Chapter 16
Is Turkey Well Prepared for the Integration of Immigrants?

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ABSTRACT

Immigration is an important feature of many societies and it has wide ranging effects on the education systems of hosting countries. The rapid growth in the number of immigrants in Turkey, has transformed the education system. The objective of the study it to outline the present position of immigrants and provide an overview of immigration phenomena in Turkey since 2011. The study also aims to review immigrants in Turkish higher education and discuss potential problems immigrant students may have during integration process. The study elaborates policies and measures to improve the integration process for potential candidates of higher education. Immigrants may have various challenges in integration process to education as well as to higher education. The article also tries to emphasize that immigrants does not only bring challenges but possess a wealth of cultural resources and competencies enabling a diverse and global society.

INTRODUCTION

Immigration has occurred ever since people have been driven to seek a better life in a different place, since the beginning of human history. Migration is the result of various factors such as search of greater opportunities, to earn better living, to live in a more agreeable environment or to join family or friends abroad. But of course people could not always choose where to migrate but force to migrate. There are many refugees escaping persecution, people devastated by conflict or natural disaster, or victims of trafficking (International Organization for Migration, 2013, p. 23). In today’s world, migration has become a reality that touches nearly all corners of the globe and migration, no longer restricted to a region or a particular nation-state, is a matter of global concern today (Gibson & Rojas, 2006). Since the end of 1990s, issues related to international immigration is receiving increasing attention from government and policy-makers. Logically, the educational effect of immigration is a core concern of countries and has attracted a massive research effort to understand this phenomenon since education is the key driver of the integration process.

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The number of migrants has risen rapidly in the past few years in Turkey. This rapid change in cultural make-up of Turkish population makes understanding processes of acculturation, integration and their relation to successful social adjustment critical issues. The question of how to facilitate immigrants’ integration is of increasing importance in Turkey nowadays. Turkey needs to integrate large numbers of immigrants and asylum seekers quickly.

IMMIGRATION

Migration is traditionally defined as the more or less permanent movement of people across space (Peterson, 1968). The movement of people over some distance and from one “usual place of residence” to another is called migration (Kok, 1999). International migrant is defined as a person that is living in a country other than his/her own country of birth (United Nations, 2016). People usually emigrate out of one place because of various reasons including economic, political, social and environment forces and become “immigrant” in a new setting. It is claimed that these new immigration “touches the lives of more people and loom larger in the politics and economics of more states than at any time in the modern era” (Papademetriou, 2006, p. xv). The permanent movement of people across country results in many important concerns and so much attention has been focused on immigrants (OECD, 2015a; Rose et al., 2011; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2006).

Nowadays the aspects of immigration have been the subject of the most heated debate. Immigration seems complex and its impact is felt in different ways in various settings, so it is difficult to make a generalization. Migration could bring both benefits and disadvantages. On the one hand immigrants can be considered a power in labour market and could contribute on economic outcomes. On the other hand, immigrants can cause of lowering wages and associated with crimes. How to deal with immigrants will decide its effect on the host country. Public policies have an important role to play in reducing the disadvantages of immigrants and integrated policies for immigration will change reverse its impact vice versa (OECD, 2015; United Nations, 2011).

IMMIGRATION IN TURKEY

The movement of migration from Syrian has largely occurred after internal conflicts rose in Syrian Arab Republic. This inflow of immigration from Syrian to Turkey since April, 2013 pushed Turkish government to take immediate precautions in order to struggle against these huge inflows and on 30 March, 2012, Ministry of Interior constituted a directive concerning the admission and accommodation of the nationals of the Syrian Arab Republic and stateless people residing in the Syrian Arab Republic who collectively seek asylum in Turkey. Temporary protection including access to receiving State, implementation of the non-refoulement principle and providing basic human rights standards with the aim of providing immediate asylum to displaced persons in the event of a mass influx is the spirit of the Directive (Ministry of Interior Directorate General of Migration Management).

This has been the beginning of receiving large influx of immigration to Turkey. National immigrant policies have been started to generated recently and have not been completed yet. All the procedures of the immigrants related to education, health, security and access to information are assured are regulated by the “Law on foreigners and international protection” adapted on 4 April, 2011.
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