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Predicting international students' academic success... may not always be enough : assessing Turkey's foreign study scholarship program

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Abstract

In 1993, Turkey's Higher Education Council (YOK) launched a program to sponsor thousands of students for graduate study abroad, in the hopes of building up a base of highly qualified, foreign educated faculty for 24 newly established universities nationwide. With an incoming new YOK administration in 1995, dramatic changes were made in the program's selection procedures. One of the key elements of these changes was the inclusion of a high foreign language proficiency requirement, which served both to meet certain ideological goals of the new administration as well as presuming to reduce the high degree of student failure abroad. In addition to assessing the overall success of the scholarship program in light of the changes made, this study provides another look at the connection between language proficiency and academic success, with both qualitative and quantitative data collected from 23 'YOK scholars'. Although finding a positive relation between language proficiency and academic success, the study suggests that rather than having solved the

01.4.2026

scholarship program's problems by imposing high language proficiency requirements, the new YOK administration actually reduced even further the program's ability to successfully supply faculty to the new universities. Recommendations are made for the Turkish and similar foreign study programs.
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