Three Dimensions of Leadership Expectations of International Students in Modern Higher Education Settings[*]

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Abstract: *Internationalization of higher education has been an indispensable issue for many developed and developing countries in the world. Many higher education institutions house international students on their campuses to receive higher education. This reality makes campuses unique places as educational settings where international students have some expectations from academic leaders, from managerial leaders and from local and international students. This descriptive case study investigated the expectations of 12 international students of leadership on an international higher education institute. The data were collected through open-ended questions and observation notes and analyzed through conventional content analysis. The results showed that the expectations of the participants from academic leaders, managerial leaders and local and international students concerned with educational, social and cultural dimensions.*

Keywords: *leadership, international campus, international student, higher education*

Günümüz Yükseköğretim Ortamlarındaki Uluslararası Öğrencilerin Liderlik Beklentilerinin Üç Boyutu

Öz: *Yükseköğretimin uluslararasılaşması dünyadaki birçok gelişmiş ve gelişmekte olan birçok ülke için vazgeçilmez bir konu olmuştur. Birçok yükseköğretim kurumu yerleşkelerinde yükseköğretim gören uluslararası öğrencileri barındırmaktadır. Bu gerçek, yerleşkeleri uluslararası öğrencilerin akademik liderlerinden, yönetici liderlerinden ve yerel ve uluslararası öğrencilerden bazı beklentilere sahip oldukları özgün eğitim ortamlarına dönüştürmektedir. Bu betimleyici durum çalışması bir uluslararası yükseköğretim kurumundaki 12 uluslararası öğrencinin liderlik beklentilerini araştırmıştır. Veriler açık-uçlu sorular ve gözlem notlarıyla toplanmış ve geleneksel içerik analizi yoluyla analiz edilmiştir. Sonuçlar katılımcıların akademik liderlerinden, yönetici liderlerinden ve yerel ve uluslararası öğrencilerden beklentilerinin eğitimsel, sosyal ve kültürel boyutları olduğunu göstermiştir.*

Anahtar Kelimeler: *liderlik; uluslararası yerleşke; uluslararası öğrenci; yükseköğretim*

I. Introduction

Internationalization movement has started to strongly dominate the world in many different fields ranging from financial areas like business and trade to more social and human-related areas like tourism and health (Khondker, 2013). Higher education at present is not an exception to the areas in which the powerful effects of the internationalization movement has been observed. When university campuses in the

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modern world are examined, it can be seen that a great number of higher education settings are unique environments where international students co-exist with local ones. An increasing number of universities are going through a process of equipping themselves to be able to host international students. These universities, which hold the characteristics of international campuses, are welcoming gradually increasing numbers of international students each year and, in a way, serving for the purposes of the internationalization movement in higher education.

On modern campuses, students are offered undergraduate or graduate education on the one hand and participate in numerous social events on the other. They can be active members of social and cultural groups by presenting their own cultures in the international community while they can also learn about the local culture and other international cultures presented by their international classmates (Takkaç Tulgar, 2018, 2019). Therefore, in such environments, international students bring and form some expectations from different members in the international community.

Among these members on international campuses, leaders at different positions inevitably play a critical role in the establishment and maintenance of healthy and efficient educational, social and cultural atmospheres. Leaders are assumed to hold central places on international campuses as they influence behaviors and actions of particular communities in line with the organization's visions and missions (Hook & Vass, 2000; Winston & Patterson, 2006).

As regards the leadership structure of international campuses, one can observe that university staff are placed at different leadership positions in order to serve for such different purposes as providing education, organizing social and cultural events and regulating the system as a whole. What is common among these leaders is the management of a whole system with the cooperation of its members. Touching upon this common point, Can (2009) maintains that leaders should be equipped with "the ability to gather individuals around some specific objectives by motivating them to fulfill these objectives cooperatively" (p. 436). As suggested by DuBrin (1990), leaders can have influence on the activities of groups in different situations, regulated according to the fundamental missions of the organization. Therefore, leadership actually matters especially in contexts where "transnational and territorial cultures of the world are entangled with one another in manifold ways" (Hannerz, 1990, p. 244). Considering the existence of modern campuses of international nature, Doyle and Brady (2018) suggest that leaders in higher education institutions are increasingly expected to take their new roles as organizational actors who are supposed to serve for the goals of unlimited social and cultural   accessibility for national and transnational communities.

When the existing research on the universal concept of leadership is reviewed, it is seen that leadership in higher education settings has become an issue grabbing increasing attention (Gaus, Basri, Thamrin & Ritonga, 2020). The concept has been studied from such perspectives as the types of leadership (Avolio & Bass, 1991; Bolden, 2011; Holzweiss, Walker & Conrey, 2020; Janfanda, 2017; Laub, 1999), instructor leadership (Garg & Gera, 2019; Pounder, 2008; Salinas, 2012) and leadership at tertiary level

(Doyle & Brady, 2018; Gaus, et al., 2020; Gigliotti, Dwyer, Brescia, Gergus, & Stefanelli, 2020; Harrison, 2011; Walumba, Wu, & Ojode, 2004). However, there is scarcity in research examining leadership as a whole concept on campuses which unite local and international students.

Setting out from the world-wide expansion of international campuses and the need to understand the expectations of international students for the betterment of the opportunities and existing conditions offered on such campuses, this study aimed to examine the expectations of international students from leaders on international campuses. This study is expected to contribute to the understanding of the concept of leadership in higher education settings as claimed to be widely observed but not clearly understood by Burns (1978) on international campuses. The study also aims to call attention to the vitality of improving conditions on campuses of international nature.

II. Method

This study adopted descriptive case study research design. Since the main purpose of the study was to reach an understanding of the expectations of the international students as regards the concept of leadership on international campuses, descriptive case study design offered the chance to reach detailed understanding of the issue (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Yin, 1984).

A. Participants

The participants were 12 international students who were studying at ATATÖMER (hereafter referred to as the Center), an institution offering Turkish preparatory education to international students who are expected to reach C1 level of language proficiency in Turkish in order to follow their undergraduate or graduate education at the university. These participants were selected through purposeful sampling. They were observed to take active part in both educational, social and cultural events. Their active participation enabled them to spend more and effective time during their stay in the international atmosphere and they engaged themselves in educational, cultural and social exchange with local and international students. In this way, these participants were thought to shape their perceptions of leadership in the light of their experiences in the international higher education setting.

B. Data Collection Tools and Process

The data were collected through open-ended questions answered by the participants in the written format and the observation notes kept by the researcher. These two data collection tools were adopted in order to increase the validity of the data. The open-ended questions were prepared by the researcher in the light of the relevant literature and the informal conversations with the international students receiving preparatory education at the Center. The open-ended questions were as follows:

1. How do you perceive the concept of "leadership" in general?

2. What are your expectations from your instructors as academic leaders?

3.   What are your expectations from your management (Center Director and Vice Director) as managerial leaders?

4.   What are your expectations from the university management (Rectorship) as top managerial leaders?

5.   What are your expectations from international friends who contribute to the social and cultural exchange process?

6.   What are your expectations from the local students who contribute to the social and cultural exchange process?

The questions prepared by the researcher were checked for understandability and clarity by two field experts who were the instructors at the Center. In addition, two international students who were not the participants of the study were posed the questions to test the clarity and understandability of the items. These steps were taken in order to ensure the validity of the questions.

The second data collection tool was the observation notes. The researcher took four observation notes regarding the participants' expectations reflected through their words and actions. These notes were held immediately after some formal and informal events in which the participants met different leaders on the international campus.

Before collecting the data, ethical permission was obtained from the Center. The data through the open-ended questions were collected in the final week of the Turkish preparatory education so that the participants could have a rich sense of being active members in the international setting. They were asked to provide free answers to the questions presented above. They answered the questions in Turkish since they reached C1 level of language proficiency at the end of the preparatory education. The observation notes were taken by the researcher in two-month intervals form the beginning to the end of the preparatory education so that she could better observe the change in the expectations of the participants.

C. Data Analysis

Before the main analysis, the researcher translated the data into English and a native speaker proofread the translations. The data were analyzed through conventional content analysis. All the answers were revised for an overall evaluation and then a three-step process was followed: Individual analysis, in-group analysis and cross-analysis. In the first step, individual analysis, the researcher content-analyzed two data sets separately. The answers of each participant were examined separately in order to reach a detailed understanding of their perceptions of leadership. A similar process of separate analysis was also followed to analyze the data obtained through the observation notes. In the second step, in-group analysis, the answers of each participant were compared in order to identify similar and different aspects in the expectations of leadership. The observation notes were also subjected to an in-group analysis to picture the change in the expectations of the participants. In the third step, a cross-analysis was conducted with the aim to compare the findings obtained from two different data sources.

The data sets were also examined by another field expert following a similar analysis pattern. The reason for conducting a three-step analysis and consulting another field expert was to increase the validity and reliability of the data analysis process.

III. RESULTS

The overall evaluation of the results indicated that the participants approached leadership from three main perspectives: expectations from the academic leaders, expectations from the managerial leaders and expectations from the other international and local students.

As regards the expectations from the academic leaders, the participants desired to receive language (Turkish) education effectively as it was the common means of communication between them and other members in the international higher education setting. They believed that learning the language from native-speaker teachers who were the academic leaders at the Center would help them maintain effective communication on the international campus. The below excerpt taken from the answer to the open-ended question points at the common expectation of the participants from the academic leaders:

> *"Here, Turkish is the common language with which we can establish and maintain interaction not only with local but also with international friends. Therefore, I naturally expect my Turkish instructors to teach me Turkish in an effective way. I also believe this is their main responsibility as academic leaders."*

Another participant also expected the academic leaders to provide high-quality education as their aim was to follow their under/graduate studies on the international campus:

> *"Since Turkish is the medium of instruction at this university, I expect our Turkish instructors to provide us high-quality education in terms of language and field-specific content. As they are the academic leaders, they should lead us to good education."*

The analysis of the observation notes also revealed that all the participants expected their instructors as academic leaders to offer them high-quality education since the early days of their preparatory education. They were aware of the need to learn Turkish in an effective way not only to receive good education but to maintain good interactions with other students and instructors on the campus.

As regards their expectations from the managerial leaders, the analysis revealed that the participants wanted the director and vice director of the Center to organize formal and informal occasions in which they can be in constant interaction with other students. They expected managerial leaders to give them chances for interaction though which they can learn about other cultures while introducing their own culture at the same time. Regarding his expectations from the managerial leaders, a participant offered the below comment:

> *"Since there are local and international students at the Center, we expect*
> *our directors to create chances for us to interact with each other in formal*
> *and informal settings. In this way, we can know each other better."*

Referring to a similar aspect, another participant explained that he perceived the role of the managerial leaders as organizers of meetings in which they can interact with other cultures:

> *"I think what managerial leaders are mainly expected to do is to offer us*
> *chances for interacting with each other. Because we are here not only to*
> *receive education but also to learn about other peculiar cultures."*

Similar aspects were also noted in the observation notes. The participants expressed their wish that the managers at the Center and the campus authorities with whom they had direct and constant contact were aware of the need of international students to be exposed to the local culture through their interactions with their local friends. Therefore, they frequently asked them to organize different events for cultural and social sharing.

When it comes to their expectations from the top managerial leaders, i.e. the Rectorship, the participants expected the top managerial leaders of the campus to constantly follow the developments in technology so that they could equip instructional places with new technologies to provide high-quality education. Besides, the top managerial leaders were expected to create chances for interaction through extra-curricular activities that could bring together local and international students. The participants were of the opinion that introducing different cultures to international students would contribute to the establishment of friendship and understanding at local and global level as narrated by a participant below:

> *"Here, our Center directors are offering us many chances to interact with*
> *other students on the campus. However, as we are all representatives of*
> *different cultures, we expect the university leaders to organize more*
> *comprehensive events in which we can also meet the local citizens of the*
> *city. In this way, we can introduce our culture to them and be exposed to*
> *their culture."*

The participants also expected the top managerial leaders to organize events in collaboration with the local authorities in which they would be able to experience the essence of the local culture through their genuine communication with the locals:

> *"I believe the Rector is the most important figure who is first responsible*
> *to create a peaceful atmosphere for us. We are here to take education and*
> *take part in social and cultural events. Therefore, the university leaders*
> *are expected to create peaceful atmospheres in which successful*
> *educational processes can be experienced accompanied with interactive*
> *social events."*

The observation reports were in line with the answers to the open-ended questions. During formal and informal occasions, the participants expressed their wish to get in

touch with the local authorities and local citizens in order to live the essence of the culture in its authentic setting. They also reflected their expectation that the current developments are to be followed by the top managerial leaders on the campus for the provision of high-quality education in line with the world-wide standards.

As for the expectations from the other international students and the local students on the campus as the contributors to the social and cultural exchange, the participants maintained that they expected their local friends to be individuals with tolerance, sympathy, respect and understanding. This expectation was reflected by a participant as follows:

> *"We are foreigners here; therefore, we expect to be treated in a humanistic and friendly manner in order to adapt ourselves to the new environment. So, it is essential that our local friends hold positive attitudes towards us as new members on this international campus. Here, we should be our real selves while being the new members at the same time."*

The participants also expected their local and international friends to share their own cultural and social peculiarities so that they could learn about different cultures. While referring to their expectations from other international and local students, the participants underlined the value of friendship and equality among the members on the international campus for initiating social and cultural exchange:

> *"This international campus hosts many local and international students and all of us have different cultures. I expect other students to be in constant interaction in a friendly manner in order to have social and cultural exchange. And, this is a great advantage on international campuses."*

The observation notes also showed the participants' expectation to be treated in a friendly manner by both their local and international friends. During informal organizations, the participants frequently commented that they expected local students to help them not only in educational issues but about the cultural and social ones as well. In addition, they expected international students to be active and voluntary participants in the new international community to initiate and sustain long-lasting cultural friendships.

IV. Discussion

This descriptive case study investigated the expectations of international students of leadership on an international campus. The results indicated that the participants had different points of expectations from the leaders on the campus. They expected their instructors as academic leaders to provide them high-quality education in order to learn Turkish in an effective way for successful learning and effective interaction. A similar form of expectation was also reflected by Garg and Gera (2019), who underlined that teachers as academic leaders are to shoulder the responsibility to manage educational matters promoting academic development. The expectations from the directors at the

Center as the managerial leaders centered around organization of curricular and extracurricular activities in which the students could spend quality time for social and cultural exchange. The expectation for socio-cultural meetings and organizations in higher education was also reported by Severin and Holmberg (2017), who stated that students should be provided with formal and informal organizations for socio-cultural sharing besides educational processes. As regards the expectations from the Rectorship as the top managerial leaders, the international students expected them to serve as an authority-bridge uniting them with local students and citizens in the city. The results also revealed that local and international students as the contributors to social and cultural exchange on the campus were expected to form and maintain interactive atmospheres. Touching upon the concept of student leadership, Skalicky, Pedersen, van der Meer, Fuglsang, Dawson, and Stewart (2020) maintained that university leaders should encourage student leadership by fostering socio-cultural sharing.

An overall evaluation of the expectations of international students from the leaders at different positions on the international campus shows that the participants expected all the leaders to contribute to the establishment and maintenance of fruitful interactive cases in which chances for social and cultural exchange as well as opportunities for high-quality education are available. The participants perceived leadership on the international campus as the responsibility of three main parties: the instructors as academic leaders, the campus management as managerial leaders and other international and local students on the campus as social and cultural shareholders. They expected all the campus leaders to provide peaceful educational and social atmospheres in which they could healthily interact with local and international students. In this way, the participants could also engage themselves in international cultural and social exchanges in addition to receiving language education. The participants assumed this process to contribute to the richness of the internationalization in higher education. Brantmeier and Bajaj (2013), Clarke and Hennning (2013) and Ortega (2009) consider this expectation essential for the sustainability of international campuses.

What was common in the expectations of the participants from different parties was that they wanted the campus leaders to take responsibility and contribute to the successful progression of an international atmosphere in educational, social and cultural dimensions. Supporting this view of collective effort, Lechner and Boli (2005) suggest that if there is a new culture to be developed, it needs to be formed with the contributions of all parties. Therefore, within this collective effort, campus leaders at different positions are expected to play uniting and regulating roles. Upon this fundamental role, Winston and Patterson (2006) note that a leader "selects, equips, trains, and influences one or more follower(s) who have diverse gifts, abilities, and skills and focuses the follower(s) to the organization's mission and objectives" (p. 7). As it can be inferred from this comment, campus leaders were expected to form unity and work in collaboration to meet educational, social and cultural needs and expectations of international students. In a way, they were expected to take a rational approach to manage the changes that internationalization in the modern world brings to campuses as also suggested by Doyle and Brady (2018).

Within the discussion of the expectations of international students, referring to the comment of Dörnyei and Murphey (2009) seems contributory. Regarding the significance of understanding different perceptions and expectations of leadership in order to raise awareness of leaders at different positions, they explain that "leadership matters; by becoming more aware of what effective leadership entails" (p. 107). Sharing a similar standpoint, Janfada (2017) highlighted that leaders should have the ethical understanding of their roles and responsibilities as they are the agents to direct higher education institutions showing the reflections of a globalized and multicultural world.

V. Conclusion

The results of this study revealed that in on an international higher education campus, international students had some expectations from academic leaders, from managerial leaders and from local and international students. Their expectations from academic leaders had mostly to do with educational matters. They wanted instructors to properly train international students so that they could follow their studies successfully in the international higher education setting.

As for the expectations from managerial leaders, it can be suggested setting out from the comments of the participants that leaders on international campuses should be provided with formal and informal guidance and training as parts of their responsibilities to be properly aware of their mission to serve international students. Their positions require them to take into consideration both the educational and socio-cultural needs of international students. For the educational dimension, they traditionally follow the requirements of their professions as educators. However, for socio-cultural dimension which is a relatively recent issue for higher education institutions all over the world, a new awareness and approach is necessary as regards their mission in the service of international students. With this new awareness, vivid international campuses in which students can feel the 'international mood' could be realized.

Expectations of the participants from local and international students revolved around socio-cultural atmosphere. They wanted to be acquainted with the cultures of local and other international students and introduce their cultural peculiarities to those in the international higher education setting.

This study is not out of limitations. The main limitation is the number of participants. In addition, the study was conducted only on one international campus. Therefore, future research is suggested to examine the expectations of more international students on different campuses of international nature to make comparisons among different higher education settings.

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