

OVERVIEW AND LEGAL BASIS OF PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION IN TURKEY

(Entry by Fatma Mizikaci)

Turkish private higher education institutions first appeared in 1963 in the form of fee-paying foundation academies and four-year vocational schools. During the nine year period from 1963 to 1972 the number of foundation vocational higher education institutions climbed to 41 with enrolment of more than 50,000 students. In 1971 they were integrated into public university system (Law no. 1418). The students and staff were affiliated with public academies.

Private higher education returned in 1981--but as non-state, non-profit foundations-- through enactment of the Law of Higher Education. The new Law includes legislation for non-profit foundations¹ to operate universities under the condition that they conform to the provisions in the same Law and be subject to the supervision of the Council of Higher Education. The legal base of "foundation higher education institutions"² is defined in article 130 of the Constitution and Law no 2547 of 1981. According to this Law, universities cannot be established by for-profit organizations and cannot operate for-profit. The application and all other processes of the foundation higher education institutions are undertaken by the Foundation Universities Coordination Unit founded under the Council of Higher Education (YÖK).

In order to establish a foundation higher education institution, the legal application procedure is rather complicated. First of all, a given non-profit foundation is to submit a proposal which includes the proposed study programs, academic units and anticipated date to commence enrolling students; number of students allocated to the study programs; proof of financial capability for the continuity of activities and proof of assets and land. In addition, the foundation should certify that it fulfils the academic and educational standards set by YÖK. In the case of possible interruption to their activities all constitutional rights and privileges are transferred to YÖK.

¹ Only non-profit foundations can operate universities; the term 'foundation universities' applies widely both in legislative and official contexts.

² Hereafter foundation higher education institutions for private higher education institutions.

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Universities, faculties, graduate schools and four-year vocational schools are founded by law while two-year vocational schools, departments, and divisions are established by the approval of YÖK. Subject to the ratification of YÖK, the boards of trustee appoint the Rectors. Foundation universities have to conform to the basics of academic provisions and administrative structures set by the Law. They are, however, free in matters of management. Typically they follow the traditional norms while different implementation modes are carried out through rules and regulations adopted by their board of trustees.

Foundations mainly undertake the university form of higher education. Currently 30 of 31 foundation higher education institutions are universities; the other higher education school offers two-year associate vocational programs and not included in the enrolment rates.

Currently the 25³ foundation universities enroll 108.323 students including associate, undergraduate and graduate programs. Thus the percentage of foundation universities in gross enrolment is 6 % in 2007. And the number of academic staff is 77.66 in 2006⁴.

The main quantitative development in Turkish foundation higher education institutions was observed after 1995 with the changes in economics and politics, such as the introduction of privatization in the market economy. This was also the time when the graduates of the first foundation university appeared in the labour market. In ten years foundation universities have grown eight fold in number.

Study programs are organized in conformity with the nationally recognized structure. The Council of Higher Education categorizes study programs into 9 basic areas both for public and foundation institutions as follows:

- Language and Literature
- Mathematics and Natural Sciences
- Health Sciences
- Medicine
- Social Sciences
- Applied Social Sciences
- Technical Sciences
- Agriculture and Forestry
- Arts

Foundation universities offer programs mostly in applied social sciences such as business, finances, banking, law, economics, computer sciences and electronics.

³ 5 universities opened in 2007 and do not enroll students yet.

⁴ Vakif Universiteleri Raporu, YOK 2007 (Report on Foundation Universities, Council of Higher Education, 2007)

The structure of degree programs in Turkish universities is two-tier: undergraduate and graduate levels. Undergraduate programs consist of four to five year Bachelor degree and/or two to three year Associate degree programs. Graduate level programmes consist of Master (MA, MS & MBA) and Doctorate (PhD) degrees. In most of the foundation universities undergraduate programs are followed by a one year compulsory English language preparatory program. The study program in Medicine is six years, and for Veterinary Medicine and Dentistry it is five years; each awarded with a Master degree. There are two types of Master programmes: thesis and non-thesis. Master and Doctorate degree programs are offered by the Graduate Schools within the universities and by some external research institutions. Foundation universities have to comply with this basic organization of studies.

Universities consists of faculties offering four-year Bachelor degree programs (some of them with a vocational emphasis); and schools of vocational education offering two-year Associate degree programs. Graduate programs (Master and Doctorate) are offered in the graduate schools of each university.

There are three sources of funding in foundation universities: 1) foundation financial sources (endowment of members of the foundation), 2) tuition fees and 3) state subsidy. Foundation universities charge tuition fees averaging between US\$ 3900 and US\$ 23,000⁵ annually depending on the program type and institution. The proportion of student fees in total income changes between 20 and 90 percent. State subsidy to foundation universities is provided on the basis of a set of criteria (article 18 Law of Higher Education). As of 2005 state subsidy accounted for only .9 to 3.6⁶ of the income of individual foundation universities and only 10 out of 25 (those enrolling students) foundation universities, meeting the criteria, received any state subsidy at all.

⁵ 18 March 2008 currency rate

⁶ Vakif Universiteleri Raporu, YOK 2007 (Report on Foundation Universities, Council of Higher Education, 2007).