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Turkish students in German universities : statistical trends and socio-economic conditions

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Introduction

Universities were from their founding international meeting places. Studying abroad was essential for the intellectual elites of ancient civilizations. Science must per se extend beyond national borders. Thus, the presence of foreign intellectuals and students has been considered essential to schools of higher learning. Policies toward foreign students have, however, been influenced by a number of other interests, which are more or less clearly articulated. In Germany in addition to the internationalization of science some other arguments for the presence of foreigners within the university has been the transfer of German language and culture, the contribution of higher education as development aid in the third world, and the economic interests of supporting German exports and securing sources of raw materials abroad (Ehling, 1987). De facto policies, however, have apparently developed more ad hoc than

these arguments would indicate. There is no doubt that the situation of foreign students in Germany today has been marked by the unintended effects of Guestworker policy in the 1960's and 70's. And, that policies toward foreign students have recently been very much tied to migration regulations. This article can only briefly summarize some trends with respect to student migration in Germany, looking specifically at students on German universities with Turkish passports.

A short history of foreign student presence in Germany

During the second half of the 19th century Germany was one of the most popular destinations for foreign students in the world. According to a report of the US «Commissioners of Education», there were 8,786 foreign students in Germany, 2,046 in France, and 2,673 in the USA in 1904 (Wheeler, et al 1925). During this time, most foreign students in Germany were US students (20% in 1895), while by 1911 most foreign students were from Russia (7% in 1886, 45% in 1911, the number of US students declined to 4%).

Until 1903 the universities set their admittance policies for foreigners themselves. Requirements for admittance, particularly regarding educational prerequisites, varied greatly. In contrast to the USA, France, and England, Germany did not do much to support the growing number of foreign students in the German Reich. Only following the First World War, did foreign students in Germany begin to gain greater importance to the state. After the war the presence of foreign students was seen as a means for improving the image of Germany in other countries. The increased interest in the presence of foreign

students was accompanied by stricter controls and policies.

As early as 1918 the State of Prussia began to centralize the admittance of foreign students. The «Central office for foreign students in Prussia» not only developed and supervised policies, but also collected information on the experiences of foreign students in Germany. This centralization was rapidly imitated by the other German states. Centralization was also accompanied by more stringent admittance requirements. While previously few applicants to German universities were rejected, the result of this policy change meant that the government rejected more than 10,000 applicants between 1919 and 1924. Under pressure from the universities, the admissions policy was again decentralized and deregulated, leaving admissions policy once more primarily up to the individual universities.

Up until 1923, Germany had acquired the reputation of being an inexpensive country for university studies, primarily due to the high inflation rate in Germany at the time. However, with the currency reform of 1923, it became very expensive for foreign students to study in Germany. Also, in 1923, fees were introduced for foreign students. These developments prompted the formation of self-help groups, which took up collections for poorer students. Many foreign students began to work on the side while pursuing their studies.

As stated at the outset the arguments used for the presence of foreign students in German universities at that time are still relevant today. The study of foreigners in Germany was supported for reasons of international scientific research, cultural policy -the communication and knowledge of German culture in the world, political and economic advantages, and communication between cultures. However, there were

also arguments against foreign students, such as the danger of xenophobia (*berfremdung*) and increased competition for German students to gain admission to the university. The foreign students who obtained the most support from Germans and the government were foreign students who were foreign Germans, that is, of German ethnic origin, but without German citizenship.

Between 1926 and 1933 the government significantly expanded the support of all foreign students. But with the beginning of the Nazi regime, the number of foreign students in Germany decreased again -particularly among east European Jews. The Second World War and the policies of Nazi Germany had caused some 280,000 scientists, artists and other academics to leave the German Reich between 1933 and 1939 (Gorzini 1993). During the war years the study of foreigners in Germany practically ceased.

Following the War the share of foreign students in Germany grew slowly until the mid 1950's. A dramatic leap occurred with the entry of students from the developing countries in the 1960's. This was also a period of *laissez-faire* policy in an expanding economy, parallel to the Guestworker recruitment which gained significance in the late fifties.

Recent developments

Between 1960 and 1985, the number of foreign students in West Germany, relative to the number of total students, decreased from 8.9% to 5.5%. Since then, by 1991 the figure has risen again to 6.6%. The proportion of students from industrialized countries relative to those from developing countries has declined. Students from LLDC (Least Developed Countries), however, made

up only 4% of all foreign students in 1981 (Ehling 1987). In the 1990's the five most important foreign student nationalities on German universities were Turkish, Iranian, Greek, Austrian and Chinese.

A certain proportion of the recent rise in the percentage of foreign students at German universities can be traced to the increasing number of foreign students who grew up in Germany as children of foreign workers whose parents migrated to Germany in the mid to late 60's. Persons with a foreign citizenship who received their secondary school education and accreditation for university education within Germany are referred to as "Bildungsinländer".

The presence of foreigners within the university was much less prevalent in the former German Democratic Republic. The proportion of foreign students at East German universities increased gradually from 1960 to 1991 from 1.3% to 3.6%.

The most important policy decisions

Up until 1961, there were no policies regulating the admission of foreign students in West Germany. For the winter semester of 1961/62 the Ministers of Culture of the different German federal states decided to implement guidelines for the admission of non-German students. The following policies were decided upon :

1) Foreign student applicants were to be divided into three different admissions categories.

2) Proof of mastery of the German language required.

3) Obligation of foreign applicant to prove, when asked, the authenticity of school documents which state his/her right to study at a university.

Students placed into category 1

were those applicants whose previous education corresponded to the German «Abitur»¹. Following a language examination applicants from this group would immediately have the right to begin studying. Applicants who fall into categories 2 and 3 are those applicants whose proof of previous education does not correspond to the German Abitur, but are allowed to study in their home country. Nearly all school leaving certificates from secondary schools in developing countries place the applicant into category 3. These must participate in a program, known as the «Studienkolleg», which would prepare them for university study in Germany. Those in category 2 must take an exam, which is designed to determine their qualifications for studying in Germany. Usually applicants who are in category 2 also participate in this program because they would otherwise have difficulty to pass the exam. This policy was controversial because the state governments assigned the «Studienkolleg» to the school administrations. Also, critics felt that the «Studienkolleg» provided insufficient orientation to the future field of study. Finally, admission to the «Studienkolleg» did not guarantee admission to the university.

The most important change in regulating the entry of foreigners into German universities was made in 1981. The Conference of Cultural Ministers (KMK - Kultusminister Konferenz) made several new policy decisions :

1) All applicants from visa-required countries must apply for a student visa from within their home country. The government only supplies this visa if the applicant proves his/her admission to a German university or Studienkolleg. It would no longer be possible to change status after arrival from a tourist visa to a student visa².

2) Applicants from Iran, Greece, and Turkey are only to be admitted if they have already passed the university admission exam in their home-country.

3) German language ability should be acquired in the home-country and the requirements for the knowledge of German were unified and the level was raised

4) Applicants from Indonesia must provide proof of authenticity of their transcripts.

These new regulations, were criticized because, as it was pointed out,

- It became more difficult for students from other groups persecuted for reasons of religion or ethnic origins to enter the country.

- The introduction of a student visa made it in some cases impossible to begin studying because the time required to be granted the visa was lengthy, thus the candidate may have missed the deadlines for beginning application.

- Since the practice of admittance delegates these decisions to university admission practice in the country of origin, the opportunities is also relegated there.

- This new policy favors those countries where no visas are required to enter Germany.

- Sufficient knowledge of the German language cannot be acquired in many developing countries.

However, since the adoption of these regulations still depended on the state legislatures, the individual regulations still tended to differ from one state to another within Germany.

The federal German government hardened its policy again in 1984 regulating the admission of foreigners to Germany, which required that university applicants from countries other than the EC countries, the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Monaco, Austria,

Switzerland, Spain, and the USA, have a special visa which can only be acquired in the home country and which will only be granted upon proof of admission to a university. A further concretization of the requirements for receiving a student visa stipulates that the applicants must provide proof of a secondary school degree that is recognized in Germany, sufficient financial means for the entire duration of the studies at the level of the highest stipend level which German students receive (BAFÖG), proof of health insurance, as well as admission to study at a university.

According to a survey of the World University Service, many students were not able to fulfill these requirements in time to make the university deadlines. Of the admitted applicants, 37% did not take advantage of their admission to the university. Due to the numerous protests and unintended consequences of the new policy, a decision was made to loosen the rule (Ehling 1987 : 72). Usually the foreign affairs office grants student visas only for a limited time, for one or two years. According to this policy, the visa can be extended as long as German interests are not harmed (this judgment is for the most part left to the agency). This policy leads to some psychological stress every one to two years, due to the uncertainty and insecurity about whether the visa will be extended.

Current policy is to renew student visas every year until the student reaches the upper division, i.e. after two to three years, then the visa is granted until completion of the diploma (three more years) every two years. If the students time of study extends beyond the average the length of time for the visa will be shortened.

The directives set in the 1980's guide the conditions for study in Germany today. There is a lesser share of foreigners,

especially of those coming from abroad, studying in German universities than in other major OECD or EC countries. The head of Germany's most important agency for academic exchange, the DAAD, believes that Germany must enlarge its budget and broaden its policy concerning attracting students from a wide range of geographical origins. This includes a) an improvement of legal conditions for students entering the country, b) a simplification of the procedure for entering the university from abroad, c) the development of programs of study designed specifically for the needs of bachelor and doctoral candidates from abroad, d) a lowering of the language barrier through a modification of the language requirements for German as a foreign language (DAAD 1996). The resources of this agency are currently prioritizing exchanges with partners from middle and Eastern Europe, Asia and West Europe.

Turkish students - Bildungsinländer : the special case of foreign students schooled in Germany

By 1980 more than one-fourth (26.2%) of the foreign students in Germany were from the guestworker nationalities. Already in 1981, the percentage of «Bildungsinländer» relative to foreign students reached 36% (17% of the foreigners at the universities and 90% of the foreigners at vocational/technical universities) had completed their secondary schooling in Germany. By 1989 about two thirds of these students had not entered Germany on student visa's but were holding resident foreigner status (Situation türkischer Studenten 1994 : 38). About 50% of these students originated from families of

guestworkers from Turkey. The fact that many of these «foreign» students had completed their secondary schooling and received their qualifying degree (Abitur) for entering the university within Germany made it necessary to reconsider their university status as foreigners.

Since the early 1980's a conceptual distinction has been made between two types of foreign students : students who did their secondary school degree (Abitur) in Germany (Bildungsinländer) and foreigners who enter Germany with school or university degrees from abroad. This distinction is important because a quota of foreigners were only permitted entry into numerus clausus disciplines. This varied between 8 and 5% depending on the discipline. Thus, it was an important recognition of equality in 1991 when it was decided that the Bildungsinländer (BI) would be permitted to enter universities as German candidates. After that Bildungsinländer were removed from the quota's for numerus clausus disciplines. Thus, the new quotas apply solely to the "real" foreigners.

In the past decade the children of the foreign workers have begun to contribute to a substantial share of the foreigners registered studying in German universities.

As a whole there were about 130 000 foreign students in German universities in 1995, constituting almost 7% of the student population. Although the absolute number of foreigners grew over the past three decades, their percentage decreased by 3%. At the same time the share of the former guestworker nationalities amongst the foreign student population multiplied rapidly, especially in the decade between 1980 and 1990 (Situation 1994 : 38) In 1960 when there were only 21 800 foreigners studying in Germany, the largest single nationality were the 2,691

Table 1 : Foreign Students in Germany 1960 to 1991

Country	1960	1975	1980	1990
Western Europe	6606	15393	17888	25304
Eastern Europe	861	2210	2564	5511
Turkey	900	3908	5627	12962
Africa	1876	3085	3656	6447
Canada	50	261	298	
Mexico	45	110	174	
U.S.A.	1198	2920	3349	4207
S. and Central America	525	1866	2410	3856
China	87	49	177	4230
Taiwan	86	295	427	
Indonesia		3068	3187	2125
India	772	671	631	
Iraq	309	241	213	
Iran	2691	3737	4772	10485
Israel	74	333	430	
Japan	117	1075	1202	
Other Asia	818	4354	4827	13211
Australia & New Zealand	18	138	136	
Other	301	1314	943	2061

students from Iran who alone were 12% of the total. At that time there were 900 Turkish students, 4% of the foreign nationalities. Already in 1975 the number of Turks had begun to surpass the Iranians and today the students with a Turkish passport are over 13.4% of the total, the single largest group. Second in number are the Iranians with over 10,485 students, contributing to 9.9% of the total nationalities.

Of the foreign students registered in German universities today, almost three quarters of the Portuguese, Yugoslav, and Turks and two thirds of the Spanish and Italians have permanent resident permits in Germany, which is a good indication of their origins as children of guestworkers. Thus the overall share of foreigners entering Germany from abroad has diminished as well in the 1990's. This would mean that only about 3.5% of the foreign students in Germany today enter directly from abroad with a foreign educational qualification.

At study conducted in North-Rhine Westphalia, the state with the largest student population, found that in 1992 75% of the Turkish students had a permanent residence permit and 20,5% were even born in Germany (Situation 1994). In a study we conducted in Berlin and Nürnberg in 1993 (N=166) 24% of

the sample were born in Germany and 27% of the sample who identified themselves as Turks were at the same time German citizens. Of the total 18% of these students had dual citizenship and 9% had exclusively German citizenship. Moreover, 80% of the parents of the students in our study were residing in Germany. In fact in the Turkish case, even in students entered Germany as real foreigners, with school certificates from abroad, their parents were likely to be residing in Germany.

Social conditions of foreign students in Germany

About 75-80% of all foreign students are full-time students. Contrary to popular opinion, the drop-out rates for students from developing countries are not much higher than for German students and their length of study is also only slightly longer. On average, foreign students from developing countries require slightly more time for the Diploma, but slightly less time for a doctorate than German students. This is due to the fact that those working towards a doctorate will usually have had some university education in their home-country, but this previous study is usually not given full

credit. As a result, these students manage to proceed more rapidly in those subjects, which they have already learned. Students from developing countries with previous university experience complete the soonest, which is mostly due to the fact that they already studied in their home country for 3 (for Diploma) to 5 (for Doctorate) year and only 20% of these received credit for any of their previous work. One third of all diploma students and one half of all doctoral students have previously studied in their home country. The total time these students require (in Germany and abroad) for their studies thus adds up to 8 years for diploma students and 10 years for doctoral students.

While about 80% of German students work towards a diploma and 20% towards a doctorate, for foreign students the ratio is about two to one, that is, 66% of foreigners are undergraduates and 33% are doctoral students. Part of the reason for this higher ratio is that the diploma is not recognized in many countries and that fellowship and scholarship programs concentrate on educating the younger scientific Generation (i.e. doctoral candidates). The greatest differences in the time required for completing a degree are in the fields of engineering, natural science, and mathematics.

Living conditions

The Conference of Ministers of Culture reports that circa 75% of all foreign students are dissatisfied with their social contact to German students and the German population as a whole (Ibaidi 1990 : 23). This situation is enhanced by the fact that housing is difficult to find, both expensive and especially difficult for foreigners. Thus, nearly half

of the students from developing countries live in student housing. Foreign students get preferential treatment in the allotment of student housing since they frequently experience discrimination when looking for housing on the free market. In the recent study conducted among Turkish students in the state of North-Rhine Westphalia it was found that about one-third of these students lived in student housing in this case there was not much difference between the German-Turks and the Turks who were in Germany on visas. The German-Turks were, however, more likely (41%) to live with their parents. Nonetheless even 10% of the Turks with student visas either lived with their parents or relatives. One third of these students lived in private housing which was the case for 20% of the German-Turks.

With respect to their sources of income, foreign students can be divided into three main groups:

1) Students who depend mostly on an income from their parents and from their own work activity (one third of the foreign students from developing countries fall into this category).

2) Students who get almost their entire income from fellowships or scholarships (about 10% of the students from developing countries fall into this category).

3) BAFÖG students, who get most of their income from the German government. Only 7 to 9% of foreign students from developing countries get the maximum financial support (BAFÖG Höchstsatz).

Most students need multiple sources of income to manage to cover the cost of living. A recent study of income and living conditions of students in Germany finds that about 60% of all students have to work during the school year in order to finance themselves (Deutsche Studentwerk 1995 in Süddeutsche

Zeitung 1995). About 24,2% of the German students in the West and 54,8% in the East receive the student wage (BAFÖG), which is dependent on the income of their parents. The average amount is 574DM per month in the West and 446DM per month in the East, the average cost of living for a student in the West is 1,231 DM and 874DM in the East.

The above cited study about the situation of Turkish students in West Germany found that almost half (48%) of the German-Turks received the student stipend (BAFÖG). This is almost twice as many as the Germans, which is an indication of the income of their parents. The fact that 12,3% of the Turks on student visas (Bildungsausländer) received a student wage reflects the situation that they have parents who are socially insured employed in Germany. Moreover, 73% of the German-Turks and 79% of the Turks from abroad are working during the semester compared to 60% of the Germans. The German-Turks have an average income of 842 DM monthly (almost two thirds are living with their parents) and the foreign Turks have about 1038 DM at their disposal monthly. Considering that both live in the West their averages are substantially lower than the average cost of living for students.

Generally the possibility to work for foreign students is dependent on the type of visa they hold. In the period where they are working for their first degree, the Diploma, they may only work during the university vacation period. It has been the case that employers use this opportunity to employ foreign students for below minimal wages (Ibaidi 1990).

Summary and conclusions

Given the situation that about one-third of the foreigners studying in Germany are permanent residents, most often the children of guestworkers, the share of new foreigners entering the universities directly from abroad has declined in the last decade. It is generally felt that though the presence of students from developing countries might be considered an asset for development reasons the reality is slightly different. Ibaidi (1990) believes that it is a combination of push and pull factors which attract students from abroad, but with little indication of any specific policy which articulates a contribution to development of the countries of origin. In this connection the share of students from the least developed countries (4% of the total) is much too small. In general it is opinion of experts in the field that the foreign student population has grown in relation to crisis developments in their countries of origin (e.g. Iran, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Ethiopia, China, Sudan) (Ibaidi 1990).

Up until the early eighties the German universities attracted a large share of discriminated or politically persecuted minorities of lower income origins. This was made possible because until then one could enter on tourists visas and change to student status if one had the proper credentials. Adding to this the fact that German universities until present are tuition free it was possible for disadvantaged candidates from abroad to find a means to finance their studies in Germany. Thus there have been developments such as the entry of minority groups such as Kurds or Chinese minorities from Indonesia. (Due to the general fiscal crisis there are currently proposals to change this.) As a whole one might conclude that Germany has not had an active policy

with respect to international presence in its universities. But, that its general policies toward foreigners, especially its asylum and guestworker policy have marked much of the nature of the presence of foreign students at the German university.

The question which cannot be answered today is whether the descendants of guestworkers will continue to dominate at least one third of the foreign student population. Or, whether their incorporation through citizenship will gradually leave room for a rise in the presence of other nationalities. The most recent data from the Technische Universität Berlin indicates that its the Turks and former Yugoslavs (including Croatia) who have grown the most since 1992 (Technische Universität Berlin 1992, 1995).

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Notes

- 1 The "Abitur" is the academic secondary school certificate which permits entry into the university.
- 2 Visas are not required for students who are citizens of EU member states, EFTA member states, Honduras, Monaco, San Marino and the USA.