

Examining National Higher Education Policy Initiatives in OECD Countries Attracting a Large Number of International Students

Yüksek Sayıda Uluslararası Öğrenci Çeken OECD Ülkelerindeki Ulusal Yükseköğretim Politika Girişimlerinin İncelenmesi

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to comparatively examine national strategic higher education policy initiatives of selected OECD countries attracting a large number of international students. As an example of a multiple-case study, the study group comprised Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and Canada. The data were the official strategic education policy documents of these countries and were obtained from the official government websites of these countries. The qualitative thematic analysis method was employed to analyze the data. The study concluded that visa and employment convenience, expanded national scholarship opportunities, advertisement and promotion of higher education, accreditation/recognition-related strategic policy initiatives, government and third-party partnerships, and strategies to enhance student well-being were the main themes observed in the national higher education policy documents. Analyzing the common similarities and tendencies in top-ranked OECD countries' national strategic higher education policy initiatives, this study offered a visionary perspective for other countries to revise or redesign their national education policies to attract more international students in the future.

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ÖZET

Bu çalışma, yüksek sayıda uluslararası öğrenci çeken seçilmiş OECD ülkelerinin ulusal stratejik yükseköğretim politika girişimlerini karşılaştırmalı olarak incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Çoklu durum çalışması örneği olarak çalışma grubunu Avustralya, Yeni Zelanda, Birleşik Krallık ve Kanada oluşturmuştur. Veriler, bu ülkelerin resmi stratejik eğitim politika belgelerinden oluşmuş ve bu ülkelerin resmi internet sayfaları üzerinden elde edilmiştir. Verilerin analizinde nitel tematik analiz yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Çalışma; vize ve istihdam kolaylığı, genişletilmiş ulusal burs fırsatları, yükseköğretimin reklam ve tanıtımı, akreditasyon/tanınma kaynaklı stratejik politika girişimleri, hükümet ve üçüncü parti iş birlikleri ile öğrenci refahını artırmaya yönelik stratejilerin ulusal yükseköğretim politika belgelerinde gözlenen ana temalar olduğu sonucuna ulaşmıştır. Bu çalışma, üst sıralarda yer alan OECD ülkelerinin ulusal stratejik yükseköğretim politika girişimlerindeki ortak benzerlikleri ve eğilimleri analiz ederek diğer ülkelere daha fazla uluslararası öğrenci çekmek için mevcut ulusal eğitim politikalarını gözden geçirmeleri veya yeniden tasarlamaları konusunda vizyoner bir bakış açısı sunmaktadır.

Atf İçin

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INTRODUCTION

As a result of an increasing momentum of internationalization and its various effects on higher education after the Cold War period (Bamberger & Morris, 2024; de Wit & Altbach, 2021; Tarc, 2019), the educational policies, thoughts, or implementations of countries have gained critical significance in the global context. In higher education, Knight (1994) explains internationalization as “the process of integrating an international dimension into the teaching/learning, research and service functions of a university or college” (p. 3). Today, interest in internationalization in higher education settings is increasing as this term has a multi-dimensional role in shaping countries and higher education institutions regarding their education-related expectations and purposes. At this point, HEIs tend to adopt constructivist and integrative processes through international faculty (Kim, 2016), international collaboration in research activities (Eduan, 2019; Fan et al., 2022; Romani-Dias et al., 2019), exchange/mobility programs among students and/or scholars (Asaoka & Yano, 2009; Bohman & Borglin, 2014; Morley et al., 2018; Slatinska, 2023; Zheng et al., 2020), and international curricular strategies (Dell & Wood, 2010; Radjai & Hammond, 2021; Renfors, 2021; Svensson & Wihlborg, 2010) to have a multi-dimensional and effective internationalization framework. These factors, which aim to strengthen the mission of HEIs to have an international structure and shape the future policy plans of countries in higher education, play an active role in the formation of the internationalization concept comprehensively and effectively.

Nowadays, one of the crucial indicators in understanding and explaining the internationalization of higher education is the presence of international students (Teichler, 2017). Various factors directly affect the thoughts of international students about which country to choose for higher education. From the view of international students, the desire to get a qualified education from prestigious HEIs (Beine et al., 2014; Hazen & Alberts, 2006), the wide range of career and job opportunities that allow them to become a component of the existing national workforce in the countries having studied (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Wei et al., 2020), and constructive policies adopted by countries for them (Hawthorne, 2008; Zheng, 2014) have an active role on the immense international student audiences who prefer to study abroad for the higher education purposes.

As a result of the disappearance of physical borders in education today, international students' intellectual identities and academic qualifications are vital for countries since these factors are the key sources of ongoing economic, educational, cultural, and social welfare for each country worldwide. Therefore, financial and scientific contributions that qualified international students who aim to conduct research activities in different fields can provide to the countries where they study can be a critical element for these countries to take a leading position among their stakeholders on a global scale (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Bound et al., 2021; Chankseliani, 2016; Tremblay, 2005). This situation is a negative factor for countries that provide student flow abroad due to the loss of the trained and qualified workforce and its subsequent effects (Gribble, 2008; Tremblay, 2002). Therefore, the contributions of international students who leave their home countries to get higher education at prestigious overseas HEIs and their positive reflections on host countries increase the significance of creating innovative, inclusive, and attractive education policies.

Previous research indicated that multiple factors, including the reputation of HEIs, employment density and richness of job opportunities, and financial, social, and cultural climates in host countries in favor of students were determinants in shaping international students' decisions to go abroad for higher education (Abbas et al., 2021; Ahmad et al., 2016; Ke et al., 2022; Kingeski & Olivella Nadal, 2020; Zhu & Reeves, 2019). For instance, in their study, Beine et al. (2014) found that the role of having a network, willingness to get a high-level education, and obtaining attractive life standards through cost-effectiveness were fundamental factors that affect students' decisions to go to various universities in OECD countries for study purposes. Through the US example, Hazen and Alberts (2006) revealed that international students' views on staying permanently in their host country where they came to pursue higher education are influenced by multiple factors, especially well-qualified education, professional job options, and better living conditions. Focusing on country-based factors that cause international student mobility through selected post-Soviet countries, Chankseliani (2016) revealed that the low employment chances in the active workforce

in their homeland and the low enrollment in higher education were the key variables that led students to study abroad. Based on the example of China, Wen and Hu (2019) found that the presence of world-renowned higher education institutions in the host country and the rising economy of the host country are essential factors that attract students to study abroad. Maringe and Carter (2007) focused on push and pull factors, which motivated students to study in UK universities by coming from different points of the world. In their study, they concluded that existing political and economic environments in students' home countries have created pushing effects, while the reputation of HEs, having an applicable and easily accessible application process, and quality in educational implementations were some of the reasons for pulling factors (Maringe & Carter, 2007).

This study aims to comparatively examine national higher education policy initiatives in the selected OECD countries (Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and Canada), attracting a high volume of international students for higher education purposes. In light of longitudinal OECD data from 2018 to 2020 (OECD, 2024), the main reason for choosing these countries as study samples is that they are some of the best examples of OECD countries that attracted a high volume of international students. The total number of enrolled international students in these selected OECD countries between 2018 and 2020 is shown in **Table 1** below:

Table 1. *Enrolled international students in selected OECD countries (% of total)**

Countries	2018	2018R**	2019	2019R	2020	2020R
Australia	26.503	2	28.375	2	25.995	2
New Zealand	19.680	3	20.769	3	17.485	7
United Kingdom	18.324	4	18.677	4	20.148	3
Canada	13.838	7	16.221	7	17.616	6

*This table is adapted from *International Student Mobility (indicator)* by OECD, 2024.

**R: Rank

According to the most recent OECD data, Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and Canada are some of the countries that received a high volume of international students from 2018-2020 (OECD, 2024). At this point, having general and comprehensive insights into policy actions that can be implemented in other OECD countries where the number of international students is low may be vital in retaining successful and brilliant national students in their home countries. Based on this standpoint, this research is critical as it aims to discover current tendencies in national higher education policies of selected OECD countries that seem successful in attracting more international students for higher education purposes. Besides, unlike academic studies toward understanding the factors that pull students from their home countries to different world countries for educational purposes (Nefedova, 2021; Jiani, 2017; Jokila, 2019), there is a potential gap in the existing literature in terms of exploring and understanding the critical roles of education policies or strategic future education initiatives implemented by countries. Therefore, this research fills a fundamental gap in the current literature. This research reveals critical information and new insights about what other countries that are less successful or popular in attracting international higher education students should consider in their future higher education policy plans to become more competitive worldwide. Therefore, this research seeks to answer two research questions below:

1. What are the current higher education policy initiatives in Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and Canada regarding attracting international students to higher education?
2. How can other world countries reshape their higher education policies and reorient their future higher education policy plans in the context of attracting international students to their higher education institutions?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study reflects the main characteristics of a qualitative methodology since it aims to deeply explore and explain the comprehensive meanings of the data through different sources. Through the qualitative research methodology, researchers aim to reveal complex meanings, which are hidden behind the data, and try to put forward comprehensive explanations about the research problems (Creswell, 2013). By empowering itself through the key characteristics of qualitative methodology, this study is an example of a multiple-case study. The nature of the multiple case study offers researchers an opportunity to analyze data through various sources and reach multi-dimensional similar findings by comparing more than one case among themselves (Yin, 2003). Besides, the concluded results through this approach are more reliable as they shed light on the common sense of multiple cases (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Therefore, this study is a multiple-case study because it examines different cases (national education policies) in selected countries and aims to understand common similarities observed in these cases within the research questions.

Study Group

The study group consisted of four different upper-ranked OECD countries in terms of enrolled international students within their education systems. These countries are Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and Canada. The selection procedure of the samples was structured in light of the purposeful sampling strategy. According to Patton (2002), “Studying information-rich cases yields insights and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalizations” (p. 230). The extreme case sampling method was used as a sub-dimension of purposeful sampling. The reason is that this method focuses on identifying, selecting, and in-depth examining cases having more extreme or unexpected performance than other cases (Palinkas et al., 2015; Patton, 2002). Therefore, employing the extreme case sampling method, the researcher has selected and included samples from OECD countries with large numbers of international students (Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and Canada) in the study group. Another reason why the researcher has specifically chosen these four OECD countries is that one of the official (or national) languages spoken in all these countries is English. This situation enabled the researcher to access the strategic policy documents in these countries in English and to examine the data comprehensively.

Data Collection Procedure

The data in this study consists of the national education policy strategies and plans of Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and Canada. All documents and information regarding national strategies and plans were gathered by researchers from the official government websites of the OECD countries. The names of the official documents and online information sources located in government websites are *Australian Strategy for International Education 2021-2030*, *National Industry PhD Program – Program Guidelines*, *Research Training Program* (Australian Government, 2021; Australian Government Department of Education, 2023; Australian Government Department of Education, 2024), *International Education Strategy: global potential, global growth* (Department for Education & Department for International Trade, 2019), *Building on success: International education strategy 2019-2024* (Global Affairs Canada, 2019), and *International Education Strategy 2022-2030* (Ministry of Education, 2022).

The information and documents examined were obtained only from official governmental websites with the extension .gov (.govt for New Zealand) of the selected countries. Therefore, education policy strategies and plans prepared or expressed by non-governmental organizations in the selected countries were not included in the research process. After collecting official documents from government websites that could be relevant to the research objectives, the researcher read the content of each document to decide whether it included and explained the national higher education policy plans of the selected countries. In this context, official documents and information thoroughly explaining national higher education policy plans were included in the study group to be evaluated in the data analysis process, while others were not. These selection procedures

constituted the key criterion in the data collection process. Since the documents and online information collected from the official websites of the countries chosen were in English and open-access, the researcher did not encounter any difficulties in the data collection and analysis processes.

Data Analysis

The qualitative thematic analysis method was employed to analyze the gathered data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), "Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (p. 79). As appropriate to the nature of the thematic analysis method, the research data were analyzed. Each theme was explained and interpreted based on the higher education policy initiatives and obtained outcomes as the answers to the research questions.

One of the triangulation strategies, the expert audit review, was employed in this study to provide the validity of this qualitative research (Patton, 2002, p. 562). This triangulation strategy depends on reviewing the data from different aspects, including collection processes and analysis procedures, by an external member accepted as neutral against the reviewing research (Patton, 2002). By employing this process, thoughts and recommendations of the expert about the quality and variety of the study group and the accurateness and comprehensiveness of the data analysis processes were taken into consideration by the researcher.

The main contribution provided by the expert to this study was that he suggested revising the first version of theme names created by the researcher. Through this suggestion, the researcher revised the names of the theme labels initially used in the study. Then, the expert also suggested the researcher a new focal point that might increase the coverage and quality of the study. The expert mentioned that the term industry is a significant factor that might shape the future of the national higher education policy strategies and plans of any country in the globalized world. Based on this new focal point provided by the expert, the researcher tried to access additional documents or information within the scope of the research questions. Through these phases, the researcher aimed to increase the overall study validity.

FINDINGS

Based on the analyzed data, six different themes regarding the higher education policies of selected OECD countries that aimed to attract international students were determined. These themes included visa and employment convenience, expanded national scholarship opportunities, advertisement and promotion of higher education, accreditation/recognition-related strategic policy initiatives, government and third-party partnerships, and strategies to enhance student wellbeing. However, these six themes were not common to all countries analyzed. **Table 2** provides a comparative framework showing the presence or absence of these six themes in each OECD country analyzed:

Table 2. Themes by OECD countries

Themes	UK	Australia	Canada	New Zealand
Visa and employment convenience	✓	✓	✓	✓
Expanded national scholarship opportunities	✓	✓	✓	×
Advertisement and promotion of higher education	✓	✓	✓	✓
Accreditation/recognition-related strategic policy initiatives	×	✓	×	×
Strategies to enhance student wellbeing	×	×	×	✓
Government and third-party partnerships	×	×	×	✓

Visa and Employment Convenience

UK

The constructive role of international students in the United Kingdom's economic, cultural, social, and educational development shapes the fundamental dynamics of the UK's higher education policies and reform plans aimed at attracting brilliant brains from worldwide. According to the *International Education Strategy: global potential, global growth*, as one of the long-term expected policy outcomes adopted by the Government, the United Kingdom aims to attract at least 600,000 international students by 2030 to be included in its higher education system (Department for Education & Department for International Trade, 2019, p. 2). This long-term expectation enabled the Government to design and implement comprehensive higher education policies to make a global destination point for international students for educational purposes. The above document, which explains the UK's higher education policies and reform initiatives for international students, will be referred to as the Strategy in the following subsections relating to the UK.

The UK Government adopted the implementation of an attractive policy initiative that focuses on increasing active workforce participation through international students in UK higher education institutions. According to the Strategy, the UK Government aims to provide student-friendly visa and immigration procedures to international students (Department for Education & Department for International Trade, 2019). One of the constructivist policy plans made in favor of international students regarding this situation is that the Government offers a six-month post-graduation living permit to undergraduate and master's degree graduates and a 12-month post-graduation living permit to doctoral graduates, which will include an unlimited work permit in the UK (Department for Education & Department for International Trade, 2019, p. 12). Within three months before graduation from HEIs, the Government also enables international students to apply for a skilled work visa as well as allows them to change their current visas into skilled-work visas from their home countries within two years period beginning from graduation (Department for Education & Department for International Trade, 2019, p. 12). By doing these, the Government aims to provide a highly skilled workforce from recent graduates of international students and improve the overall quality of the UK's educational, economic, and social welfare.

Through another strategic policy action in favor of international students who aim to pursue higher education in the UK, the Government aims to provide student-friendly visa application procedures. The UK Government plans to not set any limit on the total number of students who can apply for a student visa in order to receive a high level of international student applications from different world countries (Department for Education & Department for International Trade, 2019, p. 13).

Australia

Among other OECD countries, Australia is another leading country that has been successful in attracting international students to its educational system to pursue postgraduate studies. The Australian Government plans to implement various higher education policies and reform plans to improve Australia's overall social, educational, and economic quality. *Australian Strategy for International Education 2021-2030*, *National Industry PhD Program – Program Guidelines*, and the *Research Training Program (RTP)* explain what the Government aims to develop and carry out new higher education policies or continue supporting existing strategic policies for international students in the short and long term (Australian Government, 2021; Australian Government Department of Education, 2023; Australian Government Department of Education, 2024).

The Australian Government aims to modify and improve the existing characteristics of visa regulations in favor of international students who may come to Australia for higher education purposes. Based on the *Australian Strategy for International Education 2021-2030*, one of the future policy movements that would improve the current restrictions on visas for international students (master's with coursework) is for the Government to increase the maximum length of stay in Australia on temporary graduate visas from two to three years (Australian Government, 2021, p. 26). Considering the crucial functions of VET graduates on the global growth of the country, the Government also increases the length of temporary graduate visas that can be used by these

graduates to 24 months by bypassing some of the academic and recognition-related conditions temporarily (Australian Government, 2021, p. 26).

Unlike New Zealand and Canada, it is worth mentioning that Australia has been one of the countries that have made the most radical decisions in favor of international students in terms of facilitating visas and improving employment opportunities along with the UK. For example, while the UK aims to allow international students to stay in the country for up to 12 months to find a qualified job, Australia plans to triple this period by giving international students three years (master's with coursework). This policy strategy is one of the critical indicators of Australia's belief in the future role and power of international students in the country.

New Zealand

The OECD report that shows the volume of international students coming to another country for higher education indicates that New Zealand was the third country among the others in attracting international students between 2018 and 2019 and the fifth country in 2020 (OECD, 2024). To sustain this success steadily, the New Zealand Government has set out a new strategic plan called the *International Education Strategy 2022-2030*, which aims to successfully implement different policy actions in the education sector. The main goals of this Strategy include offering a broad and cumulative development of New Zealand in international education among other countries, as well as enhancing the existing scope of educational and social opportunities for international students (Ministry of Education, 2022).

The *International Education Strategy 2022-2030* indicates that the New Zealand Government carries out the process of monitoring the most recent visa procedures for international students who will come from foreign countries and adopts measures to inform HEIs regarding the processing times of visa applications (Ministry of Education, 2022, p. 18). While the Government also aims to check the visa procedures, it also focuses on the work rights of international students in New Zealand. Although this policy action has not been well-explained step by step and it is not clear how it directly benefits international students, it is possible to argue that the existence of this action could encourage international students to choose New Zealand for higher education purposes.

Canada

The current international education strategy plan implemented by the Government of Canada established a solid and constructive framework for its international education initiatives and offered it for stakeholders' views. This strategic plan, called *Building on success: International education strategy 2019-2024*, sheds light on different types of international education initiatives that might increase the volume of international students by attracting them to higher education in Canadian HEIs (Global Affairs Canada, 2019). Even though this strategy has expired as of March 31, 2024, this document will be used in this study since there is no approved international education strategy focused on the future.

Through its strategic plan, the Government of Canada aims to create a functional process of obtaining student permits for dynamically, socially, and academically highly qualified international students who will contribute to Canada's long-term development. To make this initiative more effective, the Government plans to revise the immigration system, particularly immigration documents and formal procedures between visa applicants and government agencies, to design a more user-friendly structure (Global Affairs Canada, 2019, p. 10). Through this ongoing initiative, the Government aims to minimize the time required to decide whether applicants are eligible for visas for different purposes.

Expanded National Scholarship Opportunities

UK

The most recent higher education strategic policy plans highlight that the UK Government gives importance to financially supporting national scholarship programs to attract qualified and academically well-equipped international students to pursue their postgraduate education within the UK borders. The Strategy shows that the Government aims to continue bolstering specific

national scholarship programs, including the Chevening, Commonwealth, Marshall (only for US citizens), and Saltire Scholarship Program in Scotland (Department for Education & Department for International Trade, 2019, p. 24). The content of Chevening Scholarships, Commonwealth Scholarships, and Marshall Scholarships provided by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office offers a comprehensive stipend that covers various expenses (e.g., living, arrival, study (tuition), etc.) in the UK for international students. Thanks to the comprehensive support that considers all the necessary financial, educational, and social requirements of international students through these national scholarship schemes, the Government aims to attract highly skilled people and nurture them as potential contributors to the cumulative development of the country in the future.

Australia

The role of scholarships in attracting students from different destinations of the world is vital. The Australian Government designs and implements national scholarship schemes for Australia's cumulative development by aiming to attract qualified and ambitious international students to Australia. Through a comprehensive and well-designed scholarship initiative, the *National Industry PhD Program*, the Government aims to build strong collaboration between selected PhD candidates in Australian HEIs and industrial organizations. Offering two tracks called Industry Linked PhD and Industry Researcher PhD for the eligible PhD candidates with this program, the Government organizes placements of these students into the selected industrial partners, and selected industrial organizations offer PhD candidates extensive salary and other financial support to conduct their research (Australian Government Department of Education, 2023). This opportunity offered by the Government allows students to develop and independently conduct their research without time, finance, equipment, or environmental restrictions thanks to the comprehensive support of industrial partners. With this program, students also have the chance to be at the forefront of the job market for future career opportunities by introducing their research through leading industrial organizations.

Through another similar scholarship opportunity called the *Research Training Program (RTP)*, the Government aims to offer comprehensive opportunities to international master's and doctorate students in Australian HEIs. With this program, the Government financially supports full-time research master's students for up to two years, part-time research master's students for up to four years, full-time research doctorate students for up to four years, and part-time research doctorate students for up to eight years, with a minimum of \$32,192 and a maximum of \$50,291 base for full-time for 2024 (Australian Government Department of Education, 2024).

Compared to the UK and Canada, the Australian Government offers more comprehensive and attractive opportunities to international students, especially those studying at the master's and doctorate level, within the scope of the national scholarship scheme. Although the UK and Canada have the same theme in their agenda, Australia also adopts internship opportunities that will contribute to the careers of international students as a national higher education policy in addition to financial support. This future higher education policy is a key strategic plan that attracts international students to the country thanks to its potential positive effects, such as minimizing international students' anxiety about finding a job after graduation, making these students more willing to research, and providing them with an educational process focused solely on research without institutional/bureaucratic work and procedures.

Canada

Another national education strategy of the Government of Canada aimed at attracting qualified international students to higher education institutions in Canada is to expand the scope and content of national scholarship programs, specifically targeting specific countries that do not have comprehensive promotional strategies to retain domestic students within their borders. Considering the attractiveness and potential role of international students in gaining financial well-being in a foreign country where they do not come to have a permanent life, the Government plans to increase the current budget of scholarship opportunities by up to \$5 million to distribute to all students over five years (Global Affairs Canada, 2019, p. 11).

Advertisement and Promotion of Higher Education

UK

As one of the other strategic policy plans that aim to promote higher education in the United Kingdom, the Government prioritizes the role of advertisement activities in some of the selected overseas countries (i.e., China, Türkiye, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia) to introduce the quality of higher education institutions as well as attract qualified and talented international students (Department for Education & Department for International Trade, 2019, p. 11). Through this action, the Government not only intends to promote its higher education system in some of the selected destinations and encourage international students' applications to their HEIs, but also invests in their future by adding those talents to their social and economic environments.

Australia

As a future policy initiative similar to other OECD countries examined, the Australian Government tries to integrate international students into its higher education system through different advertisements and information sessions. In order to fulfill this goal, the Government aims to promote higher education in Australia and build global partnerships on various international platforms such as G20, OECD, UNESCO, APEC, and ASEAN (Australian Government, 2021, p. 20). By implementing these promotions and introductory sessions, the Government indirectly seeks to expand the existing volume of international students in higher education.

New Zealand

The New Zealand Government places a high priority on promoting education in New Zealand by designing and delivering comprehensive advertising and promotion activities as part of the *International Education Strategy 2022-2030*. The Government plans to enhance the benefits of travel worldwide to offer information to prospective international students, including their families, and aims to use the power of diplomacy in order to achieve these outcomes (Ministry of Education, 2022, p. 18). By doing these, the Government seeks to attract international students from different countries to New Zealand HEIs and include them in its educational system (higher education) in favor of the country's future. Besides, to check the quality and functionality of these advertisement and promotion activities, the Government benefits from its stakeholders and partners in different structures. This action enables the Government to take required updates to obtain the maximum reputation and recognition of New Zealand international education globally.

In addition to the advertisement and promotion of higher education in New Zealand, the Government encourages international students by drawing a road map on how international students can fully benefit from the opportunities in the New Zealand education system (Ministry of Education, 2022). At this point, the Government consistently attempts to follow up on current opportunities for international students regularly and takes actions to address shortages immediately as a part of its future education strategy.

Unlike other countries examined, New Zealand structures its advertising and promotional activities to attract international students to the country, and these activities also cover international students' families. This situation provides a reassuring and comforting environment for international students who have spent their entire pre-university education in their home countries and are hesitant about going abroad. It is noteworthy to state that the comprehensive promotional activities carried out by New Zealand within this framework will play a positive role in predicting the positive and negative situations that families and international students who will settle in a new country may encounter in terms of culture, social, economic and politics, and in preparing themselves mentally.

Canada

The Government of Canada emphasizes the vital role of activities in promoting Canada and its educational institutions worldwide via its strategic international education plan. This initiative includes a new digital marketing strategy focusing on advertising different regions besides various programs offered in Canada's education institutions for some world countries that provide an

international student source (Global Affairs Canada, 2019, p. 9). Through this new marketing approach, the Government draws attention to existing social, economic, and cultural essentials within Canada. Additionally, the Government seeks an innovative method to attract international students to the country as potential developmental powerhouses by capitalizing on advertising educational programs, which have lower levels of international student volume than the others in Canada.

Accreditation/recognition-related Strategic Policy Initiatives

Australia

An accredited degree or recognized academic qualifications are significant factors that might enhance potential employment options for international students in countries where they are not citizens but want to live and work. The Australian Government aims to take visionary steps to provide recognition of academic qualifications and skills acquired by postgraduate students while pursuing their degree programs worldwide. According to the *Australian Strategy for International Education 2021-2030*, the Government duly takes required actions with the world through formal and diplomatic ways (i.e., UNESCO Tokyo Convention, the Global Conventions on the Recognition of Qualifications) to recognize graduates' academic qualifications (Australian Government, 2021, p. 26). This action, planned to be implemented as a higher education policy, could be an effective strategy that could attract talented and qualified international students since they would have no concern or hesitation about the quality and recognition of the degrees earned from Australian higher education institutions.

Strategies to Enhance Student Wellbeing

New Zealand

One of the motivating factors that might affect prospective students' decisions to apply to postgraduate programs and be a part of higher education could be the life standards and living conditions in the destination country. The New Zealand Government applies innovative future policy actions to create a comprehensive welfare for international students in New Zealand. As remarked in the *International Education Strategy 2022-2030*, the Government is committed to effectively implementing the International Student Wellbeing Strategy, which aims to improve the well-being of international students in the areas of education, economy, health, and inclusion, with the joint contribution of education providers, international students and other communities in New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2022, p. 21). Through this strategic plan, the Government aims to attract international students from overseas to New Zealand and get maximum scientific, social, cultural, and financial efficiency from those already in New Zealand by improving their welfare and life conditions.

Government and Third-party Partnerships

New Zealand

Through its international education strategy, the New Zealand Government adopts several long-term policies to ensure the active and productive participation of international students in various organizations and institutions supported by the Government, in line with the needs of New Zealand. According to the *International Education Strategy 2022-2030*, the Government not only offers new opportunities but also improves the existing ones in vocational education for international students by closely working with the Te Pūkenga, called as the New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology (Ministry of Education, 2022, p. 22). Besides, the Government aims to understand New Zealand's regional necessities by contacting responsible authorities and informing and encouraging them about how to attract international students to these regions to boost the growth in different areas (Ministry of Education, 2022). Through this action, talented international students are encouraged to come to New Zealand's different regions by regional authorities for higher education purposes, and the outcomes of this action contribute to regional development in New Zealand in the long term.

CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Thanks to the positive effects of globalization, which provides accessibility and flexibility to societies in different countries or continents, attracting international students to HEIs is a key issue for countries worldwide and constitutes a critical force that can directly increase their cultural, social, and economic well-being. World countries continually set out new and appealing education strategies to be implemented in the short or long term to achieve this purpose, or take innovative and regulatory actions for their current strategic higher education policy plans. To shed light on the question of how some selected OECD countries succeed in being at the forefront of attracting international students for their HEIs, this study aimed to reveal common tendencies and patterns in the education policy initiatives implemented by Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and Canada by analyzing their national higher education strategies. This study concluded that visa and employment convenience, expanded national scholarship opportunities, advertisement and promotion of higher education, accreditation/recognition-related strategic policy initiatives, government and third-party partnerships, and strategies to enhance student well-being were the future higher education policy initiatives of these countries to attract international students to their national HEIs.

This study revealed that visa and employment convenience is one of the common future national higher education policy plans adopted and implemented by all OECD countries to make their countries popular higher education routes for international students. All OECD countries examined have a comprehensive strategic plan toward facilitating immigration-related procedures, including applying for visas with a low level of bureaucratic workload, getting visas for a shorter time compared to the other countries, and offering much more appealing opportunities for international students after they receive their degree from HEIs in their countries. Applying for a visa with less effort and without facing time-consuming bureaucratic difficulties is a valuable factor that can positively influence international students' preferences for studying at HEIs in these countries. That is because every graduate program has a varied application period. If international students are accepted to a graduate program in a country where they dream of studying or living, they may miss the beginning of the semester due to the long time required to obtain a student visa. Additionally, dealing with extreme bureaucratic processes can be challenging for international students as this can result in them being unable to prepare the necessary documents or submitting incomplete documents to the consular offices of countries. For this reason, international students may face significant risks, such as not getting visas from these countries. Therefore, offering international student-friendly immigration services can be a positive factor that can directly influence international students' decisions to choose a degree program in these countries. These outcomes aligned with the current literature that emphasized the role of visa settings and regulations as a pull or push factor on international students' choices in selecting countries for higher education (Bandyopadhyay & Bandyopadhyay, 2015; Eder et al., 2010; Liu, 2024; Van Alebeek & Wilson, 2019). Besides, the study outcomes supported existing literature highlighting the role of employment opportunities as a positive indicator in shaping international students' decisions to choose a country abroad (Ahmad et al., 2016; Hazen & Alberts, 2006; Zhu & Reeves, 2019).

Aligning to the existing literature focusing on advertising of higher education and its positive effects on increasing the number of enrolled international students in different countries (Chen, 2008; Urbanovič et al., 2016), this study demonstrated that the selected OECD countries have designed and comprehensively implemented advertisement activities to emphasize the benefits of studying higher education in their countries. While adopting this action as a future education policy initiative, it is worth mentioning that the selected countries have focused on some of the specific world countries to attract students to their HEIs. These countries have benefited from the lack of domestic promotional activities that could enable students to stay in their hometowns. Therefore, they aimed to appeal to qualified international students by mentioning the future of higher education in their countries, especially by emphasizing that these qualified international students can shape their future by being a dynamic part of their countries.

The study results indicated that expanding the existing coverage of scholarship schemes or designing new and more comprehensive scholarship opportunities that might offer financial, social, and cultural well-being for international students are other essential future higher education policy initiatives planned by OECD countries. Since a possible scholarship opportunity is a key element that increases the motivation of international students to study abroad (Abbas et al., 2021; Casas Trujillo et al., 2020; Mao et al., 2022; Yasmin et al., 2022), aiming to offer financial welfare to international students as a higher education policy initiative adopted by all OECD countries analyzed can be considered a positive outcome that can increase the volume of international student flow.

The study showed that government and third-party partnerships, accreditation/recognition-related strategic policy initiatives, and efforts to increase international student well-being were other higher education plans adopted and implemented by some of the OECD countries. The government and third-party partnerships are significant factors that might increase the volume of international students coming to these countries for higher education. The reason is that international students have a high chance of securing a qualified job after graduation, thanks to more employment opportunities offered by countries or HEIs. Besides, international students may have a high chance of creating professional networks that might be useful for their future careers in government and third-party partnership opportunities. Therefore, these factors may positively increase international students' tendency to choose these countries for higher education by eliminating other possible education destinations.

The main limitation of this study was that it only analyzed Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and Canada cases, which were successful in attracting a large number of international students. Since the official language of other top-ranked OECD countries performing similarly successfully in attracting international students to their HEIs was not English, the researcher could not gather and analyze data from those countries. The reason was that official documents indicating their strategic future policy initiatives were not in English. Therefore, researchers who can read and understand foreign languages other than English should focus on other OECD countries' higher education policies and reform plans in the future.

The direct and indirect effects of globalization boost the competition among countries to succeed in attracting international students. Due to the easier and increasing accessibility to higher education institutions worldwide, countries must take required actions through strategic policies or reform plans to make themselves top higher education destinations for international students. To be at the forefront in terms of international students' higher education preferences, countries should focus on designing and implementing comprehensive higher education policies that address the future expectations of international students. In addition, countries should offer international students comfortable and constructive education and life opportunities. At this point, countries aiming to attract large numbers of international students to higher education institutions should design and offer comprehensive scholarships, support the active participation of international students in the national workforce through various programs, and carry out innovative advertising sessions worldwide.

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Uzun Öz

Uluslararasılaşma kavramının yükselen ivmesinin ve Soğuk Savaş dönemi sonrasında yükseköğretim üzerindeki çeşitli etkilerinin bir sonucu olarak (Bamberger & Morris, 2024; de Wit & Altbach, 2021; Tarc, 2019) eğitim politikaları, düşünceler ve ülkelerin farklı uygulamaları, küresel bağlamda kritik önem kazanmıştır. Günümüzde, yükseköğretimin uluslararasılaşmasının anlaşılması ve açıklanması hususunda önemli göstergelerden birisi de uluslararası öğrencilerin varlığıdır (Teichler, 2017). Uluslararası öğrenciler tarafından yükseköğretim için tercih edilme noktasında çeşitli faktörlerin etkisinden söz etmek mümkündür. Uluslararası öğrencilerin bakış açısından prestijli yükseköğretim kurumlarından nitelikli bir eğitim alma arzusu (Beine vd., 2014; Hazen & Alberts, 2006), uluslararası öğrencilerin öğrenim gördükleri ülkelerde iş gücünün birer parçası olmalarına olanak sağlayan geniş çaplı kariyer ve iş fırsatları (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Wei vd., 2020), ve ülkeler tarafından uluslararası öğrenciler için benimsenen yapıcı politikalar (Hawthorne, 2008; Zheng, 2014), yükseköğrenim amacıyla yurt dışında eğitim almayı tercih eden geniş uluslararası öğrenci kitleleri üzerinde aktif bir role sahiptir. Prestijli denizaşırı yükseköğretim kurumlarında yükseköğretim almayı amaçlayarak kendi ülkelerinden ayrılan uluslararası öğrencilerin ev sahibi ülkeler üzerindeki olumlu katkıları; yaratıcı, kapsayıcı ve cazip eğitim politikaları oluşturmanın önemini artırmaktadır. Bu çalışma, yükseköğretim amacıyla yüksek hacimde uluslararası öğrenci çeken seçilmiş OECD ülkelerindeki (Avustralya, Yeni Zelanda, Birleşik Krallık, Kanada) ulusal yükseköğretim politika girişimlerini karşılaştırmalı olarak incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma, iki araştırma sorusuna yanıt aramaktadır: 1) Avustralya, Yeni Zelanda, Birleşik Krallık ve Kanada'da uluslararası öğrencileri

yükseköğretime çekmeye yönelik mevcut yükseköğretim politika girişimleri nelerdir? 2) Diğer dünya ülkeleri, kendi yükseköğretim kurumlarına uluslararası öğrencileri çekebilme bağlamında mevcut yükseköğretim politikalarını nasıl yeniden şekillendirebilir ve gelecek yükseköğretim politika planlarına nasıl yön verebilir? Nitel araştırma metodolojisinin temel özelliklerinden beslenen bu çalışma, çoklu bir durum çalışması örneğidir. Çalışma grubu, yükseköğretim sistemine kayıtlı uluslararası öğrenci sayısı açısından üst sıralarda yer alan dört farklı OECD ülkesinden oluşmaktadır. Bu ülkeler, Avustralya, Yeni Zelanda, Birleşik Krallık ve Kanada'dır. Çalışma grubunu oluşturan ülkelerin seçim prosedürü, amaçsal örnekleme stratejisi ışığında yapılandırılmıştır. Amaçsal örneklemenin alt boyutu olarak ise uç durum örnekleme yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Çalışma kapsamında veriler, Avustralya, Kanada, Yeni Zelanda ve Birleşik Krallık'ı kapsayan seçilmiş OECD ülkelerinin ulusal eğitim politika strateji ve planlarını oluşturmaktadır ve bu ülkelerin resmi hükümet internet sayfalarında yer alan farklı türlerde resmi belgeler ve bilgiler üzerinden incelenerek elde edilmiştir (Australian Government, 2021; Australian Government Department of Education, 2023; Australian Government Department of Education, 2024; Department for Education & Department for International Trade, 2019; Global Affairs Canada, 2019; Ministry of Education, 2022). Verilerin analizinde nitel tematik analiz yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Analiz edilen verilerden hareketle, seçilmiş OECD ülkelerinde uluslararası öğrencileri yükseköğretime çekmeyi amaçlayan yükseköğretim politikaları ile ilgili olarak altı ana tema belirlenmiştir. Bu temaları; çalışma, vize ve istihdam kolaylığı, genişletilmiş ulusal burs fırsatları, yükseköğretimin reklam ve tanıtımı, akreditasyon/tanınma kaynaklı stratejik politika girişimleri, hükümet ve üçüncü parti ortaklıkları ile öğrenci refahını artırmaya yönelik stratejiler oluşturmuştur. Araştırmanın geçerliliğini sağlamak amacıyla üçgenleme stratejilerinden biri olan uzman denetimi yöntemi kullanılmıştır (Patton, 2002, s. 562). Araştırmacı tarafından uzman kişinin çalışma grubunun niteliği ve çeşitliliği ile veri analiz süreçlerinin doğruluğuna yönelik önerileri dikkate alınarak gerekli aksiyonlar alınmıştır. Böylelikle incelenen dokümanların sayısı ve niteliği artırılarak araştırmanın geçerliği sağlanmıştır. Bu çalışma, incelenen tüm OECD ülkelerinde söz konusu ülkeleri gözde yükseköğretim rotaları yapabilmek adına benimsenen ve uygulanan ortak politika girişiminin vize ve istihdam kolaylığı sağlama olduğunu ortaya çıkarmıştır. İncelenen tüm OECD ülkeleri; daha düşük seviyede bürokratik iş yükü ile vizelere kolay ve hızlı başvuruyu içeren göç kaynaklı prosedürler, diğer ülkelere kıyasla daha kısa sürede vizelerin alınabilmesi ve ülkelerindeki yükseköğretim kurumlarından derecelerini aldıktan sonraki süreçte uluslararası öğrencileri cezbedici daha çok fırsat sunabilmeleri gibi hususlar açısından kapsamlı stratejik planlara sahiptir. Bu çerçevede, uluslararası öğrenci dostu göçmenlik kaynaklı hizmetlerin sağlanması, uluslararası öğrencilerin bu ülkelerde bir akademik program seçme tercihlerini olumlu yönde etkileyebilecek bir durum olarak değerlendirilebilir. Bu sonuçlar, vize uygulamalarının ve düzenlemelerinin çekici veya itici bir faktör olarak uluslararası öğrencilerin yükseköğretim için ülke seçimleri üzerindeki rolüne vurgu yapan mevcut literatür ile uyumluluk göstermektedir (Bandyopadhyay & Bandyopadhyay, 2015; Eder vd., 2010; Liu, 2024; Van Alebeek & Wilson, 2019). Ayrıca, çalışma sonuçları, uluslararası öğrencilerin yurt dışında bir ülke seçme kararlarını şekillendirmede istihdam fırsatlarının olumlu bir gösterge olarak rolünü vurgulayan mevcut literatürü desteklemektedir (Ahmad vd., 2016; Hazen & Alberts, 2006; Zhu & Reeves, 2019). Yükseköğretimin reklam ve tanıtımına ve bu durumun farklı ülkelerdeki kayıtlı uluslararası öğrenci sayısı artışı üzerindeki olumlu etkilerine odaklanan mevcut literatüre uygun olarak (Chen, 2008; Urbanovič vd., 2016), bu çalışma, incelenen OECD ülkelerinin kendi ülkelerindeki yükseköğretim kurumlarında öğrenim görmeyen faydalarına dikkat çekmek için reklam ve tanıtım uygulamaları tasarladıklarını ve kapsamlı bir şekilde uyguladıklarını göstermiştir. Çalışma sonuçları, burs sistemlerinin mevcut kapsam düzeylerini genişletmenin veya uluslararası öğrencilere maddi, sosyal ve kültürel refah sunabilecek daha yeni ve kapsamlı burs fırsatları oluşturmanın OECD ülkeleri tarafından planlanan diğer önemli yükseköğretim politika girişimi olduğunu göstermiştir. Olası bir burs fırsatı, uluslararası öğrencilerin yurtdışında öğrenim görme konusunda motivasyonlarını artıran anahtar bir faktör olduğundan (Abbas vd., 2021; Casas Trujillo vd., 2020; Mao vd., 2022; Yasmin vd., 2022), incelenen tüm OECD ülkeleri tarafından gelecek yükseköğretim politika girişimi olarak uluslararası öğrencilere maddi refah sunulmasının amaçlanması, uluslararası öğrenci akış hacmini arttırabilecek olumlu bir çıktı olarak kabul edilebilir. Çalışma sonucunda hükümet ve üçüncü gruplar arasındaki ortaklıkların, akreditasyon/tanınma kaynaklı stratejik politika girişimlerinin ve uluslararası öğrencilerin refah durumlarını yükseltme amaçlı çabaların incelenen bazı OECD ülkeleri tarafından benimsenen ve uygulanan diğer yükseköğretim politika girişimleri olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Çalışma, ülkelerin yükseköğretim için gözde rotalar olabilmeleri adına ulusal beklentilerinin yanı sıra uluslararası öğrencilerin gelecek beklentilerine odaklanan ve onlara yapıcı eğitim ve yaşam fırsatları sunan kapsamlı yükseköğretim politikaları tasarlamaya odaklanmalarını önermektedir. Yükseköğretim kurumlarına çok sayıda uluslararası öğrenci çekmeyi hedefleyen ülkeler; kapsamlı

burslar oluřturmalı ve sunmalı, farklı programlar aracılıđıyla uluslararası öğrencilerin ulusal iş gücüne aktif katılımını desteklemeli ve dünya çapında yaratıcı tanıtım çalışmaları gerçekleřtirmelidir.