SWOT ANALYSIS OF REFUGEES’ HIGH EDUCATION IN TURKISH UNIVERSITIES FOR CONSTRUCTION FIELDS

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ABSTRACT
Since Turkey hosted, and still hosting, millions of refugees from developing countries tiered apart of wars and natural disasters, out of those millions there are thousands of students trying to obtain qualifications in architecture and construction engineering fields; in order to help their countries recover after war and establish infrastructure needed for sustainable future development. For example 3 million Syrian refugees and 1.5 million from Iraq (in addition to those from Afghanistan, Somalia, Yemen and Libya) living in Turkey, out of this huge number almost 2000 Syrian students-for instance- are studying architecture and civil engineering now in Turkish universities.

The aim of this paper is to conduct a deep SWOT analysis of the knowledge and qualifications obtained by those students, and the future challenges and opportunities when practicing their profession. The offered programs in Turkey now gives the graduates adequate level of preparation to face the work market reality in Turkey, even with some difficulties in transitional stage from study to career life. Those who plan to go back to their countries and work there may lack knowledge required to participate effectively in construction sector out of Turkey.

The needed modification and additional programs for better preparation to work market, both in Turkey and developing countries, are being discussed; using statistical and practical surveys along with comparative approach between Turkish and Refugee foreigner students. The paper suggests a new master program in Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University for more in depth training, in order to bridge the existing gap between academic and professional practices.

Keywords: Refugees, construction, high education, work market, chambers of architects

INTRODUCTION
For the last few decades, the number of international students in Turkey experienced an incremental change. In 2000 while 15805 international students were studying in Turkey, the number reached to 25545 in 2010 and by 2017, it became 108076. (Kalkınma Araştırma Merkezleri, 2015) (YÖK, 2017). In compliance with the statistics, one of the perspectives of the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) in Turkey is to turn Turkish universities into attraction centers for international students. In order to realize this purpose several goals such as easing the application and validation processes, accreditation, providing scholarships, etc. have been set (Kalkınma Araştırma Merkezleri, 2015). Although preparing the graduates for the professional life plays an essential role to realize this purpose, this topic developed less attention. Knowing that some of the international graduates will pursue a career in Turkey, the others will search job opportunities abroad, the students will be a step ahead in case of prior education and training for the current work markets.

RELATED WORK:
There are several studies stating problems faced by international students in Turkey (Ataca & Güröglü , 2002; Bektas, Kocabas, & Annaberdiyev, 2006; Bektas D. Y., 2008; Kiroglo, Kesten, & Elma, 2010; Annaberdiyev, 2006; Amanov, 1996). The topics mainly focus on their adjustment to the university, to local students and to the new culture. Additionally economical strains, offered scholarships, and Turkish language education for foreigners were other topics in this context. They stated mainly the problems and provide recommendations
for solving them during studying period. On the other hand in this paper the difficulties met by graduates of construction related departments translating from being a student to become a professional and modifying the university course schedules will be discussed from the international student point of view. Secondly, this study will focus on the advantages and disadvantages that refugee students faced after graduation.

METHODOLOGY:
A SWOT analysis is presented of the: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing foreigner graduates from Turkish universities holding a degree from construction related departments (architecture, civil engineering …etc.). Comparing the post-graduate work in Turkish system with the Syrian one since a majority of foreign students comes from Syrian refugees and residents in Turkey. Presenting a clear road map according to legislations and laws in both countries showing the short comes in recent applied system.

FOREIGNERS HOLDING CONSTRUCTION DEGREE IN TURKEY: SWOT ANALYSIS
After graduating from construction related departments young professionals meet several challenges starting their careers. Both architectural and civil engineering education has the potential to ease this process by introducing the possible practices, membership regulations of professional chambers or trade associations, construction legislations of municipalities and related ministries, and associating this load of information with practice. In Turkey, each department have their own approach to prepare their students to professional life. However, many of these departments lacks in providing guidelines to be followed defined by the choice of practice type and whether or not holding a Turkish citizenship. Alternatively, given the proximity of Turkey to the recent war zones and Turkish policy of accepting more refugees into Turkey, the number of the students with refugee status has increased within the last decade. The adaptation and employment of these students requires a detailed platform for discussions and recommendations hold by decision making authorities.

In the academic year of 2016-2017 there are 93 Turkish universities teaching architecture to 33,974 students and 1,875 (5.5 %) of these students are foreigners (Mim.Ar, 2017). The number of Syrian architecture students is 574 (30.6 % of international architecture students) (YÖK, 2017). Similarly Table 1 summarizes the number of foreign students possibly experienced war and studying architecture or civil engineering in Turkey. As it is shown in the table only the number of Syrian students studying construction related departments are 1762.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Architecture</th>
<th>Civil Engineering</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>642</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>574</td>
<td>1188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>699</td>
<td>2015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Architectural departments in Turkey mainly have similar courses in the context of studios, building physics, urban studies etc. However the vary on their approach to prepare students to professional life. Some focus on design skills, some on applicability, and others try to balance both. Even though they have courses preparing students for the practical part of realizing architecture such as building regulations, building quality, and construction processes, many lack in providing sufficient information of application process starting with the client, designing within the framework of building regulations addressed by municipalities and (depending on the size, type and function) ministries. A thorough understanding will be developed by explaining every step
and challenge that an architect can possibly face and how the regulations vary by building size, type and function. Lastly, documentation of a project and post processes can be described.

Another issue is defining the limitations for international students. Figure 1 summarizes the process of pursuing a professional life in Turkey while holding an architectural degree and depicts alternative construction related job possibilities. If a foreigner has the required documents for validation of diploma, he/she receives validation within three months. However if the applicant is a refugee he/she faces challenges since correspondent universities and authorities of their countries were unable to confirm the documents. Therefore, after meetings on 18/01/2017 and 05/04/2017 held by executive committee of higher education¹, applicants whose countries are in war conditions, occupied or annexed, and unable to document their diploma and transcripts or have missing documents are obligated only to fill the statement form to validate their diplomas. The second step is to apply for a working permit. If the applicant graduated from Turkey he can stay in Turkey for 6 months for a job search. Once they agree with a firm for employment, the employers apply for the permit themselves. If the applicant is located in another country, they submit the work contracts along with the application documents to the representatives in foreign countries or online application if they have an account in www.turkiye.gov.tr. Yet holding a valid diploma and receiving a working permit allow them to work in a limited area in private sector.

When this framework is analyzed by being a refugee, having a validated architecture degree will allow them to work only in private sector as paid architect or engineer. However, temporarily protected foreigners (R.Gazete, 2016) and Syrians with resident permit can involve to this process easier than the others and the limitations for employee qualifications and time are improved (R.Gazete, 2003). In other words refugees have a wider spectrum of job options than regular foreigners.

Another option is to apply for a Turquoise Card given to foreigners with a certain quality of education level, professional experience, or contribution to science and technology considered to be highly skilled workforce which gives them an unlimited work permit in Turkey (R. Gazete, 2017).

Then again, gaining an independent work permit requires great amount investment of effort and time. Even in practical terms opening your own architectural office as a foreigner is possible, there is a single case where a foreigner architect Brigitte Weber (in 2005) who has permanent work permit achieved it. Another option for foreign companies is substitution. Along with the required documents they can open a branch of their offices in Turkey. When the refugee point of view is considered, the second option is not practical.

Turkey currently hosts over three million registered refugees and around one fourth of them are between the ages of 18-59². Undoubtedly, a great number of those are architects and engineers who are willing to practice their own professions. For the second step of this study the Syrian system to practice construction related professions is explained in order to compare the two systems and postwar reconstruction work opportunities for both Turkish and Syrian citizens. From the example of Iraqi case, after the destructive war, in order to establish life again in Iraq a reconstruction process was initiated with a rapid growth. Given the historical, cultural and geographical proximity of Turkey to Syria, to prepare the students, academia and work market for a possible reconstruction process in Syria would be sensible. This proximity will allow us to provide livable buildings and neighborhoods according to their needs mainly shaped by culture, religion and local resources/materials.

¹ http://www.yok.gov.tr/web/guest/anasayfa/-/asset_publisher/64ZMbZPZISI4/content/id/34613408
² http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=224
Figure 1: Flow chart of attending professional life in Turkey after completing architectural education

**CA: Chamber of Architects (dashed lines refer to not obligatory state)**

Figure 2 summarizes the Syrian system of practicing architecture. Foreigners and Syrian citizens studied in Turkey with validated diplomas are able to open a branch in Syria according to international companies’ law and practice their profession in Syria.

Comparing the two systems we can notice that while in Turkey you are either a Turkish citizen or a foreigner, in the Syrian system we have special conditions for Palestinians refugees in Syria. Which were considered equal to Syrian citizens in rights and obligations for practicing engineering. In addition to that we have the case of Arab countries citizens which are also equal to Syrian citizens if their countries allow Syrian engineers to practice engineering career in their countries, otherwise if practicing engineering there is not allowed for Syrian citizens, they will be considered as foreigners and the law will be applied is the foreign companies law.
Moreover, a foreigner coming from a country which has a mutual agreement of degree recognition will be considered as Syrian citizen in practicing engineering profession, for example French citizens had this opportunity and the office of (arch Terry Grandin) was one example in Aleppo chamber of architects.

In addition to that, and most importantly, whatever citizenship you hold, Syrian, Arab or foreigner you can directly after graduation inscribe in engineering chambers if you hold a degree from a Syrian university and practice your profession equally like Syrian citizens engineers and architects.

Thus in Figure 2 three different colors for the arrows are used to show which path you should follow and which regulations are applied according to the condition of each degree holder in construction field.

Figure 2 According to the presidential Legislative Decree No. 80 of 2010 regulating the engineering profession in Syria (Ismail, 2011)
CONCLUSIONS
The opportunities and obstacles of holding an architectural degree with a refugee status have been discussed. Although, students with refugee status have better job opportunities compared to regular foreigners, they cannot open their own offices without working for a long time and putting extra effort.

Table 1 underlines that the number of students studying construction related fields and possibly coming from recent war zones is 2714. Even though the data relates to the number of refugee architects and civil engineers in Turkey is not available for public use, as a threshold matter the student statistics highlight the potential of refugees in the construction field. Refugees and Turkish citizens with construction related degrees who are willing to work and help to recover their Syria hold the potential to reconstruct and establish life again in Syria after war.

NOMENCLATURE

CA: Chamber of Architects
YOK: high education ministry in Turkey

REFERENCES