in the European dialogue on higher education, namely its relevance to the job market. How well are graduates equipped to take on work in the real world? How abstract is the knowledge they acquire at colleges or universities? Can they use that knowledge in real job situations? The Bologna process continues to address this issue.

*As London Communiqué mentions: "We urge institutions to further develop partnerships and cooperation with employers in the ongoing process of curriculum innovation based on learning outcomes"* [1, 4].

In Europe, the importance assigned by higher education institutions to graduate employability has grown by 11% since 2003, with 67% of respondents. "There are 4.5 million jobs on offer and 5 million unemployed. This suggests a mismatch between training and professional needs".

In fact, in 2005 about 6% of 25-29-year-olds in Turkey whose education was below the upper secondary level were unemployed and not in education, while the figure was around 9% for those with upper secondary and post-secondary attainment and as high as 12% for those with higher education [1, 10, 11].

According to OECD, in 2005 only Greece and Italy topped Turkey in the unemployment rate for higher education graduates, but in these three countries and New Zealand (which had a low unemployment total overall), the proportion of unemployed higher education graduates to those without higher education was the reverse: In the other countries surveyed, higher education offered a much better chance for employment than lower levels of schooling. While more recent Turkish official statistics were reported to show a greater differentiation in unemployment rates of university graduates between different fields, there were several universities where the leadership had become aware of the employability concern and had begun to tackle it [7].

Not surprisingly, among those reviewed by IEP, some leading universities in Turkey seem to be most advanced in addressing this issue. In fact, one working group in the 9-10 May 2008 workshop reported that the relationship between educational programmes of the universities and both the job market and industrial partnerships was quite good in Turkey. However, this does not seem to be the case in general with respect to employability, as reported by the other working group on the subject, and this position is corroborated by the IEP reports as well as by the available data and the literature.

At the same time there is a sharp increase in formal relationships between universities and industry. One working group pointed out that some technically oriented universities have set up advisory boards composed of industrial stakeholders to collaborate on designing study programmes that are relevant to the job market. These are good initiatives which, if disseminated, could serve as models for other universities in the country.

The issue of foreign language proficiency must be noted again in this context. University leaders, staff and many students in Turkey appear to be conscious of the fact that there is a great need for improving language learning [7, 8, 9].

Remarkably, in two state universities and a private one among the 17 universities reviewed by IEP, the language of teaching is English only, while twelve offer some courses in a major European language. Among all universities in Turkey there are twelve foundation universities in addition to the two state institutions where instruction is in English and one where French is the language of teaching.

In addition, as noted in the introduction to this report, Turkey has agreements with the State University of New York for dual-diploma programmes, and a German university will begin operations in 2009 with the support of the German Academic Exchange Programme, DAAD [7, 10, 11].

Nevertheless, many of the IEP reviews remarked on the lack of language proficiency experienced during their visits with university staff and students. The draft Strategy of YÖK reached a similar conclusion when it noted, "surveys indicate that about 60% of academic staff have foreign language problem and about 42% of them have never visited abroad".

At system level, this should best be addressed in general education, since students at a younger age are more readily able to acquire another language. That would require a stepped-up and significantly funded national programme for language teacher training. In higher education, it is essential that all graduates have some knowledge of a major foreign language, to enable them to both have access to a wider body of knowledge and international literature in their fields through the electronic media, and to continue advancing their knowledge and skills as these become outdated in the span of their career. Therefore, in order to advance the population of Turkey into a knowledge society, language teaching should be addressed on a national scale [2, 11, 12].

**CONCLUSIONS.** To conclude, institutions of higher learning in Turkey are responding to political, economic, social and technological pressures to be more responsive to students' needs and more concerned about how well students are prepared to assume future societal roles. Faculty are already feeling the pressure to lecture less, to make learning environments more interactive, to integrate technology into the learning experience, and to use collaborative learning strategies when appropriate.

The current challenge and opportunity for Turkey is the potential for progress in its European engagement. This is the dominant factor in the national strategy. There is also an awareness of the need to provide education to ensure modernization, though this has not been accompanied by either the funds or the structural changes necessary to ensure high quality provision. The structural changes revolve most notably around the degree of autonomy of higher education institutions in Turkey.

Building on the agreed mission and vision for higher education in Turkey will be a national strategy, with timelines and responsibilities based on subsidiarity assigned to actors and, importantly, once a new higher education strategy has been agreed upon and the steps for implementation have been launched, a period of consolidation should follow. The Turkish higher education develops its capacity for strategic thinking, for devising overarching policies and for motivating the members of the university to realise their potential [1, 13].

Individual success is a powerful driver, and individual satisfaction is a robust instrument for leaders with which to derive maximum application of effort as well as a readiness for consensus building among members of the university. More than in most other organisations, the success of universities relies on the creativity of its employees. Responsibility with real consequences that the leadership has the power to implement, coupled with individual commitment, initiative and innovation, are what a university environment is about, in Turkey as elsewhere [13].

The further researches can be made in finding out information technology impact learning environment at Turkish universities, for instance distance learning technologies, such as: computer simulations, interactive collaboration/discussion, and the creation of virtual learning environments connecting regions or nations as well as components of distance learning such as email, list serves, and interactive software have also been useful additions to the educational setting.

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#### СОВРЕМЕННЫЕ СТРАТЕГИИ ВЫСШЕГО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ ТУРЦИИ

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Представлен критический обзор современных стратегий высшего образования Турции. Ознакомившись с актуальными и потенциальными проблемами туристического образования и их причинами, в исследовании затем рассматриваются стратегии преподавания, касающихся системы, структуры, процессов, приемов, методов и процедур, которые учитель использует в классе во время обучения для оказания помощи студенту в учебе. Исследуется, что стратегии преподавания и обучения могут включать оценки, ориентированные на результаты работы в целом классе, серию индивидуальных и групповых мероприятий, позволяющих учитывать уровень обучения, стили, разные способности, навыки и понимание, позволяющие каждому студенту участвовать и достичь успеха. Исследование указывает на то, что студенты используют свои личные и социальные возможности, чтобы эффективно общаться со сверстниками в учебной деятельности, оценивать собственные способности, восприимчивость и сильные стороны сверстников, чтобы они могли развивать целый спектр межличностных навыков, таких как работа в команде, переговоры, общения и лидерство. Учитывая актуальность современности, целью данного исследования было представить следующие вопросы: краткий обзор высшего образования Турции; выявление образовательных вызовов и возможностей; описание обучения, ориентированного на студентов; учебные ресурсы и обеспечение поддержки студентов; роль непрерывного образования в университетах Турции, а также анализ стратегии вычислительного мышления. Таким образом, в этой статье мы упоминали, что инновационные стратегии в турецких университетах способствуют развитию инновациям и творчества среди студентов в получении информации от преподавателей в классе на разных этапах их высшего образования Турции, развивая творческое мышление и помогая учителям в многочисленных инновационных методах обучения.

**Ключевые слова:** высшее образование, Турция, вызовы и возможности, стратегии, студентоцентричное обучения, знания и умения выпускников, международные стандарты.

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