

The Impact of the Erasmus Program and the Institutional Administration of Internationalization in Türkiye

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Abstract

International student and staff mobility, which is widely experienced worldwide, constitutes one of the most critical dimensions of the internationalization of higher education. The Erasmus program, initiated by the European Union, plays a significant role in increasing mobility, especially between European countries. Türkiye is one of these countries that benefit significantly from the Erasmus program, which has become a driving force for Turkish universities to accelerate internationalization. In this paper, we conducted a quantitative study to evaluate the perceptions of international office professionals (IPs) on the impact of the Erasmus Program and institutional structures in the universities to administer internationalization. 126 IPs working in international offices of Turkish universities representing public and foundation universities participated in the study. The survey results revealed that IPs believe in the positive impacts of the Erasmus student and staff mobility on the institutionalization of internationalization in their universities, and most universities in Türkiye include internationalization in their strategic plan as one of the priorities. On the other hand, IPs stated that institutional support given to their offices by high-ranking administrators and other stakeholders is insufficient to administer internationalization. Moreover, the T-test results between public and foundation universities revealed that developing internationalization is a more important priority for the latter than the public ones.

Keywords: Erasmus Program, Internationalization, International office professionals, Higher education, Türkiye

Introduction

The internationalization of higher education (IHE) has become a fundamental strategic goal in the agendas of supra-national and national authorities and higher education institutions (HEIs). IHE is realized in various forms, such as branch campuses and joint degree programs; however, student and staff mobility are still the most well-known form of internationalization (Van Damme, 2001). Student mobility figures are increasing all over the world. According to OECD (2021) statistics, international student mobility has been steadily expanding in the last 20 years. In 2019, 6.1 million higher education students went to study in another country, more than twice that in 2007. In other words, the number of international students in higher education increased by an average of 5.5% per year between 1998 and 2019.

Although student mobility seems widespread in all universities worldwide, it is still not inclusive for all higher education students and staff (De Wit & Jones, 2018; Janebová & Johnstone, 2020; Van Mol & Perez-Encinas, 2022). According to the study by De Wit and Jones (2018), 99% of the higher education student population in the world does not participate in physical mobility. Therefore, despite regional and international grant schemes, international mobility is implemented in an elitist structure (De Wit, 2020) and is only accessible to a minority of students.

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The Erasmus Program has become a well-known student and staff exchange schema in Europe. With the funding provided by the European Union (EU), the students and staff participating in the Program have the opportunity to get grants for their mobility period. With this granted schema, the EU targeted to offer physical mobility for all students and staff in Europe and make it inclusive for all European HEIs. However, the goal of the EU to send a minimum of 10% of higher education students to mobility programs has failed (De Wit & Altbach, 2021), and it seems that the Erasmus grant programs are insufficient for a more inclusive international education in Europe.

Hence, as these statistics show, international student mobility programs are not as inclusive as desired in the world or Europe. In other words, only a minority of university students and staff benefit from these programs. However, structural exchange programs (e.g., the Erasmus) have significant institutional impacts on universities and their stakeholders. For these impacts to be more visible and effective, it is crucial that exchange programs and internationalization are well managed in the universities at the institutional level. This study, therefore, focuses on the impact of the Erasmus student and staff exchange program and the institutional management of internationalization.

The research was conducted in Türkiye, which has been part of the Erasmus Program since 2005. The effect of the Erasmus Program is highly critical in the country for two reasons. First, for most universities, the Erasmus Program is the only opportunity for the students and staff to be granted a mobility scheme, and thousands of Turkish participants visited Europe through this Program. Secondly, international offices were established in order to administer this Program in most universities. In other words, the Program accelerated the institutionalization of internationalization in Turkish universities.

Accordingly, this study aims to investigate the impact of the Erasmus student and staff mobility Program and the administration of internationalization in institutional terms. The study was conducted with international office professionals (IPs) as practitioners working in international offices and having direct experience with the impact and administration of the Program. In this article, the literature review is first presented, followed by the methods, results and discussion.

The Erasmus Program in Europe

The European higher education system has been in flux, and policymakers have viewed HEIs as economic engines essential for knowledge production with research, innovation, and education (Sursock & Smidt, 2010). Building the European Higher Education Area is a top priority agenda of the European Commission to redesign HEIs' economic and cultural roles in the global context (Gornitzka, 2010). Due to the need for European internationalization, the European Commission established different education mobility programs such as Erasmus and Youth. Among these, Erasmus Program has a crucial impact on universities. Erdogan (2014) states that mobility is the most visible face of internationalization. Especially in Europe, the promotion of international student mobility has particularly gained importance in recent decades (Kelo et al., 2006). By observing the significant impact of these programs, European supra-national organizations have developed many policies to disseminate the Program.

All European Union Education and Youth Programs, including Erasmus, are designed for seven years. Between 2000 and 2007, the Erasmus Program was under the Socrates program; between 2007 and 2014, it was under Life-long Learning Program. Between 2014-2020, the Erasmus+, as an umbrella term, was used to cover all education and youth programs and has become a flagship ever since. According to European Commission (2021), Erasmus+ will benefit from an estimated budget of around €26.2 billion for 2021-2027, nearly doubling the funding compared to the previous period. According to Erasmus+ 2020 Annual Report (European Commission, 2021), since the launch of the program in 1987, approximately 11.7 million participants have been supported by the Erasmus+ Program.

Although the Erasmus+ Program covers learning mobilities at all levels, this study mainly focuses on mobility in higher education. The Program includes different schemes of higher education mobility. For students, 'student mobility' and 'placement mobility' programs were designed. The student mobility program covers a short-term credit mobility experience where students study their courses in a European

university, whereas the placement mobility is conducted to have an internship experience in a European institution. Furthermore, for staff working in HEIs, there are two different types of programs. The ‘teaching staff mobility’ covers the exchange of faculty members to teach abroad, and ‘staff training mobility’ includes job shadowing or other training activities for mostly administrative staff.

Internationalization and the Erasmus Program in Türkiye

Higher education in Türkiye is centrally planned and controlled by the Council of Higher Education (CoHE). 129 state and 79 foundation universities host approximately 8.000.000 students (CoHE, 2022), including distance education. Public universities are founded and funded by the state and offer free higher education services for students. On the other hand, foundation universities are established as non-profit institutions by foundations and charge tuition fees from the students. Although there are no private HEIs in Türkiye, foundation universities are mostly incorporated with business institutions and act like private universities.

In parallel with the developments in the world, the Turkish higher education system also attaches increasing importance to internationalization. Both the CoHE at the national level and universities at the institutional level have embraced internationalization as a strategic goal. The Internationalization Strategy Document of Higher Education (2018-2022) was published by CoHE (2017), and the main aim of internationalization is to attract more international students and staff. Similarly, a recent study (Erdogan & Bulut-Sahin, 2022) examined how internationalization is included in the strategic plan documents of foundation and public universities in Türkiye and concluded that student and staff mobility is the most recurrent strategic goal. Therefore, it can be argued that Turkish universities have adopted the classical internationalization model according to the typology developed by Knight (2015). Accordingly, international collaborations, student and faculty exchange, and intercultural activities are the most used tools of internationalization. However, practices such as a joint diploma or branch campus have not become widespread among Turkish universities.

Türkiye has a unique internationalization practice (Bulut-Sahin & Kondakci, 2022), playing an important role in the region due to the country’s attraction based on political, economic, and historical characteristics. The country holds a significant regional hub position (Kondakci, 2011) by attracting degree-seeking international students from neighbouring countries based on cultural rationales. The regional hub position has become more assertive in recent years with the hosted Syrian students, and the CoHE announced Türkiye as one of the first ten countries in the World in terms of incoming international students (CoHE, 2021).

The Erasmus Program has also created a vital internationalization practice for Turkish universities. With the launch of the Erasmus program, universities that have never been involved in international activities before had the opportunity to be involved in international student mobility. Although the Erasmus Program started in 1987 in Europe, Türkiye participated in this program through pilot projects in the 2003-2004 academic year and became a full participant in the 2004-2005 academic year. Since then, many Turkish students and staff have participated in this program, and many European students and staff have also visited Türkiye.

The data presented in Table 1 shows the number of Turkish students and staff who participated in the Erasmus study and placement program and the number of incoming students and staff who visited Türkiye in the framework of the Erasmus Program. It is worth noting that the statistics given above only reflect the participants from the Program countries but not the participants from the non-European ones. Moreover, another fact is the COVID-19 pandemic restricted studying abroad which caused a decrease in student numbers in the 2019-2020 academic year.

Table 1. The last five-year statistics for the Erasmus Program in Türkiye (exchange with Program countries)

	Outgoing Student	Student Placement	Incoming Student	Incoming Placement	Outgoing staff	Incoming staff
2015-2016	12964	3111	5793	1153	2772	1520
2016-2017	13303	3586	2222	812	3334	1199
2017-2018	13834	4017	2007	1096	3241	1958
2018-2019	13197	4204	2727	1481	3259	2384
2019-2020	12968	2628	3489	915	1194	1106

Note: Adapted from “Erasmus+ country factsheets - 2020” by European Commission, 2021 (<http://https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/resources-and-tools/statistics-and-factsheets/factsheets/country-2020>). Copyright 2021 by European Commission.

The statistics in Table 1 indicate an imbalance between outgoing and incoming students in the Turkish case. The number of outgoing Turkish students is always higher than that of incoming students. In other words, while Turkish students have a high demand to study in Europe, the country is not so attractive for European students. Moreover, the number of students who participated in the Erasmus student placement program is less than that of students who participated in the student mobility program. One of the main reasons for this difference is the low budget share of student placement in the overall Erasmus budget of the countries. Furthermore, in placement programs, students should find the placement institution by themselves, and universities do not make agreements for placements, which might be another reason for low participation rates. Table 1 also introduces the number of outgoing and incoming staff numbers under the Erasmus teaching staff exchange and staff mobility programs. The number of staff is lower than the number of students since the Erasmus Program’s budget prioritizes and offers more funding to student mobility. Similar to data on student mobility, the imbalance between outgoing and incoming staff is still valid. Moreover, the low number of participated staff demonstrates the lack of inclusiveness in the staff mobility program.

The above statistics also show that the EU's and the national authorities' budget distribution rules affect the number of participants. In other words, the Erasmus Program was developed by the EU, and most of the regulations and implementation program decisions are made on the supra-national level as a top-down policy-making process (Marginson, 2007; Teichler, 2002). On the national level, the National Agencies founded in the countries monitor the implementation of the Program and distribute the budget to HEIs. Similarly, the Turkish National Agency was founded in 2002, one year before the Turkish universities participated in the Program through pilot projects. The Turkish National Agency has close contacts with the international offices and, therefore, the IPs to ensure the effective and accurate use of the funds. Thus, on the institutional level, IPs are the primary actors in implementing the Erasmus Program in HEIs.

Although international activities were more individually oriented, entire institutions can be involved in these activities (Luijten-Lub, 2007), and internationalization has started to be perceived as an institutional perspective and strategy. Edelstein & Douglass (2012) also states that international realities have become a central concern for many universities, and they utilize this strategy to compete with peer institutions at home and abroad. As Yılmaz (2013) also mentions, internationalization has become an important strategic area for HEIs. Therefore, institutional perspectives on internationalization should not be disregarded. However, although the program is widely implemented in all Turkish universities, there are rare studies in literature conducted with IPs as the university staff who are directly implementing this project. Therefore, this study aims to analyse the implementation of the Erasmus Program and internationalization in Türkiye from the point of view of the IPs.

This study is guided by the following research questions:

- a) What are the perceptions of IPs on the impact of the Erasmus student and staff mobility?
- b) What are the perceptions of the IPs on the administration of internationalization in their institution?

Moreover, two sub-questions were also used to compare the survey results between public and foundation universities:

- a) Is there a meaningful difference between perceptions of IPs in public and foundation universities regarding the impact of the Erasmus student and staff mobility program?
- b) Is there a meaningful difference between perceptions of IPs in public and foundation universities regarding the administration of internationalization in Turkish institutions?

Method

In this study, the Survey Research Design was used to learn about the perspectives of IPs in both foundation and public universities regarding the impact of the Erasmus student and staff mobility and the administration of internationalization in Turkish institutions. In the survey method (McMillan & Schumacher, 2009), to learn about individuals' perspectives, thoughts, and beliefs about the variables researchers are interested in, a questionnaire is applied to a sample of individuals from the targeted population of the study.

Instrument

The researchers developed the survey based on the knowledge obtained from the literature, and two experts on the internationalization of higher education in Türkiye reviewed the survey. Participants were first asked about their demographic information. Descriptive questions were about their gender, the type of the university they work in (public or foundation), working duration, and level of education. The qualitative part included three open-ended questions to gather information on the administration of the Program in their institution.

The survey included 15 items on a 5-point Likert scale on a continuum of strongly disagree (1) and strongly agree (5). Among these 15 items, ten questions measured the impact of the Erasmus program (perceptions about the impact of student and staff mobility), and the remaining five measured the administration of internationalization on the institutional level. In the current study, Cronbach's alpha was computed as a measure of reliability and was found to be .74, indicating acceptable internal consistency. Lastly, the survey included three open-ended questions. The open-ended questions were "what are the main challenges while working in the international office?", "what is your perception of the administration of internationalization in your institution?" and "how the internationalization strategy was developed in your institution?".

Participants

The study's target population was all the International Office Professionals (IPs) of Turkish universities. IPs are the practitioners working in international offices to administer the Erasmus exchange program study and placement mobility for students and teaching and training mobilities for the staff. They mainly deal with administrative and bureaucratic work related to student and staff exchange and several other internationalization-related tasks, such as establishing bilateral agreements with partner universities or promoting the university abroad.

The e-mails were sent to the international office e-mail addresses of 208 universities, and the volunteer IPs working in these offices participated in the study. The accessible population of this study was 129 IPs from Turkish universities; however, three participants were excluded from the study based on the amount of missing data. The analysis was conducted with 126 IPs. The 126 IPs from public universities (73.8%) and foundation universities (26.2%) participated in the survey. Participants' years of experience in the international office ranged from 1 month to 12 years. The demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

		N	%
Gender	Male	51	40.5
	Female	75	59.5
University Type	Public	93	73.8
	Foundation	33	26.2
Level of Education	Associate Degree	1	0.8
	Bachelor's degree	35	27.8
	Master's degree	52	41.3
	Ph.D. Degree	38	30.2

Data Analysis

The survey was conducted in Turkish, and after the data analysis, the findings were transcribed into English. The survey and demographic questions were analysed through SPSS version 28 (IBM Corp., 2021). Several independent sample t-tests were conducted to compare perceptions of IPs from public and foundation universities for all items in the scale. In addition, the descriptive analysis of the open-ended questions was conducted through the MAXQDA program.

Prior to conducting the independent samples t-test, the normality assumption was checked via skewness and kurtosis values. According to Kline (2016), skewness and kurtosis values ranging between -3 and +3 indicate normal distribution. Skewness and kurtosis values both for the impact of the Erasmus program and administration of the internationalization on the institutional level ranged between -3 and +3, indicating that the normality assumption was not violated in this study. Also, the normality assumption was checked via Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests. Kolmogorov-Smirnov results indicated nonnormality for the impact of the Erasmus student and staff mobility program ($D(126) = .15, p < .001$) and administration of internationalization on the institutional level ($D(126) = .11, p < .001$). However, violation of normality with a sample size larger than 30 can be disregarded (Gravetter & Walnau, 2016). Secondly, the homogeneity of variances assumption was checked. According to Levene's test results, the homogeneity of variances assumption was not violated for the impact of the Erasmus student and staff mobility program ($F_{Levene} = .03, p > .05$) and administration of internationalization on the institutional level ($F_{Levene} = 1.02, p > .05$). Therefore, analysis was conducted.

Results

The results section includes two categories: a) the impact of the Erasmus Program and b) the administration of internationalization on the institutional level.

The Impact of the Erasmus Program

This section is composed of a descriptive analysis of the impact questions and a comparison of the results for public and foundation universities. In this section, the descriptive findings are presented as the impact of student mobility and the impact of staff mobility on internationalization processes, institutional capacities, further cooperation in education and research, and lastly, on other university stakeholders.

First of all, regarding *student mobility*, overall, the majority of the participants strongly agreed that it contributes to the internationalization processes (54%) and is useful in developing the institutional capacities of the universities (44.4 %). However, foundation universities strongly agreed that student mobility is beneficial in developing institutional capacities (54.5%), whereas most IPs in state universities only agreed with this view (41.7%). Moreover, student mobility positively impacts the stakeholders of the university who did not participate in the program (40.5%). Furthermore, the impact of the Erasmus student mobility program on the other types of international cooperation was also asked to the participants. Most participants agreed that the agreements concluded for student mobility produce further collaboration with the partner institutions (37.3%). On the other hand, they partially agreed that higher student mobility rates lead to international research partnerships (38.9%).

Secondly, regarding *staff mobility*, the majority of the participants strongly agreed that it has a positive impact on other stakeholders of the university who did not participate in the program (40%). Most

participants agreed that staff mobility contributes to the internationalization processes (44.4%) and is effective in developing the institutional capacities of the universities (46%). Besides, they agreed that the agreements concluded for staff mobility led to other types of cooperation between the partner institutions (37.3%). Most of the IPs in foundation universities strongly agreed with this further cooperation (39.4%), and IPs in state universities only agreed with this view (40.9%). In addition, the participants strongly agreed that a higher rate of staff mobility generates research cooperation with universities abroad (37.3%). IPs in state universities strongly agreed with this view (38.7%), whereas IPs in foundation universities partially agreed with that (45.5%).

An independent sample t-test was conducted to compare IPs in the foundation and public universities regarding the impact of the Erasmus student and staff mobility Program. The results showed that there is not a meaningful difference between IPs in state universities ($M= 40.81, SD= 5$) and foundation universities ($M= 40.24, SD= 4.82$) regarding the impact of the Erasmus program, $t(124) = .56, p > .05$. Moreover, when items measuring the impact of the Erasmus program were analysed separately, no significant differences were found between IPs in state universities and foundation universities.

The Administration of the Internationalization on the Institutional Level

This section comprises the descriptive analysis of the survey questions, comparing the results for public and foundation universities, and analysing the open-ended questions. The descriptive results include the findings on the institutionalization of internationalization, strategic planning, and prioritizing internationalization. Moreover, the descriptive results also have IPs' perceptions of the international office capacity in terms of human resources and physical conditions. Lastly, open-ended questions were presented as the challenges related to official status, management, and other stakeholders' support and strategy development.

First, most participants strongly agreed that their university has a straightforward institutionalization process on internationalization (%31.7). Most of them agree that internationalization is included in the university's strategic plan (37.3%) and is one of their university's priorities (33.3%). The participants were also asked about the human resource and physical capacity of the international offices that they work in. They partially agreed that the physical conditions of their offices are sufficient to conduct international programs (33.3%). Most of them also disagreed that the number of IPs is adequate to run international programs (30.2%). Of the IPs in foundation universities, the majority strongly agreed that internationalization is one of the priorities of their university, but IPs in public universities only agreed with this view (48.5%).

According to the results of the independent sample t-test, there is no significant difference between IPs in public universities ($M= 26.31, SD= 3.12$) and foundation universities ($M= 27.15, SD= 2.73$) regarding their overall perception of the administration of internationalization; $t(124) = -1.37, p > .05$. However, IPs in foundation universities ($M= 4, SD= .80$) have a significantly higher perception than IPs in public universities ($M= 3.52, SD= 1.29$) regarding their view that institutionalization is one of the priorities of their institution; $t(92.464) = .00, p < .05, d= 1.18$. According to Cohen (1988), this is a large effect. In addition to that, IPs in foundation universities ($M= 3.52, SD= .1.25$) have a significantly higher perception than IPs in state universities ($M= 3.01, SD= 1.30$) regarding their view about the sufficiency of their office's physical conditions to run the programs; $t(123) = .03, p < .05, d=1.29$. According to Cohen (1988), this is a large effect. No significant differences were found in the remaining items between IPs in foundation universities and IPs in state universities.

Lastly, the open-ended questions revealed critical results regarding the challenges that IPs experience in the administration of internationalization in universities. The findings include their main challenges while working in an international office, their perception of the administration of internationalization in their institution, and the development process of the internationalization strategy. The open-ended questions were analysed descriptively. However, some quotations from the participants were also provided to better reflect their perspectives. Among 126 participants, 102 replied to the first question, 83 replied to the second question, and 59 replied to the last question.

While replying to the first question, 65 participants mentioned the uncertainty of the official status of international offices. The state university IPs participating in the study emphasized that the international offices are not placed in the official structure of the HEIs in Türkiye, e.g., some of them work under the Students Affairs, and some work directly with a Vice-Rector. This unstandardized type of institutionalization might seem like an opportunity for the autonomy and flexibility of HEIs. However, it also causes international offices open to frequent changes and become more vulnerable to management decisions. A participant expressed his views on the challenges that he experienced:

The institutional structure is the biggest problem. That's our more important problem than anything else right now. It is not clear to whom the offices are affiliated, it is not clear what the staff of the employees in the office will be, and it is not clear how many people should work in the office. There are different office structures, arbitrary practices, and injustices, but the same result is expected from everyone: you need to increase internationalization! How is it going to be? (IP-18).

The second frequently stated answer to the first question was the international offices' lack of human resource policy. 49 participants mentioned that the personnel number in the offices defined by the university administrations is insufficient, and most newly established HEIs work with only one IP. Moreover, they experience a high turnover in working personnel since the university management makes rotations in the university. Another problem mentioned about personnel policy is the lack of training programs for the new personnel. IPs noted that there are no standardized criteria for being appointed as an IP, which sometimes causes qualification problems in conducting the job. IP-32 stated that even the staff with insufficient foreign language skills was appointed to the international office, and this caused several challenges:

The position of the staff working in the offices should not be temporary, and they should be experts in the work. To prevent the constant change of office workers, it is necessary to follow the workflow closely and support the number of personnel required. Most importantly, they should not send the staff who do not speak English to this office with the decision of the Rectorate (IP-32).

Among 83 participants who replied to the second question, 62 stated that they experienced a lack of support from the management and other stakeholders of the university. The IPs think that the busy schedules of the vice-rectors responsible for official signatures cause several problems for them. Moreover, IPs mentioned that it is challenging for them to work with a manager who is physically away from the office and has a lot of other duties:

To facilitate daily and especially urgent transactions, the persons authorized to sign should be those close to the office. Otherwise, in some universities, the fact that coordinators have multiple duties and are physically in another unit away from the office creates environments that disrupt the processes and cause problems between the student and the office staff (IP-61).

Moreover, 49 participants perceive that administrators do not support the international office and do not respect their job. IPs mentioned that most of the top management responsible for the management of international offices are unwilling to listen to IPs' needs and do not treat them as internationalization experts. This decreased the motivation of the IPs, and they felt isolated in their internationalization efforts:

People in the administration should be open to innovations and aware of what internationalization can bring to the university. All the burden should not be placed on the shoulders of the international office employees. People in the administration should be able to speak English actively. It should be understood that the necessity of abroad experience and partnership visits is a part of our job (IP-73).

Similarly, 41 IPs criticize that the managers in the university primarily focus on increasing the number of international students. The IPs expressed that they are pleased to contribute to increasing the number of students and staff since this is one of their main tasks. However, they also stated that their sole effort would not be sufficient without a comprehensive understanding of internationalization at the university. An IP noted that academics' reluctance to offer English courses is a challenge to having more international students:

The office should not only be seen as the unit that produces the number of incoming students. It should be realized that increasing the number of incoming students is not a job only the office can

do alone. Also, the real reasons underlying the numerical reports (attitude of academicians in English courses, language inadequacy of administrative staff, etc.) should be focused on (IP-45).

Lastly, the participants mentioned their challenges in developing the internationalization strategy in the third open-ended question. The survey results above show that 36 participants strongly agree, and 47 agree that internationalization was included in the university's strategic plan. However, in the open-ended questions, 55 participants emphasized that the internationalization strategy is not jointly developed and is solely prepared by the management. Moreover, they also stated that some written strategies are not implemented:

There is a need for an internationalization strategy that is jointly prepared, owned, and integrated into the overall university strategy by each unit/faculty of the university. Internationalization should not be included in the strategic plan as a mere expression, efforts should be made for this, and reward mechanisms should be developed for academic and administrative staff working in this direction (IP-12).

Conclusion and Discussion

The first part of the findings showed that IPs mostly believe in the positive impact of the Erasmus student and staff mobility programs on the internationalization practices in their institution. The participants agreed on the contribution of the mobility programs in developing institutional capacities for internationalization and the positive impact on the other university stakeholders who did not participate in the Program. In addition, IPs perceive that student and staff mobility programs are leading to other types of international cooperation between partner institutions (e.g., joint master's degree programs). Regarding further research partnerships (e.g., joint research projects), the participants think Erasmus staff mobility has a higher effect on research cooperation than student mobility.

On the other hand, in terms of international offices, most IPs think the number of personnel is insufficient. The main difficulties were the lack of sufficient personnel (single staff working in some universities) and the appointment of personnel who did not receive any training and even lacked knowledge of a foreign language due to arbitrary assignments. The participants explained in the open-ended questions that since there is no clear job description, a great variety of jobs were expected from them (e.g., translation of Turkish documents into English), and therefore their human resource capacity stays insufficient. Moreover, the IPs were also asked about the international offices' physical condition, and most disagreed or partially agreed that their condition was sufficient.

The survey results showed that most of the participants' universities included internationalization in their strategic plan, they have a clear institutionalization process for internationalization, and internationalization is one of the priorities for their institution. On the other hand, when the strategy development method was asked in the open-ended questions, IPs mentioned that senior management mostly determined these written strategies in a top-down way, and these strategies were not implemented. Foskett (2012) argues that most of the time, there is a gap between published strategic documents and the operational practices of the universities. Similarly, this study also showed that the top-down strategy development method in internationalization might cause some challenges in implementing the strategies.

Next, the findings revealed that internationalization seems to consist of numbers, and there is a high expectation of increasing numbers from the offices. At that point, IPs feel so much pressure on their offices to increase the quantitative targets, e.g., to increase the number of incoming students. On the other hand, IPs argue that obstacles to internationalization that may arise from other university stakeholders (such as the unwillingness of academics to teach in English) are ignored. As De Wit and Hunter (2014) mentioned, internationalization should not be only located in international offices. In other words, IPs felt lonely in taking responsibility for internationalization; and complained about not getting enough support from the administrators and other stakeholders in managing internationalization. The main problems were stated as the fact that the top managers are away from the office and daily operations. Moreover, the professional knowledge and expertise of the IPs are not respected, and the needs of the IPs are not listened to. On the other hand, comprehensive and strategic policies are needed

to be developed in internationalization (De Wit et al., 2015); where all stakeholders take responsibility for the action.

Furthermore, the survey results also revealed differences in the perceptions of the IPs working in state and foundation universities. First, IPs in foundation universities agree more that internationalization is a priority in their institution, contributing to the institutionalization capacity than the ones in state universities. Moreover, IPs in foundation universities are more content with the physical conditions of the international offices than those in state universities. These differences in the findings for different types of universities lead us to conclude that foundation universities give more importance to internationalization in institutional terms. There might have various reasons for this, but recent research (Bulut-Sahin, 2022) on internationalization in foundation universities shows that most of the foundation universities in Türkiye included internationalization in their strategic plan to mainly attract more international students, mostly based on economic rationales. In other words, both the tuition fee provided by international students and the university's promotion in the international arena are important rationales for foundation universities to prioritize internationalization.

The open-ended questions also revealed challenges related to official status, management, other stakeholders' support, and strategy development. Participants first expressed the structural problems related to their offices, especially the lack of legal status of international offices in public universities. Taylor (2010) states that for higher education, the emergence of internationalization as a management function is also associated with new forms of professionalism and approaches to administration; since internationalization has encouraged new forms of centralized control and oversight. Internationalization in Turkish universities, as an administrative function, not recognized as an official department, is handled in various ways, sometimes as a semi-official office under the Rectorate, sometimes as a sub-bureau of the department of student affairs, etc. Another common practice in Turkish public universities is to assign personnel working in different departments to international offices. These practices cause a great contradiction with the national and institutional aims of internationalization. International offices, as the main units of implementation for internationalization, are expected to be structured in a more institutional and systematic approach.

The results highlighted that IPs think highly of the positive impact of the Erasmus Program, but there are several problems with the institutional administration of internationalization. De Wit (2013) states that the internationalization of higher education is perceived as a goal instead of a means to an end. In other words, internationalization should not be perceived as an end that can be easily reached by just adding it to strategic plans. On the other hand, internationalization in the general end, Erasmus Program, in particular, is an essential means to a strong objective of "being an international university." In other words, sending some students and staff for an exchange is just a short-term result of the program. Stromquist (2007) stated that internationalization does not only influence the academic programs but also the administrative structures and privileges in the universities. Therefore, the long-term results should be considered more in the internationalization discussion than the short-term quantitative results. Having a multicultural campus environment, the networks established through the program, and more cooperation, such as double-degree and joint-degree programs, might be the long-term effects of the program for being an international university.

The findings also demonstrate important results for Türkiye. The statistics of the Erasmus Program demonstrate an imbalance between incoming and outgoing students in credit mobility in terms of the Erasmus Program. Türkiye has become a regional hub for degree-seeking students (Kondakci et al., 2018), and the number of international degree-seeking students is increasing day by day. However, when we look at the statistics of students coming from Europe within the scope of the Erasmus Program, it is seen that the number of incoming students is relatively low compared to other European countries (European Commission, 2021). Considering that socioeconomic rationales are the main reason for Türkiye to become a centre of attraction for international students (Kondakci, 2011), it is important to examine the possible academic, economic, socio-cultural, and political reasons for the insufficient increase in the number of students coming for Erasmus students. The finding of the positive effects of the Erasmus program of this study also shows that the rise in the number of credit mobility students is

as significant as the increase in degree-seeking students for the internationalization of higher education in Türkiye. This increase in numbers will not only increase the number of students numerically, but also the national diversity of incoming students will increase, and the interaction of Turkish students with more international students will increase.

This study has two main limitations. First, in this study, the participants were asked about the Erasmus Program with the European program countries, and the exchange with the non-European countries was excluded. Secondly, this study only reflects the perceptions of the IPs as just one stakeholder in the university in terms of internationalization; however, we believe that they have a critical experience in the impact and administration of the Program. For further research, other studies can be conducted with the upper and middle-level administrators of the universities to reveal the administration problems of internationalization in Turkish universities.

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