

International Students' Experiences of SDG Commitments in Teacher Education*

Öğretmen Eğitiminde SKA Söylemine İlişkin Uluslararası Öğrenci Deneyimleri

Özlem Erden Başaran¹  Merih Uğurel Kamışlı²  Hilal Seda Yıldız³  Ayşe Bilicioğlu Güneş⁴ 

¹Assoc. Prof. Dr., Ted University, Faculty of Education, Ankara, Türkiye

²Dr., Ted University, Faculty of Education, Ankara, Türkiye

³Dr., Arden University, Coventry, İngiltere

⁴Dr., Bartın University, Faculty of Education, Bartın, Türkiye

Makale Bilgileri

Geliş Tarihi (Received)

18.03.2026

Kabul Tarihi (Accepted)

05.07.2026

Yayınlanma Tarihi (Published)

17.08.2026

*Sorumlu Yazar

Özlem Erden Başaran

Ted University, Faculty of
Education, Ankara
ozlem.erden@tedu.edu.tr

Abstract: This study examines how higher education practices driven by commitments to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) shape international students' experiences in Turkish teacher education programmes. Using narrative inquiry and guided by critical internationalisation and postcolonial perspectives in higher education, the study examines how global sustainability discourses are translated into local contexts through curriculum design, institutional language policies, and everyday inclusion practices. Interview data from six international students show that although SDG rhetoric invokes commitments to quality education, inclusion, and peace, the application of these principles remains uneven. Linguistic hierarchies, limited intercultural engagement, and symbolic compliance with SDG frameworks create tensions between such global aspirations and local educational practices. These narratives show contradictions within SDG implementation, highlighting the need for more reflexive and structurally grounded approaches to internationalisation. The study offers a context-specific account of how international students experience SDG commitments in a Turkish teacher education program, while speaking to debates on internationalisation in semi-peripheral higher education contexts.

Keywords: higher education, internationalisation, sustainable development goals, international students, teacher education

Öz: Bu çalışma, Sürdürülebilir Kalkınma Amaçları (SKA) doğrultusunda gerçekleştirilen reformların Türk öğretmen eğitimi programlarında öğrenim gören uluslararası öğrencilerin deneyimlerini nasıl şekillendirdiğini eleştirel bir bakışla incelemektedir. Anlatı araştırmasına dayanan ve eleştirel uluslararasılaşma perspektiflerinden yararlanan bu araştırma, küresel sürdürülebilirlik söylemlerinin program tasarımı, kurumsal dil politikaları ve gündelik kapsayıcılık pratikleri aracılığıyla nasıl yerleştirildiğini sorgulamaktadır. Altı uluslararası öğrenciyle gerçekleştirilen görüşmelerden elde edilen veriler, SKA söyleminin nitelikli eğitim, kapsayıcılık ve barışa yönelik taahhütleri vurgulamasına rağmen, bu ilkelerin uygulamaya geçirilmesinde düzensizlikler olduğunu göstermektedir. Dilsel farklılıklar, sınırlı kültürlerarası etkileşim ve SKA çerçevelerine yönelik sembolik uyum, küresel hedeflerle yerel eğitim uygulamaları arasındaki uyumsuzluğu ortaya koymaktadır. Bu anlatılar, SKA uygulamalarındaki çelişkileri görünür kılmakta ve uluslararasılaşmaya daha yansıtıcı ve yapısal temellere dayanan yaklaşımlara duyulan ihtiyacı vurgulamaktadır. Araştırma, uluslararası öğrencilerin Türkiye'deki bir öğretmen eğitimi programında SKA taahhütlerini deneyimleme biçimlerine ilişkin bağlama duyarlı bir analiz sunmakta; bunun yanı sıra yarı-çevre konumdaki yükseköğretim sistemlerinde uluslararasılaşma tartışmalarına da ışık tutmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yükseköğretim, uluslararasılaşma, sürdürülebilir kalkınma amaçları, uluslararası öğrenciler, öğretmen eğitimi

Erden Başaran, Ö., Uğurel Kamışlı, M., Yıldız, H. S. and Bilicioğlu Güneş, A. (2026). International students' experiences of SDG commitments in teacher education. *Erzincan Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 28(2026), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.17556/erziefd.1912489>

Introduction

Strategic initiatives have been initiated for the transformation of higher education programmes by using the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UNESCO, 2019). This commitment requires universities to revise their programmes to be consistent with the United Nations' 2030 SDGs to improve the quality of higher education practices across the world (Leal Filho et al., 2021). Existing literature from many higher education programmes suggests that the inclusion of SDGs has already started in many institutions (McCowan, 2016; Owens, 2017) including the Turkish higher education institutions that have focused on improving the curriculum by complying with the SDGs (Atar & Rahman, 2019; Yilmaz-Findik et al., 2020).

SDG inclusion in academic programmes addresses several interrelated areas of higher education, such as internationalisation, quality education, assessment and evaluation, and academic excellence (Alm et al., 2022; Gregersen-Hermans, 2021). Studies have shown that higher

education institutions promote commitments to Quality Education (SDG-4), Gender Equality (SDG-5), and Reduced Inequalities (SDG-10) for international students and offer just, fair, and equal academic environments (Ferreira-Lopes et al., 2022; Yuan, 2022). However, studies targeting Turkish higher education contexts (Yilmaz-Findik et al., 2020; Soysal & Ok, 2016; Ugras & Zengin, 2019) did not investigate international students' experiences or explore how institutional SDG commitments translate into internationalisation practices and curriculum transformation.

Reports indicate that the lack of research on international students is due to their limited numbers (Üniversitelerarası Kurul, 2016). Additionally, international students with various legal statuses, such as those under temporary protection, dual citizenship holders, and children of overseas Turkish workers, are often treated as regular students due to inconsistent migration policies (Bulut-Sahin & Brooks, 2023). This highlights the need for a standardised international student policy across Turkish higher education institutions. Despite the lack of consistent international student policies and low

* Bu çalışma, TED Üniversitesi Bilimsel Araştırma Projesi (Proje no: T-21-B2010-90081) çerçevesinde yürütülmüştür. This study was conducted within the scope of TED University, Scientific Research Project (Project ID: T-21-B2010-90081).

numbers of international students, Turkish higher education institutions continue to revise programmes to attract international students and integrate SDGs in their programme outcomes, particularly in teacher education programmes, to show their compatibility with international standards (Bourn & Soysal, 2021; İnceet al., 2022). In this study, to investigate how this alignment plays out in practice, the teacher education programmes of a higher education institution in Türkiye, where the medium of instruction is English, were chosen. As of 2021, the selected programmes declared their compatibility with Quality Education (SDG-4), Reduced Inequalities (SDG-10), and Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions (SDG-16). Because of this initiative, the updated programme outcomes (POs) of Teacher Training programmes such as Early Childhood Education, Classroom Teaching, Guidance and Psychological Counselling, English Language Teaching, Mathematics, and Science Teaching indicate commitments to the following objectives for all students:

PO 9: Act in accordance with the principles and legislation related to the purpose, structure, and functioning of the education system.

PO 11: Reflect the skills and values of respect, critical and creative thinking, ethical and social responsibility, problem solving, working independently and as a team, taking responsibility, and lifelong learning in her individual and social life.

PO 12: Act with an interdisciplinary and intercultural perspective.

Additionally, examination of published syllabi of numerous courses within each programme reveals that course content, assessment methods, and learning activities incorporate Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) either as primary content or as supplementary learning for students. Given this situation, this study examined how teacher education programme outcomes align with SDGs from international students' perspectives and experiences. Therefore, the following research question guided the study:

- How do programme outcomes related to the university's SDGs commitment to improve internationalisation of curriculum reflect in the participants' lived experiences?

Literature Review

The SDGs aim to transform individuals' thoughts and behaviours, emphasising their role in achieving sustainable development (Sachs et al., 2019). One key approach to teaching sustainable development is fostering individuals who embrace it as a core belief and philosophy of life. In this respect, higher education institutions have a crucial role in fulfilling the mission of raising generations with a sustainable mindset. As education is a powerful way to create a shared consciousness among individuals, it is suggested to train teachers who can implement sustainable development philosophy in practice. Therefore, higher education institutions have begun to play a strong role in educating students on sustainability, building their capacities, and integrating this concept into students' career development processes (Vaughter, 2018). These studies in higher education position universities as a key site for advancing sustainability.

In line with this commitment to advance sustainability, the internationalisation of higher education has simultaneously also become a strategic institutional priority (Gregersen-Hermans, 2021). The international orientation of universities has changed dramatically and taken more complex forms than in previous decades. Internationalisation efforts encompass

initiatives beyond the physical movement of students and faculty members, including joint diploma programmes and internationalising curricula (Helms et al., 2016). Therefore, internationalisation has evolved from a limited activity to a crucial component of university policy, especially for sustainability (De Wit et al., 2015), by encouraging innovation in teaching methods and creating greater mobility of students and programmes. While internationalisation and sustainability are frequently presented as complementary agendas, the relationship between them is often assumed rather than critically examined. Sustainability enhances efficiency and enables education systems to develop high-quality labour able to compete internationally, while meeting present needs without compromising future generations (De Wit et al., 2015). This suggests the need to move beyond institutional rhetoric and examine how these commitments are experienced in practice.

While these views portray internationalisation as a positive and progressive development, scholars working within the framework of critical internationalisation caution that internationalisation is often guided more by institutional status ambitions and global policy pressures than by genuine commitments to equity and intercultural learning (De Wit & Altbach, 2021; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Marginson, 2022). A critical stance on internationalisation highlights that policies frequently emphasise recruitment, branding, and global positioning over meaningful engagement with students' lived realities. This perspective draws attention to how local linguistic, cultural, and systemic constraints can limit the transformative promises of internationalisation, particularly for international students who experience higher education not as a neutral process but as one shaped by uneven power relations and symbolic inclusion practices. Given these studies, these perspectives reveal an important tension within higher education. While internationalisation is promoted as a mechanism for intercultural learning and global engagement, critical scholars question whether institutional practices genuinely support these goals.

In recent years, Türkiye's higher education system has taken notable actions toward internationalisation. According to Ericok and Arastaman (2023), Turkish institutions have been drawing increasing attention from around the globe, and the number of foreign students has begun to rise rapidly. Recent literature also reveals accelerated scholarship on internationalisation in Türkiye (Bulut-Sahin & Ericok, 2023; Bulut-Sahin & Brooks, 2023; Ericok & Arastaman, 2023; Tamtekin-Aydın, 2020; Vural-Yılmaz, 2018). However, a limited number of these studies investigate internationalisation from the perspectives of international students, as most rely on document analysis or perspectives of academicians and administrators. A common pattern emerging from the studies is the contrast between institutional indicators of internationalisation and the quality of students' educational experiences. Comparing foundation and public universities, it is found that the former prioritise international recruitment strategies (Bulut-Sahin & Ericok, 2023). Yet Bulut-Sahin & Brooks (2023) similarly argue that national initiatives that focus solely on pragmatic objectives, such as increasing the number of foreign students and staff, do not deepen internationalisation. Indicators such as recruitment, mobility and international visibility provide limited insight into how international students experience inclusion, participation, and belonging within universities.

International students' perspectives have also shown that their experiences are important to ensure the quality of

education. For example, Vural-Yılmaz (2018) highlighted that international students struggle to develop a sense of belonging due to linguistic discrepancies between academic and everyday Turkish. Similarly, Tamtekin-Aydın (2020) reported challenges international students experience at a university where the medium of instruction was English. The students stated that they were more comfortable communicating with peers from similar backgrounds due to the language barriers experienced when interacting with local students. Tavares (2021) focused on equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) from international students' perspectives and showed that despite institutional commitments to EDI principles, international students can still feel excluded and marginalised. Even though the institutional settings are different, these studies point to remarkably similar concerns regarding language, belonging, social integration, and intercultural interaction. The presence of international students alone does not guarantee meaningful internationalisation and fulfilment of sustainability commitment.

A few studies also revealed a significant gap between institutional commitments to sustainability and students' awareness of those commitments. These studies emphasise a strong conceptual connection between SDGs and internationalisation (Gregersen-Hermans, 2021; Ramaswamy et al., 2021). Yet, the others suggest that embedding SDGs within policies or programme documents may not be sufficient if students do not recognise how sustainability principles are reflected in their educational experiences (Ferreira-Lopes et al., 2022; Yuan, 2022). For example, Ferreira-Lopes et al. (2022) emphasised the importance of international, intercultural, and interinstitutional partnerships to enhance international students' awareness of how well their programmes reflect SDG commitments. Findings from Mammadova et al.'s (2022) study showed that a lack of awareness among students hinders the achievement of quality education, highlighting the need for well-designed programs to help students understand the SDGs and their relation to the quality of their education. Therefore, it is necessary to expand research in this area and consider student perspectives when evaluating SDG integration and internationalisation (Vural-Yılmaz, 2018).

Similar patterns of SDG integration in policy documents and programmes are observed in teacher education programmes in Türkiye; they mainly emphasise internationalisation in their curricula but often overlook the needs of international students (Alpaydin, 2018; Aykan & Dursun, 2021; Dimici, 2023). In response, the combined impact of programme objectives aligned with sustainability frameworks has not been recognised as a strategy to improve international practices (Ozturk & Pizmony-Levy, 2022). This study emphasises the need to merge these dimensions to enhance the internationalisation and sustainability of teacher education curricula and examines international students' experiences to reveal the issues of meeting internationalisation and sustainability standards. The study is timely and necessary because research on internationalisation and sustainability in higher education is mostly produced in developed countries like EU countries and North America, with large numbers of international students. This creates conditions in which these countries shape global narratives around SDG implementation (Gregersen-Hermans, 2021; De Wit et al., 2015; McCowan, 2016). By contrast, in countries like Türkiye, which occupy a semi-peripheral position (an intermediate location between the global core and periphery, characterised by both dependence and influence within the international knowledge network)

(Mulvey, 2020), these internationalisation agendas are pursued under different structural and institutional conditions (Bulut-Sahin & Brooks, 2023; Marginson, 2022). As a destination that attracts students from peripheral regions, Türkiye is expected to align with global sustainability despite constrained capacities. Examining how SDG commitments are enacted in such contexts is therefore critical, as global policy may be adopted in ways that prioritise formal compliance over transformative practice (Tikly, 2020).

Overall, the literature reveals three limitations. First, internationalisation research in Türkiye has focused predominantly on institutional strategies and often ignored international students' experiences. Second, the relationship between internationalisation and SDG commitments remains limited to policy or programme revision. Lastly, there is a need for further research to explore how these processes operate in semi-peripheral higher education contexts, as semi-peripheral countries like Türkiye could play an intermediate role between the global core and periphery in transferring knowledge about sustainability integration. Addressing these limitations requires greater attention to the lived experiences of international students and their interpretations of institutional commitments to sustainability and internationalisation.

Conceptual Framework

In this study, the premise of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is used as a conceptual framework to interpret how SDG commitments shape institutional expectations, while simultaneously applying a critical internationalisation lens to explain why these commitments often remain symbolic rather than transformative. ESD is relevant to this study because it reveals the institutional pressure universities experience to demonstrate compliance with SDG mandates. According to UNESCO (2019), ESD aims to empower learners by integrating sustainability principles and practices into education, building institutional capacity, and fostering global responsibility. However, while ESD explains the institutional narrative around SDG integration, it does not explain why this integration often remains superficial in practice. As Tikly (2020) and Andreotti (2014) suggest, global policy frameworks like the SDGs can promote surface-level alignment rather than comprehensive pedagogical change, particularly in semi-peripheral systems navigating global expectations. For this reason, we incorporated a critical internationalisation perspective that highlights how universities' claims to internationalisation are often driven by branding, policy alignment, and institutional reputation rather than genuine intercultural engagement (De Wit & Altbach, 2021; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Marginson, 2022). Therefore, while ESD describes the institutional expectations behind SDG integration, critical internationalisation explains the practical reasons why these expectations do not materialise for international students.

According to the UNESCO (2019) Framework for the Implementation of ESD Beyond 2019, ESD aims to empower learners to make informed decisions by integrating sustainability principles into education. This framework supports higher education programmes by building institutional capacities, creating awareness-raising practices, and offering project-based experiences. The learning outcomes include developing knowledge and skills related to sustainable development, human rights, gender equality, peace, appreciation of diversity, and global responsibility. However, a critical internationalisation perspective suggests that SDG alignment can become technocratic and shallow,

with measurable indicators replacing meaningful intercultural transformation (Versteijlen & Wals, 2023). As a result, the experiences of international students offer a crucial perspective for analysing whether SDG commitments actually result in genuine inclusion or only represent institutional claims.

In this study, the combined use of ESD and critical internationalisation offers an analytical lens to examine the gap between institutional discourse and experiential reality. International students' narratives are central to this analysis because they reveal whether SDG-framed internationalisation enables intercultural engagement and institutional inclusion or, instead, results in symbolic commitments disconnected from lived experiences.

Türkiye as a Semi-Peripheral Context and Significance of the Study

Türkiye's higher education system has a semi-peripheral position due to aspiring toward European and global standards while navigating local linguistic, cultural, and policy constraints (Bulut-Sahin & Brooks, 2023). Because of this positionality, Türkiye provides a useful background for analysing how SDG-driven internationalisation is actively negotiated rather than merely implemented. This study sees Türkiye as a translational place where global educational scripts are translated through regional conceptual frameworks, campus norms, and institutional cultures, rather than as a passive location of policy implementation. Global policy pressures create incentives for institutions to demonstrate SDG alignment, but critical internationalisation scholarship shows that alignment alone does not guarantee meaningful intercultural or educational transformation.

ESD has gained considerable attention in Türkiye's higher education agenda, and policy documents require the integration of the SDGs holistically into teacher education rather than as isolated content additions (Bourn & Sosyal, 2021). The Turkish Education Vision 2023 articulated this aim by setting strategic goals to create inclusive, equitable, and democratic learning spaces (Ince et al., 2022), positioning Türkiye as a reform-oriented system committed to aligning with SDG principles. At the same time, several studies reveal a disconnect between institutional discourse and everyday experiences. Ince et al. (2022) suggest the need for stronger collaboration among teachers, experts, and curriculum developers to transform learning environments in meaningful ways. Student teachers often report uncertainty or limited understanding of sustainability (Soysal & Ok, 2016), while Amador et al. (2015) demonstrate mismatches between students' perceptions of ESD principles and how those principles appear in coursework. These issues suggest that SDG alignment functions as an aspirational policy discourse that has not yet translated into transformative learning.

This context highlights why the present study is needed. Türkiye's semi-peripheral position makes international

students' interpretations particularly essential, as they navigate systems in which global discourses coexist with localised practices, linguistic barriers, and institutional norms. By exploring international students' lived experiences in Türkiye's teacher education programmes, this study examines the space between policy aspiration and practice.

Research Methodology

This study utilises narrative inquiry to explore and interpret the experiences of international students during their interactions with peers, university personnel, and faculty members. Narrative inquiry is widely recognised as a method of accessing meaning through individuals' stories and event summaries. According to Connelly & Clandinin (1990), humans are natural storytellers who locate themselves within individual and collective experiences. In this study, narrative inquiry is appropriate because the goal is not only to identify what happened, but to understand how participants interpret institutional structures in relation to SDG commitments, intercultural interactions, and inclusion. While programme outcomes, university policies, and institutional reports offer objective accounts of SDG implementation, the depth and impact of these commitments become visible only through lived experiences. Narratives, therefore, provide insight into how SDG-driven internationalisation and ESD aspirations become meaningful, symbolic, or constrained within daily academic and social encounters.

Study Participants

The researchers collaborated with the International Student Office (ISO) to determine the number of international students enrolled in teacher training programmes. ISO reported that 15 international students were enrolled in the Faculty of Education during the data collection period. Six students chose to participate and shared their reflections. These six students represent all active international students present in teacher education programs during the time of data collection. ISO confirmed that the remaining nine international students were not attending classes or physically present on campus based on attendance records and official notes on the ISO system, making them inaccessible for data generation. It aligns with the argument regarding limited research due to the few registered and actively attending international students (UAK, 2016). In short, the analytic sample reflects the full population of active international students rather than a subsample. This provides rich and information-dense data rather than a limited convenience sample. The demographic characteristics summarised in Table 1 were collected because gender, programme affiliation, academic progression levels, and linguistic or cultural backgrounds may shape how participants interpret SDG-driven internationalisation in local institutional contexts. These data were collected as a foregrounded analytical sense through which international students' narratives were interpreted.

Table 1. Demographics of participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Programme	Ethnicity	Level of Study
Dana	Female	Guidance and Psychological Counselling	Pakistani	Freshmen
Mariam	Female	Early Childhood Education	Pakistani	Freshmen
Leila	Female	Guidance and Psychological Counselling	Lebanon	Junior
Saliha	Female	English Language Teaching programme	Morocco	Freshmen
Denis	Male	English Language Teaching programme	Iraq	Freshmen
Yaren	Female	Early Childhood Education	Somalia	Freshmen

Data Collection Procedures

Data was collected using a self-developed, semi-structured interview protocol based on SDG-related programme outcomes and institutional documents. When developing the interview protocol, we first reviewed the literature to better understand students' choices in relation to Türkiye's semi-peripheral position within the global context. Following this, we aimed to move from the macro to the micro level. We included questions regarding students' experiences at the institutional level and how the program promoted sustainability and commitment to the SDGs. We then included questions on micro-level issues, particularly classroom communication, including interactions between teachers and international students, interactions among international students, and interactions with students from other teacher education programs within the university. As mentioned earlier, the SDGs were also a central focus of the interview protocol. Once we determined that the program specifically emphasised certain SDGs, we incorporated questions related to those goals, such as SDG 4, SDG 10, and SDG 16. However, the overall structure indirectly addressed the indicators of other SDGs. To ensure validity and reliability, the main researcher initially developed the interview protocol. The three other researchers then independently reviewed the protocol, and through a series of debriefing sessions, the questions were finalised.

Semi-structured interviews were selected to balance comparability across participants with flexibility to probe for meaning-making, emotional responses, and institutional interpretations. The first stage of the protocol covered demographics, time in the programme and in Türkiye, Turkish language learning, and participation in student clubs. The second stage included questions focused on participants' experiences of SDG-driven curriculum outcomes, institutional expectations, intercultural belonging, equity, and campus interactions.

The lead researcher conducted the interviews in English. Each interview was scheduled based on the availability of the participants. They were given online and face-to-face options. All participants agreed to have the interviews conducted online. Therefore, the interviews were conducted online via Zoom. Interviews lasted an average of 50 minutes and were audio-recorded with participant consent. The study was approved by the University's Institutional Review Board (Protocol Number 2022/04) on 23.05.2022 and conducted in accordance with established publication ethics principles, including integrity, transparency, and accountability in data collection, analysis, and reporting.

Data Analysis

Data analysis proceeded inductively, while remaining sensitised by the study's conceptual framework. Interview transcripts were read repeatedly to create narrative blocks, also described as "event summaries." Narrative blocks were constructed by coding key events and turning points across individual stories to identify emerging patterns (Risko et al., 2008). The narrative blocks allowed us to observe similarities and differences in participants' experiences in relation to when and how events emerged in their academic and social lives.

Lower-level coding first identified meaning units, contextual cues, and implicit tones that reflected participants' interpretations of institutional practices. These lower-level codes were then compared within and across participants' narratives. Recurring patterns were grouped into broader

thematic clusters through an iterative process of constant comparison. These clusters played a role in creating upper-level codings. The upper-level coding subsequently grouped recurring patterns into overarching thematic clusters. These upper-level codes were shaped not only by inductive emergence but also sensitised by the conceptual framework, allowing us to detect whether experiences reflected meaningful integration of SDG commitments or symbolic, surface-level enactment.

To enhance credibility and dependability, the coding process was peer-debriefed within the project team, where overlapping and divergent interpretations were compared until consensus was reached. This iterative comparison served as an audit trail demonstrating transparency in analytic decisions. The themes that emerged from this process reflected repeated patterns across participants rather than isolated comments or frequency counts. The interpretive structure represented by these themes captures the convergence of experiences that reveal how SDG-driven commitments were enacted, constrained, or reinterpreted in daily academic and social contexts. Thus, the resulting thematic framework reflects the analytical logic of narrative inquiry rather than a descriptive categorisation of interview content.

Based on this process, the following themes were generated: Symbolic fulfilment of SDG4, language as the gatekeeper of inclusion, decent work and future imaginaries, invisible barriers, and institutional care and advantages. These themes were examined analytically, revealing the extent to which SDG-related aspirations aligned with or diverged from lived realities. The themes map onto SDG-related institutional claims, including SDG-4 (Quality Education), SDG-8 (Decent Work), SDG-10 (Reduced Inequalities), and SDG-16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), thereby demonstrating where SDG commitments were experienced as meaningful and where they were experienced as symbolic or insufficient.

Findings

Symbolic Fulfilment of SDG 4

The participants were not aware that their university commits to fulfilling the SDGs until 2030, but they were conscious that their teacher-training programme should prepare them with future-oriented pedagogical and professional skills. Regarding the compatibility of their programmes with their expectations for affordable and quality vocational education (target indicators 4.3 and 4.4), they believed their programme to be inexpensive and academically well-designed. The participants found their programmes supportive of the development of critical thinking skills, which is one of the target indicators of quality education (4.7.1). According to them, their programmes created a foundation for critical thinking that enabled students to evaluate various issues and make informed decisions about a more sustainable world. Denis (P5) gave an example from one of his classroom experiences of developing critical consciousness towards issues affecting people globally: "We had a class professor, and after each lecture, we had microteaching for one hour. We were talking about the people and problems, such as gender, peacebuilding, and citizenship in the world and in the country."

Participants consistently narrated that their instructors used a variety of instructional strategies, such as videos, presentations, discussions, and group work, to help them understand the content better and develop critical perspectives by engaging with others on different global issues. Leila (P3) talked about how her classroom activities required them to be

creative and think critically: “Discussions, negotiations, presentations, and poster preparations. These types of things helped me become creative. These activities made me think critically about world issues.”

As participants reflected on their experiences as international students, cultural similarities emerged as an important factor in helping them feel connected to others and fostering a sense of belonging within the classroom community. Saliha (P4) described how common cultural practices created opportunities for interaction and understanding among students. For her, similarities that extended beyond language, particularly shared food traditions, served as bridges that encouraged intercultural communication. She explained, “Besides language, sharing similarities in cultures, such as having similar food, was something that increased intercultural communication in the classroom.” Denis (P5) recounted a similar experience. He shared that classroom discussions about Turkish culture often prompted professors to invite him to compare his own cultural background with the local context. In these moments, Denis found himself emphasizing commonalities rather than differences, noting, “For example, in some classes, when Turkish culture comes up as the topic after the talk, the professor just comes to me and asks about my culture and how I feel about Turkish culture. I often say it is almost the same.” Through such interactions, cultural similarities became a source of familiarity and connection, helping participants navigate their new academic and social environments with a greater sense of inclusion.

Taken together, these accounts suggest that participants experienced “quality” largely through relational and pedagogical practices rather than through institutional structures explicitly aligned with SDG commitments. In other words, various indicators of SDG 4 were realised in practice through interpersonal dynamics rather than through systematic, programme-level frameworks designed to support international students’ inclusion and learning.

Language as the Gatekeeper of Inclusion

While participants valued the pedagogical rigor of their programmes, they also questioned whether “quality” extended to inclusion and access as it was structured in the programme. Their experiences suggested that classroom interactions often reproduced linguistic hierarchies, with Turkish dominating both informal and formal discussions. This practice appeared to limit some international students’ participation and created tension between English-medium expectations and their classroom experiences.

The experiences of participants concerning speaking a common language were closely tied to feelings of inclusion. Being able to communicate helped them build relationships and experience a sense of belonging. When language was a concern, however, it became a challenge for both international and local students. Leila (P3) explained:

I never go to groups. I tell them, if you are comfortable with me being in your group, I would like to be in your group...I find that they are a little bit struggling with English...I appreciate that they try their best to communicate.

Participants acknowledged that both faculty members and peers made efforts to speak English in the classroom. Some aspects of the learning environment helped them feel included, while others generated barriers. The lack of a fully English-speaking campus environment appeared to shape these challenges. The experiences of participants highlighted language as key in developing interpersonal relationships with

faculty members and peers. For example, Yaren (P6) described the value of English-medium instruction for enabling international students’ participation. She told that classes were generally in English and that when faculty used Turkish to clarify a point, they would later translate it into English. Leila’s (P3) experience varied; one professor spoke Turkish more often than English, but switched to English after being reminded about international students’ needs.

Language also mediated peer relationships, shaping how students experienced inclusion in their everyday interactions. During group assignments, Yaren (P6) noticed that her peers were attentive to linguistic differences and made deliberate efforts to ensure she was included in the conversation. As she shared: “When we are setting groups, they explain the part they want to speak in Turkish, and then they say, ‘Okay, let’s make her understand what you just said.’ So they have awareness of us being in the group somehow.” These moments of consideration contributed to her sense of belonging within the group. Reflecting on these interactions, she (P6) expressed that speaking with her peers helped her build positive relationships: “I really found great relationships with them...they are really nice people.”

Participants’ experiences showed that language significantly shaped how they perceived the attitudes and openness of local students and instructors. Evidence from the experiences of Dana (P1), Denis (P5), and Yaren (P6) indicated that participants appreciated instructors with intercultural awareness and acknowledged their supportive approach. Denis (P5) shared: “When I’m in the classroom, professors... Start talking to me, where I’m from... Because of that... My friends in the classroom are paying attention to me too.” Similarly, Yaren (P6) explained: “Instructors are very nice and accommodating...They would instruct the whole class either in English or sometimes explain one part in Turkish and then explain the part.”

Ensuring an inclusive learning environment aligns with the targets of SDG 4 (Quality Education). Participants’ satisfaction with faculty approaches and the use of diverse instructional strategies in lessons underscores this alignment. Their experiences highlighted that despite being marketed as English-medium programmes, most courses alternated between English and Turkish. Participants described language as both a bridge and a barrier. This tension points to a possible mismatch between English-medium internationalisation and everyday classroom language practices.

Decent Work and Future Imaginaries

International students perceived opportunities to work in Türkiye after graduation as scarce due to immigration regulations and job requirements. There were references to teaching professionalism, but the concept of professionalism in the programme outcomes was based on the Ministry of National Education and the Higher Education Council frameworks. They believed this situation resulted from the university’s limited support for career development. Dana (P1) mentioned that her programme “starts with counselling sessions and internships about counselling, but they have no idea how to do it. I think working here in Türkiye and finding jobs won’t be easy for me because, as I told you, my options are very limited.” Another international student, Mariam (P2), believed that the university and her programme did not prepare her for the job market:

I do not really think the university is going to focus on the international students. Regarding employment. To be honest, at this point, we are not being prepared for the market. I think

maybe it is just because we are in our first year, so right now everyone is just in the phase of studying, but there are a few things that I have seen about career building and career planning.

The participants mentioned that their university hosts career fairs designed to prepare them for the job market, but they complained that these events were not inclusive enough to meet their employment needs nationally and internationally. In addition to this, as mentioned in the above quotes, many of them questioned the quality and capacity of their internship programmes to equip them with skills to secure a decent job. Therefore, some of them planned to return to their country or go to another country for further studies or employment.

However, the participants also offered a contrasting argument about the quality of education in preparing them for future employment, citing the medium of instruction, English, and the faculty members' international experience. At the same time, those at the beginning of their programme were concerned about their internships in Turkish state schools, where Turkish was the medium of instruction. Yet, they were confident that their programme would provide employability in the international job market as teachers, as Saliha (P4) stated: "Actually studying in English will help me a lot with my career in the international market because, as I said before, I'm studying the English language of teaching and also the university is an international university."

Students expressed uncertainty about post-graduation opportunities, citing restrictive visa policies and limited career guidance. While their programmes promised employability, institutional frameworks seemed oriented toward national, not international, labour markets. These experiences suggest that while students valued components of their training, the institutional structures surrounding employment were not aligned with SDG 8's emphasis on decent work and economic participation. Instead, for some students, employability remained contingent on external mobility rather than emerging through local opportunities.

Invisible Barriers

In response to inequality issues, the participants did not openly complain about being isolated or treated differently because of their ethnicity, age, or sexuality. However, being an international student emerged as a common position through which participants sometimes felt unintentionally excluded, particularly because of peers' hesitation to speak English and limited awareness of their needs. Except for Denis (P5), all students noted that they could not find systematic support for participating fully in classroom activities. The moments when they felt included were largely limited to friendly gestures, such as instructors asking about their country, native language, or background.

Dana (P1) recounted experiences that reflected the complex role of language in classroom interactions. She explained: "I had teachers who were very imprudent when it comes to this. When a student says something in Turkish, they translate it to us, and they also give a Turkish response." While translation was provided, the continued use of Turkish left her navigating conversations that were only partially accessible. Mariam (P2) shared a similar experience that highlighted feelings of exclusion. Recalling classroom discussions, she explained:

She talks about her experience for 15 minutes in Turkish with very animated expressions. Sometimes they laugh, sometimes they do not. Then, when she translates it into English, she says it in one line. There are no details about what

she's talking about. I don't think she wants to go through the hustle of translating all of it, but then again, it gives me such a big barrier that, okay, everyone knows it.

Mariam's experience indicated that translation did not reduce the inequalities, because crucial meaning, timing, and context were lost. Although participants appreciated instructors' attempts to translate Turkish conversations, these efforts often resulted in their exclusion from the substance of classroom interactions. Participants' experiences showed that equal access to information and social inclusion are among their primary needs in the learning environment, as emphasised in SDG-10, Targets 10.2–10.4. These experiences demonstrate that inclusion occurred informally and individually rather than structurally, revealing that institutional practices were insufficient to ensure equitable participation, despite alignment with SDG-10 in principle.

Institutional Care and Advantages

In general, participants appreciated the institutional support services provided by the university, but emphasised that belonging required navigating cultural unfamiliarity and implicit biases. Administrative care, such as assistance with residence permits and bureaucratic procedures, was perceived as fostering belonging more effectively than pedagogical practices. However, inclusion often depended on the personal goodwill of individual faculty members rather than a systematic institutional approach. This reliance on individual actors suggests that participants experienced care primarily through interpersonal accommodation rather than through clearly visible, consistent institutional mechanisms.

Participants highlighted that interactions with campus staff, campus location, and the availability of services such as healthcare and cafeteria facilities positively influenced their feelings about studying at the university. These supportive experiences strengthened their sense of belonging. Denis (P5) noted: "For us, internationals, you know, the international programme office; they're really helping me too much. I mean, when I needed anything, I went there, and they were helping me." Expressions of gratitude indicated that the hospitality and openness of staff were more influential on students' institutional belonging than the technical quality of the services themselves. Leila (P3) shared: "Everyone working in the administrative areas and in my department they're all really nice. Very helpful. That's what I really like about that university the most." Participants also emphasised that administrative assistance reduced their stress around residency processes and immigration-related issues, which contributed to their adaptation and well-being.

As students reflected on their experiences of settling into university life, language courses and cultural events organized by the university emerged as important parts of their adjustment journeys. Participants described these opportunities as helping them feel more prepared for social interaction and more confident in navigating their new environment. Alongside these experiences, the campus itself was often portrayed as a supportive space that facilitated a sense of comfort and belonging. Leila (P3) described the campus environment as "small but comfortable and convenient," emphasizing the ease with which she could navigate daily university life. Similarly, Yaren (P6) spoke about the calming presence of nearby public spaces, highlighting the proximity of Neighborhood Park (name of the park is anonymous due to confidentiality). Through their accounts, the physical and social environment of the university

appeared to play an important role in fostering feelings of psychological safety and institutional belonging.

The university's responsiveness to issues raised by international students further signalled a commitment to equitable, inclusive practices. Dana (P1) reflected on this effort:

We have been having a rector meeting with the director. They really care about our concerns and problems when they try to solve them. As international students like it when the professor does not speak in Turkish in English-speaking programmes, they have been always accommodating our feelings and our problems as well. So yeah, that is a very nice thing about the University. Honestly, it felt good.

Leila's (P3) reflections on fairness in language use demonstrated how she interpreted institutional values at the classroom level. She emphasised that fairness required both Turkish and international students to understand explanations, yet she had experienced courses where instructors spoke only Turkish.

Overall, the participants' experiences indicates that the university was striving to meet the principles of SDG-16, especially Target 16.6, which emphasises accountable and transparent institutional structure. However, their accounts also showed that while institutional support was consistent at the administrative level, equitable access within classroom practices was less reliable. This inconsistency demonstrated how SDG-16 was more fully realized in administrative responsiveness than in daily pedagogical interaction.

Discussion

Informed by the conceptual framework, this study deepens understanding of how Sustainable Development Goal commitments are interpreted and enacted within Turkish teacher education programmes, revealing tensions characteristic of semi-peripheral higher education systems. Institutional discourse positions the programmes as aligned with SDG-4, SDG-10, and SDG-16, yet the experiences of international students show that these commitments were not always consistently reflected in daily educational practices. These findings are consistent with concerns raised about the gap between documented internationalisation efforts and lived interactions in classroom contexts (Vural-Yılmaz, 2018; Tamtekin-Aydın, 2020). In this sense, SDG adoption is not merely a technical compliance issue but one shaped by language, cultural norms, and institutional structures. This echoes Stein's (2019) argument that semi-peripheral systems tend to adopt global sustainability discourse without transforming the epistemic and structural hierarchies through which education operates.

Participants' interpretation of SDG-driven internationalisation was shaped by positions arising from their demographic information. Programme affiliation appeared as a component of global sustainability discourses, as teacher education structures in Türkiye are governed by nationally prescribed curricula, internship regulations, and professional standards. Participants' accounts suggest that SDG-related commitments were often experienced through existing programme requirements and institutional practices, rather than through explicitly transformative pedagogical approaches.

Linguistic and cultural background is another factor that explains international students' experiences. Language functioned as a boundary-making mechanism and operated as a form of institutional power affecting access to participation, recognition, and belonging. It reflects broader critiques that

internationalisation can reproduce hierarchical global relations when institutional practices remain unexamined (Stein, 2019). Academic progression also emerged as a critical position because international students perceived that there was no clear link between their academic progress and work expectations.

Starting with language practices, it clearly illustrates the tendency to align with global expectations. Although English is the official medium of instruction, classrooms frequently shift to Turkish, shaping social relationships and affecting participation. Students often normalize these shifts and do not perceive them as discrimination, but their narratives show how linguistic hierarchies can unintentionally re-inscribe boundaries. Prior research also suggests that language mediates belongingness and that faculty members and peer interactions shape perceptions of inclusion (Tavares, 2021). The findings here extend this understanding by showing how linguistic dominance becomes a barrier not simply to communication but to substantive participation in sustainable education practices.

The findings also highlight that institutional commitments to SDGs may remain limited when not structurally supported. Faculties' goodwill created moments of recognition, but inclusion depended heavily on personal effort rather than institutional design. This aligns with the argument that internationalisation often circulates as institutional discourse without fully transforming pedagogical practice (Ramaswamy *et al.*, 2021). Participants' narratives suggest that meaningful SDG enactment requires systematic mechanisms for intercultural engagement, not only rhetorical alignment. Similar to Tikly's (2020) critique of ESD in the Global South, the results indicate that sustainability frameworks are interpreted through existing institutional asymmetries rather than reshaping them, which limits their transformative capacity and meaningful engagement.

Employment expectations further illustrate this tension between institutional commitments and students' perceived future opportunities. While SDG-4 and SDG-16 appear partially realized, participants questioned whether their education translates into meaningful job opportunities in Türkiye. Participants' accounts reflect that factors such as visa regulations and domestically oriented internship requirements affected their sense of future possibility. Prior work similarly emphasises that sustainability claims risk superficiality when institutional systems are not aligned with global mobility or decent work expectations (Bourn & Soysal, 2021; Ince *et al.*, 2022). In this respect, participants perceived a disconnect between their educational experiences and future employment opportunities, suggesting that the aspirations associated with SDG-8 may not always be experienced as attainable within the context they described.

Finally, the narratives provide nuance for interpreting internationalisation outcomes. Studies conducted with local students often report positive results (Yılmaz-Fındık *et al.*, 2020; Soysal & Ok, 2016; Ugras & Zengin, 2019); however, the current findings demonstrate that international students experience subtle forms of exclusion. Their coping strategies, such as forming friendships with other international students or remaining low profile, mirror earlier findings concerning the importance of intercultural sensitivity and institutional awareness (Tamtekin-Aydın, 2020; Vural-Yılmaz, 2018). This highlights the significance of including international student perspectives in discussions of SDG transformation, as their absence may create an incomplete understanding of inclusivity.

Overall, this study contributes to debates on SDG-driven transformation by showing that internationalisation becomes more meaningful when linguistic equity, intercultural engagement, and provisions for belonging are addressed in everyday educational practice. While institutional commitments to sustainability offer a promising direction, the findings suggest that symbolic alignment should be accompanied by more consistent pedagogical and organizational support if SDG goals are to be experienced meaningfully by international students.

Conclusion

International students' narratives reveal that the effectiveness of SDG alignment in higher education depends not on the presence of policy references but on how institutions contend with linguistic hierarchies and intercultural asymmetries. The semi-peripheral positioning of Turkish higher education illustrates how global sustainability commitments can coexist with locally rooted practices that limit substantive enactment. The findings show that linguistic inclusion, intercultural engagement, and equitable pathways to future work are not secondary but central to realizing SDG-4, SDG-10, and SDG-16 in practice.

The study demonstrates that symbolic alignment with SDGs is insufficient without institutional mechanisms that support consistent intercultural participation. Goodwill from individual faculty members cannot substitute for structural attention to language practices, student engagement models, and inclusive curriculum design. Because similar tensions may appear in other higher education systems navigating global sustainability and internationalisation agendas, the findings may offer insights for comparative scholarship. Ultimately, the research contributes to comparative scholarship and internationalisation in higher education by suggesting that SDG implementation in higher education would benefit from closer attention to linguistic equity, culturally reflexive pedagogies, and students' perceived pathways to future work.

Author Contributions

The first and second authors contributed equally to all stages of the study. The third author contributed to the literature review, data analysis, and the conclusion section. The fourth author contributed to the literature review of the manuscript.

Ethical Declaration

This study was conducted with the approval of the TED University Human Research Ethics Committee (Protocol No. 2022/04), granted at the meeting held on May 23, 2022 (Decision No. 2022/04).

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest with any institution or person within the scope of the study.

Declaration of Generative AI Use

In this study, an AI-based tool was used to improve the language and readability of the manuscript. AI tools were not used for content generation, data analysis, or interpretation. All interpretations and final decisions belong to the authors. The authors take full responsibility for the content of the manuscript.

References

Alm, K., Beery, T. H., Eiblmeier, D., & Fahmy, T. (2022). Students' learning sustainability –implicit, explicit or non-

- existent: A case study approach on students' key competencies addressing the SDGs in HEI program. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, 23(8), 60–84. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSHE-12-2020-0484>
- Alpaydin, Y. (2018). Educational experiences of the international students in graduate programs in Turkey. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 7(2), 89–99. <http://doi.org/10.5539/jel.v7n2p89>
- Amador, F., Martinho, A. P., Bacelar-Nicolau, P., Caeiro, S., & Oliveira, C. P. (2015). Education for sustainable development in higher education: evaluating coherence between theory and praxis. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 40(6), 867–882. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2015.1054783>
- Andreotti, V. (2014). *Actionable postcolonial theory in education*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230337794>
- Atar, C., & Rahman, S. A. (2019). Higher education in Türkiye: Responding to sustainable development agenda. *Intellectual Discourse*, 27(2), 335–351.
- Aykan, A., & Dursun, F. (2021). Views of international student teachers on the problems they encountered in Turkey and suggestions for these problems. *Türkiye Eğitim Dergisi*, 6(2), 497–506. <https://izlik.org/JA34GF82PG>
- Bourn, D., & Soysal, N. (2021). Transformative learning and pedagogical approaches in education for sustainable development: Are initial teacher education programmes in England and Turkey ready for creating agents of change for sustainability? *Sustainability*, 13(16), 8973. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13168973>
- Bulut-Sahin, B., & Brooks, R. (2023). Nation-bounded internationalisation of higher education: A comparative analysis of two periphery countries. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 42(5), 1071–1085. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2023.2193723>
- Bulut-Sahin, B., & Ericok, B. (2023). Türkiye'de yükseköğretimin uluslararasılaşmasında ulusal stratejiler ve kurumsal yönetim. *Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli Üniversitesi SBE Dergisi*, 13(3), 1915–1937. <https://doi.org/10.30783/nevsosbilen.1341529>
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. Jossey-Bass.
- Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, 19(5), 2–14. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X019005002>
- De Wit, H., & Altbach, P. G. (2021). internationalisation in higher education: Global trends and recommendations for its future. *Policy Reviews in Higher Education*, 5(1), 28–46. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23322969.2020.1820898>
- De Wit, H., Egron-Polak, E. Howard, L., & Hunter, F. (2015). internationalisation of higher education. European parliament directorate general for internal policies. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/540370/IPOL_STU\(2015\)540370_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/540370/IPOL_STU(2015)540370_EN.pdf)
- Dimici, K. (2023). An analysis of the internationalisation of pre-service teacher education curricula: The international experience of prospective teachers. *Van Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 20(3), 1085–1110. <https://doi.org/10.33711/yyuefd.1329056>
- Ericok, B., & Arastaman, G. (2023). Mapping the internationalisation of higher education in Türkiye. *Yükseköğretim Dergisi*, 13(2), 143–156. <https://doi.org/10.53478/yuksekokogretim.1163655>
- Ferreira-Lopes, L., Van Rompay-Bartels, I., Bezanilla, M. J., & Elexpuru-Albizuri, I. (2022). Integrating SDG 12 into business studies through intercultural virtual collaboration. *Sustainability*, 14(15), 9024. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14159024>
- Gregersen-Hermans, J. (2021). Toward a curriculum for the future: Synthesizing education for sustainable development

- and internationalisation of the curriculum. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 25(4), 461–481. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10283153211031033>
- Helms, R. M., Brajkovic, L., & Rumbley, L. E. (2016). National policies for higher education internationalisation: what campus leaders & practitioners need to know? *internationalisation of Higher Education*, 3, 1–18. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/310655054_National_Policies_for_Higher_Education_Internationalisation_What_Campus_Leaders_and_Practitioners_Need_to_Know
- İnce, B., Dayioglu Ocal, S., Bağcı, A., Albayrak Sari, A., & Öztürk, M. (2022). Key elements of education for sustainable development in Turkey's education: An analysis of policy documents. In M. Öztürk (Eds.), *Educational Response, Inclusion and Empowerment for SDGs in Emerging Economies: How do Education Systems Contribute to Raising Global Citizens?* (pp. 3–20). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-98962-0_1
- Leal Filho, W., Frankenberger, F., Salvia, A. L., Azeiteiro, U., Alves, F., Castro, P., & Avila, L. V. (2021). A framework for the implementation of the sustainable development goals in university programmes. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 299, 126915. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2021.126915>
- Mammadova, A. (2022). Perceptual differences on the concept of sustainability between Japanese and foreign students. *European Journal of Sustainable Development*, 11(4), 25. <https://doi.org/10.14207/ejsd.2022.v11n4p25>
- Marginson, S. (2022). Global science and national comparison. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 41(2), 153–168. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050068.2021.1981725>
- Mc Cowan, T. (2016). Universities and the post-2015 development agenda: An analytical framework. *Higher Education*, 72(4), 505–523. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-016-0035-7>
- Mulvey, B. (2021). Conceptualizing the discourse of student mobility between “periphery” and “semi-periphery”: The case of Africa and China. *Higher Education*, 81(3), 437–451. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-020-00549-8>
- Owens, T. L. (2017). Higher education in the sustainable development goals framework. *European Journal of Education*, 52(4), 414–420. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12237>
- Öztürk, M., & Pizmony-Levy, O. (2022). Early career teacher educators' dispositions toward sustainability and accountability for sustainability issues: A case from teachers colleges in Turkey. *Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education*, 14(3), 1127–1143. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JARHE-02-2021-0051>
- Ramaswamy, M., Marciniuk, D. D., Csonka, V., Colo, L., & Saso, L. (2021). Reimagining internationalisation in higher education through the United Nations sustainable development goals for the betterment of society. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 25(4), 388–406. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10283153211031046>
- Risko, V. J., Roller, C. M., Cummins, C., Bean, R. M., Block, C. C., Anders, P. L., & Flood, J. (2008). A critical analysis of research on reading teacher education. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 43(3), 252–288. <https://doi.org/10.1598/RRQ.43.3>
- Rizvi, F., & Lingard, B. (2010). *Globalizing education policy*. Routledge.
- Sachs, J. D., Schmidt-Traub, G., Mazzucato, M., Messner, D., Nakicenovic, N., & Rockström, J. (2019). Six transformations to achieve the sustainable development goals. *Nature Sustainability*, 2(9), 805–814. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41893-019-0352-9>
- Stein, S. (2019). Critical internationalisation studies at an impasse: Making space for complexity, uncertainty, and complicity in a time of global challenges. *Studies in Higher Education*, 46(9), 1771–1784. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2019.1704722>
- Soysal, N., & Ok, A. (2016). Prospective classroom teachers' perceived competencies on sustainable education. *Social and Economic Perspectives on Sustainability*, 1, 143–157.
- Tamtekin-Aydın, O. (2020). Social interaction between students: local and international students' experiences at a Turkish university. *Journal of International Students*, 10(2), 383–400. <https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v10i2.1067>
- Tavares, V. (2021). Feeling excluded: International students experience equity, diversity and inclusion. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 28(8), 1551–1568. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2021.2008536>
- Tikly, L. (2020). *Education for sustainable development in the global South: New challenges for theory and practice*. Routledge.
- Üniversitelerarası Kurul (2016). Türkiye’de yükseköğretim ve uluslararasılaşma. http://cdn.hitit.edu.tr/hitit/files/23530_1610041532492.pdf
- Uğras, M., & Zengin, E. (2019). Sınıf öğretmeni adaylarının sürdürülebilir kalkınma için eğitim ile ilgili görüşleri. *Journal of Theoretical Educational Science*, 12(1), 298–315. <https://doi.org/10.30831/akukeg.442751>
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2019). Framework for the Implementation of education for sustainable development (ESD) beyond 2019. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000370215>.
- Vaughter, P. (2018). Beacons, not towers: How higher education can help achieve the sustainable development goals. *UNU-IAS Policy Brief series*, United Nations University. <https://prosper.net.ias.unu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/UNU-IAS-PB-No13-2018.pdf>
- Vural Yılmaz, D. (2018). Yurtdışında eğitim: Bir Türk üniversitesinde uluslararası öğrenci deneyimleri. *Journal of Higher Education*, 8(1), 23–32. <https://izlik.org/JA88WL73NY>
- Versteijlen, M., & Wals, A. E. J. (2023). Developing design principles for sustainability-oriented blended learning in higher education. *Sustainability*, 15(10), 8150. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15108150>
- Yılmaz-Fındık, L., Bayram, I., & Canaran, O. (2020). Pre-service English language teachers' conceptions of sustainable development: a case from Turkish higher education context. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, 22(2), 423–456. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSHE-06-2020-0202>
- Yuan, T. (2022). Higher education beyond SDG 4: China's scholarship provision in the global south. *International Journal of Chinese Education*, 11(3), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2212585X221136735>