

The Role of Foreign-Educated Scholars in Turkey's Higher Education System: A Narrative Study of Two English Language Teacher Educators

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Abstract

In recent decades, the Republic of Turkey has undertaken a program of reform aimed at modernizing its higher education system. This endeavor has included a comprehensive restructuring of the nation's public universities. In order to meet the urgent need for highly qualified faculty members to staff its state-run higher education institutions, the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) has turned to a government-sponsored study abroad program through which competitively selected individuals receive funding to pursue graduate degrees at North American and European universities in exchange for service in the Turkish university system. However, due to significant non-return rates of sponsored students and a lack of transparency within the program, its goals have been closely scrutinized; amid these concerns, the contributions of those who do return appear in some cases to go unnoticed. Thus, in order to illuminate the experiences of returning scholars, this study explored the accounts of two English language teachers who received doctoral degrees from foreign institutions, then returned to Turkey to serve as teacher educators. Critical theory was utilized in order to investigate the oppressive power relationships inherent in the Turkish higher education system. The results revealed that as much as these foreign-educated scholars contributed to their respective universities, their ability to provide lasting benefits to Turkish education was minimized by the systemic and bureaucratic barriers they encountered; therefore, the higher education system was unable to achieve the desired goals of the study abroad program.

Keywords: *Turkish higher education; teacher educators; study abroad; educational reform; narrative inquiry.*