

# Academics' Views on the Contribution of International Academic Mobility for Professional Development (The USA Sample)\*

Aydin BALYER\*\* Kenan OZCAN\*\*\*

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this research was to determine academics' views on the contribution of international academic mobility to their professional and personal development. The qualitative study was conducted with a "case study" design. The study group consisted of 15 faculty members determined with snowball sampling method. The data were collected with a semi-structured interview technique, and analyzed with an inductive analysis method. Results showed that international academic mobility contributed to academics' personal and professional developments. However, the participants some difficulties such as established negative academic practices, staff constraints, inability to participate in decision-making and adaptation to corporate culture. It was also understood that some academics are thinking of going back abroad because of the frustration with their promotion process. In addition, the academics working in the fields of science and engineering in the newly established universities have problems with conducting research and producing publications due to the technical infrastructure deficiencies. It was determined that academics expect project budgets to increase, strengthen workshops and develop laboratory infrastructures, and access to library databases. The regulations and laws regarding academic mobility for international purposes should be rearranged and the conditions should be improved.

**Keywords:** Academics, research, international academic mobility, scientific knowledge production, higher education

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\*\*  Corresponding Author: Yildiz Technical University, [balyer@yildiz.edu.tr](mailto:balyer@yildiz.edu.tr)

\*\*\*  Adiyaman University, Turkey, [kozcan04@hotmail.com](mailto:kozcan04@hotmail.com)

## Introduction

International academic mobility for professional and personal development is the situation that academics stay abroad temporarily for research, project, learning or teaching and return to their home institutions. In this sense, academic mobility, according to Urry (2004), is to stay temporarily outside the country of origin for professional and personal development such as research, learning and/or teaching, and to establish and maintain different connections with academic network. Jons (2011) defines international academic mobility of researchers mostly as circular mobility from the host institution to one or more other institutions. Studies show that this type of mobility can generate significant positive feedback effects for both traveling and hosting academics, as well as students, research groups and institutions (Ackers, 2005; Ackers & Gill, 2008; Altbach, 1989; Blumenthal, Goodwin, Smith & Teichler, 1996; Joˆns, 2007; 2009; O'Hara, 2009; Van de Sande, Ackers & Gill, 2005; Welch, 1997).

It can be said that in this context mobility also serves the purposes of producing new knowledge, international circulation of existing knowledge, sharing innovative resources for research and teaching, regular student and academic exchange, and establishing long-term research and project cooperation. In this sense, some countries have gained significant benefits as a result of the collaborations formed as a result of such mobility. Through the collaborations established in this context, Germany has become one of the top 5 countries with the highest number of articles published in the fields of science and engineering worldwide, and the USA has become one of the first three countries to publish with co-authors with the cooperation formed after international mobility. It was revealed that these researchers are also in the first place in their home countries (Adams, Gurney & Marshall 2007; National Science Board, 1998, 2010).

It is proposed that international mobility for professional and personal development among academics and students has increased after the post-World War II period. As a result of it, international relations and collaborations in higher education and research have intensified (Altbach & Teichler 2001; Bhandari & Blumenthal, 2009; Robertson, 2006; 2010). Ioannidis (2004) stated that scientists are the most active group in this kind of international mobility. According to him, academics participating in this mobility are among the most frequently cited in the USA, with a very high rate of citations such as 24% in the UK and 19% in Germany.

As in different countries of the world, it is a common situation in Turkey. Students and academicians move in different ways for professional and personal development in other countries. In this sense, since the first half of the 19th century during the Ottoman Empire, students were sent abroad with a public scholarship (Erdogan, 2010; Yildirim, 2005). According to Gumus and Gokbel (2012) students were sent abroad in order to meet the public needs for qualified human resources. Since the first years of the new Turkish Republic, this mobility was sustained. After the War of Independence, despite limited public resources, students were sent to different countries throughout the world in

different fields. They are expected to improve themselves as qualified manpower and help the development of the country (Yildirim, 2005).

When the current situation is evaluated in terms of the Turkish higher education system, international mobility for professional and personal development is carried out in different ways. One of these methods is to send students or researchers to different countries in order to train faculty members. In this context, the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) sends students abroad through the Selection and Placement Examination for Graduate Studies (SPEG) within the scope of the "Law No. 1416. In this regard, 3.511 students were sent abroad between 1929 and 2019 (Altekin & Tekben, 2019). These scholars are obliged to work in their home institutions for twice the duration of their stay abroad after returning as a basic requirement of the current law.

The other method is conducted by the Council of Higher Education (CoHE). CoHE sends students and lecturers abroad taking needs of universities and public institutions into account. Although these processes slow down from time to time, this initiative continues. Especially with the establishment of new universities, this process was reviewed and for this purpose, CoHE created many overseas research scholarships in addition to the existing international doctorate scholarships for the lecturers working at public universities. However, it is observed that there is a decrease in the number of academics sent abroad, especially after 2016 (Gumus & Gokbel, 2012). Another implementation of international academic mobility for professional development is visiting researcher or lecturer (sabbatical, visiting professor, etc.) status. In this regard, academics go and stay at a different university abroad for a certain period. In addition to these implementations, there are scholarships for academic mobility provided by institutions such as the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK), the Turkish Academy of Sciences (TUBA) and the State Planning Organization (DPT).

Altekin and Tekben (2019) revealed that international academic mobility for professional development contributes to both personal and professional development of the participants. The main contributions are academic competence, study discipline, social and cultural gains, and foreign language knowledge. On the other hand, after such a mobility, both within this scope and in other ways, it is also possible for academics to experience some problems in home countries and institutions. In this sense, especially in recent years, students who have been sent abroad with MoNE scholarships encounter problems such as transferring to another university especially to newly established universities in an unplanned way. As they have to meet their compulsory service obligations, they are appointed to the fields outside their expertise quickly. In most cases, their departments do not exist at the university they are appointed. It is also reported that they have difficulty with adaptation to their home institutions, acceptance, teamwork culture and cooperation. They also have limitations and difficulties with technical infrastructure especially those who work in the field of science and engineering at newly established universities. They cannot access library and information base regarding research and publication process. According to Ocal (2012), due to these problems, some academicians refuse to return to the country. Sometimes, they may give up their academic studies and direct to different fields of work. Those who return to their home

institutions complain about the lack of suitable working conditions, environments, and the uncertainty of staffing processes.

International mobility implementations have significant economic costs for both home country and institutions. Then, the expectation from these academicians or researchers is to develop their knowledge, experience and research capacity in their fields of study, and transfer them to their source country, institution and students.

International academic mobility for professional development and its contribution to academicians has been studied much. Since academic mobility has positive contributions for both academicians and institutions, there is a need to determine their views. It is important to determine their experiences about international mobility. In this context, the current research aims to determine the views of academicians on how and how much the international mobility contributes to both themselves and their home institutions regarding developing knowledge and research capacity, producing publication, developing joint institutional and project cooperation. It is important to research the contribution of academics for both their personal and professional development as well as their contribution to their home institutions after completing their mobility.

## **Purpose of the Research**

This study aims to determine academicians' views on the contribution of international academic mobility for both their professional and personal development. In order to achieve this general purpose, the answers of the following questions were researched:

- What are academicians' opinions on the need for international mobility for professional and personal development?
- What is the purpose of this mobility?
- What kind of scholarship did they have?
- What is the reason of choosing the host country?
- What are their views on the impact of international mobility on their professional and personal development?
- What are their opinions on the problems they encountered after coming back to their home institutions?
- What are the participants' views on their career development after this international mobility?

## **Method**

In this qualitative study, a "case study" design was used. The case study is a method in which one or more events, environments, programs, social groups, or other interconnected systems are explored and scrutinized (McMillan, 2000, 45; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Merriam (2013) defines case study as an in-depth description and analysis of a limited system. Yildirim and Simsek (2011) define

it as an in-depth investigation of one or more cases and analyzing the data related to the situation with a holistic approach.

In the research, "nested single case design", one of the case study designs, was used. In this pattern, there can often be more than one substrate or situation in a case (Yildirim & Simsek 2011). Faculty members participating in international academic mobility differ in terms of university, field, duration, and title. In the study, the contribution of academic mobility is considered as a case. In the research, the sub-analysis units included in this case are the need for academic mobility, purpose, financing, country preference, its effect on academic and personal development, problems, and its effect on career development after returning to home institution. It is thought that examining the nested structure of the determined sub-analysis units will explain the research case in detail and results regarding the whole research case can be obtained.

## **Study Group**

The study group of this research consists of 15 faculty members working in different units (Department of Education, Science and Literature, Engineering and Vocational Schools) of Yildiz Technical, Adiyaman, Inonu, Mersin, Istanbul and Ankara universities in the spring semester of 2018-2019 academic year. They were determined with a criterion sampling method. Qualitative research can be conducted with a small number of people selected according to certain criteria, and the selected people are determined according to certain criteria. Criterion sampling that meets the specified criteria is accepted as one of these methods (Patton, 2014, 230-235).

The criterion in this research is that the faculty members have been in the United States (one person has been in Switzerland) for a certain period of time by benefiting from a public scholarship to carry out academic studies. After returning to the home country, they have compulsory service for twice the period of their stay abroad. Snowball or chain sampling technique was preferred in the determination of the participants. In some cases which are difficult to reach the units that make up the universe or where information about the universe is missing this sampling technique can be used (Patton, 2005). In this regard, first of all, two people who participated in academic mobility at Adiyaman University and Yildiz Technical University were interviewed on the subject. In the later stages of the research, people who are acquaintances and friends from abroad and who work at different universities were reached by snowball technique (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Out of all the participants, 4 of them work in Adiyaman, 4 work in Yildiz Technical University, and with the advice of these people and the help of the suggested people, a total of 15 people were reached. Among them, 1 person was from Ankara, 1 person from Mersin, 2 people from Malatya and 3 people from Istanbul University. Thus, by making use of the communication network among themselves, the target group of faculty members were reached (Grix, 2010). The faculty members interviewed were between the ages of 28-45, 6 women and 9 men. The branch, duration of stay abroad, title and country variables of the academic staff participating in the research are given in Table 1.

**Table 1.**

*The Participants Demographics*

Code	Branch	Title	Scholarship Type	Institution	Duration	Host Country
Ahmet	Philosophy	Res. Assist. Dr.	Res. Project	Adiyaman	1	USA
Ali	PDR	Assist. Prof.	MoNE &CoHE	İstanbul	6	USA
Ozgur	Physics	Prof. Dr.	Res. Project	İnonu	3	Switzerland USA
Baris	PDR	Assist. Prof.	MoNE &CoHE	Adiyaman	6	USA
Turgay	Computer Eng.	Assist. Prof.	MoNE &CoHE	Yildiz Tech.	8	USA
Esmay	Electrical Eng.	Assist. Prof.	MoNE &CoHE	İnonu	8	USA
Sedat	Educational Administration	Assoc. Prof.	Res. Project	İstanbul	1	USA
Omer	Special Education	Assoc. Prof.	MoNE &CoHE	Ankara	6	USA
Bekir	Educational Administration	Assoc. Prof.	MoNE &CoHE	Adiyaman	6	USA
Can	Science Education	Assist. Prof.	MoNE &CoHE	İstanbul	4	USA
Ozan	Maths.	Res.Asist.	MoNE &CoHE	Yildiz Tech.	4	USA
Gulsum	Measurement &Evaluation	Assist. Prof.	Res. Project	Mersin	1	USA
Mehmet	Biology	Res.Asist.	MoNE &CoHE	Adiyaman	8	USA
Cemal	Chemistry	Res.Asist.	MoNE &CoHE	Yildiz Tech.	6	USA
Aziz	Mechanical Eng.	Prof. Dr.	Res. Project	Yildiz Tech.	2	USA

As can be seen in Table 1, 15 faculty members from 12 different branches participated in the research. One of the participants did academic studies in both the USA and Switzerland, and the others did academic studies in the United States (USA), and their stay abroad is between 1-8 years. Three of the participants, who spent one year abroad, were visiting lecturers, and the lecturer, who had a total of three years in the USA and Switzerland, was a visiting lecturer for two years in Switzerland and one year in the United States. Faculty members who have been in the USA for 6 or 8 years stated that they have been in this country for graduate and doctoral education with the scholarship of the MoNE. Those who were in the USA for one year and those who were in the USA and Switzerland benefited from the CoHE scholarship, whereas those who were in the USA for 6 or 8 years benefited from the MoNE scholarship. Two of the participants are working as Res. Assistant Dr., one person as Assoc.Prof. Res. Asistant Dr. and 12 people are working as faculty members.

### Data Collection

The data were collected with a semi-structured interview technique in which the data of the research is used most frequently in qualitative research (Yildirim & Simsek, 2006, 119). In such a technique, the interviewees have control over the research (Ekiz, 2009, 63) and drill questions can be asked. This technique has also flexibility in the interview process. For this purpose, an interview form was developed by the researchers. During the preparation of the form, the literature on international academic mobility was first researched in detail. Themes related to the need for academic mobility, purpose,

financing, country preference, the effect of the process on academic and personal development and the problems experienced and the effect on career development after returning to universities were determined.

In the semi-structured form, six questions were prepared to determine the demographic characteristics of the participants, and four questions were prepared in order to determine the problems and solution proposals according to the specified themes. In addition, the form was finalized by taking the opinions of two faculty members working in the field of educational administration. And the opinions of two faculty members who participated in an international academic mobility in the field of educational administration were taken. The interviews were held face-to-face between March and May 2019. Before starting the interview process, the researchers gave information about themselves for 4-7 minutes. It was tried to provide an environment of trust by stating that the identity of the faculty members and the institutions they worked would not be clearly stated in any part of the study and code names would be used. The purpose of the research was explained, and permission was requested for the audio recording before the interview process.

Although 11 of the participants allowed the audio recording, notes were taken by the researchers during the interview with 4 people. Eight of the interviews took place in the office of the lecturers and three in the office of the researchers and were completed in 40-45 minutes. During the interview processes, the following questions were asked to the participant academicians.

- Why did you need academic mobility?
- Why did you prefer the country you visited?
- What is the contribution of academic mobility to your personal professional development?
- Which scholarship program did you benefit from?
- How many years did you stay in the country you visited?

## **Data Analysis**

In the data analysis process, the inductive analysis method, one of the content analysis types, was used. This type of analysis is generally used to gather the data, analyze, and interpret similar data collected on a subject (Mayring, 2000; Yildirim & Simsek, 2011). Inductive analysis is carried out to reveal the concepts underlying the data and the relationships between them through coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yildirim & Simsek 2011).

Analysis of the research data was carried out in three stages. In the first stage, the data obtained as a voice recording were transcribed by the researchers and transferred to a word document. Each word file was given a code name, the same code name was written in front of the question numbers. For example, the file name is coded as Sedat, for the question it is coded as Sedat 1, Sedat 2, Sedat 3, and Sedat 4. This method was carried out separately for 15 participants. In the second stage, the answers given to each

question were collected again in a file. In other words, the answers given to the first question were reconstructed as Sedat 1, Ahmet 1, Ozan 1, the answers to the second question as Sedat 2, Ahmet 2, Ozan 2, and the same process for the third and fourth questions was reconstructed as a total of four files. In the last step, the themes obtained by the two researchers (why academic mobility, scholarship, why the visited country, etc.) were presented to the opinion of an expert in educational sciences and qualitative research, and an inter-coder reliability analysis was carried out on the themes obtained. "Reliability= [Agreement / (Agreement + Disagreement)] X 100 formula (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was used and the reliability level between encoders was calculated as 90%. In addition, the opinions of two experts working in the field of educational administration and participating in academic mobility were taken on the themes related to the statements of those participating in academic mobility.

### **Trustworthiness and Ethics**

The validity of scientific findings in qualitative research; and reliability is related to the reproducibility of scientific findings (Yildirim & Simsek, 2003). Some precautions were taken to increase the validity and reliability of the research. First of all, in order to increase the internal validity (credibility) of the research, the literature was researched in detail. Then, a pilot interview was held with two academicians who participated in an international academic mobility. While preparing the semi-structured interview form, the questions were finalized after receiving experts' opinions. In addition, it was stated that the identities of the participants would not be disclosed during the research process. The purpose of the research was explained in detail. The participants' concerns were resolved. Some participants did not let video recording. For this reason, their interview process was written by hand. Secondly, in order to increase the external validity of the research, the design of the research, the study group and demographic characteristics, the stages of preparation of the research questions, the data collection and analysis processes were explained in detail. Third, in order to increase the internal reliability (consistency) of the research, all of the findings were given directly without commenting. And the field experets' opinions were taken to increase reliability. In the last stage, in order to increase the external reliability of the research, detailed descriptions were made and the findings were written, and the code names given to the participants were stated and presented in a clear way that would allow checking the consistency of the data in the findings section.

### **Results**

In this part of the research, the data reached in line with the sub-objectives of the research are presented in a systematic way. In this regard, the dynamics affecting the academic mobility process, the contribution of this process to their professional and personal development, the problems they encounter in the process of transferring their experiences after returning to their institutions, and their views on how they see their career development are discussed. These themes are shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1

Main Themes



In Figure 1, the reasons for academic mobility, effects on professional and personal development, sharing experiences and the effects on their academic careers are examined. The findings regarding these themes are presented in detail in Table 2:

Table 2.

Need for Mobility, Objectives, Scholarship Type and Country Preferences

Themes	Statements from the interview
<b>Academic Mobility Need</b>	Ali- <i>"Opportunity to work with people from different nations, culture"</i>
	Ozgur- <i>"I could only work at CERN"</i>
	Turgay- <i>"Very few people working in my field in my country"</i>
	Omer- <i>"Working with famous professors in my field"</i>
	Baris- <i>"Starting my professional career in a developed country"</i>
	Gulsum- <i>"Because I think the university abroad is better"</i>
	Bekir- <i>"In order to advance my language skills"</i>
<b>Academic Mobility Objectives</b>	Aziz- <i>"Writing my thesis by accessing sources more easily"</i>
	Mehmet- <i>"Because I'm curious about a developed country"</i>
	Master and Doctorate Education PhD thesis research Postdoctoral research
<b>Scholarship Type</b>	MoNE-CoHE Institutional Assignment Research project
<b>Country Preference</b>	Esma- <i>"To be the best in my field and scholarship opportunities"</i> Sedat- <i>"I could only find resources related to my field here"</i> Ozan- <i>"I believed that my horizons will expand in the USA"</i>

**Need for Mobility:** Participants stated that they preferred academic mobility because of the need to study at a better university in their profession. They also wanted to have famous lecturers abroad, the opportunity to study new topics related to their field, easier access to resources and make a good start to their academic career in a developed country. The opinions of the participants about the need for academic mobility for language skills are as follows:

*...Taking my language skills to a better level (Ali)... Accessing resources related to the field and participating in scientific meetings (Turgay) ...Learning what is going on in the world from more reliable sources (Bekir)...Being a global citizen (Mehmet).*

**Academic Mobility Objectives:** Participants went to international academic mobility for postgraduate education, doctoral thesis process and postdoctoral research.

**Scholarship Type:** All participants went abroad with the MoNE scholarship within the scope of the law no 1416 and CoHE scholarship. Those who went abroad for post-doctoral research stated that they received CoHE scholarship, while some of them received institutional support, and joint project support. Regarding the scholarship, one participant stated:

*...Without a public scholarship, it was not possible for me to do my graduate studies in the USA (Ali).*

**Country Preference:** When the participants' views on country preferences were evaluated, they stated that the USA was the best in their professions. The opinion of a scholar on the subject is as follows:

*...I believed that I would reach all the resources related to my field and that my horizon would be opened in this country. (Poet)*

The participants' views on the contribution of international academic mobility to their professional and personal development are given in Table 3.

**Table 3.**

*Contribution of Academic Mobility on Professional and Personal Development*

Themes	Statements from the interview
<b>Theory and Practice Knowledge</b>	<i>Esmat-"I gained important knowledge"</i>
	<i>Mehmet-"I learned the research processes"</i>
	<i>Cemal-"I learned to solve problem on my own"</i>
	<i>Aziz-"I learned academic language and ethics of science"</i>
	<i>Gulsum-"I learned to advocate for professional values"</i>
	<i>Baris-"I developed experience based on practice"</i>
	<i>Omer-"I learned practice"</i>
	<i>Ali-"I became an independent scientist"</i>
	<i>Sedat-"I learned teamwork"</i>
	<i>Ozgun-"I learned to do experiment in the laboratory"</i>
<b>Joint Publication or Research Release</b>	<i>Mehmet-"I learned to analyze data with various methods"</i>
	<i>Cemal-"I published articles in good journals, public speaking"</i>
	<i>Esmat-I attended congresses with my colleagues"</i>
	<i>Ali/Baris/Omer-"We wrote books and book chapters together"</i>
<b>Multiculturalism and Tolerance</b>	<i>Ozan-"I took part in project"</i>
	<i>Can-"We received \$300,000 in funding from the project"</i>
	<i>Baris- I worked people from different languages, nationalities, cultures, beliefs and communities with no problem.</i>
<b>Maintaining Cooperation</b>	<i>Esmat-"I noticed all nationalities and beliefs are valuable"</i>
	<i>Omer-"I learned to respect in a multicultural society"</i>
	<i>Bekir-"I continue my studies with my advisor from the USA"</i>
	<i>Ali-" We still attend conferences, carry out projects, write articles and book chapters together"</i>
	<i>Turgay-"I continue to work with my doctoral teacher again"</i>

**Bridging Theory and Practice:** They stated that during the international academic mobility process, the participants gained knowledge in their professional fields. They developed

skills in bridging theory and practice. They also learned to learn, and they meticulously applied scientific ethical principles in academic publications. Some academicians stated:

*...I learned how to do experiment, publish its results, present in front of the public (Cemal)...I learned to advocate for professional values under all circumstances. (Ali)*

**Joint Publication or Research Release:** Participants stated that they generally developed projects with their advisors, wrote books, book chapters, articles, and participated in congresses with their colleagues during the graduate education process. Some academics underlined:

*...We received \$300,000 funding from the project we developed with my advisor, and I got my salary from this project during the project (Can)... When my scholarship was cut off, my teacher took me on a project and solved the financial problem (Mehmet).*

**Multiculturalism and Tolerance:** The participants stated that living in a multicultural society for a certain period increased their tolerance. This process contributed to working with colleagues from different nationalities and faiths for a purpose. Some academicians stressed:

*...I learned to work and empathize with people from different languages, nationalities, cultures, beliefs and communities... (Baris). I learned to respect, keep a distance, say no, do what I know, not to enter private life, to live in a multicultural society... (Omar) and ... I internalized that people from all nationalities and beliefs are valuable... (Esma)*

**Table 4.**

*Problems Encountered*

Themes	Statements from the interview
<b>Adjustment and Rejection</b>	Ali- <i>"There was no mentor"</i>
	Turgay- <i>"There was no orientation program"</i>
	Mehmet- <i>"Although I came 5 years ago, I was able to receive my promotion 6 months ago."</i>
	Ali- <i>"As I was discriminated by my institution. I am thinking of returning to the USA"</i>
	Sedat- <i>"I sometimes have acceptance problems"</i>
	Ozan- <i>"There is no cooperation, teamwork."</i>
<b>Academic Culture &amp; Infrastructure Problems</b>	Baris- <i>"I encountered some ethical problems here."</i>
	Esma- <i>"They gave me an office three months later"</i>
	Omer- <i>"Academic freedom is a serious problem here."</i>
	Turgay- <i>"Socio-cultural activity is very low. The library is very inadequate and I cannot access databases."</i>
	Ozgun- <i>"They do not provide devices to work with. We are fed up with these problems"</i>
	Sedat- <i>I was appointed to a different department. After working for 1,5 year, I was able to get my promotion in my field."</i>
Ahmet- <i>"There is no stimulating environment. Although my field is Philosophy, I was appointed to the department of Sociology."</i>	

**Maintaining Collaboration:** The faculty members who completed the academic mobility process and returned to their countries/institutions continue to cooperate with their advisors and colleagues abroad. In particular, they conduct joint publication and develop joint projects. They also participate in international conferences together. Some academics noted:

*"I continue my studies with my advisor. Even, I was awarded by Young Researcher Award by my university in the USA... Since there is no one working in my field in our country yet, I continue to work with my doctoral teacher... (Turgay). My teacher wants me to return to my university again, but I will decide after my compulsory service (Can).*

The participants' opinions on the problems they encounter while transferring their experiences after returning to their home institutions are given in Table 4.

**Adjustment and Rejection:** The faculty members who stayed abroad for many years for graduate education and then started to work in their home institutions for the first time in a different city after returning to their home country, experienced orientation problems and were not mentored in this regard. Also, they were not promoted accordingly. In addition, they had to share an office with number of other faculty. They stated that they were not accepted in the institution. Their productivity decreased and some people thought of going abroad again if they did not have economic obligations. In this regard, some academics reported:

*...It has been 5 years since I returned from abroad. I got the title of associate professorship 6 months ago, but I was not promoted. Currently I am working as a Dr. Res. Assist. (Mehmet).*

*... There is no cooperation and teamwork here. There are systemic problems. I was able to get promoted one and a half year later. This effected my motivation negatively. From time to time, I am thinking going back to the USA (Ozan).*

*...Since I was discriminated in my institution, I lost my spirit of teamwork. I am thinking of returning to the USA after completing my compulsory service (Ali).*

**Academic Culture and Infrastructure Problems:** Faculty members in science and engineering branches, who started their duties in their institutions after completing their international mobility process, stated that they had difficulties in transferring knowledge and experience to their colleagues and institutions due to laboratory, experimental tools and equipment, bureaucratic procedures, teamwork and cooperation problems. They underlined that they were appointed to different departments. Some ademicians said:

*...In terms of research, I realized that the work done now can be carried out in the same way 50 years later in our country (Esma)... We do not have a deficiency in terms of academic level, but there are financial and bureaucratic problems which force and intimidate us (Ozgur).*

*The situation that challenges me academically is the absence of an environment that forces me to produce and put what I have learned into practice. I did not even get my promotion for three years. My department is closed. Although my field is philosophy, they appointed me to sociology department (Ahmet).*

*...I was asked to be appointed as an editor from the USA, but it was abandoned because I was working in a unit outside my field. I think I've worn out in two years (Esma).*

The participants' views on their career development after academic mobility are given in Table 5.

**Table 5**

*Participants' Career Development after International Mobility*

Themes	Statements from the interview
Career development	<p>Ali-<i>"My career development is slow. The atmosphere and my colleagues affect me negatively"</i></p> <p>Bekir-<i>"I am losing my motivation day by day. The academic environment makes me get tired."</i></p> <p>Cemal-<i>"I believe that I will reach the top in my academic career, but it will be hard."</i></p> <p>Sedat- <i>"I think my career development will be easier as I gain a broader perspective on problems"</i></p>

The participants stated that they would not have any problems after returning home in the academic context regarding their career development. However, sometimes quantity becomes more prior than quality. Faculty members do not believe that they will reach the top in the profession because of some difficulties they have experienced. Their views are as follows:

*... Day by day, my determination to work is breaking down. The university environment makes me get tired and intimidated (Bekir). I think my career development will be easier as I gain a broader perspective on problems (Sedat).*

## Conclusion and Discussion

This qualitative study aimed determine academicians' views on the contribution of international academic mobility for their professional and personal developments. In this regard, their reason for international academic mobility, basic objectives, types of scholarships, country preferences, and the contribution of this circulation to both personally and by the source institution were researched. To that end, a number of results were obtained. According to one of the results, most academics participated in international academic mobility for postgraduate education, doing research or post-doctoral research. The common objectives emerged out are learning a foreign language, having a master's or a PhD degree as well as having an experience in an international academic and research environment.

Academics reported that this mobility helped them start their professional careers strongly by conducting research and academic publications. They also noted that they could transfer the knowledge and experience they gained abroad to their own institutions after they return home. In this regard, their mobility contributed to the scientific development of their country. Another result showed that all the participant academicians benefited from MoNE and CoHE scholarships. In addition, some had financial support from TÜBİTAK or their home university for their projects.

Regarding the reasons for country choice, the participants chose mostly the USA because this country provided many opportunities including diversity of scholarships. Another reason for choosing this country is that the universities in the USA have the best and most famous professors in their fields. Hence, Meyer and Brown (1999) state that in the globalizing world, the academic diaspora also regulates the career field in higher education in this sense. In addition, Kim (2009) noted that this diaspora builds social capital as well as human capital. According to him, the reason why academicians or academic candidates prefer countries such as the USA and Germany is their belief that it will facilitate their career development.

When examining the contribution of international mobility to their professional and personal development of the participants, all academicians stated that they had significant gains in the field knowledge, practice, publishing articles, project development, and experience of working as a team in a multicultural academic environment. The academicians also implied that they benefited from the technical, academic, sports and social infrastructures of the universities, especially the library and laboratories. Through these facilities, they gained new knowledge and experience about their fields. They also gained ability to solve a problem by transforming the knowledge into practice, wrote new papers, articles and book chapters, participated in congresses and developed joint projects.

Moreover, all participant academics mentioned that they have experienced working with people and groups from different languages, nationalities, cultures, beliefs and ethnic communities. By working and living in a multicultural society, they developed tolerance and respect towards differences. Even after these academics returned to their home countries, they kept in touch with their advisors and carried out joint academic studies and participated in scientific activities.

In a similar research, Jons (2009) found that participants who joined this type of mobility make significant contributions to creating "international network of knowledge and academic connections". According to him, after this kind of mobility, participant academicians increased the number of single-author or multi-author publications. They also participated in the number of scientific events such as conferences, workshops and seminars. In this sense, it was also found that international academic mobility contributes to creating important values, and intangible factors that will lead to sector development and economic development in the future (Eustace, 2000; Kramer, Revilla, Marinelli, & Iammariono, 2009). Similarly, Schiller and Diez (2012) and Wang, Hooi, Li, and Chou (2019) discovered that academicians who participate in this type of mobility not only

develop themselves, but they also make significant contributions to developing cooperation with the industry. Furthermore, participant academicians developed stronger connections with local and international companies in terms of developing cooperation after returning to their home countries. In a similar study, Civera, Donina, Meoli, and Vismara (2019) found that especially rectors participating in international mobility establish better connections with their business circles. In a similar study conducted by Altekin and Tekben (2019) with 27 participants who studied abroad with the law numbered 1416, it was discovered that postgraduate education abroad contributed significantly to the participants' personal, professional and academic developments. However, it was noted that these academicians could not fully reflect some of their achievements to the home institution. Likewise, in a study conducted by Alemu (2019), it was concluded that academic staff gained significant benefits from this mobility despite the difficulties encountered. Also, Zucker and Darby (2006) reported the proven positive effects of such mobility, especially in the field of biotechnology.

It was concluded that all the participant academicians were satisfied with taking part in this mobility process. This may be related to the fact that these academics benefited from this mobility both personally and professionally. The academics stated that they made important personal and professional contributions from international mobility. But when they return to their home institutions, they experienced significant problems regarding settled academic practices, acceptance, bureaucratic functioning, participation in decision making and adapting to the culture. Particularly, the participants who benefitted from MoNE scholarship stated that they had difficulties with living in a new city after returning to their home institutions. These academicians reported that when they first started to work, they were not given orientation training and mentoring. In addition, the participants emphasized that they were disappointed due to the problems with promotion. Some academicians waited for more than one year to get promoted. In one study Tiffany (2016) found that academics were completely happy to participate in this type of mobility. But they especially have difficulties with promotion policies, communication within the department and with management. The fact that academic staff are sent abroad for mostly graduate education and research purposes. Their mobility, adaptation, rights should be planned. After the academic mobility, the participants noted serious problems and as a result some academicians are planning to go back to the USA. This is not a desired thing for academia. By taking precautions, they should be kept in their home institutions.

According to another result obtained in this research, academicians experience some difficulties after returning to the country. First of all, they had difficulties in terms of adaptation and not being accepted. They are not mentored and oriented in their home institutions and try to survive themselves. Similar findings are supported by some research results. For example; Nilemar and Brown (2019) revealed that academics experience adjustment difficulties after such mobility. Another important problem faced by academics after such mobility is the situation of being appointed outside their study of expertise. For example, a candidate was appointed to sociology department although his field is philosophy. This prevents the effective and efficient use of resources and may

lead to deviations from the strategic goals of the institutions. However, in a study conducted by OECD (2008), it was found that when this process is evaluated well, people with high skills participating in this mobility can also serve to disseminate information locally and regionally.

Despite its positive contributions, the participant academicians have problems with conducting research and producing publications due to insufficient technical infrastructure of their universities. They are unable access to information sources, face financial constraints and encounter negative administrative attitudes. Academics in the field of social sciences noted that they have difficulties with receiving scientific research projects.

As a result, it can be said that the international mobility process for professional development makes significant contributions to both institutions and individuals in general. It is understood that academics make great efforts to transfer the knowledge and skills they gained abroad to home institutions. On the other hand, they expect increased budgets for scientific projects. They also expect to have more support, mentoring and orientation when they return from this mobility. In this regard, it is recommended that the legal arrangements related to international mobility for professional purposes be made quickly and that the personal rights of these academicians should be improved. It is also essential to improve technical infrastructure, libraries and databases.

**Ethics Committee Approval:** In this study, as the data collected before 2019 and the article was submitted to the journal in 2021, Ethical Committee Approval could not be obtained retrospectively, but ethical principles were observed throughout the study. Within the framework of these principles, promotional information is based on participant voluntariness. The data were kept confidential and the data were used only in this scientific research.

**Informed Consent:** Informed consent was obtained from the participants.

**Peer-review:** Externally peer-reviewed.

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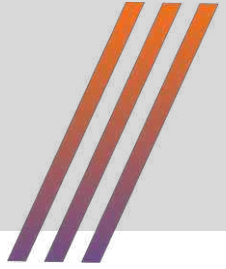
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**Author**

Prof.Dr. Aydın Balyer is a professor in the field of Educational Administration at the Department of Educational Sciences at Yıldız Technical University. His research interest focuses on school leaders, principals, their professional development and working conditions. He also studies on educational policies especially diversity management in their schools.

Prof.Dr. Kenan Özcan is a professor in the field of Educational Administration at the Department of Educational Sciences at Adiyaman University. His research interest focuses on educational policies, vocational and technical education, teachers' professional development and teacher empowerment, sustainable development and education.

**Contact**

Educational Administration at the Department of Educational Sciences at Yıldız Technical University

E-mail: [balyer@yildiz.edu.tr](mailto:balyer@yildiz.edu.tr)

Educational Administration at the Department of Educational Sciences at Adiyaman University

E-mail: [kozcan@adiyaman.edu.tr](mailto:kozcan@adiyaman.edu.tr)