

# Private Universities and Global Education: The Role of Sabanci University

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Since, the foundation of the first university, the University of Bologna in 1088, today the number of higher education institutions reached more than 9,000 in 204 countries. The role of higher education has been the preservation and advancement of knowledge. In this day and age, the knowledge became the main driver of economy across the globe. As the economic stimulators changed across centuries, the need of higher and better education surged constantly. Ever increasing appetite of private sector for better, more creative and productive employees could not be filled.

As we witness locally and globally, education, environment, social health and therefore happiness are all correlated.

For example, in Turkey highly qualified individuals used to be educated abroad and later employed abroad. There were no lucrative job opportunities. The result was very few value-added products or services. Local average income was low and not evenly distributed. Environment was not well protected and the quality of life was very modest.

It used to be to the advantage of the developed countries to have national wealth. As the population of these societies grew, more jobs had to be created. But there were not enough foreign markets with high income.

Gross domestic product (GDP) and per capita income grew by educating more people, and creating more value-added goods. Today, every increase in any local income contributes to global economy unlike a few decades ago.

Once a society reaches a comfortable economic level then the environmental and other issues such as health, human rights and labor rights become more apparent. This inevitably leads to a better and safer world.

Until last two decades only a handful top universities existed in some few countries. In recent years, global recession lead to cuts in public funding of education even in developed countries, which made the role of private universities more crucial. Today, many new universities are established in several countries, sometimes with the co-operation of top institutions of the world.

In Turkey, the first university, Istanbul Technical University was founded 1773, and today the total number reached 173. Sixty-six of these higher institutions are private and they were all founded starting 1990s. Sabanci Holding established by my late grandfather, is one of the two largest conglomerates in Turkey. Sabanci Foundation, the biggest family foundation in Turkey was established in 1974. It built 120 institutions, the biggest of which is Sabanci University. It was founded in 1994.

As globalization accelerated at 1980s, the government could not respond to education needs of the society. The demand for knowledge and therefore education was growing at a rapid rate. Local corporations as well as global ones were seeking more bright and more educated work force. World economy was growing rapidly and it showed the signs of even more accelerated growth for the near future. Furthermore, economies were getting integrated, information was traveling fast and world markets became one. In order to sustain local economic strength, global economy had to be sound and safe.

Sabanci University's main goal is to develop qualified individuals who possess the knowledge and skills required to pursue a career anywhere in the world. I can proudly say that with its internationally renowned faculty and rigorous curriculum, it is one of the leading higher education institutions of Turkey. Its system allows students to decide on their major field of study in their junior year. It has significant joint programs, such as MIT-Zaragoza International Logistics Program.

It plays an important role of providing scholarships and awards to thousands of students every year. These students get the best education opportunity they could not have had otherwise. Additionally, the university attracts many international students for both undergraduate as well as graduate programs.

Today, Sabanci University is developing students in Engineering, Art and Sciences, and in Management. Its placement rate is at 90%. So far, about 4,000 undergraduate and 200 graduate degrees were awarded.

Sabanci University contributes to global community by raising socially conscious, creative, visionary individuals which will make our world a better place. It will adapt its curriculum for upcoming needs of the national and multinational corporations. It will continue to increase its role in research and advancement.

I would like to thank you and quote Nelson Mandela: 'Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world'.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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