



## Hearing the Voice of the Sector and Graduates and Transferring into the Curriculum\*

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** The economic and social developments of countries are strictly dependent on the qualified graduates/workforce that they have. The aim of this study was to determine the quality and skill aspects of graduates and their satisfaction level of labour supply and demand in higher education.

**Research Methods:** In this study, the data related to the Foreign Trade Program were collected by the focus group (composed of program graduates and employers) interview technique as one of the qualitative research methods. The data obtained from the interviews were subjected to content analysis and findings were obtained on the areas of quality and skill mismatch between supply and demand through coding and identification of themes.

**Findings:** The findings showed that employers have expectations in the field of supply chain knowledge, Excel knowledge, mastery of management information systems, ERP knowledge, warehouse management, port operations, logistics knowledge, and basic export operations. However, employers stated that these qualifications were insufficient in graduates and many had to be taught by them on the job. Graduates, on the other hand, have stated that when they think about the difficulties they have experienced in the business world, they realize their shortcomings only when they start working.

**Implications for Research and Practice:** According to the findings, it is considered appropriate to carry out such research with a participant profile in other fields of higher education, including representatives of the relevant business world, academic representatives and representatives of the central authority. The connection between the labour market and the education system can be established in a healthy way by carrying out the work in different higher education programs.

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## Introduction

Unemployment of Higher Education graduates in Turkey has started to be considered as a special type of unemployment. In Turkey, where youth unemployment is reported as 22% (TUIK, 2018), graduates of higher education and graduate education programs are considered to be a segment that needs to be addressed separately because the qualified workforce is very important in terms of increasing employment in the fields of science, technology, and innovative production in international competition.

The quality of the workforce and the matching of the qualifications required by the existing jobs in the market is an issue that needs to be carefully focused on. In today's labor markets, the quality mismatch is as important as unemployment (Mavromaras & McGuinness, 2007). Quality mismatch refers to the educational levels of individuals in the labor market that are incompatible with their work and are referred to as mismatched matches (Kurnaz, 2015). The importance of the issue stems from the realization of employment by identifying high-quality requirements due to the excess supply of labor and the high rate of unemployment rather than hiring according to the qualifications and skill levels needed in the labor market; and thus, the types of competence (Somers, Cabus, Groot & Brink, 2018). It is essential to determine the qualifications, skills and competencies of the new graduates to be employed, the extent to which they have gained in the educational institution they are graduated from, and the qualifications that employers expect from employment. In this study, it was aimed to perform the questioning in the sample of foreign trade program graduates.

According to a report published in 2019 by Coursera (2019), the "new core competencies of the digital economy" are examined in three groups: Humanities competencies, basic digital competencies, and commercial competencies. Human competencies can be grouped into social, creative, and critical intelligence. "Soft skills", which can be listed as critical thinking, creativity, communication, analytical skills, collaboration, and relationship building are also sought-after competencies in the digital economy. Core digital competencies cover functional areas of expertise or competencies that data analysts should have, such as data analysis, data management, software development, computer programming, and digital security. Commercial competencies are competencies that play a unifying role in the workplace, enabling other competencies to emerge and be used, such as Project Management, Business Process Management, data collection, and digital design. These fourteen competencies are in high demand both in digital intensive sectors and in all sectors in general. The report emphasized that higher education should contribute to the attainment of these competencies (Markow & Hughes, 2018).

The word competence is used as a qualification for achieving a job in the daily language. Competencies can be examined in multiple sections. When evaluated in terms of expertise in business life, competence can be segmented as knowledge, values and skills. Having mandatory work-related knowledge is the basis of many qualifications. Values provide a framework for how and why professionals should

apply knowledge. Skills, on the other hand, are the capabilities that act by acquiring or developing through education or experience (Drisko, 2014).

In his paper "Testing for Competence Rather than for Intelligence", psychologist David McClelland (1973) emphasized that neither exams nor school grades appear to have the power to predict actual proficiency in many real-life outputs, besides advantages. According to McClelland, five criteria are needed to be able to test qualifications. Prahalad and Hamel's work "Core Competence of the Corporation" (1990) forms another cornerstone. In the study where basic competencies are addressed, examples are given from companies, and it is stated that over the years there has been a transition from basic competencies to basic products. In another approach, Boyatzis created a model of 21 competencies using his own "behavioral incident analysis" technique with 2000 managerial employees from 12 institutions (Boyatzis, 1998; Yeung, 1996).

Although qualifications are known to consist of knowledge, value and skill components, their definitions need to be made carefully. Differences between basic and advanced or special outputs should be clearly stated. For a profession, it is very important to have a suitable, comprehensive and flexible qualification list and its components. Identifying such lists requires great care and attention. Many professional organizations have developed specific qualification lists and contents to guide higher education programs (Burning Glass Technologies, 2015; Burning Glass Technologies, 2019; Coursera, 2019; Djumalieva & Sleeman, 2018; McGowans & Andrews, 2015; WEF, 2019; World Bank, 2019;). These lists are important aspects of the accreditation process for educational institutions; it also includes more general information about the institution's mission and objectives, program resources, and policies related to faculty and students.

Accreditation by the American Association of Nursing Colleges has decided to evaluate individual-specific learning outcomes, stating nine "core areas" and 66 "special qualifications". Similarly, in 2006, the British Psychological Association listed 40 specific competencies grouped in nine broad areas. Institutions publicly promote professional competencies (Drisko, 2014). In a study about vocational education and labor market entry (Ludwig-Mayerhofer et al, 2019), several factors that shape young people's school-to-work transitions can be found: their motivation and competence endowment, their decisions to apply for specific educational programs, the constraints they face regarding the opportunities for VET programs. In another study examining the relationship between vocational education systems in European countries and the transition to the labor market, dual systems have positive impacts on the labor market (CEDEFOP, 2017). Both school and workplace-oriented education has a positive effect on the transition to business life.

Turkey's Higher Education in the Futurehood report, a survey quoted by Erdogmus, suggests that similar problems are experienced in the world (Erdogmus, 2019). Accordingly, the QS Global Employer Survey 2018 report, which is a study aimed at determining the expectations of graduates and the perceptions of graduates about the skills expected from the graduates with the participation of 11,000 employers

and 16,000 students in the UK, showed the importance given by employers to the graduates' skills and the satisfaction level of their graduates. There are significant differences in the skills expected by employers in order of importance of the skills expected from graduates. The three most important skills that employers expect from students are problem solving, teamwork and communication. Creativity, organization and problem-solving skills are the order of importance of the students in terms of the skills expected from them (Erdogmus, 2019).

Similar studies have been found in the literature review. In a study conducted in the United States, the use of student views in the implementation of student-centered curriculum studies was ensured (McCudd, Musa & Gingerich, 2008). For this purpose, a survey and focus group study were conducted with student groups. In this study, the management of curriculum change has been seen as a daunting challenge, given the multiple stakeholders in educational institutions, the many forces that influence them, and the organized and complex activities involved. The competencies in the findings were reflected in the curriculum. A study in India aimed to determine the basic competence framework of public nurses using the Delphi technique (Hemalatha & Shakuntala, 2018). In this context, a literature review was conducted first, then a team of eight academics and seven experts determined the basic competencies. These studies demonstrate the importance of data collection through the technique of focus group interviews on issues involving multiple stakeholders.

In Turkey, there are various studies claiming that university is insufficient in capacity to prepare young people to work life. Graduates of vocational high schools are described as having the problem-solving and decision-making skills, taking responsibility, having basic knowledge and skills related to their profession, communicating with people of different cultures and understanding, speaking foreign languages, using computer skills, and using resources efficiently (Icli, 2007). Practical applications are often not sufficient during the training period. In almost all scientific activities with the participation of the private sector in this regard in Turkey, the largest and the most important issue expressed by private sector representatives is the lack of implementation of the students (Alkan, Suicmez, Aydinkal & Sahin, 2014).

The fact that students studying in vocational schools cannot make connections between school and industry and cannot meet the needs of intermediate staff demanded by the labor markets are seen as one of the important problems of vocational and technical higher education, and the importance of "on the job training" is emphasized (Arpat, Kalfa, Aksit & Camurda, 2017). For this reason, the rapid involvement of graduates in the labor market should include a good preparation process and practical training. Close relations with the business world should take concrete place in the training programs. It is recommended to configure courses under titles such as "Work Experience" or "Preparation for the Labor Market" (Demirer, 2016).

Foreign language has become a technical necessity for individuals as a result of the effects of developments such as globalization and Industry 4.0, opening up Turkey to foreign trade after the 80s (Adak, 2010). English, German, Russian, and French languages have a positive impact on wages, according to a study in Turkey (Paolo &

Tansel, 2015). Firms claim that they have needs such as foreign language skills (especially English), computer skills, analytical thinking skills, social skills, communication skills, and practical experience, but graduates do not meet these requirements (Baltaci & Ozaydin, 2020). In addition to reducing the credibility of university education in the community, the wages paid to university graduates are adversely affected by the fact that university graduates do not have the appropriate qualifications for the market (Bicerli, 2011). It is seen that the problems related to the employment of university graduates should be dealt with as a whole and within the framework of their mutual relations in order to provide a healthy development (Unal, 1990).

The labor markets of many industrialized countries face extensive technological and demographic changes. Digitalization, networking and robotics are transforming the business world and the demand for skills and competence with it. Vocational education and training (VET) is often valuable to help graduates' transition smoothly from education to employment. In many countries, studies are being carried out in order to review the content of vocational education in the face of technological developments and organizational innovations. In Western societies, VET systems face lots of challenges, including the need to adapt to increasing skill requirements across the economy and to handle the danger of producing an "underclass" of low-skilled youth (Ludwig-Mayerhofer et al., 2019). For example, research findings in Germany that adopt a dual education system shared between school and workplace in vocational education demonstrate that participants' adaptation to structural change via job-related further training is correlated with increased employment security, professional flexibility, and commitment to the employer (Becker, 2019). Although almost all European countries show differences, it has been found that both educational and horizontal mismatch occurs (Sam, 2019).

As in developing countries (Cainarca & Sgobbi, 2012), there are two aspects of mismatch in the higher education and labour market relationship in Turkey. The first is related to raising more graduates in some areas than the labor market can absorb. Unplanned and unscheduled development in the Turkish higher education system disconnected from the labour market is most clearly seen in vocational schools (Bicerli, 2011). Education quality cannot be provided in vocational schools opened without physical infrastructure and without teaching staff. Imbalances between the quality of labor and the demand of the labor market simultaneously lead to both unemployment and the creation of open jobs (structural unemployment) (McGuinness, Pouliakas & Redmond, 2018; Ordine & Rose, 2017). On the other hand, the economy's inability to create jobs suitable for the educated unemployed and the lack of creative, globally competitive sectors is also effective (Cabus & Somers, 2017).

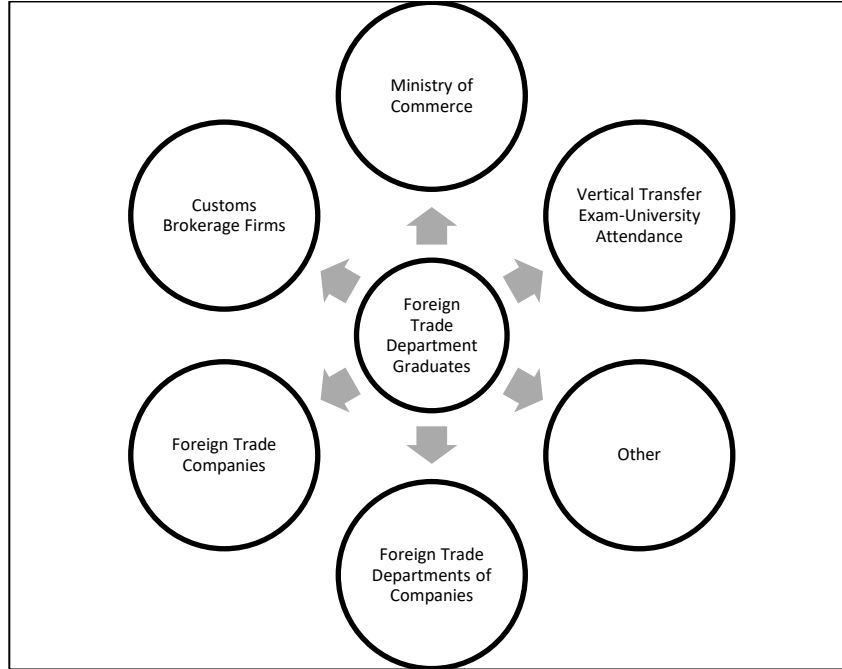
The second dimension of the mismatch between the higher education system and the labor market is that although university education produces graduates in fields that are valid in the market, their qualifications cannot meet the demands of the market (Bol, Eller, Werfhorst & DiPrete, 2019). Therefore, the role of higher education in the formation of employment for creative and competitive sectors is as important as its role in raising qualified manpower to the labour market.

Instructional plans and contents should be designed to meet the professional qualifications in such a way that individuals can adapt to the labor market (Lichy & Khvatova, 2019). According to the Bologna criteria, each department/program must have learning outcomes consistent with the learning objectives. In this context, it is important that the courses are designed to form the learning outcomes of the program. Professional qualifications are defined nationally for many professions, enabling the recognition of lifelong learning. In this context, Turkey's Foreign Trade program for the fifth level (undergraduate) and national occupational standards for national vocational qualifications have been identified. These qualifications and standards provide us with the basis for proving and determining the qualifications of individuals who have not undergone formal education while at the same time informing the teaching institutions about what concepts they should consider when educating their graduates.

The foreign trade program in the vocational school programs consists of four semesters (two years) in Turkey. In order to complete the program, students are required to complete at least 120 ECTS credits. The aim of foreign trade programs is to train the qualified manpower required by the increasing foreign economic relations of the Turkish economy to perform all import and export operations by working in accordance with customs legislation so that companies can achieve the quality they aim for and compete in foreign markets.

Qualitative and quantitative data on foreign trade programs and graduates in the direction of labor supply provide the basis for understanding the employment structure in the field. Quantitative data allows us to determine the numbers of students and graduates and the current and future numerical situation in the labour market. The qualitative demands of the labour market mean the qualifications expected from the graduate profile. Although qualitative aspects of graduates of each department and program have been determined by the Vocational Qualifications Authority (VQA) and the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), it is unclear whether these qualifications have been achieved in real terms. The aim of the study was to compare the profile of graduates with the alignment of the expectations of the Vocational Qualification institution and the sector.

In the 2017-2018 academic year, there were 166 foreign trade programs in 206 universities. Within the scope of the profession definition of the VQA, the definition of Foreign Trade Officer was made. In this context, the Foreign Trade Officer has been identified as a qualified person who takes measures related to occupational health and safety and environment within the framework of quality systems, organizes jobs, checks export and import documents, ensures that import and export operations are carried out in accordance with the nature of the work, and carries out activities for professional development (MYK, 2017). Graduates of the Foreign Trade program can find employment opportunities from banks to private enterprises, from customs consultants to the Ministry of Commerce. The graduates who are able to attend university and transfer to the four-year faculty with the vertical transfer exam can also take KPSS exam (which is a local employability exam) and work in different governmental institutions. This structure is also shown in FIG 1.



**Figure 1.** Foreign Trade Program Graduates' Employment/Evolution Areas

Within the scope of its targets for 2023, Turkey aims to export US \$ 500 billion and increase the number of exporting SMEs to 60,000. In order to achieve these goals, the existing workforce must be present in quantity and quality. The education system has a huge power and responsibility to achieve this goal.

*The purpose of the study*

The aim of the study was to determine the expectations of stakeholders from the graduates of the Vocational School of Foreign Trade Program. The level of proficiency of the education they receive and the extent to which they meet the expectations of the labor market have been searched.

*Study Problem*

The aim of the research was to determine whether the program could train graduates in line with the expectations of the business world, to identify the strengths and weaknesses, and to develop recommendations for changes in teaching plans considering the national qualifications framework. It was thought that the findings to be reached by the research would provide the necessary determinations in terms of graduate-labor market alignment.

## Method

### Research Design

The qualitative research method involving focus group interviews was preferred in the pattern of the research. There are four basic methods that can be used to collect data in qualitative research: focus group interview, observation, interview, and document review. In this type of educational research, focus group interviews with individuals, in-depth, semi-structured interview techniques are often used. Focus group interviews are defined as a qualitative data collection technique which is conducted in accordance with the predetermined guidelines and in accordance with the logic of this method, prioritizing the subjectivity of the interviewees, and taking into consideration the discourse of the participants and the social context of this discourse (Cokluk, 2011). In the focus group technique, experts or stakeholders of the subject come together in groups of 6-12 people and present their opinions.

The model in Table-1 was applied during the research process of the study.

**Table 1**

*Research Process.*

Conceptual Framework	Stakeholders	Method	Study	Analysis And Evaluation	Conclusion
Literature Review	Target Audience Determination for Focus Group Activity	Creating A Semi-structured Interview Form/ Validity / Reliability Analyses	Focus Group Work	Comparison of Outputs with Literature and Current Situation	Creation of The New Curriculum

### Research Sample

The universe of the study was the students and graduates of the foreign trade department of a foundation university and its stakeholders from the business world. In this context, the focus group interview, which was designed in accordance with the qualitative research method, was conducted with two different groups.

1- Foreign trade program students and graduates: There were 11 students and graduates as follows. Eight women and three men; five students, six graduates; between 20-25 years old. They were selected from individuals with high academic achievement and high distinctiveness with expert opinion.

2- Representatives of organizations employing graduates of foreign trade program: There were nine participants, two of them were women representing the sector. Participants were selected based on their experience representing Logistics, International Trade Consultancy, Ministry of Customs, Exporters' Unions, Free Zone, Iron and Steel Industry, and Automotive sectors. People who work in human resources, operations, production units or who are in managerial positions are selected. The age range is between 30-55.



Graduates and students from the program were the first group of participants interviewed. Representatives of public and private sector employing foreign trade graduates constituted the participant profile of the second interview phase of the research. Planning was made for the focus group meetings with the companies registered in the Chamber of Industry and Exporters' Unions of the Region, the customs companies and the foreign trade departments of the private companies, and focus group meetings were held with the representatives of the relevant companies within the framework of the work schedule determined. The interviews were conducted in two sessions in July and August. In focus group interviews, it was aimed to collect data on the general professional competencies, behavioral qualities of the foreign trade graduates employed by employers and sector representatives and the status of the graduates to meet these expectations. On the other hand, the opinions of the graduates and the students about the differences between the knowledge, skills and competencies they gained from the program they graduated from and their experiences in the business world were obtained.

#### *Research Instrument and Procedures*

The interviews were resolved and tabulated by taking audio recordings and notes. Research questions were evaluated in terms of scope and content by two foreign trade and one non-field faculty member, and a validity study was conducted. The following semi-structured questions have been prepared to define the knowledge, skills and competencies of the students and graduates; to determine the opinions of the graduate students about the educational process; and to obtain the experience and opinions of the graduates about the differences in the transition from school to work.

- Whether they willingly choose the foreign trade program.
- Whether their expectations are met after graduation
- Issues that they feel missing after being thrown into the business life
- The proficiency level of the education they received
- Courses and subjects they find missing
- Opinions about employer expectations

On the other hand, representatives of the sector and the business world (by sharing the curriculum and course contents in advance) were asked questions about the following subjects.

- The adequacy of the current curriculum
- Lessons/subjects / contents that they see as deficient
- Issues that they deem excessive/repetitive/unnecessary
- The knowledge, skills and competencies of the foreign trade specialist

#### *Validity and Reliability*

During the research process, the target audience was determined for the focus group study after the literature research, which determined the conceptual

framework. The semi-structured interview form was created using expert opinions and was used in two-session focus group interviews after the validity study was conducted. The analysis of the data and the discussion of the findings have resulted in the creation of resources for the new curriculum studies.

### Data Analysis

The content analysis method was used in the study based on the interpretation and inference of the data. Although it is subjectively criticized by some authors, it is a method of analysis frequently used in social sciences. The subjectivity of content analysis can only be overcome with a good analysis design (Goode & Hatt, 1952).

The data was encoded by content analysis, divided into categories and specific themes were reached, then themes were tabulated. The codes obtained from the views of the graduates and sector representatives were categorized and three themes were reached. Themes were classified as attitudes and behaviour; vocational and technical competence, and skills.

## Results

Findings obtained from two focus group studies were evaluated in three categories. Table 2 shows the expectations of student/ graduate and sector groups on "attitude, behavior" "knowledge" and, "skills".

**Table 2**

*Focus Group Main Themes and Sub-Themes and Focus Group Study Findings.*

Focus Groups		
Themes	Graduate	Sector Representatives
<i>Attitude and Behavior</i>	Honesty; Transparency; Accuracy; Sectoral and Professional Awareness and Interest	Creativity; Awareness; Self-control; Reliability; Work-Travel and Erasmus; Curiosity; Social Network (Club membership, NGO's)
<i>Knowledge</i>	Import / Export Operations Information; Professional English; Second Foreign Language; Documents in Foreign Trade; INCOTERMS; Package Programs in Foreign Trade; Internship; Government Supports and Incentives; Marketing; Correspondence Techniques; Geography and Foreign Cultures	Supply Chain and Logistics; Advanced Excel-Formula; Information Technology and Management Systems; Professional Correspondence Techniques; Business Processes Warehouse / Warehouse Management; Port Operations and Management
<i>Skill</i>	Interpersonal communication	Problem Solving; Analytical Thinking; Interpersonal Communication; Presentation Skills; Written / Oral Communication and Grammar

The findings of the research are compared with the Foreign Trade Expert profile of the VQA. In focus group studies, emerging categories were "emergency knowledge, knowledge of tools, equipment and equipment, research skills, multi-dimensional

thinking and decision making in critical processes, knowledge and skills related to financial transactions in foreign trade verification and benchmarking knowledge and skills, team management skills, persuasion skills, environmental protection methods knowledge, occupational health and safety knowledge, workplace working procedures knowledge, quality management knowledge, exchange knowledge, learning and transferring knowledge, performance measurement and evaluation knowledge and skills, planning and organization skills, problem solving skills, risk management knowledge and skills, basic working legislation knowledge, basic level of Turkish commercial code, knowledge of national and international foreign trade organizations and operations, ability to work in international environment, and raising ability to use the moment well". The focus group activities and the knowledge and skills shared by the vocational school were: office knowledge and skills of office programs / professional programs used on computers, knowledge and skills of foreign trade legislation, knowledge and skills of foreign trade processes, customs legislation and customs clearance procedures, country of operation information, record keeping and reporting skills, professional term knowledge, professional foreign language knowledge, oral and written communication skills, and international delivery forms (incoterms) knowledge. It is shown in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Knowledge and Skills / Departmental Courses(Partly) Matrix*

Knowledge And Skills / Departmental Courses(Partly)	Basic Concepts in Foreign Trade	Operating	English I	Occupational Safety and Health-I	Documents in Foreign Trade, Payment Methods, Incoterms	Economy	Marketing Techniques in Foreign Trade	English II	Customs clearance	Electronic Trade
1. Emergency Information				x						
2. Knowledge of tools, equipment and equipment				x						
3. Research skills	x	x					X		X	X
4. Office programs / professional programs used in computer knowledge and skills										X
5. Knowledge of environmental protection methods										
6. Ability of multi-dimensional thinking and decision making in critical processes	x			x	X	X			X	X
7. Knowledge and skills of foreign trade legislation	x				X				X	
8. Knowledge and skills of foreign trade processes	x				X		X		X	X

The characteristics of the Foreign Trade Officer determined by the Vocational Qualification Authority are shown in Figure 2 left column in the matrix of meeting the knowledge and skills. Compared to the requirements of the Vocational Qualification Authority and the current curriculum, there are no unmatched courses. In other words, it has been observed that the current curriculum fully meets the requirements of the Vocational Qualification Authority. There are no skills or competencies that are requested but are not covered in the content of the courses.

### **Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations**

Higher education graduates are expected to have a high rate of employment in the labour market. However, when the higher education quality and labor market expectations of countries are inconsistent, it is difficult to reach the expected employment level. The results of the qualitative research showed that there is a difference between labor market expectations and the content and quality of foreign trade education, and at what level the expectations related to competencies can be met. Similar studies have shown that the question of the research involves a key issue. For example, a study on vocational education and entry into the labour market found several factors that shape young people's transition from school to work (Ludwig-Mayerhofer, 2019), Some of these factors are their motivation and competence endowment, their decisions to apply for specific educational programs, the constraints they face regarding the opportunities for VET programs and the gatekeepers' recruitment behavior, the information and support youths may or may not receive from social networks, and the learning environments they encounter in firms and schools. Another study examining the relationship between vocational education systems in European countries and the transition to the labor market claims that dual systems have positive impacts on the labor market (CEDEFOP, 2017). Both school and workplace-oriented education has a positive effect on the transition to business life.

The report titled "Higher Education in the Future Turkey" points out that similar problems are occurring in the world (Erdogmus 2019: 101). Accordingly, the QS Global Employer Survey 2018 report, which is a study aimed at determining the expectations of graduates and the perceptions of graduates about the skills expected from them with the participation of 11,000 employers and 16,000 students in the UK, showed the importance given by employers to the skills and the satisfaction level of their graduates. "There are significant differences in the skills expected by employers in order of importance of the skills expected from graduates. The three most important skills that employers expect from students are problem solving, teamwork and communication. Creativity, organization and problem-solving skills are the order of importance of the students in terms of the skills expected from them" (Erdogmus 2019: 101).

It is seen in the research and literature on the subject that in Turkey, the university is inadequate to prepare young people to work life and performance of a widespread conviction is low (Erdogmus, 2019: 103). Graduates of vocational high schools are described as having problem-solving and decision-making skills, taking

responsibility, having basic knowledge and skills related to their profession, communicating with people of different cultures and understanding, speaking foreign languages, using computer skills, and using resources efficiently (Icli , 2007: 264). Practical applications are often not sufficient during the training period. In almost all scientific activities with the participation of the private sector in this regard in Turkey, the largest and the most important issue expressed by private sector representatives is expressed as the lack of implementation of the students (Alkan et al., 2014: 138).

The fact that students studying in vocational schools cannot establish a connection between the school and industry and their inability to meet the need for intermediate staff demanded by labor markets is considered as one of the important problems of vocational and technical higher education, and the importance of “basic on the job training” practices is emphasized (Arpat et al. 2017: 90).

For this reason, the rapid involvement of graduates in the labor market should include a good preparation process and practical training. Close relations with the business world should take a concrete place in the training programs. Courses are proposed to be structured under the headings such as “Work Experience” or “Labor Market Preparation (Demirer, 2016: 823). It is thought that the students will have a significant impact on their understanding of the difficulties they will face in the labor market when they graduate and gain working experience.

Turkey's 80's years in the commercial sense to come out (Adak, 2010) and with the impact of developments such as globalization and Industry 4.0 occurred in the world of individuals knowing a foreign language has become a technical necessity. In a study on the impact of foreign language on the value and wages in labor market, knowing English as well as Russian, French, and German have been demonstrated to have a positive impact on the wages (Paolo & Tansel, 2015).

Firms claim that they have needs such as foreign language skills (especially English), computer skills, analytical thinking skills, social skills, communication skills and practical experience, but graduates do not meet these requirements. In addition to reducing the credibility of university education in the community, the wages paid to university graduates are adversely affected by the fact that university graduates do not have the appropriate qualifications for the market (Bicerli, 2011). It is seen that the problems related to the employment of university graduates should be dealt with as a whole and within the framework of their mutual relations in order to provide a healthy development (Unal, 1990: 45).

This study, which is limited to the foreign trade program, shows the gap between the expectations from the labor market and higher education. In addition to the research and studies presented above, the findings of the study can be utilized by academicians, decision-makers in higher education and representatives of the business world. The basic expectations of the student-alumni are to find a job quickly; one of the problems of those who find work is that they feel inadequate to meet the expectations of the business world. They emphasize the low wages in the labor market. In spite of the expectations of employers, the subjects found themselves inadequate in the education they received, in foreign language, predisposition to flexible working

conditions, mastery of legislation, and mastery of correspondence rules in Turkish and foreign language. Supply chain knowledge, Excel knowledge, mastery of management information systems, ERP knowledge: Package Program information, warehouse/warehouse management, port operations, logistics information, basic export operations are the expectations of the employers and their representatives, but many of the graduates are inadequate in this sense. In behavioral expectations, they emphasized reliability, acting in accordance with ethical principles, protecting the confidentiality of customer portfolio, communication skills, creativity, problem-solving, interactive learning, effective presentation skills, knowledge of correspondence techniques, and decision-making skills.

The data obtained from the research were compared with the demands of the Vocational Qualification Authority. The results were tabulated, and the demands were compared. Knowledge, skills and competencies that are not equivalent in the teaching plans and contents are reflected in the teaching plans as courses. In the light of the data, Commercial Geography and Cultures course has been added to the curriculum and the content of the Professional Development Activities course has been revised within the framework of the information received. Elective foreign language courses for students have started to be recommended more and consultancy has been provided in this direction. In addition, it was decided to repeat this study every year in order to keep the pulse of the sector.

Of course, it will not be possible to make generalizations to compare all higher education fields and business expectations through a program. Similar studies at Four-year faculties and other two-year vocational programs will be helpful in taking rational steps in solving the employment problem and youth unemployment problem. In addition, carrying out such studies by a unit and placing them on an institutional basis is important in the macro dimension.

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## Yükseköğretim Mezunlarının İşgücü Piyasası Talebine Uyumu: Dış Ticaret Programı Örneği

### Atf:

Kellevezir, I. & Cakir, O. (2020). Hearing The Voice of Sector and Graduates and Transferring Into Curriculum. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research* 90, 139-158, DOI: 10.14689/ejer.2020.90.8

### Özet

*Problem Durumu:* Ülkelerin ekonomik ve sosyal gelişmesi, sahip oldukları işgücünün niteliğine bağlı olup, her seviyedeki örgün ve yaygın eğitim yoluyla artırılabilir. Mesleki eğitim belirli uzmanlık alanlarında işgücünü yetiştirme yoluyla işgücü piyasasında mevcut arz ve talebin dengelenmesinde oldukça önemli bir role sahiptir. İşgücü planlamasının öncülü, eğitim sisteminin nicelik ve nitelik açısından planlanmasıdır. İşgücü piyasasının talep yanına ulaşarak gerekli bilgi, beceri ve yetkinliklerin belirlenip eğitim sistemine geri besleme yapılması, işgücünün etkin ve verimli üretilmesini sağlayacaktır. Planlamanın nitelik boyutunda işgücü piyasası dinamiklerinin göz önünde bulundurulması, nitelik uyumsuzluğunu önleme açısından önem taşımaktadır. Mesleklerin gerektirdiği nitelikler, teknolojik gelişmeler gözetilerek, paydaşların katılımı ile ortaya konularak eğitim sisteminden talep edilmelidir. Bu sayede iş/meslek/işgücü sacayağı sağlıklı bir şekilde dengelenebilir.

*Araştırmanın Amacı:* Bu çalışmanın amacı dış ticaret programı örneğinde, işgücü talebinin nitelik ve beceri yönleri ile bu yönlerin eğitim sistemi tarafından karşılama düzeyine ilişkin tespitlerde bulunmaktır. Her ne kadar Mesleki Yeterlilik Kurumu tarafından her bölüm ve programın mezunlarının nitel yönleri saptanmış olsa da reel durumda bu yeterliliklere ulaşıp ulaşılmadığı konusu belirsizdir. Araştırmada Mesleki Yeterlilik Kurumu ve sektör beklentilerinin uyumu ile mezun profilinin karşılaştırılması hedeflenmiştir. Araştırma ile programın iş dünyasının beklentilerine uygun mezun verip veremediğinin saptanması, güçlü ve zayıf yönlerinin tespit edilmesi ve ulusal yeterlilikler çerçevesi de göz önüne alınarak öğretim planlarında yapılacak değişiklikler için önerilerin geliştirilmesi amaçlanmıştır.

*Araştırmanın Yöntemi:* Nitel araştırma yöntemi ile yürütülen çalışmada odak grup görüşme tekniği ile veri toplanmıştır. Araştırma deseninde odak grup görüşmesi veri toplama tekniği öncesi yapılan ve kavramsal çerçeveyi belirleyen literatür taraması, ardından odak grup çalışması için hedef kitlenin tespiti yer almaktadır. Yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu, uzman görüşlerinden yararlanılarak oluşturulmuş, geçerlilik ve güvenilirlik çalışması yapıldıktan sonra iki oturumlu odak grup görüşmelerinde kullanılmıştır. Çalışmanın evreni, bir vakıf üniversitesinin dış ticaret bölümü öğrenci, mezun ile iş dünyasından paydaşlarıdır. Programdan mezun olanlar ve öğrenciler görüşülen ilk katılımcı grubudur. Dış ticaret mezunlarını istihdam eden kamu ve özel sektör temsilcileri araştırmanın ikinci görüşme aşamasındaki katılımcı profilini oluşturmaktadır. Sanayi Odası ve İhracatçı Birliklerine kayıtlı firmalar, gümrük firmaları, özel firmaların dış ticaret departmanları yöneticileri ile odak grup

görüşmeleri için planlama yapılmış, ilgili firma temsilcileri ile belirlenen çalışma takvimi çerçevesinde odak grup görüşmeleri 2018 Temmuz ve Ağustos aylarında iki oturum şeklinde gerçekleştirilmiştir.

Odak grup görüşmelerinde; sektör temsilcilerinin istihdam ettikleri dış ticaret mezunlarının genel mesleki yeterlilikleri, davranışsal nitelikleri ve mezunların bu beklentileri karşılama durumları hakkında veri toplanması hedeflenmiştir. Mezunlardan ve öğrencilerden ise mezun oldukları programdan edindikleri bilgi, beceri ve yetkinlikler ile iş dünyasındaki deneyimleri arasında bulunan farklılıklara ilişkin görüş alınmıştır. Araştırma soruları öncelikle iki dış ticaret alanından ve bir alan dışı öğretim üyesi tarafından kapsam ve içerik açısından değerlendirilerek geçerlilik çalışması gerçekleştirilmiştir. Mezun grubuna yöneltilen sorular;

- Dış ticaret programını isteyerek seçip seçmedikleri;
- Bölüm seçerken ki beklentileri,
- Mezun olduktan sonra beklentilerinin karşılanıp karşılanmadığı,
- İş yaşamına atıldıktan sonra kendilerini eksik hissettikleri konular;
- Aldıkları eğitimin yeterliliği;
- Eksik buldukları dersler ve konular;
- İşveren beklentileri hakkında sorular yöneltilmiştir.

Sektör ve iş dünyası temsilcilerine ise (Öğretim planları ve içerikleri önceden paylaşarak);

- Mevcut müfredatın yeterliliği;
- Eksikliği gördükleri ders/konu/içerikler;
- Fazla/tekrar/gereksiz gördükleri konular;
- Dış ticaret uzmanının sahip olması gereken bilgi, beceri, yetkinlikler hakkında görüşleri

sorulmuştur. Görüşmeler ses kaydı ve not alınarak çözümlenmiş ve tablolaştırılmıştır.

Elde edilen veriler içerik analizi ile kodlanarak kategorilere ayrılmış ve belirli temalara ulaşılmış, ardından temalar tablolaştırılmıştır. Mezun ve sektör temsilcilerinin görüşlerinden elde edilen kodlar kategorize edilerek üç temaya ulaşılmıştır. Temalar, tutum ve davranış; mesleki ve teknik yeterlilik ile beceriler olarak sınıflandırılmıştır.

*Araştırmanın Bulguları:* Elde edilen bulgular işverenler ve işveren vekillerinin tedarik zinciri bilgisi, Excel bilgisi, yönetim bilgi sistemlerine hâkimiyet, ERP bilgisi, depo/antrepo yönetimi, liman işlemleri, lojistik bilgisi, temel ihracat işlemleri şeklinde mesleki alanda beklentilerinin olduğu saptanmıştır. Ancak mezunlarda bu bilgilerin yetersiz olduğunu ve pek çoğunun kendileri tarafından işbaşında öğretilmek zorunda kaldığını belirtmişlerdir. Mezunlar ise iş dünyasında yaşadıkları zorlukları düşündüklerinde genel olarak eksik yönlerini ancak çalışmaya başlayınca fark ettiklerini belirtmişlerdir.

*Araştırmanın Sonuçları ve Önerileri:* Bulgular doğrultusunda bu tür araştırmaların diğer eğitim alanlarında ilgili iş dünyası temsilcileri, eğitim kurumlarından temsilciler ve merkezi olarak karar verici kurum temsilcilerini de kapsayan bir katılımcı profili ile

gerçekleştirilmesinin uygun olacağı düşünülmektedir. Yapılan nitel araştırmanın sonuçları işgücü piyasası beklentileri ile seçilen üniversitedeki dış ticaret eğitimi içeriği ve niteliği arasında bir fark olmadığını, beklentilerin karşılandığı yetkinliklerin neler olduğunu ortaya koymuştur.

Dış ticaret programı ile sınırlı olan bu çalışma, işgücü piyasası ve yükseköğretimden beklentilerin arasındaki boşluğu göstermektedir. Öğrenci-mezunların temel beklentilerinin hızlı bir şekilde iş bulmak olduğu; iş bulanların da bulamayanların da hem fikir oldukları sorunlardan birinin iş dünyasının beklentilerini karşılamada yetersizlik hissettikleri; işgücü piyasasındaki ücretlerin düşüklüğünü vurguladıkları görülmüştür. İşverenlerin beklentilerine karşılık kendilerini aldıkları eğitimde yetersiz buldukları konular; iyi bir yabancı dil bilgisi, esnek çalışma koşullarına yatkınlık, mevzuata hâkimiyet, Türkçe ve yabancı dilde yazışma kurallarına hâkimiyet olmuştur. İşverenler ve işveren vekillerinin tedarik zinciri bilgisi, Excel bilgisi, yönetim bilgi sistemlerine hakimiyet, ERP bilgisi/ Paket Program bilgisi, depo/antrepo yönetimi, liman işlemleri, lojistik bilgisi, temel ihracat işlemleri mesleki alanda beklentilerinin olduğu ancak mezunlarda bunların yetersiz olduğu ve pek çoğunun kendileri tarafından öğretilmek zorunda kaldığını belirtmişlerdir. Davranışsal beklentilerde ise güvenilir olmak, etik ilklere uygun davranmak, müşteri portföyünün gizliliğini korumak, iletişim becerileri, yaratıcılık, problem çözme, , interaktif öğrenme, etkili sunum becerisi, yazışma tekniklerini bilme, karar verme becerisini vurgulamışlardır.

Araştırma sonucu elde edilen veriler, Mesleki Yeterlilik Kurumu talepleri ile karşılaştırılmıştır. Alınan sonuçlar tablolastırılmış, talepler Öğretim planları ve içerikleri karşılaştırılmıştır. Öğretim planları ve içeriklerinde karşılığı bulunmayan bilgi, beceri ve yetkinlikler, ders olarak öğretim planlarına yansıtılmıştır. Veriler ışığında, müfredatı Ticari Coğrafya ve Kültürler dersi eklenmiş, Mesleki Gelişim Etkinlikleri dersinin içeriğinin daha çok gelen bilgiler çerçevesinde revize edilmesi sağlanmıştır. Öğrenciler için seçmeli yabancı dil dersi daha çok tavsiye edilmeye başlanmış ve danışmanlıkların bu yönde yapılması sağlanmıştır. Ayrıca, sektörün nabzını tutmak adına bu çalışmanın her yıl tekrarlanması kararı alınmıştır.

Kuşkusuz bir program üzerinden tüm yükseköğretim alanlarını ve iş dünyası beklentilerini karşılaştırmaya yönelik genelleme yapmak mümkün olmayacaktır. Dört yıllık eğitim veren fakülteler ile diğer iki yıllık MYO programlarının da benzer çalışmalar ile mercek altına alınması istihdam sorunu ve genç işsizliği sorununun çözümünde rasyonel adımlar atılması konusunda faydalı olacaktır. Ayrıca bu tür çalışmaların ulusal olarak, bir birim tarafından yapılması kurumsal bir zemine oturtulması, makro boyutta önem taşımaktadır.

*Anahtar Kelimeler:* Yükseköğretim, istihdam, dış ticaret programı, işgücü piyasası, müfredat geliştirme, yetkinlikler.