

The Role and Responsibilities of the Universities in the Transformation of Anatolian Cities in Turkey¹⁵

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Abstract

Although there are many elements that shape cities, universities have been first among these elements in recent years. The main purpose of the universities, which are central to the societal progress, is to conduct scientific research, generate knowledge, combine cultures and provide necessary professional skills. In addition to these objectives, it is expected that the universities in Turkey would also contribute to their host cities in many ways. Today, each Anatolian city has at least one university. This study aims to question the role and responsibilities of the universities in the transformation of Anatolian cities in Turkey. Therefore, the demographical, economical, geographical, industrial, societal and cultural effects of universities on their cities will be discussed in the framework of Turkey. As the results of the study: i) Universities are expected to play a substantial role as an urban development agent especially in terms of demography and economy, ii) The effects of the universities in the cities are felt more in the undeveloped cities than in the developed ones, iii) Universities also affect their cities in terms of the employment structure, housing, health facilities, physical infrastructure, quality of life, societal and cultural structure.

Keywords: University, Turkey, Anatolian City

Introduction

Universities, in addition to educational functions, contribute directly and indirectly to the provinces in many areas, primarily social, political, economic and cultural. Today, there is at least one university in every city in Turkey, with the thought that they might contribute to the reduction of the developmental differences between regions and cities. In the period after 1950, because of the rapid migration towards the western part of the country, new universities were established in the provinces which have the potential to become centers. For the last two decades, the majority of universities have

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been established by the state in medium-sized provinces in Anatolia. As of February 2017 (yok.gov.tr), there are 6.689,185 university students in total in 81 cities of Turkey including 2.759,708 formal education students, 777.079 evening education students, 74.619 distance learning students, and 3.077,779 open education students. There are 183¹⁶ higher education institutions in total: 112 of them are public, 65 are private, 6 are private vocational schools. The purposes of their establishment are to reduce developmental differences between regions, to set the ground for economic development in cities, especially in trade, and to distribute within the country the economic return provided by the university for the region it was established in. It is also expected that universities will contribute to accumulation of social capital, development of community, and institutional capacity of the region. All these functions provide an entrepreneurial university definition. Universities directly and indirectly affect the city in which they were established - firstly its demographic structure, then, in time, its economy, spatial settlement, social and cultural structure, social and professional improvement, sports and physical activity areas, and industry. In a sense, as expressed by Ransom (2015), the future of cities is related to the future of universities.

Establishing universities out of economic concerns contradict the reasons for the existence of universities. A process based on scientific data is required while establishing a university. The reasons specified as motives in the establishment of universities (Arap, 2010:18), such as the facts that the city is economically underdeveloped, that it has cultural potential, that its young population should be directed towards professionalism, and that the university revitalizes the city cannot be evaluated as scientific. However, due to such and similar reasons, as well as the effects of political people, the establishment of universities has been accelerated.

New universities lack of facilities such as building, equipment, library, laboratory and so on. However, the fact that peoples of all cities want more universities, departments, and students overshadows these problems, and this desire has coincided with the state policy with regards to aiming at economic revival (Arslan, 2016: 1105-1106). In the study, we will discuss the changing role of universities in terms of Turkey, the effects of universities on changes of Anatolian provinces, and the obligations for the development of the province.

¹⁶ When 14 Police Academies, 5 Military Academies and Gülhane Military Medical Academy (GATA), and 5 Public Vocational Schools (Sergeant, Gendarmerie) are added to this number, the total number of higher education institutions is 207.

Changing Roles of Universities

In short, the functions of universities in Turkey are culture generation/transfer, professional education, scientific research and training new scientists. The primary function of a university is to generate/transfer culture.¹⁷ While doing so, universities are affected by the socio-economic and political order (Gasset, 1998: 39, 43). Since 1980, the higher education system in Turkey has been restructured in a new liberal understanding in which the state is minimized and withdraws from the public services, and in which the market share is increased. In this period, the decisiveness of the post-1980 military government, as well as the followed EU process and market-focused economic model, in other words, opening education to the private sector and civil society, were effective. With the "Higher Education Law" no. 2547 enforced in 1981, the universities began to be restructured with the economic-based Anglo-Saxon model. Within this framework, the budgets of universities were limited, and the endeavors to increase privatization and the number of universities accelerated (Sallan Gül and Gül, 2014: 56). Even though the president of the Council of Higher Education at the time, Dođramacı (1989) defines the aim of this law as to “improve the quality of teaching, research and community service in Turkish institutions of higher education without bringing them under any ministerial control”, with the effect of new liberal waves, the universities became a community of organizations that undertake the functions of teaching, researching, and public-serving, with the target of complying with the demands of the external world and the market. This new formation is called “multiverse”, in other words, “entrepreneur university” (Tekeli, 2003: 132). Higher education started to be commercialized, and the requirements of university components were overshadowed by the financial objectives of the university administrations. The concept of “serving the public” seen on the definitions remained a secondary objective, and the functions of the university started to be discussed through the entrepreneur university model (Arap, 2014: 107). The last generation universities established in Turkey also comply with this model.

The Responsibilities of Universities in the Transformation of Anatolian Cities and the Expectations of Cities

What the cities expect from the universities is very extensive, especially in terms of economic effects. With the idea that a university

¹⁷ The values produced by the universities in the UK are listed as (Kelly, McNicoll, 2011) Educational value; cultural value; intrinsic value; option value; heritage value; economic value; public value; social value; financial value; blended value; instrumental value (and so on and so forth.)

should be established in undeveloped areas, so that the economic and social level of the city will rise together with the newcomers and thus the more universities will be established.

The economic, cultural, social or political roles of universities are interconnected (Brennan et al., 2004). Based on their UK and USA experiences, Goddard and Vallance (2011: 5) list the obligations and roles of universities for cities as follows: i)The universities must become integrated with the cities they are established in, ii) cooperate with the other universities or educational institutions in the city, iii) create opportunities for the society they exist in (individual learners, businesses, public institutions), iv) be administrated in a way that ensures broad participation with the city and region they are established in, v) use their location to form their identity but operate on a global scale. While these are definitions specific to entrepreneur universities, the issues that the universities may be responsible for with regards to the transformation of cities are: To provide the manpower needed by the society, and to direct social improvement. The expectations of cities from the universities or the responsibilities universities are expected to bear with regards to the transformation of cities are discussed below:

Economical Roles and Expectations

Turkey's economy is based more on consumption than on production. In terms of production-based industries, the service industry is at the forefront. The fact that especially the economies of small- and medium-scale cities are based on consumption and focused on the service industry resulted in an increasing importance placed on the universities in the cities and the number of students in those universities (Esgin and Arslan, 2012: 384). While the contribution of the spending of university students on the city's economy varies according to years, cities, and universities, the students are very important to the city's economy.

The effects of universities on the local economy can be evaluated under employment, income, and spending items (Çayın and Özer, 2015:132; Atik, 1999:99). Their economic contributions to the city are the employment of academic and administrative personnel, the payments made (salary, additional course fee, travel allowance, working capital, etc.), the payments made to people, institutions and organizations other than its personnel, and the spending made by the university students. The increase in employment resulting from the development of manufacturing industries that provide goods and services for universities and student spending is an indirect employment contribution (Çayın and Özer, 2015:132, Görkemli, 2009:176, Erkekoğlu, 2000:214). The economic effects of universities on their cities are those whose results are fastest-observed as their calculability is high. When the number of students and academic-administrative personnel is considered,

the direct and indirect contribution of universities to the city's economy is very big. Another element that may be considered among the indirect contributions of universities to the city's economy is the research, symposium or planning works conducted by the universities for the development of the region (Çınar and Emsen, 2001:97).

Following the establishment of universities, a big and young population changes all consumption patterns of the city and results in a significant difference in the service industry in the city (Işık, 2008:162). As an extension of the public policies outlined in order to support the small-scale cities, public universities have recently been established more in smaller, economically weak and emigrant cities. All 15 universities established in Turkey in 2006 are located in cities with a population between 50.000 and 120.000 (Bayraktar, 2011:110; Sargın, 2006:29-30). Increasing population results in an increase in the demand for housing and employment, the need for transportation, and the demand for social equipment and cultural activities. Moreover, together with the graduates, the labor force supply is increased by those who stay in the city.

Roles and Expectations in Transformation of Urban Space

The universities trigger transformation with regards to urban space in the cities they are established in. While campus areas are centers of attraction, housing and service industries develop quickly, starting from the campus surroundings. Following the establishment of universities in small- and medium-scale cities, important structural changes in the urban space usage such as the growth of city area, diversification of urban function, formation of new areas of employment, revival of housing industry, inclusion of residences like dormitories and hostels in the urban living spaces, and formation of new settlements are observed and expected (Akengin and Kaykı, 2013:523-524; Işık, 2008:128; Gürkaynak and Kasımoğlu, 2004:156-157).

Following the establishment of the universities, the city expects to open new cultural, sporting and recreational venues, while the local residents expect the universities to contribute to the socio-cultural development of the city through relations with the staff and students from various cultures (Gürkaynak and Kasımoğlu, 2004:156-157; Gültekin et. al., 2008:264).

Roles and Expectations in University-Industry Collaboration

Common keywords for universities and cities are technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship. Moreover, these terms are at the point where industry and universities intersect. Universities have the capacity to support the industry sector in the cities they are established in, thanks to their

different departments, research centers, techno-cities, inventory studies, and the internship done by the students (Savaş Yavuzçehre, 2016: 241)

University-industry collaboration is significant for the city's development. Manufacturers, universities and public benefit greatly from this collaboration. Manufacturers benefit from it with regards to obtaining advanced and appropriate technologies, eliminating the lack of scientific personnel and equipment, decreasing the resource wastage, solving the cost and quality issues, and increasing productivity, competitiveness, and profit. University can enhance its financial resources and the quality of education, improve the environment of scientific research, and fulfill an important duty and responsibility. Society benefits from the collaboration with regards to the increase of technological knowledge, decrease of external technological dependence, increase in international competitiveness, as well as industrialization and economic development. The countries that are industrialized and are at the level of information society and those which are about to reach the same level are those in which the industry-university collaboration is managed the best (Dura, 1994:115).

Roles and Expectations with Regards to Social Development and Increasing the Quality of Life

Universities established in Anatolian cities function as condensed social transformation agents, and give acceleration to the change the cities may only experience in several years (Vural Yılmaz and Yılmaz, 2013:205-206). It is expected that universities will change their city's social and cultural structure with their libraries, sports facilities, social services, research centers, joint projects with NGOs or local governments, public education, academic conferences, workshops, congresses and student clubs organizations, their radio or TV channels. Students from different cultures go to the Anatolian cities by means of university student exchange programs. These are elements that color the urban culture (Savaş Yavuzçehre, 2016:242).

Universities contribute significantly to the social change and development, in terms of both quality and quantity. The expectations of the city from the universities include the creation of equal opportunities, training qualified workforce, training leaders of future, developing entrepreneur class, improving technology, affecting the propensity to save and the income distribution, and ensuring national unity (Akengin and Kayk1, 2013:503). While these contributions are not easily determined, they are responsibilities that are significant for a society to improve.

Self-transformation of universities is in relation with social transformation (Brenner et al., 2004). Unfortunately, as Anatolian cities focus on their transformation, they invest inadequately in students

improvement. For instance, when cultural investments such as culture center, bookstore, library, etc. are compared to cafes, stores, restaurants, etc., one can see that the cultural investments are of secondary importance (Arap, 2014: 114; Ergun, 2014: 230).

Conclusion

Universities are important actors of the city with regards to the local economy, as they employ a range of personnel, purchase local goods and services, and participate in the cultural life and structured environment of the city. Today, there is at least one university in every city in Turkey. Universities are expected to play a role as development agents in the Anatolian cities. The effect of universities on the cities is felt more in small cities rather than big ones. Universities, whose demographic and economic effects are firstly observed in the city, affect in time the employment structure, housing and health facilities, physical infrastructure, and social-cultural structure of the cities they are established in, and have an indirect effect on the life quality in those cities. Even though it is asserted in the developmental plans or national education councils that the developmental differences will decrease with the establishment of universities, this has not been the case yet. However, to increase the contribution of universities to a city, universities should be established in the cities which have completed most of their infrastructure. The effect of a university to the city is reduced due to the decreased education quality in higher education and the inadequacies of the physical, economic and social/cultural structure of the city. Anatolian cities that do not have the identity of 'university city' will not be preferred by the students in the near future.

For Anatolian cities to be better university cities, city administrators and universities should collaborate while the future of the city is planned; the economic effects of the universities should not be brought to the forefront and it should not be forgotten that the establishment purpose of universities is to generate science. As a result of the excess young population in Turkey, university supply has not yet met the demand. However, in terms of the establishment of universities; country realities, rationalism and science should be prioritized instead of populist policies. Universities should be turned into democratic and autonomous corporate structures that can place all its elements in the education, training, research and service-providing stages. Along with quantitative increase, so as to meet the increasing demand for higher education in Turkey, policies towards providing a qualitative and qualified higher education should be followed.

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