



## English Medium Instruction (EMI) Programs at Turkish Universities: An Overview <sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

This study aims to conduct a quantitative examination of English Medium Instruction (EMI) programs in Türkiye, a factor that increases the internationalization of universities and educational institutions. All data were collected from the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) website. This study uses descriptive statistics to provide information and evidence on EMI programs in both public and private universities. The data were analyzed to determine the differences between EMI programs in public and private institutions and to compare basic EMI program features across university types. The findings show that EMI programs in private universities are much more widely implemented than those in public universities. In addition, it is seen that more importance is attached to EMI programs in private universities. One of the important results of this study is the fact that EMI programs have become increasingly popular among students in both public and private universities in recent years. However, the analysis highlights the lack of comprehensive data on current student enrollments, the number of faculty members, and graduation rates in EMI programs, and underscores the need for more precise and accessible information on EMI.

**Keywords:** *English medium instruction, program, EMI, medium of instruction*

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## **Introduction**

In the last few years, higher education institutions around the world have promoted EMI programs. EMI programs, which can be seen as crucial for universities looking for ways to be more internationalized, can provide their graduates with worldwide employment opportunities and a multicultural environment. Corresponding with the increase of EMI programs throughout the world, there has been a growth of EMI programs in Türkiye in the last few years (Karakaş, 2016; Yüksel & Altay, 2022). This has been prompted by the demand for proficiency in the English language, the strong demand for education to be conducted in English, and the competitive nature of Turkish universities around the world. Though there has been a large increase in EMI programs, the official documents describing the nature of the EMI remain ambiguous. For example, there are documents on the foreign language learning environment, such as Official Gazette No. 29662 (2016) and Official Gazette No. 32489 (2024), but these documents do not include information on EMI, but on teaching in foreign languages, provisional and final provisions on supervision and quality assurance of teaching in foreign languages, and provisional and final provisions to be applied in case of failure to fulfill them.

Despite comprehensive information on all programs at universities in Türkiye, specific data on which of these programs provide EMI is lacking, raising questions about the scope of EMI programs. It is crucial to be aware of the precise numbers regarding the total number of students currently enrolled in these programs as well as the number of faculty members and their titles in EMI programs. For example, Table 1 indicates the current number of programs in public and foundation institutions in Türkiye:

**Table 1.**

*The current total numbers of the programs in Turkish universities*

<b>Number of.....</b>	<b>State (Public)</b>	<b>Foundation (Private)</b>	<b>Total</b>
University	127	78	205
Faculty	1532	504	2036
Institute	431	151	582
Department	15907	3710	19617
Undergraduate Programme	7563	2107	9670
Master Programme	13259	3399	16658
Doctorate Programme	11214	716	11930
Proficiency In Art Programme	140	16	156

YOK Statistics, 2024\_ <https://istatistik.yok.gov.tr/>

Table 1 shows 205 active universities in Türkiye, 127 of which are state and 78 are foundation universities. State universities generally have a wider range of programs and a larger student body. There are 2,036 faculties (1,532 state, 504 foundation) and 582 institutes (431 state, 151 foundation). There are 19,617 departments and academic departments, 15,907 state and 3,710 foundation. There are a total of 9,670 undergraduate programs (7,563 state, 2,107 foundation), and it is seen that state universities have more undergraduate programs in terms of number. There are 16,658 master's programs (13,259 state, 3,399 foundation) and 11,930 doctoral programs (11,214 state, 716 foundation), with a preponderance of public universities. The number of arts proficiency programs is 156 (140 public, 16 private), with the majority of these programs offered by public universities (YÖK Statistics, 2024).

However, it is not clear how many of these faculties, institutes and departments provide education in English and which master's, doctoral and art proficiency programs are in English. Furthermore, the differences between public and foundation/private universities in terms of these variables have not been investigated in depth. As a result, this study aims to undertake an extensive quantitative investigation into the development and status of EMI programs in higher education throughout Türkiye by 2024. Specifically, the analysis will include the total number of students enrolled in EMI programs, current enrollment, as well as the number of staff working in EMI

programs from multiple perspectives. In doing so, the study aims to provide a timely and thorough analysis of EMI programs in Türkiye. The research questions are as follows:

1. What is the number of English Medium Instruction (EMI) programs in Turkish higher education institutions?
2. How many undergraduate and postgraduate EMI programs are available in Turkish universities?
3. Which public and private universities endorse EMI most among Turkish universities?

## **Literature Review**

The global implementation of EMI programs at increasing levels in higher education institutions is driven by the common interest in internationalization, global competitiveness and graduate employability. In this context, EMI programs in Türkiye have expanded significantly, also influenced by global trends.

Middle East Technical University (METU), founded in the 1950s, followed by Boğaziçi University in the 1970s, were the first universities to implement EMI in Turkish higher education. These universities pioneered the use of English as a language of instruction to adapt to Western educational norms and to expand students' access to scientific and technological breakthroughs (Kırkgöz, 2005). The widespread adoption of EMI programs increased after the 1990s with legal reforms that allowed private universities to use foreign languages as the language of instruction (Arik & Arik, 2014). Furthermore, after joining the Bologna Process in 2001, the Turkish Council of Higher Education allowed the creation of new courses and programs in collaboration with universities to increase internationalization through learning and teaching mobility. Thus, the number of EMI courses was increased in order to increase the number of international students in Türkiye. Macaro and Akıncıoğlu (2018) state that through EMI, adapting young people to international environments, raising the status of universities and internationalizing higher education in Türkiye are on the agenda. Therefore, English is universally accepted as the language of education (EMI) for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (Tonkin, 2011).

According to recent studies, the number of EMI programs has increased significantly: While there were 345 EMI programs in Türkiye in 1999, this number increased to 1,452 programs in 2019 (Yüksel & Altay, 2022). Private universities have shown a greater increase than public universities in this regard; 85% of private institutions and 55% of public universities offer EMI programs (Kırkgöz & Karakaş, 2022). In this context, it can be said that the number of students participating in EMI programs has also been increasing significantly. As a result, it should be straightforward to estimate the growth in EMI faculty members teaching in EMI programs.

It is known in the literature that comparative studies between public and private universities reveal significant differences in the implementation and outcomes of EMI programs. Private universities are perceived as having greater resources and more developed infrastructure to support EMI, which results in students' satisfaction and academic outcomes (Dearden & Macaro, 2016). In summary, the private sector has been more active and quicker in implementing EMI programs due to fewer restrictions and greater financial independence, while the public sector has been slower to adopt, largely due to budget constraints and government oversight (Dearden & Macaro, 2016).

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

This study applies a quantitative approach for the purposes of investigating the current situation of EMI programs in Turkish universities. The aim is to profile systematically EMI programs in relation to public and private outlooks of universities imposing descriptive statistical techniques.

## Data Collection and Analysis

The information for this research was obtained from the Higher Education Council (YÖK) Database, which holds complete records of universities, and under the roof of YÖK, the Undergraduate Atlas which is a valuable source of program interests and details of EMI and other TMI programs in Türkiye. The research population includes all official documents and information relating to the EMI within tertiary education in Türkiye, and the sample included all EMI programs delivered by state and non-state universities in Türkiye in 2024.

Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were applied to the data, and with the help of these statistics essential features and trends within the data were clarified in a more efficient way. They were comparatively examined to find out the disparities emerging from the number of EMI programs offered in public and private universities. This comparison was designed to highlight the differences in EMI programs with regard to their introduction and development in various universities. Looking into the accuracy and reliability of the findings, data were only collected from legitimate and public sources. The use of publicly available data eliminates the potential for bias, and this is an improvement in the overall outcomes of the research.

## Ethics

As this study only made use of publicly available documents and information, it did not require formal ethics committee approval. This research complies with ethics from the perspective that all data sources are transparent, publicly available, and utilized with the utmost regard for the original integrity of the information.

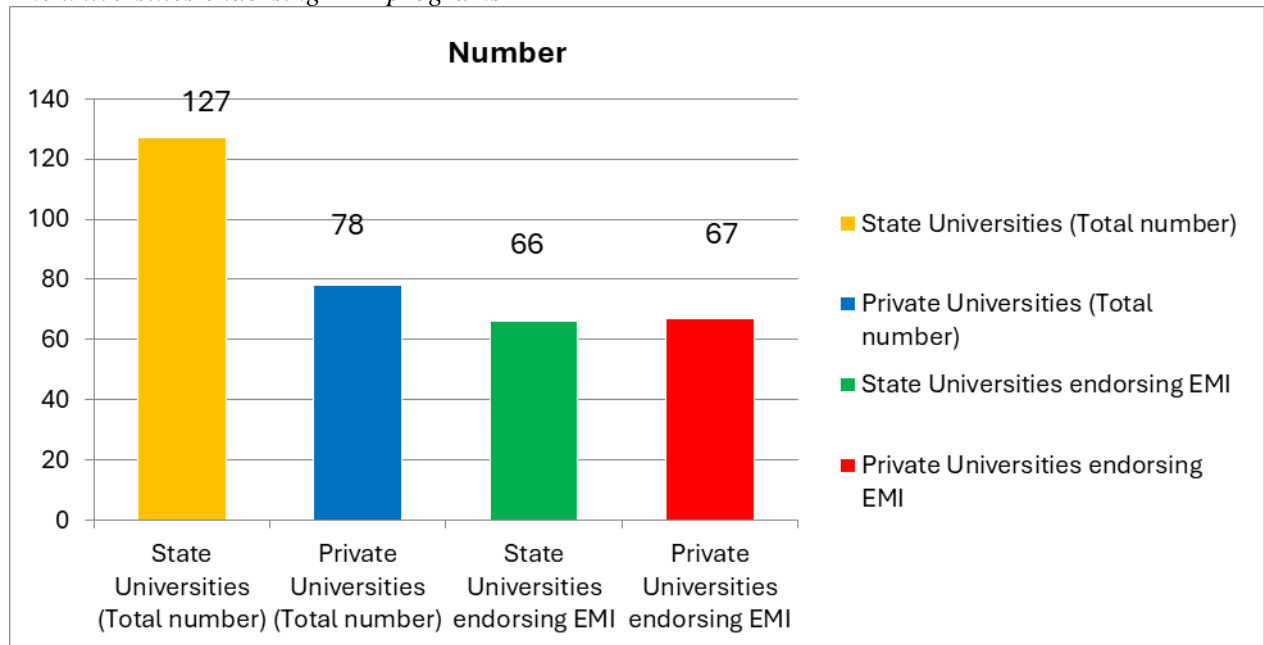
## Findings

### Research Question 1st

What is the number of English Medium Instruction (EMI) programs in Turkish higher education institutions?

**Figure 1**

*The universities endorsing EMI programs*



In Figure 1, which provides information on the total number of universities in Türkiye and the number of universities implementing English Medium Instruction (EMI) programs, there are a total of 127 state universities and 78 foundation universities. Among these universities, 66 state universities and 67 foundation universities implement EMI programs. This means that approximately 52% of state

universities and 86% of foundation universities in Türkiye offer EMI programs. The figure shows that a significant number of both state and foundation universities implement EMI, and foundation universities have a significantly higher percentage of EMI programs.

Research Question 2nd

How many undergraduate and postgraduate EMI programs are available in Turkish universities?

**Figure 2**

*The number of EMI programs in State and Private universities*

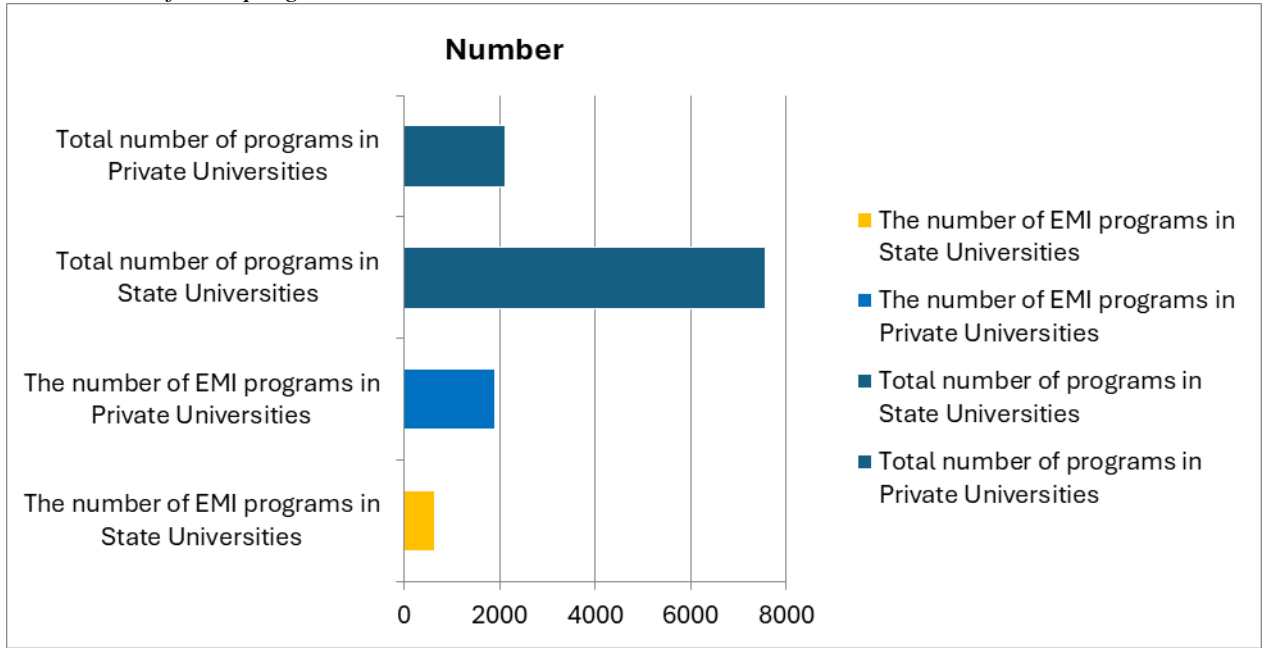


Figure 2 displays the number of EMI programs and the total number of programs in state and foundation universities in Türkiye. State universities offer a total of 7,563 programs, of which 634 are EMI programs, accounting for approximately 8.38% of their total programs. In comparison, foundation universities have 2107 programs of which 1,909 are EMI programs making up a total of approximately ninety percent 93%. This comparison strikingly reveals that while state universities have more programs, foundation universities conduct a significantly higher proportion of their programs in English. This suggests a strong trend towards EMI in foundation universities compared to state universities in Türkiye. In other words, Figure 2 highlights a striking contrast in the emphasis on EMI programs between state and foundation universities in Türkiye. While state universities offer a large number of total programs, only a small portion of them are EMI. In contrast, foundation universities, despite having fewer total programs, offer a significant majority of their programs in English, namely EMI. This shows that private universities in Türkiye focus more on providing education in English compared to state universities. In this context, while general information on EMI programs is available, unfortunately, no statistics could be found on how many of these programs are postgraduate programs.

Research Question 3rd

Which public and private universities endorse EMI most among Turkish universities?

**Figure 3**

*State and Private universities endorsing EMI programs most among Turkish universities*

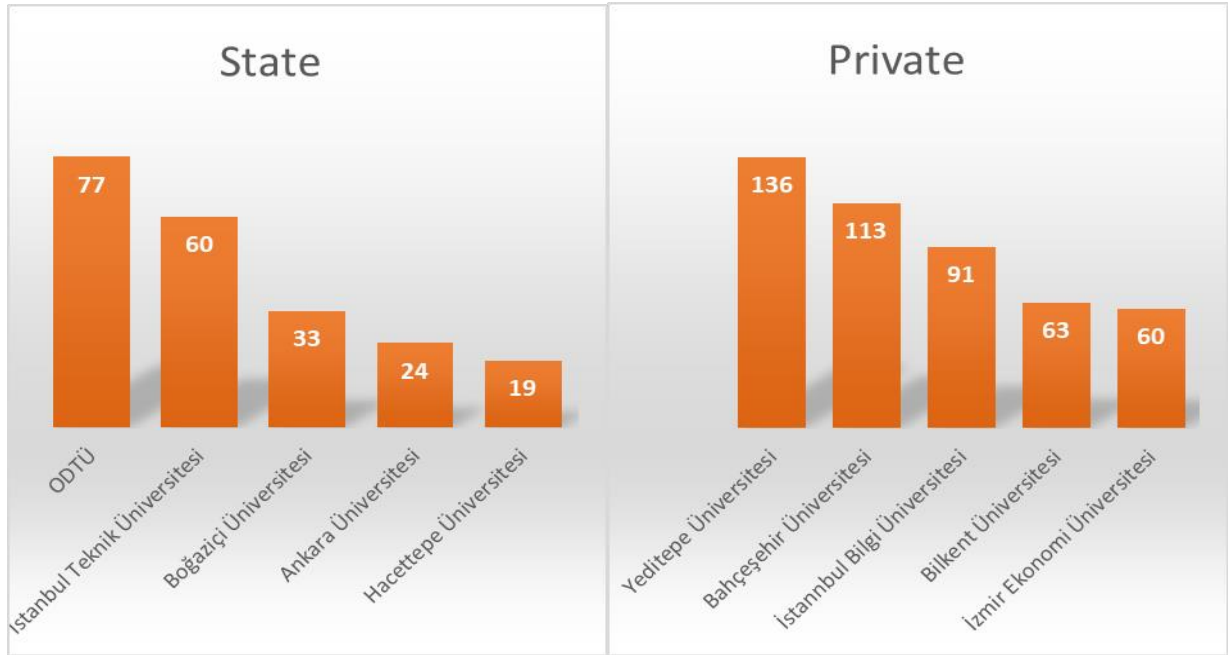


Figure 3 compares the number of English Medium Instruction (EMI) programs offered by various state and foundation universities in Türkiye. Among state universities, Middle East Technical University (METU) leads with 77 EMI programs, followed by İstanbul Technical University with 60 programs, Boğaziçi University with 33 programs, Ankara University with 24 programs and Hacettepe University with 19 programs. On the other hand, foundation universities offer a larger number of EMI programs, with Yeditepe University offering the largest number of EMI programs with 136 programs. Bahçeşehir University follows with 113 programs, İstanbul Bilgi University with 91 programs, Bilkent University with 63 programs and Kadir Has University and İzmir University of Economics with 60 programs each. This figure highlights the greater presence of EMI programs in foundation universities compared to state universities and shows a strong emphasis on EMI in the private sector.

### Discussion and Conclusion

This study uncovers important patterns and contrasts in the practice of EMI programs within Turkish higher education institutions. One of the most remarkable proofs is the huge gap in the adoption of EMI programs by public and private universities. Private universities are leading the way, with 86% of them offering EMI programs compared to only 52% of public universities. Moreover, while public universities generally have a larger number of total programs, only 8.38% of these are EMI, whereas in private universities, a substantial 90.61% of programs are applied in English.

This is also the reason, in part, why EMI as a focus moves towards higher levels in private institutions like these – better availability of resources, better infrastructure, and a greater desire to internationalise. These institutions are driven by the need to attract a global student body and to enhance their international reputation, aligning with global trends in higher education. These findings are consistent with accounts by Dearden (2015) who reported a global movement towards EMI as a way of becoming more internationally competitive and providing higher-flying graduates. Macaro and Akıncioğlu (2018) also note the talent for EMI to prepare students for entry into globalized academic and professional contexts and conclude that internationally competitive institutions may be more likely to successfully implement EMI. Conversely, public universities in Türkiye often confront issues around funding, faculty training, and resource allocation, which can complicate the implementation of EMI programs. Furthermore, these complications are not unique to Türkiye, as public institutions in other countries that do not use English as their language of communication across programs have experienced similar complications. Thus, without adequate support for EMI programs at public universities, public universities may face difficulty in realizing the benefits of English-medium education, such as international student recruitment and implications for globalized academic activity.

Meanwhile, there has been a significant expansion in EMI over a relatively short time frame. Nonetheless, this research calls attention to significant data gaps in order to present a more holistic understanding of the EMI phenomenon in higher education in Türkiye. For example, there is a distinct absence of detailed information regarding the number of faculty teaching in EMI, student enrollment figures for presently conducting courses in EMI, and the number of graduates from EMI programs. Since 2000, further data regarding recruitment budgets for EMI faculty is also lacking. These gaps in evidence contribute to hampering the evaluation of the initiation, effectiveness, and long-term impact of EMI in Türkiye.

In summary, in order to continue academic inquiry, and action in policy regarding EMI, then these gaps in data must be filled. To this end, Dearden (2015) highlights the call for a thorough and clear data collection to drive this reconsideration but also uncover whether there is an actual effect of EMI on education outcomes. Without such data, it is challenging to provide a complete picture of EMI's role and progression in Türkiye's higher education landscape.

In conclusion, this study gives critical information about the current status of EMI in Türkiye, in which private universities are the most active actors. However, it also emphasizes the need for improved data collection and reporting practices to better understand and support the growth of EMI. By addressing these gaps, policymakers, universities, and researchers can enhance the effectiveness and accessibility of EMI programs, thereby contributing to Türkiye's broader goals of internationalization and global competitiveness in higher education.

### **Limitations**

The purpose of this work was to derive the core issues concerning English Medium Instruction (EMI) programs in Türkiye. However, this research faced a number of limitations which are worth stating.

One of the most significant limitations was the lack of acquiring relevant statistical data from major structures, including but not limited to the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK), the Higher Education Council (YÖK) Statistics Bureau, and even ilan.gov.tr, which can also provide some data. More specifically, we were unable to retrieve information on the number of faculty members involved in EMI programs, the number of EMI students, the number of graduates, and even the number of EMI faculty recruitments since the year 2000.

The lack of access to this data posed a challenge in fully understanding the broader picture of EMI's development and impact on Turkish higher education. They are necessary for the measurement of the effectiveness of the used programs and are part of the minimum of the reliability and validity of the findings of the research.

Therefore, this study's results are limited in their capacity to provide a holistic view of EMI's role and movement. There are more works required that fully capture data from relevant institutions to fill these gaps and build off the insights advance in this research.

### **Implications**

The findings of the present research provide significant implications for policymakers, universities, and research stakeholders carrying out EMI in the Turkish higher education context.

For policymakers, the results suggest a need for improvements in data collection and data reporting on EMI programs. Increased access to useful information (e.g., student enrollment, the number of faculty members in EMI programs, and graduate results) will strengthen decision-makers' ability to generate policies and decisions which will shape the development and sustained implementation of EMI in a Turkish context.

For universities, particularly public universities, results from this study indicate that improvements in resources and infrastructure should be made to fully implement and sustain EMI. If these programs are not successfully supported one of their metrics for success, attracting international

students, will not fulfill its promise. In addition, the global competitiveness of Turkish higher education will not be increased.

For researchers, the study was intended to demonstrate the need for more research addressing the long term impacts of EMI. In the prospect of future research, there are areas of research regarding how EMI affects students' academic achievement and the expertise of these universities to naturally improve their international academic stature. Understanding long term implications will be key as reviewing and revising programs with changes in context and curriculum require a much more thorough comprehension of what this impact is.

In short, this study gives a picture of EMI in Turkish higher education but adds some significant gaps to consider. Addressing these gaps will help ensure the complete success and access of EMI programs as part of improving internationalization and international competitiveness overall for Türkiye's broader higher education landscape.

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### **Ethical Declaration and Committee Approval**

In this research, the principles of scientific research and publication ethics were followed. Ethics committee permission is not required since the data were compiled from public (YÖK) web sources.

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### **Proportion of the Author Contribution**

The entire study was conducted by the author.