

The Role of the Private Universities in Turkish Higher Education System in 2000s

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ABSTRACT

At the base of Turkish higher education system lies the establishment of the army-founded schools in 1770s. In 1863 the first university called Darülfunun was founded. Since then the higher education system in Turkey has been reformed for several times. In nearly all of the reform attempts the basic aim has been to meet the needs of the country and increasing demand for higher education.

Recently, a rapid increase in the number of private universities throughout the country is clearly visible. Today, the number of these private universities accounts for 23 of 76 universities. The enrollment in these private universities accounts for 6.2 percent of all students in higher education. The number of faculties in these universities accounts for 6.6 percent of all faculties in all universities. Most of these private universities are located in İstanbul, Ankara and İzmir, and the instruction in these universities is implemented in a foreign language. Expansion of the private universities can contribute to increase the schooling rate, which is 18 percent now at the higher education level.

The point is that there has always been an effort to change universities in Turkey to respond to the needs of the Turkish society, whereas universities generally have been institutions that change society. A suggestion for the private universities is that they should

look for strategies that make them unique – not same or similar. Some of them may concentrate on graduate education while some of them on research, or social sciences etc.

The higher education system plays an important role in terms of the process of socio-economic and cultural development in Turkey. As a matter of fact, the need for highly skilled people has become more serious than before. Moreover, a civic society is a requirement for the unification with the European Union. Being a modern and democratic society is among the aims that Turkey tries to reach with the highest priority.

Higher education is an effective institution that can play an important role in reaching these aims and meeting these needs as qualities that are demanded by an industrialized economy which can be provided by the higher education (Geard, 1981). Also, the people who lead the society socially and politically which can be provided by higher education. Education of individuals who have the critical approaches is related with higher education (Leslie & Anderson, 1988). Besides, higher education is a stage that brings a high rate of return to individuals who receive it and the society (Psacharopoulos, 1980). Thus, it is important to have a well developed higher education system. Regarding the performance that the higher education system of Turkey has shown, it is hard to say that the demands and the needs of the society and the individuals have been met en route to becoming a democratic and developed society.

Since 1776, there have been important developments in the Turkish higher education system. The higher education system has been reformed to transform the society and to meet the demand for higher education. However, the higher education system could not reach the level that meets those needs.

In recent years, a rapid increase in the number of private universities throughout Turkey is clearly visible. In this article, the state of the private universities that have been expanding in Turkey in the past decade will be examined. First, the attempts to change and expand higher education up to the present, and after that the state of private universities will be explained. The issues that the private university faces will be discussed and some suggestions will be presented.

The first attempts that form the institutions of higher education

The starting point for the foundation of universities goes back to the years between 1783 and 1839, when significant reforms took place. It was in this period that the Navy School (1795), the Ground Forces Military School (1795), the Military Medical School (1807) and the Military School (1834) were founded.

Following these military schools, in 1846 it was decided to establish the first university called Darülfunun. However, this was actualized later in 1863. The lectures in this university were open to the public; people outside the university could attend them.

In the same period, the School of Political Sciences (1859) and the Medical School (1867), the Law School (1880) and the Veterinarian School (1889) were also established. There were not enough professionals to teach in these schools; therefore, some foreign instructors were appointed to teach the courses. These instructors came from Germany, Hungary, and Austria (Akyüz, 2000). At the same time various students were sent to European countries to be educated as future instructors for these schools.

University reform in 1933

Before the Republic era started, with a regulation in October 1919, Darülfunun became an autonomous university. After the Republic was founded, it had a legal status in 1924.

In those years a new process for modernisation and westernisation started under the leadership of Kemal Atatürk. However, the belief was that Darülfunun could not contribute to the modernisation process of the new republic. Indeed, Professor Albert Malche, who had been invited to observe the university in Turkey, also pointed out that Darülfunun had been behind its age.

For this reason, a law passed in 1933 closed Darülfunun and İstanbul University was founded in its place. With this regulation the university lost its autonomous status and was integrated into the Ministry of Education. In order to meet the needs for instructors at the new university, professors who escaped from the Nazi's pressure were appointed for teaching posts. These scientists made an important contribution by giving lectures and founding the basis of various scientific disciplines in developing the scientific approach in Turkey (Hirch, 1950).

Multi party era and expansion of the universities

Following the implementation of reforms for a modern life style during the years between 1923 and 1946, the multi party systems started, in 1946. Right after the new era started a new law that returned the autonomous status to the university was legislated. In the same years another university called Ankara University was founded.

Until these years there had been only few institutions of higher education and all of these institutions were located in the two big cities, İstanbul and Ankara. During the years between 1950 and 1960, for the first time, three new universities were opened in cities besides İstanbul and Ankara (Erdoğan, 1992). This was a starting point for expanding higher education throughout the other regions of the country besides the biggest cities.

During this era, the government also cooperated with international institutions to develop modern universities in Turkey. For instance, in 1950, the government asked the University of Nebraska in the United States to cooperate in developing a university in Erzurum in the eastern region of Turkey (Szyliowicz, 1973). Another university, Middle Eastern Technic University, structured according to the American departmental mode, was established in Ankara with the cooperation of UNESCO in 1955. As a consequence, the capacity of the institutions of higher education continued to expand in the mid 1950s.

Struggles to meet increasing demand for higher education

In the late 1960s, the number of candidates applying for university entrance rose dramatically, and university admissions remained constant. According to Krueger (1972), a high rate of return in Turkish higher education was an important reason for the increased demand for higher education. Many people desired to study in higher education, so that they could earn a high income. Thus, the increased demand for higher education resulted in the institution of an Inter-University Student Selection Examination in the academic year of 1962-63 due to space limitations at the colleges and universities (Kaya, 1974).

In 1965, in order to respond to the pressure of the increasing demand for higher education, the government permitted the establishment of private colleges. As a result, a few private institutions were established by private enterprise. However, the standards of these private colleges

aroused opposition, and in 1971 they were declared substandard, and subsequently some were taken over by the Ministry of Education and made part of public universities, while the rest of them were closed.

From 1971 to 1978, eleven new universities were established in smaller cities in different regions of Turkey to meet an increasing demand for higher education. However, the enrollment capacity of all these institutions of higher education was still not enough to meet the needs of the growing population (Gedikoglu, 1885).

Restructuring higher education system

Until the 1980s, the higher education institutions were disorganised. While there were more professors at the universities in the big cities, there was a serious shortage for instructors in the universities of small cities. Besides, there were institutions of higher education under the authority of the Ministries. There was a serious coordination problem among the institutions that provided higher education.

Hence, the higher education system was restructured in 1983 creating a new system, a top central organisation called “Higher Education Council” responsible for the coordination, administration, financing and planning of all higher education institutions.

Under the new system, the capacity of the higher education institutions was increased considerably by establishing seven new universities to meet the demand for higher education. As a result of these steps, the rate of schooling at the higher education level reached 9.27 percent in 1990.

However, the demand for higher education was still insufficient and the schooling rate at the higher education level was still considered quite low by the government. Therefore in 1992, the government established twenty three new universities. All of these universities were built in cities besides the biggest metropolis.

As a result, there were several regulations in order to develop higher education in Turkey. The clear aspect that can be seen in these regulations is that all of these regulations were made in the periods when political changes were at play. Thus, these became the efforts of the state to develop in education. After each regulation new universities were opened to increase the quantitative progress (Aypay, 2003). There had not been a serious search for a model to increase the quality of the university. As a result the number and the capacity of the universities

increased, but the demand for higher education was not met and an ideal system for higher education was not created.

However, after 1990s a new phenomenon –the expansion of private universities– has been significant. This phenomenon that may transform the Turkish higher education system will be discussed in detail below.

A new phenomenon in higher education in Turkey: Private universities

As stated above, one of the most important developments in the Turkish higher education system that has been observed at the beginning of year 2000s is the increase in the number of private universities. In this part of the article these private universities and the approaches and policies towards these institutions will be examined.

The emergence and expansion of private universities

The first step to permit the private sector step in higher education was taken in 1965. In a short period some private colleges were opened by a reference from the law which is related to private schools. In fact, there was not a legal basis for founding a private college. Therefore, it is appropriate to say that this type of colleges was established without a legal base. As a matter of fact, in October 1971 the Constitutional Court decided to close those private colleges on grounds that higher education can be provided by the state only. Thus, the idea that higher education can be provided by the private sector was affected negatively.

A first legal step to let the private sector establish a university was taken in the new Constitution prepared in 1982 as a result of an Act in the Constitution that said private founded foundations can establish the university without aiming at any benefit.

Following this legal step, the first private university called Bilkent University was established in Ankara in 1984. Bilkent University had the advantage of being the only private university in Turkey for almost ten years, as it was eight years later when the second private university called Koc University was opened in 1992 in İstanbul. Right after the Koc University, Baskent University was established in 1993 in Ankara

and Fatih University was established in 1994 in İstanbul. Although the legal regulations to open private universities were carried out in 1982, the Higher Educational Council did not allow the expansion of private universities in the decade after. Since 1994 private universities have multiplied in number. As a matter of fact, there are 23 private universities in Turkey today (Ministry of Education Educational Indicators, 2003). When we think that there are 53 state universities in Turkey, we can say that the number of private universities can be considered quite high.

Table I: Private universities in Turkey

Name of University	Foundation year	Location	Enrollment		Number of faculties
			4 years	2 years	
Bilkent	1984	Ankara	8152	1020	951
Koç	1992	İstanbul	1889	–	161
Başkent	1993	Ankara	4577	205	610
Fatih	1994	İstanbul	2006	339	222
Yeditepe	1996	İstanbul	7575	1558	589
Sabancı	1996	İstanbul	1221	–	163
Işık	1996	İstanbul	1547	–	81
İstanbul Bilgi	1996	İstanbul	6264	356	474
Kadir Has	1996	İstanbul	1033	490	138
Maltepe	1997	İstanbul	1667	509	175
İstanbul Kültür	1997	İstanbul	2064	547	208
Atılım	1997	Ankara	1234	9	180
Beykent	1997	İstanbul	1496	861	114
Çağ	1997	Mersin	732	56	46
Cankaya	1997	Ankara	2841	99	198
Doğus	1997	İstanbul	1317	234	104
Bahcesehir	1998	İstanbul	1375	685	169
Halic	1998	İstanbul	1144	–	134
Okan	1999	İstanbul	–	–	–
Ufuk	1999	Ankara	70	–	10
İstanbul Ticaret	2001	İstanbul	426	333	74
İzmir Ekonomi	2001	İzmir	650	580	93
Yasar	2001	İzmir	28	24	6

Source: Ministry of Education, 2003 Educational Indicators

Distribution of private universities in Turkey

When we look at the distribution of private universities in Turkey, we see that most of them are in İstanbul. As a matter of fact, 15 of 23 universities are located in İstanbul. 5 of them are in Ankara, 2 of them in İzmir and 1 of them Mersin. As a result, it can be said that private universities have been expanded mostly in three big cities. Only 1 of the 23 universities is located in Mersin. This situation seems similar to that prior to 1950, when there were no universities in cities other than İstanbul and Ankara.

Enrollment in private universities

It has been stated above that the number of private universities has reached the level that can be considered quite high. It can also be said that the number of students who enrolled in these universities has increased sharply in this short period. In the year of 2003, while the total enrollment in all universities is 893.879, the enrollment in private universities is 49.308. Accordingly these numbers of private enrollments account for 6.2 percent of all enrollment in higher education. These results that have been taken in the last decade are quite important. However, when we take into consideration the number of the universities, it could be stated that the rate of the enrollment at private universities could reach a higher level.

It has been observed that the number of students that these universities provide education for is less than that they can provide. For instance, in the year of 2002 53.2 percent of the enrollment capacity of total 22 private universities was fulfilled. The rate of the enrollment capacity of the 12 universities stayed under 50 percent. Three universities could fulfil only 30 percent of the total enrollment capacity (ÖSYM, 2002).

According to officials who are in charge of these universities, this issue of remaining under the enrollment capacity is related to student selection system, which is operated by a state organisation because these universities have to accept students under the rules and criteria developed by that organisation which is also holding a nationwide examination for higher education.

Besides, the Higher Education Council determines the quota of the enrollment for these universities. It is often claimed that Higher Education Council gives a quota that is under what the private university demand.

Various university rectors say that since the Higher Education Council determines the quota that is under what they can afford, their universities are running under their capacity providing education for fewer students.

There is also the fact that the number of students who studied abroad in 2002 is 45,473 (National Education Indicators, 2003). It can be said that a considerable rate of these students studies in foreign countries particularly because the universities including the private ones in Turkey do not accept them.

Tutions, scholarships, loans etc.

The tuition that a private university charges can be afforded by a small segment of the Turkish society. It is difficult for middle class families to send their children to these universities. However, it can not be said that all students who study in these universities come from rich families, because these universities provide scholarships to students whose scores are quite high. In the year 2002, 24.1 percent of the students who enrolled in these universities received scholarships. The rates of scholarships that are provided by some universities reach 50 percent.

Thus, it is possible for poor students to be able to study in these universities. However, it is not enough to get scholarship from the universities. Besides that, governments also should develop policies to provide financial aid to these students as it happens in countries such as the USA and Japan.

The owners of private universities

In the constitution it is written that the private universities can be opened only by foundations. However, the foundations, which are involved in establishing universities, are connected with private firms. It has been an attractive involvement for well-known firms to establish private universities. For instance, two of the biggest firms, Koc and Sabancı have founded their universities. Besides that, the universities like Kadir Has University, Yasar University, Okan University have been founded by other firms too. The universities that have been established by firms would be considered as prestigious institutions. As a matter of fact, in these universities all kinds of measures are taken to reach excellence in all aspects, such as labs, libraries, housing, transportations, sport facilities.

Some of the private universities are connected with private schools that consist of primary and high school. Some of the private universities have existed as an extension of private schools which have long been in private education. For instance, Baskent, Fatih, Yeditepe, Işık, Maltepe, Kultur, Atilim, Beykent, Cag, Cankaya, Dogus, ve Bahcesehir are the universities which have been founded on the basis of primary and high schools. On the other hand, several other private schools are expected to open their universities in the near future. At first glance this kind of relationships can be an issue for the universities to institutionalise. However, this is a common case, especially in Japan and France. This kind of relationship can contribute to particularly education carried out in high schools. In addition to that, high schools and universities which have been disconnected from each other can be a subpart of the whole system. Hence, both subsystems can contribute to education held in each one.

Teaching staff

In 2003, 4.900 teaching staff were working at private universities. This number accounts for 6.6 percent of total teaching staff in all universities in Turkey. The findings on teaching staff with academic degrees are as follows:

At private universities 615 professor are working, which accounts for 6.12 percent of all professors in Turkey. In addition to that, 262 associate professors and 711 assistant professors are working at private universities. The number of students per teacher is 13.1 at private universities. This number is 16.6 per teacher at the state universities.

Table II: Teaching staff at private universities

	Total	Private Univ.	Private Un. / All Univ.
Total	74134	4900	6.6%
Professor	10042	615	6.12%
Assoc. Prof.	5219	262	5.02%
Assis. Prof.	12356	711	5.75%
Research Asssistant	27380	823	3.0%
Lecturer-Instructors	19137	2489	13.0%

Source: Ministry of Education, 2003 Educational Indicators

These universities play an important role to attract many international academics to come to Turkey to work. Indeed, many of the top administrators and professors who work in these universities originally come from mostly the U.S.A and EU countries. For instance, 45 percent of the teaching staff who work as full time at Sabancı University come from the developed countries where they used to work.

On the other hand, it can be said that many of the educated academics are staying in Turkey since they are able to find opportunities to work here in these universities. In addition, it is easy to see many teaching staff who are originally Turkish and used to work abroad. Thus, it can be stated that private universities play an important role in a process called “reverse brain drain”.

The teaching staff of private universities is not only academics who have only teaching experience. Many of them have experiences in trade, banking, foreign affairs, politics, etc. In other words, they know the practices in the field as much as the theory they are teaching. Thus, it can be said that education in these universities is carried out by relating the theories to practices.

However, private universities are criticised by stating that they hire the staff from the state universities rather than educating academics themselves. Indeed, some of the courses are taught by the staff who is working in state universities. It seems impossible to educate especially professors and associate professors in private universities since such a period of time has not yet passed. Moreover, the number of research assistants who are working in these universities is considerably small. We can, therefore, state that they do not pay attention to educate their academic staff.

Private universities and vocational education

The private universities also offer programs that are completed in 2 years. The aim of these programs is to give vocational education in various fields. In all of the private universities there are 25 institutions which give vocational education. The number of students who have enrolled in these institutions is 7905. Most of the fields of these institutions seem to be closely related to the labour force according to the economy needs.

Graduate studies in private universities

Although these universities are in the early stage of their existence, they also provide graduate studies. According to the indicators of 2003, 6.283 students are enrolled in graduate programmes. This number accounts for 7.63 percent of all graduate students in Turkey. At the same time the number of institutions for graduate studies is considerably high. As a matter of fact, there are 38 institutions for graduate studies which accounts for 18 percent of institutions for graduate studies in all universities. Besides that, the rate of the publications of the academics of these universities is also high. In 2002, the number of the publications of the academics of private universities listed in international indexes accounted for 6.6 percent of all publications in that of all universities (Gürüz, 2003). Since 1994, the number of articles per teaching staff has been highest in these private universities (Köksoy, 1998).

Table III: Other findings related to private universities

	Total	Private	Private/Total
Number of Universities	76	23	30.2%
Number of Institutes	207	38	18.3%
Number of BA Students	793879	49308	6.2%
Number of Territary Students	323971	7905	2.4%
Number of Graduate Students	82277	6283	7.6%
Number of Teaching Staff	74134	4900	6.6%

Source: Ministry of Education, 2003 Educational Indicators

The language of instruction

The language used for instruction in most private universities is English. Private universities take advantage of using English as language of instruction in various aspects. For instance, they can easily appoint foreign academics. They are also involved in international projects and cooperate with foreign colleagues. In addition, they can easily implement international exchange programs related to staff and students.

Results and suggestions

There has been a steady increase in demand for higher education, but universities have not met these demands, although their numbers have increased. Since 1946 there have been reforms concerning the university. The basic similarity in all university reforms is that each reform has been followed by an increase in the number of universities. As a matter of fact, in the period between 1946-1973, 1973-1981, and 1981-1995 there has been an expansion (Şimşek, 1999). The period from 1995 to 2002 can be addressed as the last expansion (Aypay, 2003). The difference of this last period from the previous ones is that the expansion came with the establishment of private universities.

In fact, the establishment of private universities started in 1982 and since then they amount to 23. And now 6.2 percent of university students are studying in these private universities. It seems that there is a potential to establish new private universities as several private foundations are planning to establish their private universities. If this process of expanding private universities can be managed well and the governments take measures, the whole higher education system may be very dynamic and responsive to society. Therefore, the policies related to private universities should be more attractive and reasonable. Private universities should particularly have more initiatives to determine the policies for selection and placement of their students. In addition, governments should support the students who study in these universities with financial aids, loans, etc.

Expansion of the private universities can contribute to increase the schooling rate, which is 18 percent now at the higher education level. On the other hand, private universities can be seen as useful for the sake of creating opportunities to employ highly educated people. This is especially important for Turkey where opportunities to employ highly educated people are quite weak.

Having close relations with international institutions, these universities can contribute to the quality of the whole higher education system in Turkey. These universities with their academic infrastructures may play an important role in providing education to international students who are looking for different universities to continue their studies supported by the European Union Programmes.

The point is that there has always been an effort to change universities in Turkey to respond to the needs of the society, whereas universi-

ties generally have been institutions that change society. This may be the reason why reform attempts to change the university have not been successful (Aypay, 2003). Therefore, there should not be any interventions to change the university. However, the universities should be able to change the society. Thus, an autonomous university system may be created.

Another suggestion for the private universities is that they should look for strategies that make them unique – not same or similar. In other words, they should be not only private but also special. Some of them may concentrate on graduate education while some of them on research, or social sciences, etc.

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ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ*

Ο ρόλος των ιδιωτικών πανεπιστημίων στην τουρκική ανώτατη εκπαίδευση στην αρχή του 21^{ου} αιώνα

Οι απαρχές του τουρκικού συστήματος ανώτατης εκπαίδευσης βρίσκονται στην ίδρυση στρατιωτικών σχολών κατά την περίοδο από το 1773 έως το 1839. Το πρώτο πανεπιστήμιο, το Darülfünun, ιδρύθηκε στην Κωνσταντινούπολη το 1863. Οι διαλέξεις των καθηγητών (πολλοί από τους οποίους ήταν ξένοι λόγω έλλειψης καταρτισμένων γηγενών) ήταν ανοιχτές στο κοινό. Το πανεπιστήμιο έγινε αυτόνομο το 1919. Όμως μετά την επανάσταση του Κεμάλ Ατατούρκ, το Darülfünun θεωρήθηκε ότι δε συνέβαλλε στη διαδικασία εκσυγχρονισμού της χώρας και έκλεισε με νόμο του 1933. Στη θέση του ιδρύθηκε στο Πανεπιστήμιο της Κωνσταντινούπολης, το οποίο υπαγόταν απευθείας στο Υπουργείο Παιδείας.

Η αυτονομία των πανεπιστημίων νομοθετήθηκε από την πολυκομματική βουλή του 1946 και ακολούθησαν έκτοτε πέντε δεκαετίες συνεχούς επέκτασης της ανώτατης εκπαίδευσης. Στις δεκαετίες του 1950 και του 1960 ιδρύθηκαν πανεπιστήμια, κατ' αρχάς στην Άγκυρα και στην Κωνσταντινούπολη και στη συνέχεια σε όλες τις περιοχές της χώρας, κυρίως στις μεγάλες πόλεις. Κάποια από τα νέα πανεπιστήμια ιδρύθηκαν με τη συνεργα-

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σία και την επίβλεψη ξένων (κυρίως αμερικανικών) πανεπιστημίων και διεθνών οργανισμών, όπως της UNESCO.

Η αύξηση της ζήτησης για ανώτατη εκπαίδευση, ως αποτέλεσμα της καλύτερης οικονομικής προοπτικής των πτυχιούχων της, οδήγησε στη θέσπιση «Διαπανεπιστημιακών Εξετάσεων Επιλογής» από το 1963, καθώς και στην ίδρυση ιδιωτικών κολεγίων το 1965. Όμως, τόσο το δικαίωμα παροχής ανώτατης εκπαίδευσης από ιδιωτικούς φορείς όσο και η ποιότητα των σπουδών στα κολέγια αμφισβητήθηκαν έντονα και, ως εκ τούτου, η κυβέρνηση ενσωμάτωσε το 1971 κάποια απ' αυτά στα υπάρχοντα πανεπιστήμια, ενώ έκλεισε τα υπόλοιπα.

Το 1983 ιδρύθηκε το Συμβούλιο Ανώτατης Εκπαίδευσης, με αρμοδιότητα την ανάπτυξη, το συντονισμό, τη διοίκηση και τη χρηματοδότηση όλων των ιδρυμάτων ανώτατης εκπαίδευσης. Το 1990 το ποσοστό συμμετοχής των νέων στην τριτοβάθμια εκπαίδευση έφτασε το 9,27%. Η κυβέρνηση, θεωρώντας το ποσοστό αυτό χαμηλό, προχώρησε το 1992 στην ίδρυση 23 ακόμη πανεπιστημίων σε μικρότερες πόλεις, επιτυγχάνοντας έτσι την αύξησή του σήμερα –με τη βοήθεια και των ιδιωτικών πανεπιστημίων– στο 18%.

Γεγονός είναι ότι η επέκταση της ανώτατης εκπαίδευσης έγινε σε περιόδους γενικότερων πολιτικών αλλαγών και ήταν κυρίως ποσοτική χωρίς ποιοτικά κριτήρια.

Η ίδρυση ιδιωτικών μη-κερδοσκοπικών πανεπιστημίων προβλέπεται από το Σύνταγμα του 1982, αλλά το Συμβούλιο Ανώτατης Εκπαίδευσης απέτρεψε την ίδρυση σημαντικού αριθμού από αυτά έως τα μέσα της δεκαετίας του 1990. Σήμερα υπάρχουν στην Τουρκία 23 ιδιωτικά πανεπιστήμια, σε σύνολο 76, στις μεγάλες πόλεις, Κωνσταντινούπολη (15), Άγκυρα (5), Σμύρνη (2) και Μερσίνα (1). Σ' αυτά φοιτούν περίπου το 6,2% των φοιτητών και απασχολείται περίπου το 6,6% του συνόλου των καθηγητών, ενώ η διδασκαλία γίνεται στην αγγλική γλώσσα.

Το γεγονός ότι τόσο τα κριτήρια εισαγωγής όσο και ο αριθμός των φοιτητών που εισάγονται καθορίζονται και για τα ιδιωτικά πανεπιστήμια από το Συμβούλιο Ανώτατης Εκπαίδευσης, έχει ως αποτέλεσμα τα ιδρύματα αυτά να λειτουργούν με αριθμό φοιτητών μικρότερο απ' όσο θα μπορούσαν να απορροφήσουν σε πολλές περιπτώσεις, με λιγότερο από το μισό των διαθέσιμων θέσεων. Ταυτόχρονα, υπάρχουν περίπου 45.000 φοιτητές που σπουδάζουν στο εξωτερικό, αφού δεν έγιναν δεκτοί από τα πανεπιστήμια.

Τα δίδακτρα των ιδιωτικών πανεπιστημίων μπορεί να καταβάλει μόνο το εύρωστο οικονομικά, δηλαδή μικρό, τμήμα της τουρκικής κοινωνίας. Πολλά, εντούτοις, από τα ιδρύματα αυτά χορηγούν υποτροφίες σε φοιτητές χαμηλότερου εισοδήματος, χωρίς αυτό να είναι πάντοτε αρκετό για τους πιο φτωχούς φοιτητές.

Τα ιδιωτικά πανεπιστήμια ανήκουν σε ιδρύματα, τα οποία συνδέονται με μεγάλες ιδιωτικές εταιρείες. Θεωρούνται ιδρύματα υψηλού κύρους και λαμβάνουν κάθε μέτρο διασφά-

λίσης της ποιότητας της παρεχόμενης εκπαίδευσης. Πολλά επίσης από τα πανεπιστήμια αυτά συνδέονται με ιδιωτικά εκπαιδευτήρια της πρωτοβάθμιας και δευτεροβάθμιας εκπαίδευσης ή αποτελούν προέκτασή τους.

Μεγάλο μέρος του διοικητικού και του διδακτικού προσωπικού των ιδιωτικών πανεπιστημίων προέρχεται από τις Ηνωμένες Πολιτείες και την Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση ή είναι Τούρκοι που επαναπατρίστηκαν έχοντας προηγουμένως διδάξει σε πανεπιστήμια του εξωτερικού ή έχοντας εργαστεί σε μεγάλες ξένες εταιρείες (αναστροφή της «διαρροής εγκεφάλων»). Τα ιδιωτικά πανεπιστήμια δέχονται όμως συχνά κριτική για το γεγονός ότι προσλαμβάνουν διδάσκοντες από τα κρατικά πανεπιστήμια, ότι δε διατηρούν ικανό αριθμό βοηθητικού ερευνητικού προσωπικού και, γενικότερα, ότι δε δίνουν σημασία στην εκπαίδευση του προσωπικού τους. Παρ' όλ' αυτά, αξιοσημείωτο είναι πάντως το γεγονός ότι το ποσοστό των διεθνών ή άλλων δημοσιεύσεων του προσωπικού των ιδρυμάτων αυτών είναι πολύ υψηλό.

Τα τουρκικά ιδιωτικά πανεπιστήμια προσφέρουν, τέλος, διετή προγράμματα με σαφή επαγγελματικό προσανατολισμό σε τομείς υψηλής ζήτησης στην οικονομία, καθώς και μεταπτυχιακές σπουδές (18% του συνόλου των μεταπτυχιακών προγραμμάτων και 7,63% των μεταπτυχιακών φοιτητών). Είναι αρκετά ευέλικτα στην ανάπτυξη διεθνών συνεργασιών και ανταλλαγών φοιτητών και προσωπικού.

Η επέκταση των ιδιωτικών πανεπιστημίων έχει βοηθήσει στην αύξηση της συμμετοχής στην ανώτατη εκπαίδευση, έχει δώσει ευκαιρίες απασχόλησης σε επιστήμονες με υψηλή κατάρτιση, αλλά και έχει επιτρέψει, μέσα από την ανάπτυξη των ευρωπαϊκών προγραμμάτων, σε φοιτητές τη συνέχιση των σπουδών τους στην Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση. Το ζητούμενο για τα ιδιωτικά πανεπιστήμια είναι πλέον η διαμόρφωση της ιδιαίτερης ταυτότητας του καθενός: μερικά από αυτά θα μπορούσαν να επικεντρωθούν στις μεταπτυχιακές σπουδές, άλλα στην έρευνα, τις κοινωνικές επιστήμες κτλ.

Από το 1946 έγιναν πολλές μεταρρυθμίσεις στα πανεπιστήμια. Κάθε φορά γινόταν προσπάθεια να αλλάζουν τα πανεπιστήμια στην Τουρκία, ώστε να ανταποκριθούν στις εκάστοτε ανάγκες της κοινωνίας, ενώ τα πανεπιστήμια είναι γενικά θεσμοί που αποβλέπουν στην αλλαγή της κοινωνίας – ίσως γι' αυτό οι προσπάθειες δεν υπήρξαν γενικά επιτυχημένες. Για να μπορέσουν ν' αλλάξουν την κοινωνία, τα πανεπιστήμια θα πρέπει να απαλλαγούν από τις έξωθεν παρεμβάσεις και να αυτονομηθούν.