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The Expansion of Higher Education in Emerging Economies: Examples from Turkey and Chile

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Abstract

Turkey and Chile, both emerging economies, have accomplished the upgrade of their tertiary education systems to a universal level over the last two decades, whilst following different expansion strategies. While Turkey established more than 50 public universities, particularly in the least developed regions, enabling students from lower socioeconomic status to gain access higher education in their locale, Chile facilitated the privatisation of its higher education sector, effectively segregating the lower and upper socioeconomic classes with regard to their access to higher education. In this theoretical paper, we aim to analyse the higher expansion strategies of Turkey and Chile with a particular focus on the consequences of rapid higher education expansion in both countries. The paper starts by presenting the motivations behind attaining higher education and then continues with a delineation of the Turkish and Chilean higher education systems. After summarising the above expansion strategies, the paper then focuses on how the recent bold expansion strategies have boosted tertiary enrolment in each of these countries and the consequences of the rapid expansion in terms of quality of, and fair access to tertiary education.

Keywords: Higher education expansion, Massification, Emerging economies, Turkey, Chile

Introduction

Worldwide, there is a growing tendency towards the massification of higher education (HE). The number of tertiary students globally has more than doubled over the last two decades, rising from 100 million in 2000 to 235 million in 2020 (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022). Also, UNESCO's data on national HE systems creates the impression that HE expansion is occurring in almost every state, though at changing rates. The tertiary systems in many high-income countries achieved 'universal' access, in Trow's (1973) terminology, prior to the turn of the millennium. While some low-and-middle-income countries (LMICs) have achieved the universal phase in the last few decades, many of the world's least-developed countries are only able to provide higher education for small segments of their societies. To illustrate, according to the recent statistics published by UNESCO (2022), the worldwide gross tertiary enrolment ratio (GTER) doubled between 2000 and 2020, rising from 19% to 40%. While GTER is 77% for OECD member countries, the least developed countries' average GTER stands at only 11%.

Even though the massification process started earlier in the developed nations, some emerging economies have shown significant progress in expanding their national tertiary systems by following aggressive tertiary expansion strategies (Özoğlu et al., 2016). As two conspicuous examples, Turkey and Chile, both emerging economies, followed bold expansion strategies that both ostensibly resulted in the rapid increase in the countries' tertiary enrolments. The GTERs in Turkey and Chile reached

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115% and 93%, respectively, in 2019, increasing by almost 90% for Turkey and 55% for Chile since the beginning of the millennium (World Bank, 2022a). Despite their economic and educational similarities, these recent periods of rapid HE expansion in both countries has been boosted through quite different expansion strategies. However, limited attention has been paid to the massification processes of these countries in the pertinent literature. Investigating how the different policy interventions of these countries have impacted issues regarding quality and fair access to HE might also help to illuminate the pros and cons of the associated strategies. This might help to further elucidate the lessons to be learned from emerging economies that have experienced the rapid expansion of their higher education systems. Hence, this paper aims to manifest the tensions between quality and fair access evinced within the Turkish and Chilean HE systems through a historical and comparative perspective.

In this theoretical paper, we comparatively examine the HE expansion processes of the Turkish and Chilean HE systems, considering the commonalities and divergences in these two countries and general worldwide patterns. The examination focused on the strategies to augment new HEIs and remove fiscal barriers to allow for widening participation throughout the recent expansion period of the last two decades. We first present a background on higher education systems in both countries by outlining their previous expansion strategies. This section will be followed by an investigation and comparison of the recent rapid expansions of the Turkish and Chilean HE systems, particularly with regard to the issues mentioned above. We finish by assessing the similarities and differences between the rapid expansions of the Turkish and Chilean HE systems to draw an all-encompassing picture of the pros and cons of the strategies utilised by each country to enhance both quality and fair access to HE.

Conceptual Framework

This paper conceptualises higher education expansion policies in terms of two intertwined domains; the source of establishing new places, and the type of fiscal support offered to gain access to higher education. Here, the literature regarding LMICs will be utilised as both countries have similar characteristics to the LMIC countries during the period considered in this study, even though Chile has recently begun to be listed among the high-income countries (World Bank, 2022b). Although the contemporary world is experiencing a post-massification era (Jongbloed & Vossensteyn, 2016) or an era of high participation in higher education systems (Marginson, 2016), LMICs have been facing severe problems in terms of keeping pace with such high participation trends as they have limited resources to utilise (Schendel & McCowan, 2016). In LMICs, the widening participation agenda has been prioritised to engage with global trends with the intention of boosting the high-skilled labour force in line with knowledge-based economy discourse. Yet, the impetus of the expansion strategies in LMICs differs from that in high-income countries as the majority of LMICs do not have adequate resources to enhance higher education access through taxpayers' money alone. This is accelerating the privatisation of HE in LMICs, also aligning with the neoliberal agenda that aims to increase competition across higher education institutions (HEIs) and, therefore, ensure quality (Jamshidi et al., 2012; Kromydas, 2017).

At the time of writing, around one-third of global HE students are enrolled at private HEIs (Levy, 2018). Private providers have a more salient role in HE expansion in certain countries including Korea, Hong Kong, Brazil, Chile, India, the Philippines, and the US, according to Marginson (2016), where private HEIs are the main medium of HE expansion in these countries. In Brazil, the rapid growth of private HEIs in the sector has yielded a rapid increase in HE enrolment; student enrolments increased from 1.5 million in 1992 to over 7.5 million in 2012 (McCowan, 2016). The traditional explanation that the needs of the labour market is the main factor driving HE expansion is too simplistic. Students do not enrol in tertiary education purely for the economic return that an HE degree might offer; rather social expectations and socioeconomic background play a significant role in the decision to enter HE (Aamodt & Kyvik, 2005). Trow and Burrage (2010) argued that family aspiration is the main driver for the increase of tertiary enrolments, regardless of the changing social and economic developments, because families are well aware of the advantages that an HE degree could offer in terms of paving the way for social mobility or for preserving their children's social position. Betterment is limitless; therefore, families always demand HE for their children to improve or preserve their social status, albeit that upward social mobility through an HE degree is mainly a middle-class phenomenon because, as Marginson (2016) argues, while the upper class are not expecting an economic return for tertiary

education and the lower class are not aware of the potential economic gains possible via higher education, the middle class seeks social upgrade through higher education attainment. Therefore, HE attainment forces a certain ‘quasi-obligation’ on the middle class (Trow, 1973). This might explain students’ and families’ ongoing willingness to pay significant amounts of money to private HEIs. This fact notwithstanding, social demand is mostly insufficient to explain the level of tertiary enrolment in many countries as its increase clearly requires available places at HEIs.

Herein, governmental bodies play pivotal roles in different parts of HE expansion, including creating available places, monitoring, and funding in many national HE systems. Since establishing new universities requires financial assistance, access to HE is limited without a stable economy that provides resources for HE (public or private) and places in the labour market (Kaiser & Vossenteyn, 2005). State interference is most apparent when an HE system moves to the next phase of massification of HE (Marginson, 2016). In addition to creating available places at HEIs, central governments are generally the main sponsors or financial regulators of tertiary education, as in the case of Turkey, but some countries, including Chile, will share the financial burden with private providers, and with families and students through tuition fees.

In the following sections, Turkey and Chile, both emerging economies, are presented in a comparative sense as distinct examples of the above, as the former pursued the “state control” model, which appoints the state as the sole authority to organise and conduct the system, while the latter followed the “state supervising” model, which accepts the state's role is to reconcile a large autonomous system (Dobbins et al., 2011), throughout their HE expansion processes. Additionally, special attention is given to the recent rapid expansion processes since both countries' tertiary massification levels have been upgraded over the last two decades from the mass phase to the universal phase by following different strategies. Before scrutinising the recent expansion strategies in both countries, the two countries’ higher education systems and previous expansion strategies will now be described.

Higher Education Systems and Previous Expansion Strategies in Turkey and Chile

Turkey

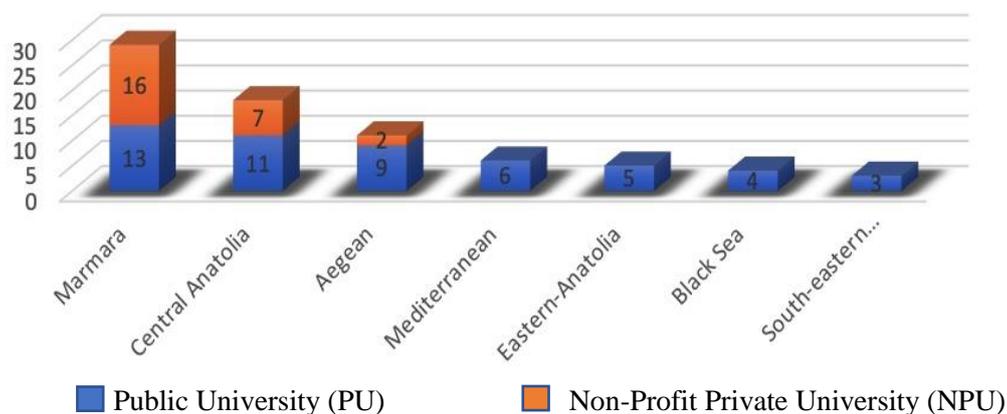
Turkey has a large-scale tertiary educational system composed of nearly 8 million students, 201 HEIs, and approximately 150,000 academic staff, according to recent official figures released by the Turkish Council of Higher Education (<https://istatistik.yok.gov.tr/>). Almost half of the tertiary students are pursuing open education degrees while 52% of open education tertiary students are pursuing a bachelor’s degree, 48% are on short-cycle programmes. Also, the number of foreign students enrolled at Turkish universities has quadrupled since 2013/14, reaching 224,048 in 2020/21.

The Council of Higher Education (CoHE) administers the Turkish HE system in accordance with the Higher Education Act numbered 2547. As a result of the ongoing expansion efforts, particularly those recent ones that have been taken in place since the turn of the millennium, GTER in Turkey reached 115% in 2019 from 40% in 2008 (World Bank, 2022a). Before delving into the recent rapid expansion of Turkish HE, previous expansion strategies should be discussed to gain a better understanding of the expansion process as a whole.

The first efforts that can be considered “expansion” were made after the enactment of the Higher Education Act number 2547 in 1980; due to this, eight public universities (PUs) were opened, though in fact these universities are created through the conversion of existing HEIs, such as academies, colleges, etc., into universities. More importantly, private providers were allowed to establish HEIs. Here, we need to specify that private providers can engage in the system merely in a “foundation university” format as a non-profit private university (NPU) but which is supported by the government through the allocation of land for free and tax reductions (Guzman et al., 2022). Hence, even though there are serious discussions regarding the extent to which these universities are operating for non-profit purposes (Coşar & Ergül, 2015; Fırat & Akkuzu, 2015), in the Turkish HE system, the sense of “private university” is different from that of many other countries across the world, including Chile. The first NPU university, Bilkent University, was established in Ankara in 1984 and non-profit private

universities (NPUs) have been contributing to the HE expansion in Turkey ever since. Additionally, the CoHE has been established as an autonomous legal entity to regulate and oversee the HE education sector in Turkey in accordance with the Higher Education Act (Gür & Çelik, 2011). Since 1981, the CoHE has been the principal organization in charge of the Turkish higher education system (Tekneci, 2016).

The second expansion occurred in 1992 with the establishment 24 universities (23 PUs and one NPU), predominantly in the western regions of Turkey and, giving a total number of universities of 53 (51 PUs and two NPUs). After two public universities' openings between 1992 and 1994, according to Sargin (2007), the Turkish higher education sector continued to expand through private providers until 2005, contrary to previous state efforts. Except for two universities established in Izmir and Mersin, all NPUs were opened in Istanbul (16), located in the Marmara region, and Ankara (7), located in Central Anatolia.



Graph 1. Regional distribution of HEIs in Turkey in 2005 (Source: Statistics Unit of the CoHE)

As discussed above, the new public universities were set up in different regions of Turkey, taking the uniqueness in local advancement into consideration. The propensity to build up new PUs and NPUs in major urban areas, for the most part in western districts, proceeded until 2005. This approach reinforced the supremacy of major urban communities in giving advanced education and has been detrimental to increasing the parity with significant urban communities across the country. In total, migration flows in Turkey from less developed to metropolitan regions and urbanization procedures have been profoundly connected. The migration flow is generally from the eastern to the western regions of Turkey. With this movement stream, universities were generally set up in major cities (for the most part in the west) until 2005 (Sargin, 2007). This propensity exacerbated the dissimilarity in higher education enrolments across different regions. After 2005, a series of expansion strategies were initiated, as will be discussed below, that resulted in an immense increase in GTER in Turkey, from 35% in 2005 to 115% in 2019 (World Bank, 2022a).

Chile

Chile has a diverse and highly privatised tertiary education system, composed by nearly 1,200,000 students, enrolled in 142 HEIs (58 universities, 34 professional institutes, and 50 technical educational centres) (SIES, 2022). Only 23.3% of higher education institutions are public, with 83.2% of students enrolled in for-profit private institutions, while enrolment reached a total of 1,204,414 students in 2021 (SIES, 2022) and GTER had risen to 93% in 2019 (World Bank, 2022a), with 57% of students enrolled in universities (SIES, 2022). The tertiary enrolment rates in Chile have increased by 517% over the last 30 years (SIES, 2022). Nevertheless, this had not been the norm in the twentieth century. The Chilean HE system entered the higher participation phase during the first years of the twenty-first century, following the prevalent global trend.

Between the 1960s and mid-1980s, the Chilean HE sector could be characterised as being in an elite phase where strict selection processes were the norm and with a student population composed mainly

of the upper class. The first effort that can be considered expansion occurred during the student movement at the end of the 1960s, which aimed to expand higher education to other parts of society (Bernasconi & Rojas, 2003). As a result, from 1967 until 1973, the current seven universities of that time expanded across the national territory through regional campuses, with enrolment approaching 15%. Over only a few years, the public investment doubled from 1.08% (in 1967) of GDP to 2.11% (in 1973) (Brunner, 2015).

The second period of expansion occurred as a direct consequence of the new regulations established during the military dictatorship (1973-1990). In 1980, an educational reform, called “Decree Law 1980” (Decreto Ley, 1980), was introduced that transformed the Chilean HE system. The reform addressed three key aspects of the Chilean HE system: first, diversification of investment and the reduction of public expenditure by introducing student fees in public HEIs; second, the increase in educational suppliers by opening the HE system to the market and reducing and relaxing the requirements to open an HEI, with the aim of attracting private investors; and third, through the established neoliberal economic model of the Pinochet regime, competition among HE institutions and the creation of different types of academic programmes was stimulated. After the reform, a massive number of private providers emerged in parallel with a significant reduction in public funding. By the end of 1989, the total number of HEIs had grown by more 2,250% and public funding was less than 0.5% of the GDP (Brunner, 2015). HE offers and student enrolment increased mainly because new HEIs, primarily vocational centres, provided short courses that charged low fees and did not apply any selection process for its intake of students (Espinoza, 2017). At the end of the dictatorship in 1990, GTER had reached 18.5% (World Bank, 2022a).

During the 1990s, economic growth and political stability increased the wellbeing of the population, especially in terms of access to essential services such as health, housing, and education (Bernasconi & Rojas, 2003). As a result of increased welfare and the high number of high school graduates, a massification period within the Chilean HE began, mostly on the demand of students from the middle and upper classes. The GTER rose by more than 15.7% in 10 years (1990-1999), and reached 48.8% in 2005 (World-Bank, 2022), albeit that the gap between the three social classes in tertiary enrolment had been exacerbated over the years; for instance, while the percentage of students from the first quintile (the poorest one) in HE rose from 4.4% in 1990 to 9.4% in 2000, the proportion of the fifth quintile (the richest one) in HE increased from 40.2% in 1990 to 65.6% in 2000 (Bernasconi & Rojas, 2003). After 2005, surprisingly similar to Turkey's HE expansion period, Chile's GTER rose from 48.8% in 2005 to 93% in 2019, though by following a quite different expansion approach, as discussed below.

As presented above, although both countries' expansion processes date back decades, both countries' HE systems have upgraded from the mass phase to the universal phase ($GTER > 50$) in less than 15 years by employing bold and disparate expansion strategies that are thus worth investigating and comparing. In the following section, the recent HE expansion strategies in Turkey and Chile are presented with a specific focus on the strategies used to establish new HEIs and to provide economic support to students.

Higher Education Expansion in Turkey and Chile since 2005

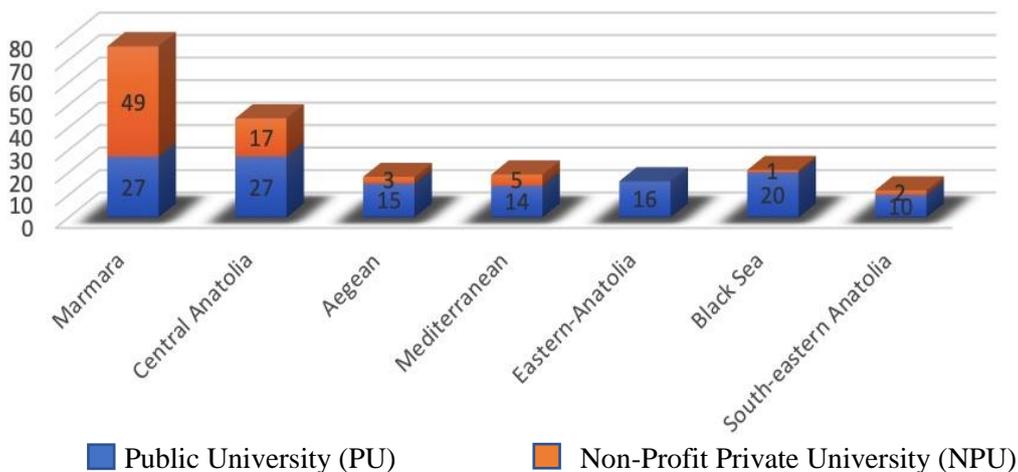
Establishing New Places

Enlarging the number of HEIs is one of the prominent strategies of HE expansion. The majority of LMICs utilised private resources to create new places as they have limited resources. In Chile, too, the massification of HE was mostly a private phenomenon in terms of investment and provision (Brunner, 2015; Williamson, 2019). Family expenditure was three times higher than public spending in terms of proportions of GDP in Chile, whilst public expenditure on tertiary education was less than 0.4% of GDP, ranking Chile as having the second- highest private expenditure on tertiary education, just after South Korea (OECD, 1998). Additionally, by 2000, state student aid was only available for students enrolling at public and private institutions created before the 1980 Reform (i.e., traditional universities) which had 46.1% of the total tertiary enrolment at that time (Espinoza & Gonzalez, 2013). Besides, these traditional universities were the HEIs where students from the middle/upper classes tended to study. The

state fund, the University Credit Solidarity Fund, also known as the FSCU (according to its Spanish acronym), were only available for traditional universities, therefore students enrolled in other institutions were ultimately entirely dependent on family income to be able to access HE, yielding disproportionately greater barriers for students from lower socioeconomic status to obtaining an HE degree. Therefore, as Paredes (2015) argues, the state financial aid was a regressive policy, where the state funds students those in need less and where students from the lowest economic backgrounds were denied state help. Overall, Chilean students from high socioeconomic backgrounds attained disproportionately more in tertiary education over the years.

In contrast to many LMICs, Turkey embarked upon a firm public-funded tertiary expansion crusade with the motto “one (public) university for each city” in 2006, with the particular aim of reducing regional disparity in level of education (Mercan, 2016). Because the disparity across the least developed and most developed regions is quite evident in the distribution of HEIs, for example, while a smaller number of public universities is present in the least developed regions, as shown in Graph 2, the majority of universities are located in the most developed regions. Subsequently, in 2006-2008, 41 public universities were established in the less-developed provinces, as opposed to previous university locations which were in densely populated, developed regions of Turkey. In 2008, each of the 81 provinces had had at least one state university regardless of the population and developmental level. Arguably, the locations of the new universities have been effective at increasing tertiary enrolments by offering tertiary education for locals who intend to study in their own domicile.

Although Turkey followed a public-funded expansion route rather than encouraging competitiveness across universities, in contrast to Chile and the majority of LMICs, there are a number of underlying economic motivations for this decision. University openings are seen as an economic investment by the state because an HEI increases the market value of locals by offering a university degree, creates job opportunities for the region through the recruitment of the local people for various purposes on the university campuses, and generates income for the local market as they offer essential services to the university students and staff. Therefore, economic expectations from university openings have been frequently cited in the public and political sphere by various MPs and politicians (Arap, 2010). Additionally, new university openings, particularly in the less developed regions, aim to diminish the migration flows towards the major cities as many students, sometimes with their families, were migrating to the big cities to enter HE (Sargin, 2007). As can be seen in Graph 2, in every district, the quantity of HEIs has expanded as compared with 2005. The provincial difference as far as HEI circulation tends to decline, despite the strength of Marmara and Central Anatolia locales. At present, through this bold state intervention, every region has at least one state university and a private university except for the Eastern-Anatolia region, which is the poorest in the country.



Graph 2. Current regional distribution of HEIs in Turkey (2022) (Source: Statistics Unit of the CoHE)

Overall, courtesy of the “one (public) university for each city” policy, recent expansion in Turkish HE system has arguably provided much greater parity in access to students from various backgrounds than the highly privatised Chilean HE system by removing barriers to students in the less developed regions. As the public-funded model in LMICs normally only provides higher education to a small elite group (Oketch, 2016), achieving this through public funding is arguably a noteworthy development. Nonetheless, there have been various challenges stemming from the route that followed through the recent rapid HE expansion in Turkey. These newly opened universities have faced shortages of both quality academic and administrative staff (Akçığıt & Özcan-Tok, 2020; Gök, 2016). The academic performance of public universities, as measured by the rate of researchers with publications, has been fluctuating since 2007, despite a steady increase until 2007. Besides, some of these newly opened universities have struggled to fill the quotas determined by CoHE in certain academic programmes, particularly those perceived to have limited career opportunities (Gür, 2016; Özoğlu et al., 2016). More importantly, sustainable funding of the HE sector, rather than solely being subsidised by the public sources, should be considered, as it is known that constraints in the funnelling of money from governments to universities means strong limitations, especially for LMICs (Schendel & McCowan, 2016). This has been evident since the Turkish economy started to stagnate in 2014 and public universities have been allocated less funding, despite their increasing numbers. The decline of Turkish universities in the major global rankings continues as a result of lack of funding, high student/academic staff ratios, and so on.

Supporting/Funding students

Another somewhat vexing question that policymakers across the world have been facing is the price tag of tuition fees and how students will be supported in the context of their widening participation. In a highly privatised model, the norm is for students and families to pay, whilst government may offer a degree of support through loans. For instance, in 2005, the Chilean government embraced a fair access policy in tertiary education for a large sector of the Chilean population (OECD, 2009). In the same year, tertiary enrolment at non-traditional universities accounted for 62% of the total (SIES, 2019). Yet, the state aid for this group of students was still not available; instead, private bank loans were offered as an alternative for those families able to provide an adequate guarantee on the loan. Eventually, the incumbent government initiated the state-guaranteed loan system, known as CAE (*Crédito con Aval del Estado*) in 2005 for students in need of a loan to study at an HEI. Through the CAE loan, the aim was for the net enrolment ratio of the cohort (18- 24 years) to reach 50% by 2012 (OECD, 2009), in particular by enrolling students lacking the funds to study at an HEI. Initially in the CAE loan system, private banks provided the CAE credits to students at an almost 6% rate of interest, with students paying the loan back following graduation. If a debtor student is unable to pay, the state acts as a guarantor and pays the debt to the bank at a higher rate of interest, with the debtor student ultimately then settling their debt with the state.

The impacts of the CAE loan started to emerge just two years after its implementation. In 2007, the annual growth of enrolment increased to 18%, in comparison with the 6% average annual growth of the preceding five years (SIES, 2022). In the subsequent 13 years from 2005 to 2017, tertiary enrolment increased by 197%, rising from 595,240 to 1,176,724 (SIES, 2022). It could be argued that the growth in tertiary enrolment is a direct result of the public policy that supports students who were excluded in the previous stages of HE expansion, for example, in 2010, seven of ten students were the first in their families who were able to study in tertiary education (Leiva & Campbell, 2016). In total, the CAE loan has benefitted 874,929 students between 2006 and 2017 (Holz & Poblete, 2018).

Nevertheless, the CAE loan system has given rise to a number of problems over the years. First, the CAE loan covers only a proportion of the tuition fees. In Chile, HE fees are not regulated; instead, each HEI establishes its tuition fees independently. The government applies a standard tuition fee for each HEI, thus for the institutions which have higher tuition fees, students need to incur additional private loans to pay the difference, which ends in additional debts (Paredes, 2015). Second, there were significant differences between the CAE and FSCU loans. For instance, the CAE's interest rate was three times higher than FSCU's interest rates at that time. Also, while CAE beneficiaries are required to pay back the loan after the graduation in equal instalments regardless of income, the FSCU loan is paid up

to 5% of monthly income. Consequently, student debt increased immensely. Currently, 40% of graduates and dropouts who were CAE beneficiaries are in default (Páez et al., 2018).

The above scenario triggered one of the biggest protests in the country since the return of democracy in Chile (Guzman, 2012; Pavlic, 2018). In 2011, thousands of secondary and university level students took to the streets to protest the Chilean neoliberal HE system and its inequalities. According to Guzman (2012), a strong feeling of injustice and indignation among the Chilean youth due to the lack of attention being paid to their grievances by the governments was the main driver of the protests. Since 25% of students were financing their studies with the CAE loan (Paredes, 2015), a strong social force and solidarity in the movement grew among Chilean society. The students' demands can be summarised according to five key points: more state expenditure on tertiary education, improved participation of disadvantaged populations, reformation of the neoliberal HE system in Chile, the abolishment of for-profit education, and finally a free HE for everyone (Bernasconi, 2012). In 2011, the new government offered to introduce changes to the HE system and provide extra funding for scholarships and fee-reduction benefits. Consequently, the interest rate of the CAE loan was reduced to 2%, and the form of payment was eased and equalized to that of the FSCU loan. Nevertheless, the government did not agree with the structural transformation of the HE system demanded by students (Bernasconi, 2012). In 2014, the new Chilean president, Michelle Bachelet, agreed to structural changes to HE, and a set of HE reforms were introduced in the Chilean Parliament. As a result, in 2016, the free education programme (*Gratuidad*) for the most needy was initiated.

In the free education programme, the new widening policy had a different approach in terms of access. First, the programme provides secure access to students that come from the lowest income quintile. Second, the benefit is not constrained by the merit of the students, as in the other state scholarships. Third, the resources come directly from the state finances without any third-party involvement. Fourth, the benefit is available for students enrolled at a range of HEIs, not only in traditional universities. Finally, the state recognises HE is a right, and thus its involvement must be more significant than purely that of a financial guarantor. In short, the policy covers the tuition fees of the students, and any non-profit HEI with four or more years of accreditation can participate. Currently, 31.5% (376,433 students) of the total enrolment benefits from the programme in which 48 HEIs participate (MINEDUC, 2019). In these four years of implementation, the free-education programme has not increased enrolment significantly. The average annual growth between 2016-2019 was only 0.6% (SIES, 2022). This is partly because of a shift of students from the lowest quintiles with the CAE loan to the free-education programme. For instance, the participation of the poorest quintiles in the CAE in 2017 was 15% less than in 2014 (Parliament, 2019).

Meanwhile, in Turkey, in 2012 the incumbent government removed tuition fees for all levels of tertiary education in PUs to lift the financial barriers to Turkish students. Thus, HE became free in Turkey, as it is in high school and primary education. This makes tertiary education entirely accessible to students from lower socioeconomic levels. Hence, the abolition of tuition fees resulted in a 'bonanza' of student numbers in higher education, with the number increasing sixfold since 2012, from around one million to six million, excluding open university students (CoHE, 2021a). However, the abolition does not cover NPUs, which are also noteworthy in Turkey's recent rapid expansion period. Although private providers have been taking part in the Turkish HE expansion since 1984, the most significant increase was recorded after 2005; indeed, the number of NPUs in Turkey has almost tripled, rising from 25 in 2005 to 74 in 2021. Yet, private university students only represent 15.4% of the country's total enrolment (CoHE, 2021a) and, with some exceptions, the sector mainly plays its role in HE enrolment by accepting underachieving students for a fee despite their low central exam scores.

Along with the abolition of tuition fees, Turkey has been offering public-funded grants and loans to students from low-income families via the Higher Education Loans and Dormitories Institution, as it is known that students from low-income families struggle to cover the expenses of university life (Crawford et al., 2016; Herbaut & Geven, 2019). Applicants are examined according to their incomes, and thus whether they deserve to be offered a grant, or a loan, or indeed whether they are entitled to any support at all. For instance, 50% of all applicants are entitled to one or both forms of support in their

final year. However, the amount of support is designed to cover pocket money, which is one-fifth of the minimum wage. Also, the number of students offered grants encompass only 6% of the population, while 16% of students are supported by loans.

In summary, Turkey designed its HE expansion through bold state intervention by creating new places and tuition fees, while the CAE loan was the main driver in increasing tertiary enrolment in the highly privatised Chilean HE. Nevertheless, negative effects regarding student debt and inequalities caused mass student protests in Chile, and the free education programme emerged as the state's reaction to student frustration. Meanwhile, the financial predicament of students who have loan debts to the state has been a growing problem in Turkey as graduate unemployment has increased accordingly. Despite not turning into massive protests in the same manner as Chile, Turkish students reacted differently to these problems, as discussed below.

Discussion and Conclusion

Although both countries experienced a military coup d'état in the 1980s, the consequences regarding higher education were quite different. As a mediator of the system, Chile introduced a neoliberal model that diminished universities' public funds year on year, whilst at the same time encouraging privatisation to increase competition. Meanwhile, privatisation of the Turkish HE system has remained remarkably mild compared the Chilean HE system. Additionally, before making higher education totally free in 2012, the PUs in Turkey were charging a low amount of tuition fee. However, in Chile, dissimilarity in the price tag associated with private HEIs resulted in confusion as the massification period was primarily driven by families with the economic resources to invest in their children's education, i.e., "the mobilization of private resources." (OECD, 2009, p. 234). Hence, successive governments had offered increased support by extending the benefits of loans to reconcile students' and families' demands and market realities. However, these interventions only provided palliative solutions. Considering similar patterns are also evident in the countries that have highly privatised HE sectors (Morley & Lugg, 2009; Schendel & McCowan, 2016), there might be a lesson to be learned. If governments merely offer palliative solutions to soothe the existing turbulence, problems will just be repeated. In one way or another, social demand forces them to think about more entrenched solutions, as happened in Chile in 2016.

Nonetheless, abolishing tuition fees and providing free public HE through many HEIs does not mean removing the barriers to access to HE for all and the diminishment of socioeconomic inequalities. Herein, the key problem is attempting the expansion without a reasonable focus on quality (Schendel & McCowan, 2016). Because, if there are significant differences in the quality of HEIs, the value of a degree from a less-qualified HEI will be derogated, while having a degree from a top university would maintain such a value. Hence, first, the competition to access the latter will be increased, and second, access to the former will become meaningless. In both cases, the tyranny of the elite occurs, and students from low-income families in rural areas will be disadvantageous, as it is known they cannot pay the expenses of being far away from their family home (Chankseliani et al., 2020). This is evident in Turkey by the number of vacant positions in the recently opened universities. Without students enrolled in the open education system, the gap between the number of students who applied for the university entrance exam and enrolled in university programmes has gradually been increasing over the last few decades in Turkey (CoHE, 2021b). Data shows that the proportion of students who applied for university entrance exams and enrolled in university programmes between 2004-2009 increased to 54.2% from 30%. However, the ratio then gradually decreased in the following years, bottoming out at 35.8% in 2019. A noteworthy reason for this is the number of vacant quotas in university programmes.

In 2017, some 214,430 quotas in university programmes were not accepted by any student. The CoHE conducted a survey in the following days on students who participated in the university entrance exam but did not prefer to accept a university position. The results of the survey were shared with the public, and it was underlined that "employability" is the main driver of students' preferences (CoHE, 2018). Given that the great majority of these vacant positions are placed in universities that were established after the rapid expansion policy, students gained a negative perception about the credibility of these universities on future career preparation and employability. The problems that these universities have

been facing, e.g., staff shortages, and lack of quality, which are vociferously emphasised in the related literature (Cin et al., 2021; Gök, 2016; Özoğlu et al., 2016; Polat, 2017) might be the essential reasons for that perception.

Consequently, there are crucial lessons to be learned from both cases for LMICs. Problems with accessing university in a highly privatised HES can quickly become an urgent issue requiring immediate action, as instant cash flow is needed for students to enrol. As seen in the case of Chile, major upheaval in students' budgets turned into massive street protests more than once. However, palliative offerings to save the day ended with the recurrence of problems, but in a more complicated way. Yet, making HE free for all is not the only solution; as Schendel and McCowan (2016, p. 408) note, "attention to the quality of higher education is essential in ensuring that access is meaningful for students and that institutions can make a positive contribution to society beyond the issuing of diplomas". As seen in the case of Turkey, quotas in the recently established universities have been preferred lesser as access to these HEIs is not meaningful to students. Although the situation has not turned into street protests, students (and families) reacted differently by waiting for the next university entrance exam to access top universities or otherwise just gave up their participation in HE. Arguably, this might be more detrimental in the long run than what happened in the Chilean case because problems become concrete imperceptibly, and underlying reasons might become entrenched issues until they are actually perceived.

Overall, in both countries, future agendas should address making access to university meaningful. The key issue here is providing quality HE for all and enriching graduate employability, as both countries have been challenged in terms of employing university graduates, which is ultimately the main impetus of their motivation to attend HE. Hence, future research should focus more on engaging feasible policies and practices in graduate employability through higher education attainment. However, it should be noted that policies implemented after centralist decision-making processes had become unsustainable and resulted in counteractions being taken by students, such as the street movements in Chile and enrolment preferences after university exams in Turkey. Therefore, future policies must be constituted by considering the agendas of all the relevant stakeholders within society.

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