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Abhandlungen

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Berichte und Kommentare

Caner *Aver:* Krisenregion südlicher Kaukasus. Tagung der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Berlin, Juni 2003
Wilhelm *Ossenkopp:* P³ - Gesprächsreihe mit Politik, Presse und Persönlichkeiten
Cengiz *Yıldırım:* EUROKON 2003: Kongress für europäisch-türkische Unternehmerkontakte, Dortmund, 2. bis 4. Oktober 2003

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Inhalt

Zu diesem Heft 1

Verzeichnis der Autoren 5

Abhandlungen

Angelos *Giannakopoulos:* Europäische Union, Türkei und die Frage einer europäischen Identität 7

Sevgi *Uçan:* Different Images of ‚European Space': From ‚Imperialist Europe'to ‚Social Europe' 21

Faruk *Şen:* EU Beitritt der Türkei als Vollendung eines Europa der kulturellen Vielfalt? 39

Barbara *Pusch:* Deutsche und österreichische Wissenschaftlerinnen und Wissenschaftler in der Türkei 53

Elif *Yeşilbaş:* Posttraumatische Belastungsstörung und Bewältigungsstrategien bei erwachsenen Erdbebenopfern in der Türkei 67

Tekin *Akgeyik:* University Youth and the Transition From Education to Working Life in the Crisis Conditions in Turkey: A Survey 101

Perihan *Ügeöz:* Human Resources in der Türkei als Faktor bei ausländischen Investitionsentscheidungen 111

Nevide *Akpınar Dellal* / Mehmet *Gündoğdu:* Zustand und Zukunftsperspektive der Fremdsprachenpolitik in der Türkei 135

Yordanka *Bibina:* Bulgarian Policy on the Cyprus Issue 1950s-60s 145

Björn *Opfer:* Gebraucht und gehasst – Ahmed Doğan und die Bewegung für Rechte und Freiheiten in der bulgarischen Innenpolitik 167

Bülent *Uçar:* Eine retrospektive Nachzeichnung der Debatte um die doppelte Staatsbürgerschaft in Deutschland 199

Rosita *Fibbi* / Philippe *Wanner* / Bülent *Kaya* / Etienne *Piguet:* Second Generation Immigrants from Turkey in Switzerland 217

Miszellen

Martina *Sauer:* Umweltbewusstsein türkischer Migranten in Deutschland 241

Paul *Leidinger:* 80 Jahre Republik Türkei – Geschichte und Gegenwart 253

Cengiz *Aktar:* Cliches against Turkey's EU membership. A pocket guide for debaters 259

Sinan *Özel:* The Social and Economic Life of Turkish Americans 267

Berichte und Kommentare

Caner *Aver*: Krisenregion südlicher Kaukasus. Tagung der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Berlin, Juni 2003 277

Wilhelm *Ossenkopp*: P³ - Gesprächsreihe mit Politik, Presse und Persönlichkeiten 285

Cengiz *Yıldırım:* EUROKON 2003: Kongress für europäisch-türkische Unternehmerkontakte, Dortmund, 2. bis 4. Oktober 2003 293

Buchbesprechungen

Çarkoğlu, Ali / Rubin, Barry (eds.): Turkey and the European Union, London – Portland 2003 (Barbara Pusch) 297

Ebel, Robert / Menon, Rajan (Eds): Energy and Conflict in Central Asia and the Caucasus, The national Bureau of Asian Research, Lanham 2000 (Sinan *Özel*) 299

Hunter, Shireen T. (Ed.): Islam, Europe's Second Religion. The New Social, Cultural, and Political Landscape, Westport (Connecticut) & London 2002 (Ayça *Kılıçlı*) 300

Peter Ludlow (Hg.): *The Making of the New Europe: The European Councils in Brussels and Copenhagen 2002,* Brussels 2004 (Sinan *Özel*) 302

Rohe, Mathias: Der Islam - Alltagskonflikte und Lösungen. Rechtliche Perspektiven, Freiburg/Breisgau 2001 (Bülent *Uçar*) 303

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Zeitschriftenschau 311
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University Youth and the Transition From Education to Working Life in the Crisis Conditions in Turkey A Survey*

Tekin *Akgeyik*

Abstract

The economic crisis during the last two years in Turkey has had tremendous effects on people there has been an economic crisis in Turkey. The crisis was followed by the collapse of the stock market, announcement of the government decision for the transition to a floating-currency regime, a devaluation of 40 per cent in the value of currency and real wages. Due to the economic crisis, unemployment levels rose, investment continued to shrink. Especially, the unemployment rate among the educated young has increased and makes up a third of total unemployment.

In the present study, the underlying results of the economic crisis are explored from the viewpoint of university students at the Faculty of Economics, Istanbul University which is the biggest university in Turkey since October 2002. This survey aimed to gain the opinions of the university youth on the economic crisis, the impacts of it on their attitudes, aspirations and job expectations.

Introduction

During the last two years there has been a significant economic stagnation in Turkey. The roots of the economic crisis have penetrated the economic foundations of the country. Because of the characteristics of the Turkish economy, Turkey has never had a strong economic system. The weak economic structure has caused several economic crises in the 1990s in Turkey. But in the last two years Turkey has had two very big economic crisis' (in November 2000 and February in 2001). The government has attempted to tackle this problem by looking at the immediate causes of the November 2000 and February 2001 crises. The crisis has resulted in serious economic problems and unemployment has risen while investment has been shrinking.

In the present study, the underlying results of the economic crisis are explored from the viewpoint of the university students at the Faculty of Economics, The Istanbul University in October 2002. This survey aimed to gain the opinions of

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the university youth on the economic crisis, the impacts of it on their attitudes, aspirations and job expectations, sector preferences (public or private), their opinions on unemployment and the future of the economic crisis, the transition from education to working life under the crisis conditions; challenges, difficulties and new opportunities, their tendencies about migration abroad.

The paper comprises two parts. On the first stage, the economic crisis and its roots are reviewed. The second part includes the survey on the university youth about employment and unemployment in Turkey (Case of Istanbul University, Faculty of Economics).

A. Background: The Roots, Causes and Results of the Economic Crisis

The roots of crisis in Turkey lie behind the structural weakness which goes back to the adoption of financial liberalization policies by President Turgut Ozal that the country began to liberalize its economy as early as 1989 (Gorvett (a), 2001). With the transition to the convertibility of the Turkish Lira in 1989, huge amounts of short-term foreign capital poured into the country where the interest rates were higher than in advanced capitalist countries (Oğuz, 2001).

The 1990s had been a lost decade for Turkey. The rate of growth fluctuated as the economy was trapped within mini cycles of growth-crisis-stabilization and renewed (artificial) growth. This resulted in an over-debted economy (Erinç, 2001).

The first signs of economic crisis had been appeared in the second part of 1993. In that time, accelerated indebtedness enriched the monetary crises because of reduced investment, and serious recession caused by political reasons (Tan, 2001). Finally, whatever the triggering factor was in each case, it was the structural cause of currency crises of April 1994.

In the second half of the 1990s, the Turkish economy had been affected by two major shocks: the Russian crisis of August 1998 and the Marmara Earthquake in August 1999. As a result, the output fell by 6,1 per cent in 1999 (Oğuz, 2001).

In 2000, the government started a stabilization program including fiscal discipline, a pre-announced crawling peg and implementation of structural reforms. But leading financial markets could not believe the government because they did not understand the government's strategy. The government delayed key structural reforms in the banking sector despite clear weaknesses. As the current account deficit rising, foreign investors sought to withdraw their funds and foreign banks cut credit lines. But the situation was not a typical foreign exchange crisis in which the public looses confidence in the domestic currency. In this case the public was willing to hold Turkish Lira (McHale, 2001). As a result of all these developments triggered the first crisis in November 2000, actually, that was the sign

of an inevitable second crisis which would occurred in the next few months (Gorvett (b), 2001).

In the early months of 2001, the Turkish economy was going through the deepest crisis in its history. The crisis was sparked on February 19th upon the news of a political dispute between the president, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, and the prime minister, Bülent Ecevit, over a corruption probe. The dispute was followed by the collapse of the stock market, announcement of the government decision for the transition to a floating-currency regime and a devaluation of 40 per cent in the value of the currency and real wages (Oğuz, 2001).

As a result of the economic crisis, all economic indicators has begun to get worse. The interest rates rose sharply and average interest level became 150 per cent in the following 2 months. The economic growth turned negative. By the end of the year, the economy shrank by 9 per cent and inflation rate was 66.8 per cent. The average income per inhabitant fell from US$ 3,200 to US$ 2,000 within a few days. In 2001 more than 4,000 firms were closed down and 443,000 people lost their jobs because of the crisis. These meant a significant recession, shutting down more businesses and creating more unemployment and more poverty. (Gorvett (b), 2001).

After the February crisis, Kemal Derviş, former vice-president of the World Bank, was appointed as the Minister of Economy to lead the government's new economic recovery program. The new economic program was called the "National Program". It pledged that the major public banks would be merged and privatized in 3 years. State subsidies to farming would be stopped, public expenditure would be cut by 9 per cent, public-sector salaries would be frozen, and state-owned telecommunication, airlines, petroleum, steel, tobacco and spirits, sugar, natural gas and electricity distribution industries would be privatized and opened to global markets (Oğuz, 2001).

B. The Survey: Crisis Conditions, University Youth and unemployment: The Case of Istanbul University, Faculty of Economics

1. Method

a) Sample

The study population is approximately 3000 undergraduate students from different departments and classes of the Faculty of Economics, Istanbul University, that enrolled in Labor Economics, Finance and Economics Departments. The sample size consists of 168 respondents by randomly selected that has a response

rate of 84 percent and on 95% confidence interval. The students' mean age is 20.18 years (range = 18–23, SD = 1.58); their mean class average is 2.29 (range = 1–4).

b) Procedure

The data was collected in October 2002. The participants were asked to answer 10 questions, which evaluate the student's opinions on economic crisis, its results and its impacts on students. The survey was administered by trained graduate students and completed by the respondents during class sessions. The data collection was completed in a single session lasting for approximately 10 to 15 minutes. Names were not required and the respondents were assured that there were no right or wrong answers and that the best answer was their own personal opinion. They were asked to read the instructions carefully and to answer all the questions.

Data analyses involved frequencies and cross tabulations. Simple frequencies were used to provide descriptive information about students' evaluations and expectations for the economic crisis. Class differences were analyzed by cross tabulation.

2. Results

a) Seriousness of the Economic Crisis

Respondents were asked to indicate the most important result of the economic crisis from the student's point of view at the University. Results indicated that the majority of the students (57.1 per cent) believed that unemployment is the most important result of the economic crisis. 19 per cent believed that it is recession, 16.1 per cent believed that it is stagnation and according to only 7.7 per cent the high interest level is the most important consequence of the economic crisis (Table 1).

Table 1: The Most Important Result of the Economic Crisis

	%
Stagnation	16
High Interest Levels	7,7
Unemployment	57,3
Recession	19
Total	100,0

When looking at the answers they gave, we see that there is an interesting result, that unemployment as an issue with personal effects among the first and second-class students is lower (52.9 per cent and 51.1 per cent) than third and fourth's results (62.5 per cent and 66.7 per cent). This means that lower class students probably do not yet strongly deal with unemployment issues. However, upper classes evaluate unemployment as the most important issue because they are closer to graduation (Table 2).

Table 2: Most Important Result of the Economic Crisis (Cross tabulation)

Class	Stagnation (%)	High Interest Levels (%)	Unemployment (%)	Recession (%)	Total (%)
1	9,8	9,8	52,9	27,5	100,0
2	19,1	6,4	51,1	23,4	100,0
3	27,5	5,0	62,5	5,0	100,0
4	6,7	10,0	66,7	16,7	100,0
Total	16,1	7,7	57,1	19,0	100,0

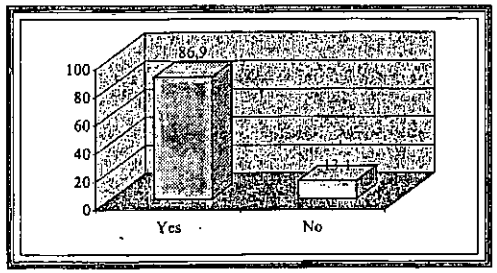
Another question that asked to the students, was about evaluating the seriousness of the economic crisis. The Results indicated that the students mostly (86.9 per cent) believed that the economic crisis affects job opportunities negatively. It means that the university youth is pessimistic about their near future (Figure 1).

At the same time it was the respondents were asked, which was the most effected sector because of the crisis. According to students, the private sector was affected by the economic crisis much more. Nearly 84 per cent of the respondents believed that public sector employees, relatively, have job security when we compare with private sector employees. This result shows us what the students' preferences will be when seeking a job (Table 3).

Table 3: The Economic Crisis Effected Sectors

	%
Public Sector Employees	16,1
Public Sector Employees	16,1
Private Sector Employees	83,9
Total	100,0

Figure 1: The Economic Crisis Affects Job Opportunities

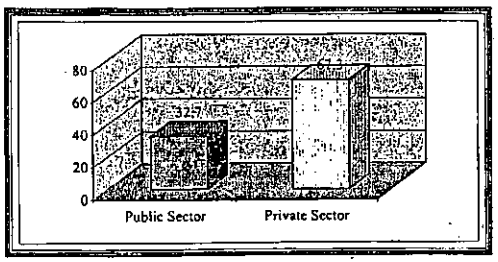


In another question, their tendency towards a sector during the economic crisis conditions was asked: Approximately a third of the respondents (32.7 per cent) prefer the public sector after graduating. This proportion is very high, because the public sector's working conditions in Turkey is worse than the conditions in the private sector. So, generally students prefer to work in the private sector. To test that result (32.7 per cent), two more questions were asked to the respondents. The first question is related with sector preferences of students under normal conditions. In that question students indicated their real tendencies and we see that the rate of the public sector is reduce by half (18.8 per cent) (Figure 2 & Table 4).

Table 4: Sector Preferences of Students under Normal Conditions

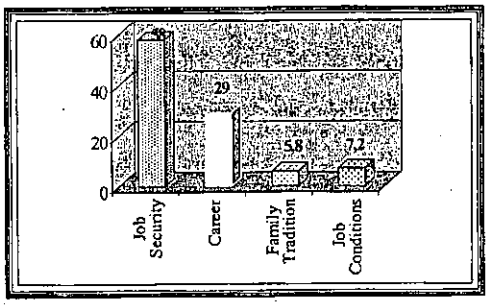
	%
Public Sector	18,5
Private Sector	81,5
Total	100,0

Figure 2: Students' Sector Tendency in Economic Crisis Conditions



The second question is about the reasons for public sector preferences. The students who had preferred the public sector in the previous question answered this question. The majority of them (58 per cent) indicate that the first reason is job security. The second reason is career (29 per cent), 5.8 per cent is family tradition and 7.2 per cent is more comfortable job conditions (Figure 3). This means that students under the crisis conditions prefer job security compared to high working standards (like higher wages and better career opportunities).

Figure 3: The for Public Sector Preferences



b. Economic Crisis and Future Expectations

When looking at the future expectations, we can see that there is a pessimism among the students: 75 per cent of them say that they do not expect the economic crisis conditions to improve within the next five years and only 3 per cent believe the economic crisis will be over in the next coming years. 20 per cent say that things will stay about the same in the next 3 years (Table 5).

Table 5: The Future Expectations

	%
It will be over 1 year later	3,0
It will be over in a 3 year period	22,0
At least 5 years more it will be taking	75,0
Total	100,0

This way of thinking as mentioned above highlights one trend in students' minds going abroad. About half of all students (51.2 per cent) say that the economic crisis has raised their intentions of going abroad. 45.8 per cent say their intentions of going abroad are about the same. Only 3 per cent say there is a decrease in their intentions (Table 6).

Table 6: The Economic Crisis and Abroad Intention

	%
It have raised my abroad intention	51,2
It have decreased my abroad intention	3,0
It have not affected my abroad intention	45,8
Total	100,0

To be able to analyze the intentions of going abroad of the respondents better, another question was asked to students about whether they want to join in the "Green Card" Lottery or not. The result is very interesting because, 62.5 per cent say that they wish to join in the "Green Card" Lottery. This means that 2/3 of the university students would prefer to work and live abroad especially in the United States of America. This is probably due to the fact that they do not perceive any future prospects for their life in Turkey. Amid the current flood of economic problems, social problems in Turkey seem to have been increased sharply by the rising economic turmoil that have brought serious economic and social problems in all social groups. It seems that the problems will exist for a period, especially for the younger generations. So, Turkey's economic and social problems will still be the highest on the priority list.

C. Discussions and Conclusions

The survey indicates that university students have worry about their future during the transition from education to working life. Actually social problems (especially unemployment) in Turkey is not solely a youth issue. However, because of the economic crisis, especially the growing size of unemployment among educated people, threaten social peace. In fact the data indicates that unemployment among the educated young has reached to 30 per cent (DIE, 2002).

Before the crisis students who graduated from the Faculty of Economics were mainly employed in the banking or finance sector. Since the economic crisis has affected these sectors and employees in these sectors lost their jobs, students have had to change their preferences. According to the survey data, only a fifth of students are planning to work in the banking sector after graduation. However, 25

per cent of respondents want to work in the communications sector, because the effect of the economic crisis in that sector has been relatively low. That is why in the communications sector the employees mostly have preserved their jobs. It seems that fear of being unemployed plays the central role in the relations between students and the economic crisis.

Unemployment is a very dangerous problem for young people (well educated, especially university student). It seems that the unemployment problem will not be solved in the near future. On the other hand, the conclusions from the data are that, there is a substantial difference between the opinions of lower classes and upper classes. Lower classes believe that the unemployment is less important as upper classes believe it is more important. Both lower and upper class students believe that the economic crisis affects job opportunities negatively and both believe that the economic crisis will go on at least 5 years more.

Secondly students seem pessimistic about the future, because 3/4 of students believe that the economic crisis will continue at least 5 years. Main result for pessimism may be raising tensions in Turkey especially among the young. This will decline hopes and positive expectations and the young will grow up into a less tolerant environment.

Finally, there maybe more conflicts and troubled people in our community. Indeed some studies on the conflict attitudes of young raise some major warning signs. So, we need to take some action for that problem. Schools, researchers, and social program experts should take responsibility to guide the young in challenging environments toward positive futures. The imminent danger many challenges pose to university youth should prompt a great deal of research and intervention efforts to target attention directly towards elucidation and amelioration of risk factors.

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Human Resources in der Türkei als Faktor bei ausländischen Investitionsentscheidungen

Human Resources als Standortfaktor - Das Beispiel Türkei

Perihan *Ügeöz*

Unterbeschäftigung und Arbeitslosigkeit gehören zu den schwerwiegendsten Problemen der Türkei. Das vorhandene Kapital wird weitgehend für den staatlichen Schuldendienst benötigt – eine Lösung des Beschäftigungsproblems könnten daher vor allem ausländische Investitionen sein. Zugleich wird ausländischen Investitionen eine Schlüsselstellung bei der Modernisierung der Wirtschaft und einem stärkeren Wirtschaftswachstum beigemessen.

Die zentralen Argumente, mit denen die Türkei um ausländische Investitionen wirbt, sind ihre geographische Lage, eine liberale Wirtschaftsgesetzgebung sowie eine junge und qualifizierte Bevölkerung.

Mit der Verlängerung der Schulpflicht von 5 auf 8 Jahre, einer Erhöhung der Beschulungsquote und einer stärkeren Ausrichtung des Schulwesens auf die Berufsbildung sind Schritte unternommen worden, die die Türkei in den nächsten Jahren zu einem immer attraktiveren Investitionsstandort machen können.

Einen weiteren Anreiz dafür dürften die bereits vorhandenen ausländischen Direktinvestitionen darstellen. Der deutsch-türkischen Wirtschaftszusammenarbeit kommt dabei ein besonderer Stellenwert zu, der sich auch in der türkischen Außenhandelsstatik niederschlägt. Mehr als 1000 deutsche Unternehmen haben in den vergangenen 15 Jahren in der Türkei investiert. Ein großer Teil von ihnen sind entweder Produktions- oder kombinierte Produktions- und Absatzunternehmen (i.d.R. Tochterfirmen). Ein Grund für die besondere Intensität der Zusammenarbeit dürfte die große Zahl der in Deutschland lebenden türkischen Immigranten sein. Diese Gruppe hat in den vergangenen Jahren nicht nur aufgrund ihrer steigenden Bedeutung im deutschen Wirtschaftsleben immer mehr Aufmerksamkeit auf sich gezogen, sie spielt auch eine große Rolle bei gegenseitigen Investitionen, beim Transfer von Know-how und den zwischenstaatlichen Beziehungen.

Das derzeit in Zusammenarbeit mit dem Internationalen Währungsfond (IMF) durchgeführte wirtschaftliche Stabilitätsprogramm und die zur Vorbereitung auf den Beitritt zur Europäischen Union eingeleiteten Reformen dürften zudem die wichtigsten Barrieren, die bisher die Bereitschaft hemmten, in der Türkei zu investieren, in den nächsten Jahren abbauen. Diese Tendenz und die sich verstärkende Orientierung der türkischen Wirtschaft am Außenhandel wiederum