

A SWOT Analysis on the University Entrance Examination in Turkey: A Case Study

Mehmet Ali İÇBAY*

Abstract – Strategic planning focusing on the university entrance examination is mainly built on analyzing the characteristics of the secondary education period and on pointing the changes in this period. Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis is a commonly employed method for analyzing those changes and for reaching systematic decisions. This paper, as an attempt to depict changes in the secondary education period in Turkey and thus to attain reasonable decisions, describes a study of the SWOT analysis set in the context of university entrance examination in Turkey. The study is based on the remarks of the graduate students in a class discussion. At the end of the analysis, 16 strengths, 24 weaknesses, 18 opportunities, and 15 threats are generated. The most important 7 opportunities not to be missed and the most alarming 7 threats not to be neglected are selected to build two strategies and related missions. At the end of the study, the suggestions for a new university entrance examination in Turkey are presented.

Key words – SWOT, university entrance examination, higher education.

Özet – Öğrenci Seçme Sınavı Hakkında Bir GÜZFİT İncelemesi: Bir Değerlendirme Çalışması – Üniversite giriş sınavı üzerinde yoğunlaşan stratejik planlama, temelde orta öğretim aşamasının özelliklerinin ayrıntılı incelenmesine ve bu aşamadaki değişikliklerin saptanmasına dayanır. Güçlükler, zayıflıklar, fırsatlar ve tehlikeler (GÜZFİT) incelemesi bu tür değişiklikleri incelemek ve sistematik kararlar almak için çoğunlukla kullanılan bir yöntemdir. Bu çalışma Türkiye’de orta öğretim aşamasındaki değişiklikleri saptamak ve böylece mantıklı kararlar almak için bir çaba olarak Türkiye’de uygulanmakta olan üniversite giriş sınavının GÜZFİT çalışmasını sunmaktadır. Çalışma lisansüstü öğrencilerin sınıf tartışması sırasında ortaya çıkan görüşlerine dayanmaktadır. Bu inceleme sonunda 16 güçlü, 24 zayıf, 18 fırsat ve 15 tehlike boyutları bulunmuştur. Ancak en önemli ve dikkate alınması gereken 7 fırsatla en fazla vurgulanan ve göz ardı edilemeyecek 7 tehlike, ilke ve bu ilkelerle ilgili görevleri oluşturmak için seçilmiştir. Bu çalışmanın sonunda Türkiye’de uygulanabilecek yeni bir üniversiteye giriş sınavı için öneriler sunulmaktadır.

Anahtar sözcükler – GÜZFİT, üniversite giriş sınavı, yüksek öğrenim.

Introduction

Higher education is a door to a better life in many of the societies. It offers chances to have a more specialized education, a more prosperous job qualification, a higher level of job satisfaction and a more intense self-awareness. A great number of jobs that were available to non-graduates of a higher education institution have become accessible to

* Mehmet Ali İçbay, Research Assistant, Department of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Education, Middle East Technical University, 06531, Ankara, <icbay@metu.edu.tr>.

graduates only. Further, there has been a great amount of widened earning gap between higher education graduates and the rest of the population (Murphy, 1993; Dolton & Vignoles, 1999). Students and their parents have consequently realized the value of higher education. The latest changes in the occupational arena and the increased awareness in the value of continued education have increased the demand for the higher education, and thus have forced the policies which mediate university entrance to have tougher and more selective admission systems.

Countries differ widely in the particular way that they deal with admission to higher education. In some countries, universities in principle admit any individual, irrespective of whether they hold any formal qualification (in the United Kingdom, for example) whereas in other countries, universities admit individuals providing that they have the correct academic secondary education certificates (in the Netherlands, for example) (Baker & Wolf, 2001). Nonetheless, as the number of applicants to higher education increases, and thus the higher education sector grows, either by law or through established practice, examinations and test results play a crucial role in determining both whether an applicant can be admitted to a higher education institution, and what programs or courses that applicant can be placed.

Admission to higher education in the Turkish education system is regulated by *Student Selection and Placement Center* with a nationwide examination called *Student Selection Examination*. At the interface between secondary and higher education, *Student Selection Examination* determines which applicants among the whole secondary education graduates in Turkey can be admitted to higher education, and by taking their choices into account to what programs those applicants can be placed.

The purpose of this study is to present the findings of a SWOT analysis on the university entrance examination in Turkey. The paper first describes the Turkish education system, the history of admission to higher education, the university entrance examination chronology and the short definition of SWOT analysis. The SWOT analysis is finally set in the context of the university entrance examination. At the end of the SWOT analysis, two separate missions and strategies to reach those missions are constructed. They briefly prove that the Turkish education system needs an examination with alternative methods.

The Turkish Education System

The basic structure of the Turkish national education system is outlined in Basic Law on National Education (Law no. 1739). According to this law, the formal Turkish education system consists of pre-primary education, primary education, secondary education and higher education (Ministry of National Education [MONE], 2000).

Pre-primary education, which is optional, is the education of children who are under the age of compulsory primary education. The purpose of pre-primary education, which

is held at nursery classes in primary schools, and independent kindergartens, is to ensure physical, mental, and sensory development of children and the acquisition of good habits. Primary education provides children with the basic knowledge, skills, behaviors, and habits to become a good citizen, and to get prepared for life and for the next education level. Primary education, eight years of uninterrupted education, is compulsory for all children and is provided free of charge at public schools.

Secondary education in Turkey has two categories of educational institution. They are namely the general high schools which prepare students for higher education, and the vocational and technical high schools which provide specialized instruction with the aim of training qualified personnel. Higher education provides high level specialized education in various fields for the students who have completed secondary education. Its purpose is to train manpower within a system of contemporary educational and training principles to meet the needs of the country. The Higher Education Law (Law no. 2547) regulates the organization and functions of all public and private higher education institutions in Turkey. Higher education institutions in Turkey are categorized in three ways: universities, military and police colleges and academies, and two-year vocational training schools.

Admission to Higher Education in Turkey

Before the 1950s, student selection to the programs of higher education was not a major issue. At that time, when the number of applicants to a certain program exceeded, the grades of the matriculation examination, which was administered under the auspices of the Ministry of National Education, were commonly used as the criterion for selection. Until 1940s, authorities tried to select students with examinations based on the students' secondary education. Examinations included mathematics, geometry, natural sciences, history, geography, logic, philosophy, Turkish language and composition tests. Each student approximately spent 2½ days for the tests (Mihçioğlu, 1969). After the 1950s, due to the huge increase in the student population, some of the higher education institutions began to implement their own independent student selection examinations. These examinations, however, were proved to be inadequate and inefficient because they were generally based on the essay type and thus difficult to assess objectively.

The aim of fair admission to higher education could not be realized with those independent examinations held by different institutions although objective testing was put into practice. Therefore, in order to solve the problem, *Interuniversity Board* set up *Interuniversity Entrance Examination Commission* in 1963 whose goal was to examine the feasibility of broadening the student selection system. The centralized system for the admission to higher education, after *Interuniversity Board* ratified the regulation on *Interuniversity Registration and Entrance Examination* in December 1963, started in the 1964-1965 academic year.

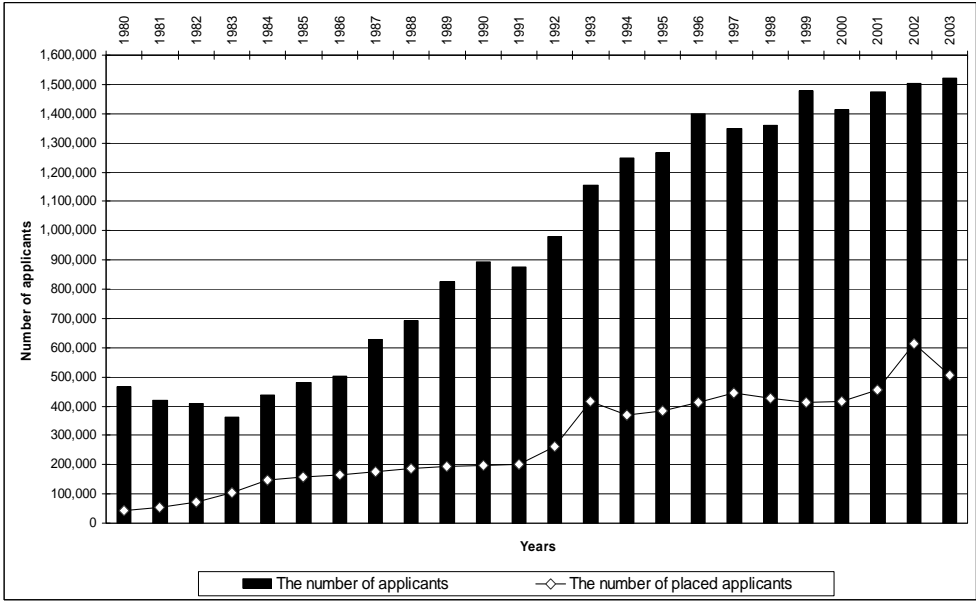


Figure 1: Number of Applicants to the University Entrance Examination in Turkey

Source: ÖSYM (2000) for 1980-1999; numbers for 2000-2003 are collected from recent newspapers.

The university entrance examinations were prepared and administered by Ankara University from 1964 to 1966, by Istanbul University from 1966 to 1973, and by Hacettepe University in 1974. During this period, some other higher education institutions such as Istanbul Technical University and Middle East Technical University used separate but similar admission procedures. Similarly, the higher education institutions for teacher training within the Ministry of National Education used their own system of admission.

As a result of the constant increase in the number of applicants to higher education (Figure 1) and the partially centralized system, it became difficult for the commission under the direction of a university to prepare and administer the university entrance examination. In 1974, in order to establish a uniformed administration, *Interuniversity Board* set up *Interuniversity Student Selection and Placement Center*. In accordance with the Higher Education Law in 1981, this center was attached to *Higher Education Council*, and its name was changed to *Student Selection and Placement Center* (Öğrenci Seçme ve Yerleştirme Merkezi [ÖSYM], 2000).

Table 1: *The History of University Entrance Examinations in Turkey*

<i>Periods</i>	<i>Type</i>		<i>Tests</i>
<i>Period I (1974-1980)</i>	<i>One-stage</i>	<i>Four tests</i>	General ability, Mathematics and natural sciences, Turkish language and literature, Foreign language.
<i>Period II (1981-1998)</i>	<i>Two-stage</i>	<i>Stage I</i>	Verbal ability, Quantitative ability.
		<i>Stage II</i>	Natural sciences, Mathematics, Social sciences, Turkish language and literature, Foreign language.
<i>Period III (Since 1999)</i>	<i>One-stage</i>	<i>Two tests</i>	Verbal ability, Quantitative ability.

University Entrance Examination in Turkey

A single examination which is administered by the state authorities provides an objective, fair and defensible approach to organize student selection and placement processes (Baker & Wolf, 2001). As an objective, fair and defensible method, any secondary school graduate in Turkey who wishes to attend an undergraduate program in a university has to take the university entrance examination. The examinations carried out by Student Selection and Placement Center can be described in three subsequent periods: the period of introducing a centralized examination, the period of implementing a two-stage examination, and the period of reintroducing one-stage examination (Table 1).

From 1974 to 1981, the university entrance examination was a one-stage examination consisting of four tests: a general ability test, a mathematics and natural sciences test, a Turkish language and literature test and social sciences test, and a foreign language test (Dökmen, 1992). The tests were administered at a single session at the same time and date throughout the country. Four types of composite scores were calculated from the candidates' raw scores: natural sciences score, social sciences score, foreign language score, and natural and social sciences score.

In 1981, a two-stage university entrance examination was introduced because of the facts that the number of students applying for the examination increased between 1974 and 1981, that it seemed difficult to assess students' knowledge and skills who graduated from schools having different curricula with one examination, and that the questions in the general ability section were deciphered (Kutlu, 2003). The first stage, Student Selection Examination, held in May in a single session, involved two tests: verbal ability test and quantitative ability test. The second stage, Student Placement Examination, held in June in a single session, was a five-test battery which included a natural sciences test, a mathematics test, a social sciences test, a Turkish language and

literature test, and a foreign language test. As a new regulation different from the previous examination system, the high school grade point averages of the candidates were taken into consideration in the calculation of the composite scores.

Since 1999, the one-stage examination has been re-administered. The examination similar to the examination in the period between 1974 and 1981 consists of the Student Selection Examination and Foreign Language Examination, which is administered approximately two weeks after the first examination for the candidates who wish to attend a higher education program in a foreign language and literature. Candidates, similar to the method used in the two-stage examination, are essentially evaluated on the basis of their performance on the examinations and their academic achievement at high schools. Candidates are provided to decide their program preferences after they receive their composite scores. Besides, the students who graduate from vocational high schools are able to attend two-year technical-vocational school of higher education without an examination (ÖSYM, 2000). However, the one-stage examination has been greatly criticized because of the facts that the shift from two-stage to one-stage examination has been implemented without any research, that there has been a decrease in the number of questions asked in the tests, that it is difficult to assess students' knowledge and skills with only one examination, and that the program preference lists of students who graduate from vocational high schools have been restricted (Kutlu, 2003).

SWOT Analysis

This section of the paper briefly describes what a SWOT analysis is, and explains the main rationale why a special technique, prioritization, is employed in the SWOT analysis in this study. SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis is aimed to identify the strengths and weaknesses of an organization, and the opportunities and threats in the environment (Dyson, 2004). The SWOT analysis is a social activity in which a group of people gather to share their opinions in a systematic way to build the group goals and strategies. It includes the collection and portrayal of information about internal and external factors, and allows the group members to focus on the key issues. Strategies that increase the effects of the strengths and eliminate weaknesses while approaching the goal by exploiting the opportunities and by encountering the treats wherever necessary are developed at the end of the analysis. It is a democratic group decision making technique. The group find the opportunity to learn what others in the group say on the subject, decide and find out where his or her decisions stand (Stacey, 1993).

When employed properly, a SWOT analysis can yield a good basis for strategy formulation (Kajanus et al., 2004). It is a strategy formulation method by listing the internal and external factors. As a result of this listing process, the SWOT analysis is sometimes described as a naïve form of analysis (Pickton & Wright, 1998). Often it

only demonstrates the factors in the analysis, and those factors are usually depicted briefly (Hill & Westbrook, 1997). In order to overcome this limitation, Kotler (1991) suggests prioritization, a scoring process, which allows the factors to be identified according to their significance and level of importance. Prioritization in the course of the analysis provides the group members to determine which factors should be paid particular attention to formulate a strategy.

Method

The conceptualization of the design in this study can be best characterized as a case study. The current situation of the university entrance examination in Turkey in a class discussion is depicted and the desired situation through the SWOT analysis is portrayed at the end of the class discussion. The main purpose of the analysis is, thus, to present a new admission system, which is thought to be a better method to mediate the rules and principles of university admission.

The data used in this study are collected in a three-hour class discussion. Secondary data from the statistics and official documents are presented in the beginning of the discussion in order for the group members to have the detailed information about the topic. 3 master and 2 doctorate students majoring in the fields of Curriculum and Instruction, and Administration and Planning in the Department of Education Sciences at Middle East Technical University have a three-hour class discussion in *EDS 573 Current issues in Turkish education* course on October 20, 2004. The group members have had this university entrance examination in their lives and have lived through its advantages and disadvantages. Hence, it can be considered that they are more able to create ideas authentically and constructively. It is also observed that the group members have given many examples from their experiences of university entrance examination process.

In the beginning of the discussion, the class is provided with the information about the methods of admission to higher education, some admission examples from the European Union countries, the Turkish education system, and the current admission method used in Turkey. A discussion about the characteristics of university entrance examination is then held to set the context for the SWOT analysis. The group attendants are first asked to generate items about strengths and weakness of university entrance examination in Turkey, and then items about opportunities and threats individually. They are asked to note down their ideas on a piece of paper and to stick them to the board. At the end, there are 16 strengths, 24 weaknesses, 18 opportunities, and 15 threats listed (see Appendix for the whole list). After reviewing the items, the attendants are asked to select the most important 7 opportunities not to be missed and the most alarming 7 threats not to be overlooked. They are also asked to rate them with a 7 point scale (a total of 35 points can be rated for threats and opportunities). 7 opportunities and 7 threats, which had scores more than 5, are chosen to represent the

threats and opportunities of the SWOT analysis. At the end of the session, the group members in two groups are required to originate a mission and strategies to reach that mission, and are told to stick them to the board.

The reliability and validity of the analysis are checked by the course instructor, a planning specialist in the State Planning Agency in Turkey. During the SWOT analysis process, she removes the irrelevant items from the list, combines the duplicated or identical items into one item, determines the number of votes that can be allocated for the threats and opportunities sections of the list, and guides the groups to build missions and strategies. Further, she decides which frame to base the missions and strategies at the end of the analysis.

Results

Three major themes identified as strengths and five major themes identified as weaknesses emerge from the analysis. For the sake of simplicity, the similar items are grouped under certain themes. Strengths include the institution's reputation, the fairness of the examination and the practicality and efficiency of the examination. Weaknesses include the examination's lack of focus on ability and interest, PIFUEE (private educational institutions which help students prepare for the examinations), which is in this study called as private institutions for university entrance examination (PIFUEE), the examination-curriculum difference, timing and the negative influence of the examination on the students' psychology.

Strengths

- (1) The reputation of Student Selection and Placement Center: One of the strengths which characterize the university entrance examination in Turkey is that Student Selection and Placement Center which has been preparing and administering the tests throughout the country since 1974 has a good reputation in the society. The application, administration and evaluation processes carried out by the center have a long and well-developed tradition.
- (2) The fair examination: Another strength of the university entrance examination is its fairness. Every secondary education graduate in Turkey has a right to take the examination. It is, furthermore, fair because the evaluation of the applicants' scores is calculated in objective criteria, and the evaluation procedure and results are all open to public inquiry.
- (3) The practical and efficient examination: The final and very crucial strength of the university entrance examination is its practicality and efficiency. The examination provides standardization throughout the country with a nationwide test held once in a year. It eliminates the applicants and selects the most

potential ones on the basis of their academic success. Besides, it places appropriate students to the proper programs according to their preferences.

Weaknesses

- (1) Lack of focus on the students' abilities and interests: Various comments from the SWOT analysis group stress that the university entrance examination in Turkey does not assess the students' abilities and interests, and does not reflect the students' intellectual capacity efficiently. Consequently, the examination cannot totally determine the occupational tendencies of the students.
- (2) PIFUEE: A second theme of weakness that emerges from the discussion is that the university entrance examination has created a new sector, PIFUEE, a private preparation institution to help the candidates develop their testing skills and area knowledge. It is widely believed by the group members that it is not possible for a student to pass the examination and be placed in a university program without the help of PIFUEE. The need for private preparation courses in PIFUEE, further, puts the lower income group students at a disadvantage.
- (3) The examination-curriculum difference: The great difference between what is taught at schools and what is assessed in the university entrance examination is another weakness. As a result of this, students tend to disregard the parts of secondary education curricula that are not assessed in the examination. Those neglected parts in the curricula have become unattractive and dysfunctional for the students in the long term.
- (4) Timing: The fourth weakness of the university entrance examination is that it is held once in a year, in the second week's Sunday morning in June. Therefore, according to the SWOT analysis comments, it is not possible to assess success thoroughly with one examination.
- (5) Negative influence on psychology: The final theme stresses that there are negative influences of the university entrance examination on the student psychology. According to items in the analysis, exam stress and anxiety affects success greatly. Because students have the notion that their higher education lives depend on how much they can do on this examination, they become very stressful and anxious, and thus unsuccessful.

Threats and Opportunities

Seven threats and seven opportunities that are scored greater than 5 out of 7 votes are listed in this section of the study. In order to keep the logic of the analysis, the threats are given first and then the opportunities are listed.

Threats:

- (1) The university entrance examination requirements do not reflect secondary education program requirements (7 votes).
- (2) The tertiary level of education gains a position that can dictate over the secondary level and the Ministry of National Education (6 votes).
- (3) Being focused to one examination cripples the secondary level education goals and the effort for that level (6 votes).
- (4) Exam requirements by Student Selection and Placement Center and PIFUEE help to create a social class of the financially powerful (6 votes).
- (5) Students do not need to think critically because multiple-choice questions limit their thinking abilities (5 votes).
- (6) Assessing only verbal and logical skills causes a highly stressed cognitive test. Children who are gifted in other areas remain unspotted by the system (5 votes).
- (7) High school education is not so efficient in terms of its curriculum (5 votes).

Opportunities:

- (1) After the secondary education graduation, the Ministry of National Education could hold a nationwide baccalaureate examination for those who want a higher education (7 votes).
- (2) Universities can choose their students by baccalaureate exam results, which will show area grades as well, and their department capacities (7 votes).
- (3) Vocational higher educational institutions may separate themselves from the universities (6 votes).
- (4) The PIFUEE can function together with the Ministry of National Education to prepare high school graduates for the baccalaureate examinations (6 votes).
- (5) There could be more examinations held many times in a year. However, there should be only one placement time (5 votes).
- (6) The Student Selection and Placement Center can become autonomous to measure secondary education level outputs by baccalaureate examinations (5 votes).
- (7) There could be a nationwide secondary education evaluation system (5 votes).

The strengths and weaknesses organized as themes, and threats and opportunities listed in the significance and importance sequence have important implications for the future of the university entrance examination in Turkey. In order to have a better admission system in Turkey, the SWOT analysis group formulates two separate missions and different strategies in order to reach those desired situations sketched in the missions.

Mission I: Within the following 4 years, Student Selection and Placement Center will develop a nationwide secondary education measurement system which will assess students' scholastic aptitude as well as their curricular achievement.

Strategies I:

- (a) Student Selection and Placement Center will prepare the test.
- (b) Students will take the test one year after their secondary education graduation.
- (c) The curricular part of the test will be based on the curricula of different types of schools.
- (d) PIFUEE's function will be mainly remedial teaching.

Mission II: In 5 years time, in order to measure the outcomes of the secondary level education curricula, the Ministry of National Education will organize baccalaureate examinations, which rest on the secondary education curricula and assess the knowledge, skills and abilities acquired during the secondary school education.

Strategies II:

- (a) The Ministry of National Education will administer the baccalaureate tests at the end of each academic year throughout the secondary education.
- (b) The students' performance assessed by the school on the basis of standard criteria will be taken into account.
- (c) The Student Selection and Placement Center will place students to universities according to their scores from the baccalaureate tests.
- (d) PIFUEE will support the schools and will cover the same curricula with the secondary education curricula. They will cater to the needs of the students who need extra help.

Conclusions

The SWOT analysis set in the context of the university entrance examination in Turkey demonstrates that the Turkish education at the interface between secondary and higher education desperately needs either an examination or a series of examinations mainly because the number of applicants for higher education is more than the number of places in the universities in Turkey. Further, the analysis shows that the administration method, the criteria for what to assess, and the evaluation process should be rearranged according to the contemporary changes in the Turkish education system mainly because university entrance examinations in the Turkish educational context do not assess accurately what the secondary education graduates know.

As a strategy suggested at the end of the analysis, the introduction of a new examination system does not guarantee that all of the problems which range from the increasing number of students to the limited places available to them, or the negative influence of a one-stage examination timing will be solved forever. However, a chief

notion will always ensure the success of the examination. A brief analysis of the examination itself, of the environment where the examination has been developed, and of the local and specific characteristics that govern the administration of the examination provides insightful solutions to the new problems. Recently, a new change for university entrance examination has been implemented. According to this change, the new examination will be composed of two stages. In the first stage, the applicants' general knowledge will be assessed whereas in the second stage, the applicants' area knowledge will be checked (Güçlü, 2005a). This new change has proved that the changes in the university entrance examination does not guarantee any success because it has already been criticized for the fact that it will force the applicants to have more courses in PIFUEE (Güçlü, 2005b).

The main limitation of this study is the number of people involved in the SWOT analysis. More people from different areas need to be involved in the analysis so that more sophisticated and comprehensive items can be constructed. The other limitation is the reliability and validity of the method used in the study. Even though it is a qualitative case study, and thus the reliability and validity of a study is less stressed for the sake of obtaining detailed information about the case, the mere means of confirming the reliability and validity of the methods in the study, which involve generating items, prioritizing them, and composing missions and strategies, is the course instructor's monitoring and correcting the analysis process.

As a result of the limitations discussed in the previous paragraph and as suggestions for the following studies, the same study might be carried by more people who have different background, who have varied occupations, and who can provide alternative views. The other suggestion for the future studies is that the items created in the SWOT analysis should be supervised by an expert so that the reliability and validity of the items can be controlled efficiently.

The main aim of this study, along with this notion, is to provide a comprehensive analysis of university entrance examination from the points of students who have had this examination in their lives. My hope is that this study attracts the authorities' attention that would develop a new university entrance examination system, and that the SWOT analysis results help them recognize what have been neglected and overlooked in the system for a long time.

References

- Baker, S., & Wolf, A. (2001). Editorial: Examinations and entry to university: pressure and change in a mass system. *Assessment in Education*, 8(3), 285-290.
- Dökmen, Ü. (1992). *Öğrenci Seçme ve Yerleştirme Merkezi, kuruluşu, gelişmesi, çalışmaları* [Student Selection and Placement Center, establishment, development, studies]. Ankara: ÖSYM.

- Dolton, P. ve Vignoles, A. (1999). Overeducation: Problem or not? In Henke, M. & Little, B. (Eds.). *Changing relationships between higher education and the state* (pp. 105-124). Higher Education Policy Series, 45.
- Dyson, R. G. (2004). Strategic development and SWOT analysis at the University of Warwick. *European Journal of Operational Research*, 152, 631-640.
- Güçlü, A. (2005a, August 2). ÖSS'de neler değişti? [What has changed in the university entrance examination?]. *Milliyet*.
- Güçlü, A. (2005b, July 17). Dersaneye bağımlılık artacak [The dependence on the private institutions will increase]. *Milliyet*.
- Hill, T. ve Westbrook, R. (1997). SWOT analysis: It's time for a product recall. *Long Range Planning*, 30(1), 46-52.
- Kajanus, M., Kangas, J., & Kurttila, M. (2004). The use of value focused thinking and the A'WOT hybrid method in tourism management. *Tourism Management*, 25, 499-506.
- Kotler, P. (1991). *Marketing management* (7th ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Kutlu, Ö. (2003). Cumhuriyetin 80. yılında: Ölçme ve değerlendirme [Evaluation and assessment in the 80th anniversary of the Turkish Republic]. *Milli Eğitim Dergisi*, 160.
- Mıhçıoğlu, C. (1969). *Üniversiteye giriş ve liselerimiz* [Admission to universities and our high schools]. Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Yayını.
- Ministry of National Education. (2000). *Turkish education system*. Retrieved November 1, 2004, from <http://www.meb.gov.tr/Stats/apk2002ing/apage29_48.htm>.
- Murphy, J. (1993). A degree of waste. *Oxford Review of Education*, 19, 9-13.
- Öğrenci Seçme ve Yerleştirme Merkezi. (2000). *Selection and placement of students in higher education institutions in Turkey*. Ankara: ÖSYM.
- Pickton, D. W. ve Wright, S. (1998). What's SWOT in strategic analysis. *Strategic Change*, 7, 101-109.
- Stacey, R. (1993). *Strategic management and organisational dynamics*. London: Pitman.

Appendix

Strengths

- (1) The university entrance examination provides standardization throughout the country.
- (2) It is fair and everyone has right to enter the exam.
- (3) It is a fair system in terms of trustiness of scores.
- (4) There are objective criteria for evaluation in the university entrance examination.
- (5) It has a tradition that has been developed over the years.
- (6) There is a limit set to standardize the input (applicants) into the system.
- (7) It provides a chance to notice some shortcomings of the secondary school curricula.
- (8) It has a good reputation in the society.
- (9) It is ensured in the examination that those having the most potential are mostly placed in a program.
- (10) It fulfills the need to eliminate the applicants.
- (11) It is accessible to all.
- (12) Homogeneity in the students' capabilities and competences is provided by the examination.
- (13) It selects students on the basis of academic success.

- (14) It is practical in terms of selecting students in a nationwide examination.
- (15) It chooses appropriate students to certain departments.
- (16) The number of students to be placed is determined in the examination.

Weaknesses

- (1) It became necessary because the secondary education level does not have a nationwide comparative measurement system.
- (2) It does not measure ability, interest and success, so entrants can get registered in unsuitable programs.
- (3) The program preference is made only on the paper.
- (4) Only school without help of PIFUEE is not enough for preparation to the examination.
- (5) Exam stress and anxiety may affect the psychology of learners in a negative manner.
- (6) The differences of level in secondary education institutions pose a disadvantage to some applicants.
- (7) Vocational and technical high school students could not enter the programs they wish.
- (8) It is not possible to assess one's success only with one exam.
- (9) Universities invest money on people who could do the same job with vocational and technical education.
- (10) The need for private preparation courses puts the lower income group children at a disadvantage.
- (11) The examination is not efficient in reflecting students' intellectual capacity.
- (12) Students tend to disregard the parts of school curricula that are not included in the university entrance examination.
- (13) The examination cannot totally determine occupational tendency of the students.
- (14) There is a continuous increase in the cost of preparation for parents because it is almost seen impossible to win the university entrance examination without PIFUEE.
- (15) It is impossible to evaluate the real capacity of applicants with a high level of test anxiety.
- (16) It is held once in a year.
- (17) Students can't study for pleasure and self-satisfaction.
- (18) Secondary school performance, skills, personality, etc. are neglected or not reflected enough in the exam.
- (19) Secondary school courses become unattractive and dysfunctional for students.
- (20) There is no match between what is taught in the secondary school education and what is asked in the examination.
- (21) The examination causes rote memorization.
- (22) Students' lives depend on how much they can do in the examination.
- (23) Qualified and non-qualified students have the same examination.
- (24) The examination causes the students at their age to be asocial.

Opportunities

- (1) After the secondary education graduation, the Ministry of National Education could hold a nationwide baccalaureate examination for those who want a higher education (7 votes).
- (2) Universities can choose their students by baccalaureate exam results, which will show area grades as well, and their department capacities (7 votes).
- (3) Vocational higher educational institutions may separate themselves from the universities (6 votes).
- (4) The PIFUEE's can function together with the Ministry of National Education to prepare high school graduates for the baccalaureate examinations (6 votes).
- (5) There could be more examinations held many times in a year. However, there should be only one placement time (5 votes).

- (6) The Student Selection and Placement Center can become autonomous to measure secondary education level outputs by baccalaureate examinations (5 votes).
- (7) There could be a nationwide secondary education evaluation system (5 votes).
- (8) New qualitative assessment techniques might be introduced to the system (4 votes).
- (9) Top universities could have extra admission rules such as TOEFL, LES, etc. (4 votes).
- (10) Some of the applicants could attend the programs without an entrance examination (3 votes).
- (11) Applicants can learn their exam scores before they make a choice (3 votes).
- (12) Secondary education performance could be removed from the exam grade (2 votes).
- (13) Secondary education curricula could involve sections for university entrance examination (2 votes).
- (14) With the integration to European Union, the students could take a standard examination and then attend to universities in a European Union country (2 votes).
- (15) Multi-layered exams can be applied (1 vote).
- (16) Two-stage admission examinations might be reintroduced (1 vote).
- (17) Students' preferences could limit the selection process (0 votes).
- (18) Regional development index could contribute to the total grade (0 votes).

Threats

- (1) The university entrance examination requirements do not reflect secondary education program requirements (7 votes).
- (2) The tertiary level of education gains a position that can dictate over the secondary level and the Ministry of National Education (6 votes).
- (3) Being focused to one examination cripples that secondary level education goals and the effort (6 votes).
- (4) Exam requirements by the Student Selection and Placement Center and PIFUEE help to create a social class of the financially powerful (6 votes).
- (5) Students do not need to think critically because multiple-choice questions limit their thinking abilities (5 votes).
- (6) Assessing only verbal and logical skills causes a highly stressed cognitive test. Children who are gifted in other areas remain unspotted by the system (5 votes).
- (7) High school education is not so efficient in terms of curriculum (5 votes).
- (8) PIFUEE owners have become a source of financial and political power in the system (4 votes).
- (9) Knowledge of certain sciences, being the key to higher education, will lead to the negligence of social and intellectual domains of the professionals (3 votes).
- (10) Students do not choose their departments on their own (3 votes).
- (11) High school education becomes a burden on students (3 votes).
- (12) There is no solution for the learners who could not win the examination (1 vote).
- (13) The students may not necessarily win the field of study they would like to major in or they have ability or interest in (0 votes).
- (14) There would be ethical problems if there was no exam (0 votes).
- (15) There is an accumulation of graduates at specific departments although there is no need for them (0 votes).