

Full Length Research Paper

Longitudinal investigation of perceptions towards university concept through metaphors: A university Sample in Turkey

Türkan Argon

Abant İzzet Baysal University Educational Faculty, Bolu/Turkey.

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This study aims to fill the gap in the field of observation-based longitudinal studies about metaphors in educational literature and investigates students' perceptions about the concept of university before and after university by identifying and comparing the change and the direction of change observed in perceptions. The phenomenological study was conducted on 128 Abant İzzet Baysal University first year students selected through maximum variation sampling method during 2012-2013 academic year. Qualitative data collection technique was used in the study and descriptive and content analyses were used in data analysis. Based on the metaphors used during research, the following categories were obtained *prior to university entrance*: place hard work is rewarded, place that is difficult to reach, personal development center, free place, culture center and vocational/professional center whereas categories *subsequent to university entrance* were found as vocational/professional center, culture center, place of research, happy environment, a new beginning, life sample, disappointment, loneliness and hardship. Comparison of conceptual categories for "before and after categories" shows that perceptions were positive prior to university entrance, some positive perceptions changed to negative and university was defined as disappointment, loneliness and hardship.

Key words: University, metaphor, teacher candidate, longitudinal.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, universities, both the producers and implementors of knowledge, scientific and technological development and transformation and qualified man power, have been and always will be the centers of attention for all world societies. Universities have changed their visions and undertaken new missions and visions to remove borders among countries in a world that has transformed into a small village due to the effects of macro-level globalization, to compete at national and

international levels and to cooperate and share experiences. In the micro-level, demands for universities regarded as crucial for future employment opportunities are increasing day by day. Changes in the views of individuals especially of students towards universities are expected along with these changes. Being the driving force of change, universities are striving to keep up with this process. One of the pillars of this process is composed of scientific research. Literature presents

E-mail: turkanargon@hotmail.com

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various scientific studies on universities some of which utilize metaphors to identify the current situation (See: Kumral, 2009; Dalgıç et al., 2012; Bozdemir and Uluman, 2012; Tortop, 2013; Konaklı and Göğüş, 2013; Korkmaz and Bağçeci, 2013).

Metaphors that aim to reflect the social reality (Töremen, 2009) play important roles in the field of education aesthetically and pedagogically (Botha, 2009) and facilitate the comprehension of topics that are not sufficiently understood (Semerci, 2007). As a method of thought and observation, metaphors facilitate our comprehension of the world (Morgan, 1998) and present how realities and experiences are interpreted consciously or unconsciously while individuals manage their daily thoughts and actions (Kılıç and Arakan, 2010). Teacher training is a tool that can especially be used to direct teaching practices and to define the place of teachers in modern educational approaches (Vadeboncoeur and Torres, 2003). Metaphors have opened up new channels for educational analyses by transforming teacher, administrator and student languages into the language of researchers to allow better comprehension of the world of education (Jensen, 2006). Institutionally, metaphors are the best documents to understand organizational processes (Bolman and Deal, 1991; cited in Spears and Szczerbacki, 2013). They provide a new way by presenting creative opportunities to observe and know organizations (McCourt, 1997) and focus on how organizations are viewed, how organizations view themselves and the operations, communication and interaction in the organizational structure (Ruben, 2014). Metaphor theories are highly effective to comprehend organizational culture and transformation by clarifying the dynamics and mechanisms underlying complex concepts and processes (Morgan, 2006; Pondy, 1983, cited in White, 2013).

It is common practice to refer to students' views through the use of metaphors to determine state of matters, to present positions of change and to undertake restructuring in universities which are at the highest level of the education system. Students are both important sources of data to identify the current situation and one of the most important stakeholders in universities as well. In the context of education faculties, teacher candidates' perceptions on universities and the meanings they attribute to universities are rather crucial for universities to develop themselves institutionally and to identify their places and importance in educational and social respects. The common point in the studies undertaken up to now is the instantaneous description of the current situation through the use of student views. Observation-based longitudinal studies that follow the change in the metaphors of same students are not available in literature. In other words, there are no studies that identify students' perceptions on universities prior to university attendance and compare these with the subsequent perceptions to determine whether there are changes in the perceptions. These types of studies may be important

indicators to develop universities by identifying the change and its direction (positive/negative) and determining the effective variables (university conditions, instructors, type of training, negative or positive experiences etc.). These studies are also important to increase quality in profession by ensuring the identification of beliefs, dispositions and professional practices prior to service implementation and by contributing to professional development (Noyes, 2004; cited in Güveli et al., 2011). This study aims to fill the gap in the field of observation-based longitudinal studies about metaphors in educational literature and identifies and compares students' perceptions before and after university. In this sense, the study aims to identify the change in the perceptions of freshman students and to present the reasons of positive or negative changes. Study results are expected to lead university administrators, instructors and policy makers to develop the academic and social qualities of universities. Based on the specified rationale, the study sets out to identify the views of teacher candidates regarding the concept of "university" prior and subsequent to university entrance with the help of metaphors. Parallel to this aim, answers to questions below were sought in the current study:

1. What are the common characteristics between the metaphors used by teacher candidates prior and subsequent to university attendance?
2. Which qualities of universities are assessed with the help of metaphors used by teacher candidates prior and subsequent to university attendance?

METHOD

Research model

This study uses phenomenological study design, which is a qualitative research method. Phenomenological study design focuses on concepts about which that the researcher is aware of but does not have detailed and in-depth understanding. This design provides a suitable research basis for researchers to study concepts that are not completely foreign but not fully comprehended yet (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2006).

Working group

The study was conducted on 128 freshman students attending Abant İzzet Baysal University Faculty of Education, English (n=31), Classroom Teaching (n=34), Social Sciences (n=33) and Turkish (n=30) Departments during 2012-2013 academic year. Maximum variation sampling method, a purposeful sampling method, was used in the selection of students to ensure maximum representation of student variety. Purpose of sample selection is not to generalize the findings to the universe by ensuring variety but to determine the similarities and differences among variable situations (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2006). Table 1 displays the personal information of the working group.

According to Table 1, female students are the majority in the working group. Number of participants from the departments and ratio of male-female students are close to each other.

Table 1. Students' personal information.

Personal variables	Departments				Total	
	English	Classroom	Social Sciences	Turkish		
Gender	Male	f 12	13	14	14	53
		% 22.6	24.5	26.4	26.4	100.0
	Female	f 19	21	19	16	75
		% 25.3	28.0	25.3	21.3	100.0
Total		f 31	34	33	30	128
		% 24.2	26.6	25.8	23.4	100.0

Data collection

Qualitative data collection technique through the use of metaphors was used in the study. Metaphor is the use of a figure of speech in the place of another for purposes of comparison (TLA, 1983). Metaphors express the users' actions and thoughts (Draaisma, 2007) and help identifying how the concepts which need to be analyzed are perceived by individuals (Rızvanoğlu, 2007). They ensure that individuals attribute meaning to and understand their experiences (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2006) by explaining unknown experiences with the help of the known (Lakoff and Johnson, 2005) and by transmitting deep messages about thoughts and beliefs (Beyerchen, 2014). Metaphors that are valuable research tools in providing a new outlook to educational practices and theories (Jensen, 2006) are powerful mental tools that can be used to comprehend and explain highly abstract, complex or theoretical concepts (Yob, 2003).

A 6-item form was prepared and distributed to voluntary students to determine freshman students' metaphor perceptions regarding "university, instructor and university students" concepts prior and subsequent to university entrance. Students were asked to complete the following prompts found in the forms: "University/An instructor/A university student was like..... before I entered university, because...." and "University/An instructor/A university student is like.....now (after I have started the university), because....".

They were instructed to use a metaphor for each concept and given information about the importance of writing their rationales and were told that their identities would be kept confidential to reflect their honest and real views.

Literature on studies using metaphors does not include studies that observe the change in the metaphors used by the same students, i.e. observation-based longitudinal studies are not available. The difference of the current study lies in the assessment of the views of the same students in order to effectively present whether there is a change in the studied concepts and their characteristic in time. Each student was given a code and analyzed for "before and after".

To prevent possible influences on the identification of perceptions regarding university, first implementation was carried out during first week of school (September, 2012) to identify their perceptions about university and the second implementation was conducted at the end of the first year (May, 2013) to reflect their perceptions about university after they were fully formed and could reflect reality. Since findings regarding university, instructor and university student concepts take up too much space in analyses, only the findings related to "university" concept was presented and discussed.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

I. Phase: identification of valid data

Collected data were transferred to digital environment, common criteria were identified and metaphors and the rationale behind them were examined. Investigation focused on the following points:

1. It was checked to see whether the same participants answered to both "before and after university" sections and 12 views that do not include both views were left out of analysis.
2. Each metaphor was examined in detail and statements with the characteristics of similes and adjectives were left out of analysis, for instance, student 118 used the metaphor "a school that can easily be completed" to express his/her views prior to university.
3. Metaphors including more than one metaphor for university and metaphors including various views were eliminated. For instance, student 37 was left out of analysis for using more than one metaphor (center of science, freedom) and student 65 was left out of analysis for expressing various functions related to university (University is like a film strip because there are many activities, an environment of freedom and many friends there. I mean there are many things).
4. Metaphors were examined to observe whether the rationales provided for metaphors emphasized any characteristics of universities. For instance, student 91 emphasized the university as provider of an income source in the metaphor "University is the place where one earns his living because money doesn't grow on trees" but did not sufficiently explain the rationale and did not state the function of the university appropriately.
5. Out of the 180 forms that were examined, 12 of the forms were blank or half filled, therefore 168 forms were taken into consideration. A total of 40 forms (coded 3, 4, 8, 18, 20, 26, 28, 31, 37, 38, 42, 45, 51, 54, 57, 60, 64, 65, 69, 70, 78, 81, 83, 85, 88, 91, 96, 101, 105, 107, 109, 115, 116, 118, 125, 126, 130, 132, 165 and 166) were left out of analysis based on the reasons mentioned above and the remaining 128 forms were recoded and transferred to digital environment to be assessed.

II. Phase: data analysis

Descriptive and content analysis techniques were used in data analysis. Descriptive analysis aims to present the findings to the reader following the organization and interpretation of data. In this context, the data are first described systematically and clearly, descriptions are explained and interpreted and cause-effect relationships are examined to obtain results. Direct quotations are used often to reflect participants' views more impressively.

Table 2. Categories formed regarding university and frequency distribution of the categories.

Prior to University Entrance			Subsequent to University Entrance		
Categories	f	%	Categories	f	%
Place where hard work is rewarded	30	23.4	Vocational/professional center	26	20.3
Place that is difficult to reach	29	22.7	Disappointment	26	20.3
Personal development center	28	21.9	Culture center	21	16.4
A free place	18	14.1	Place of research	19	14.8
Culture center	14	10.9	Happy environment	11	8.6
Vocational/Professional center	9	7.0	Life example	9	7.0
			A new beginning	8	6.3
			Place of loneliness	5	3.9
			Hardship	3	2.3
Total	128	100.0	Total	128	100.0

The main purpose in content analysis is to arrive at concepts and relationships that can explain the collected data. First the data are conceptualized and later themes that explain the data are identified following the organization of prominent concepts (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2006). During content analysis, the metaphors generated by participants were listed temporarily in the alphabetical order and repeating metaphors were checked. Later, valid comparisons and their logical rationale were examined, similar metaphors were collected under common headings (categories) and 6 categories were obtained. Impressive metaphors and their rationales were provided with direct quotations.

The following steps were followed to increase the validity and reliability of the study: steps for collecting data and obtaining results were reported in detail to increase the persuasiveness and transferability of the study. Direct quotations were provided by keeping participants' identities confidential. Obtained metaphors and categories were presented to two experts to match each metaphor with a category and match-ups by the researcher and the experts were compared. Categories were formed based on student views prior to university since the study primarily focused on the changes observed in student views subsequent to university entrance. Following the identification of the instances of agreement and disagreement, inter-reliability was calculated with the help of Miles and Huberman's (1994) formula ($\text{Reliability} = \frac{\text{agreement}}{\text{agreement} + \text{disagreement}}$). Inter-reliability ratio was calculated to be 85%. Results were associated with the presented data and objectivity was followed in data analysis.

III. Phase: reliability and validity

Validity in qualitative studies is related to the accuracy of scientific findings and reliability is associated with the reproducibility of scientific findings (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2006). In this context, some precautions were taken to increase the reliability and validity of the study.

a. During the development of the form, literature review was used to generate the conceptual framework of the topic to increase internal validity. During content analysis themes were selected to be extensive enough to include related concepts but narrow enough to exclude unrelated concepts. Interrelations between themes and sub themes and the relationship between each time with one another were checked to ensure integrity. In order for the collected data to reflect the actual situation, students were provided with necessary information during form completion and mutual trust was created to allow expression of views in honesty.

b. In order to increase external validity (transferability), the research process and the tasks during the process were explained in detail. In this context, the research model, working group, data collection tool, data collection process, data analysis and interpretation were defined in detail.

c. All findings were presented without comments in order to increase internal reliability (consistency) of the study. Coding was done separately on the data by an instructor experienced in qualitative research field and the researcher and the codes were compared to calculate the rate of consistency.

d. Tasks undertaken in the process were explained in detail to increase external reliability (verifiability) of the study. In addition to this, raw data and codes are kept by the researcher to allow other researchers to examine them.

FINDINGS

Table 2 presents the distribution of frequencies for metaphor categories created by students about the "university" concept prior and subsequent to university entrance. Since Tables 3 through 8 focus on the changes after university entrance, the information on this table is based on the prior to university entrance categories to determine whether there were changes in student views and whether the changes were positive or negative if there were any changes.

Categories Related to University

Table 2 shows that prior to university entrance, students perceive the university as *Place where hard work is rewarded* (23.4%), *Place that is difficult to reach* (22.7%) and *Personal development center* (21.9%). These views are followed by *A free place* (14.1%), *Culture center* (10.9%) and *Vocational/Professional center* (7.0%). It is interesting to note that function of employment is cited last. It may be related to the fact that students regard university as a difficult place to get into and focus on getting into university before they think about the employment opportunities that the university will provide.

Table 3. Distribution of subsequent views of students who defined university as “a place where you get rewarded for hard work” prior to university entrance.

Prior to University Entrance			Subsequent to University Entrance	
Code	Metaphor	Category	Negative Change/Metaphor	Category
1	Heaven		Deserted island	
14	Lush prairie		3-star hotel	
33	Heaven		Road bend	
48	A magical globe		Empty box	
53	Aquarium		Nightmare	<i>Disappointment</i>
61	Culture center		Prison	
81	Holiday venue		Mountain slope	
86	Finish Line		Prison	
109	Solved Puzzle		Large Dress	
110	Dream		Village	
		<i>Place you get rewarded for hard work</i>		
Code	Metaphor		Positive Change/Metaphor	Category
3	Holiday Village		Camp	
9	Rest Area		Nazi Camp	<i>Research</i>
39	City		Library whose doors are not opened for many years	
12	Entertainment center		Short cut	
62	Holiday Village		Farm	<i>Life example</i>
111	Sky		Sky	
13	Palace		Culture Palace	
85	Folk song		Potpourri	<i>Variety</i>
105	Rose	World		
20	Rest Area	Pigeonhole	<i>Happy environment</i>	
78	Holiday Village	Above the clouds		
90	Ball point pen	Eggplant		
37	Palace	Atelier		
54	Holiday Village	Mill	<i>Professional training</i>	
70	Entertainment center	Factory		
93	Holiday Village	A tree that bears fruit		
114	A sort of prayer	A tree that bears fruit		
41	Dream world	Light		
47	State-of-the-art car	Bridge of transition	<i>A new beginning</i>	
67	Entertainment venue	A second world		

Students believe that they will be rewarded after this formidable process. Student views about the concept of university have diversified subsequent to university entrance.

The metaphor of *Vocational/Professional center* identified as the last item prior to university entrance moved to the top of the list subsequent to university entrance. Ratios of identification are the same for *Vocational/Professional center* (20.3%) and *Disappointment* (20.3%) followed by *Culture center* (16.4%) and *Place of research* (14.8%). There are also students who qualify university as a *Happy environment*, *A new beginning*, *Life example*, *Place of loneliness* and *Hardship*.

Comparison of conceptual categories of the metaphors students used prior and subsequent to university entrance

shows that all of the prior views are positive. However views of the 26.5% of these students have changed for the negative subsequent to university entrance. Students who have developed negative perceptions identified university as *disappointment* (20.3%), a place of loneliness (3.9%) and *hardship* (2.3%).

Common characteristics regarding the concept of university

Place where hard work is rewarded

According to Table 3, students regard the university as a place where they will experience the rewards of their hard work since they prepare to the university with a lengthy

and challenging process. Although the majority of positive student views stay the same after university entrance, some negative changes are also observed and metaphors such as empty box, nightmare and 3-star hotel are included among views as well.

Student views such as following present negative changes in student views: Student 14 (SS; Male): *"The University was like a lush prairie for me before I came. I thought it was a very nice place where I would be free from stress and in perfect harmony with nature. But now it feels like a 3-star hotel because it requires hard work just like I had to study in primary and secondary grades. When this is the case, there are not many opportunities to develop oneself in other regards"*; student 53 (E, Female): *"University was an aquarium for me because prior graduates who visited us at school told us that the university was a place where you can be comfortable. But now I am here, it is like a nightmare because it is not what I hoped or expected it to be"* and student 109 (CT, Male): *"I regarded the university as a solved puzzle before I started university. I used to see it as a place where I would finally feel relaxed and would rest since I would have solved the problems of my life upon entrance. But now it feels like a large dress for me since I did not observe any changes since I started the university, it feels like a slightly developed form of high school"*.

Varieties are observed in positive student views which continue to be positive subsequent to university entrance. University concept previously identified as a place where rewards of hard work will be received is identified as research, life example, cultural diversity and a happy place subsequently. Views found in the following statements are examples of positive views that continue to be positive: Student 39 (E, Female): *"It felt like a city before I came. I dreamed of it as a campus in which many individuals continued their lives. I thought of it as a campus with a shopping center, cafes or cinemas; a lively place. But now it feels like a library whose doors have not been opened for many years, actually it provides many opportunities if you know how to obtain it. However, it is like a deserted library due to insensitive patrons. People regard it as a financial resource, some place to allow them to earn money rather than some place to read and learn"* and student 13 (SS, Male): *"I used to dream of the university as a palace because I wanted it to be as beautiful as one. I would like to think of university as place in which students who have accomplished to get in would study happily. But now I am here, it reminds me of a center of culture because it is the place where students develop the most"*.

Although metaphors that included words such as prison and camp gave the impression of being negative, they were assessed as positive due to the rationale provided by the students which suggests that university is a place of hard work. The following statement by student 9 (SS, Male) is a sample for this phenomenon: *"For me, university was like a rest area before I came because*

getting into the university was going to make up for half of my target. Almost everyone who was accepted into university after all this hard work was telling me that they had more fun than they had before in their normal lives. But after acceptance, the university feels like a Nazi camp, there is no respite and there is constant work. It is really a place for the ones who deserve it".

Place that is difficult to reach

Table 4 shows that students perceived university as a place that is difficult to reach prior to university entrance with the metaphors they used such as mountain, castle and steel door. It was observed that the majority of students (n=18) had a positive change in their views.

Views of 11 students displayed negative changes subsequent to starting university due to reasons such as loneliness, hardships and inability to find what they expected. Examples of statements that represented loneliness were as follows: S 122 (C, Male) stated that *"University was like a faraway star for me because reaching that star was very difficult, even impossible and we all had the fear of not attaining it. But now I am here, it is like a foreign country because I cannot find the closeness we had in high school. You feel alone. If we continue to regard it as a star, maybe it is more difficult to own it rather than reaching for it"* and S 8 (SS, Female) expressed that *"It was a difficult castle to enter for me because it was not a place that everybody is accepted, there was a challenging exam and only a small number of millions of people could pass it. But now I am here, it is like a fridge because you are alone and by yourself. University environment feels very cold"*. The statements that represented disappointment are as follows: S 99 (C, Female) stated that *"University was a summit before I came here because it caused us to perceive it as difficult to achieve during our preparations. It felt like we could never reach that summit. But now, it feels like a corn poppy to me. It is just like a corn poppy which is beautiful right before it is picked and it sheds its petals when you pick it; I realized when I was accepted into university that it was not something to be exaggerated. Its only difference from school, I mean high school is that you wear civilian clothes, otherwise you go to hostel, you go to class, it is all the same"* and S 22 (SS, Female) reported that *"University was like a high wall before I started to university because I was studying very hard and the wall was so high that it was unattainable and a distant dream for me therefore I used to review my hopes and dreams when someone mentioned university. However, it feels like a low wall now because whoever studies can do it. It was not something to exaggerate anyway"*.

S 31 (SS, Female) whose views changed positively subsequent to university entrance said that she regarded university as the peak of Everest before she started

Table 4. Distribution of subsequent views of students who defined university as “a place that is difficult to reach” prior to university entrance.

<i>Prior to University Entrance</i>			<i>Subsequent to University Entrance</i>	
Code	Metaphor	Category	Negative Change/Metaphor	Category
8	A castle that is difficult to enter		Fridge	
50	Castle		Fridge	<i>Loneliness</i>
101	Vineyard		Hot pepper	
122	Star		Foreign country	
22	High wall		A low wall	
44	Mount Kaf		A site	
69	Summit of the Himalayas		Emptiness	
98	Diamond		Pen	<i>Disappointment</i>
99	Summit		Corn-Poppy	
103	Phoenix		A low wall	
63	World of Wonders		Challenging racetrack	<i>Hardship</i>
Code	Metaphor	<i>Place that is difficult to reach</i>	Positive Change/Metaphor	Category
2	Summit		Wheel of fortune	
10	Mount Kaf		Plate	
25	Phoenix		World	
57	Summit		World	<i>Variety</i>
77	Dream		Aquarium	
87	Ivory tower		Culture palace	
31	Peak of Everest		Bee hive	
36	Summit of the Himalayas		Bee hive	
42	Gold medal		Sun	
52	Star		Data bank	
55	Summit		Ocean	<i>Research</i>
106	Tree		Sea	
113	Steel door		Library	
119	Diamond		Treasure	
35	Star		Furniture ateliers	
65	Nightmare		Court	<i>Professional Training</i>
95	Musical chairs		Field	
112	Summit		Bridge	

university and explained her rationale in the following statement: “*Many people I closely knew studied real hard but they could not pass the university entrance exam in 3-4 tries*” and emphasized the existence of constant study and development by mentioning that “*University is like a bee hive because students are given every task regarding research since assignments and classes require constant research. Students are never free and they constantly study*”. S 65 (Male) identified the university as a place to facilitate finding opportunities for employment in the following statement: “*It was like a nightmare because university was crucial to get into for me; it was my biggest dream to be in that environment. I was scared not to be able to accomplish this dream. Therefore, it was a nightmare for me. But now it feels like the court since it decided my future income and job opportunities*”. S 42 (E, Male) emphasized the characteristic of university as a place that requires constant

study and acquisition of knowledge in his statement: “*University was like a gold medal for me before I started school because I thought it would be difficult to get into. People around me made negative comments all the time. I always thought that I would not be accepted into university and get the gold medal. But now I am here, it feels like the sun because all scientific studies, experienced teachers and smart students revolve around it*”.

Personal development center

According to Table 5, there is almost no negative change in the views of students who previously regarded university as a personal development center. S 121 (C, Female) pointed to the difficulty concept with her statement. “*Before I started the university, it was like a tree for me because a tree grows and develops when it is*

Table 5. Distribution of subsequent views of students who defined university as “a personal development center” prior to university entrance.

<i>Prior to University Entrance</i>			<i>Subsequent to University Entrance</i>	
<i>Code</i>	<i>Metaphor</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Negative Change/Metaphor</i>	<i>Category</i>
74	Shopping Center	<i>Personal development center</i>	Deserted island	<i>Disappointment</i>
121	Tree		Stone	<i>Hardship</i>
<i>Code</i>	<i>Metaphor</i>		<i>Positive Change/Metaphor</i>	<i>Category</i>
6	Small Earldom		Station	
7	Center of science		Ship	
19	land of opportunities		Door to opportunity	
51	A big door		Inn	<i>Professional Training</i>
75	Rainbow		Field	
84	Culture center		Factory	
102	Lion		Field	
108	Shopping center		Field	
15	Research center		City	
27	Home		Spider web	<i>Life example</i>
40	Center of science		Kettle	
76	Center of education		School of life	
16	Research center		Culture Palace	
60	Fair		Social cultural foundation	<i>Variety</i>
73	Roof of a building		Fruit garden	
89	Center of art		Rainbow	
32	Olympics		Scientific and technical box	
66	A massive world	Falling snow		
68	World	Scientific and technical box	<i>Research</i>	
97	Market	A temporary treasure		
120	Chateau	An old man		
107	Sport center	Amusement park		
118	Hospital	Game	<i>Happy environment</i>	
123	Grand father	Lego		
128	Laboratory	House		
34	Summit point	Valley	<i>A new beginning</i>	

fed through the roots and I thought that the university is fed through science and knowledge. But now I am here, the university feels like a piece of stone for me. It is as difficult to study at the university as it is difficult to break a stone and see inside” and S 74 (T, Male) mentioned the feelings of disappointment with the following statement: “For me, the university resembled a shopping center because I thought we could find anything related to knowledge in there. But after I started the university, it is like a deserted island now because it does not meet my needs, I could not find what I expected”.

S 19 (SS; Female) who perceived university positively subsequent to university entrance as a place that professionally trains people mentioned that “I used to regard the university as a land for opportunities because I believed that all required opportunities to develop oneself could be found at the university. I had no opportunities to develop myself at the area where I lived. I still feel the same after university entrance; I mean university still

equals a door to opportunity for me. I can develop myself as much as I like and I can be successful. I applied for courses (computer, diction etc.) as soon as I started university. Now I can attend courses”. S 40 (E, Female) who regarded university as an example for life stated that “It was like a science seat of science for me before because I thought that universities are more informed. Going to university felt like privilege to me. Since my childhood, I studied by focusing on university entrance because I thought that actual knowledge, life existed there. But now university is like a kettle for me because in my opinion, universities form the infrastructure of the real life, just like the kettle is the infrastructure of brewing tea. At the university, the tasks to be accomplished never end just like in the real world. There is always something to do. There are assignments, presentations or midterm or final exams. We play the introduction part to our lives here. We have the control both morally and materially”. S 73 (T, Female) emphasized cultural diversity in the

Table 6. Distribution of subsequent views of students who defined university as “a free environment” prior to university entrance.

<i>Prior to University Entrance</i>		<i>Subsequent to University Entrance</i>			
<i>Code</i>	<i>Metaphor</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Negative Change/Metaphor</i>	<i>Category</i>	
45	Statue of liberty	<i>A free place</i>	A small village	<i>Disappointment</i>	
64	Home whose door opens everywhere		Empty box		
71	Land of freedom		Prison		
88	Land of freedom		Mirage		
116	Island of freedom		Deserted island		
72	Statue of liberty		Foreign country		<i>Loneliness</i>
<i>Code</i>	<i>Metaphor</i>		<i>Positive Change/Metaphor</i>		<i>Category</i>
5	Kite		Culture Palace		<i>Variety</i>
29	Disco		Bag		
30	Land of freedom		Culture Palace		
56	Kite	Aquarium			
18	Sky	Mill	<i>Professional Training</i>		
58	A ball field	Bridge			
115	Forest	Caramel			
21	Cloud	Military	<i>Research</i>		
92	Weather	Military			
38	Sky	Rebirth	<i>A new beginning</i>		
94	Land of freedom	Birthday cake			
126	Land of freedom	Brake	<i>Life example</i>		

following statement: “University was like the roof of a building for me before I came to university because the roof represents a completed building. University is the roof of our education; it is the last point in education. After I started university, it is like a fruit garden for me. Just like you can find a variety of fruits in a fruit garden, you can find students from all cultures, all parts of the country at the university. It (diversity) enriches the garden”. S 120 (C, Female) defined the university as a research center with the following statement: “The University was like a chateau for me. Do you want to know why? I thought that there was a good education environment and high class people with knowledge at the university just like in the chateaus. After I started university, it is like an old man for me. The old man may not have a great outward appearance but he has a lot of knowledge, various areas of interest and is a professional”.

A free environment

Six of the 18 students who previously perceived university as a free place presented negative views subsequent to university entrance (Table 6). Student views that display disappointment are as follows: S 45 (E, Female): “University was like the Statue of Liberty for me because my friends at the university had talked of the place in very different terms. I also thought that I was given the right to do as I pleased since I was away from my parents.

However, university is like a small village for me now because the university I am in is still trying to develop itself like children do in developmental stages and it still has many shortcomings”; S 64 (E, Female): “I believed university was like a house whose doors open everywhere. University meant freedom in everything, comfort and a safe environment for me. An environment in which you are able to do anything and not held accountable for them was not bad at all. But now I regard university like an empty box. It has nice outward appearance but it is empty inside. Only you can fill that box. Otherwise there is no concept of university other than that” and S 71 (T, Male): The University was like a Land of freedom before I started university and I believed I could do anything I want here. But now it is like a prison for me because you cannot do as you please, you have to do what your instructors want”.

Examination of student views with positive changes in the perception of university as a free place points to perceptions regarding university as a professional training venue as found in following statements: S 18 (SS, Female) mentioned that “University was like the sky for me because people around me talked about university as a place in which nobody would bother us and I could move freely. Now I am here, the university is like a mill for me. The mill ensures that the wheat is processed in the form of flour to make bread and just like that, the university is a tool to make us beneficial to society by training us”. S 58 (E, Male) mentioned that “University

Table 7. Distribution of subsequent views of students who defined university as “a place with cultural diversity” prior to university entrance.

<i>Prior to University Entrance</i>			<i>Subsequent to University Entrance</i>	
Code	Metaphor	Category	Negative Change/Metaphor	Category
46	Album		Private teaching institution environment	
59	World		Prison	<i>Disappointment</i>
125	Another planet		High school	
Code	Metaphor		Positive Change/Metaphor	
4	Flower garden	<i>Place with cultural diversity</i>	Ladder	<i>A new beginning</i>
80	Metropolis		Step	
23	Rainbow		Life coach	<i>Life example</i>
17	Ocean		Door to opportunity	
83	Fair		Vehicle	<i>Professional training</i>
91	City		Atelier	
28	Television		Mosaic	
43	Culture center		Museum	<i>Variety</i>
104	Circus		Circus	
124	Foreign land		United Nations	
96	Forest		House with a garden	<i>A happy environment</i>

was like a ball field for me because I thought I needed to continue the game by myself with my own efforts. I thought each score was for my own benefit. But now the university is like a bridge for me because it will help me attain the profession in my dreams”. S 126 (C, Female) emphasized that university is the place where you learn about life in the following statement: “University was supposed to be the land of freedom. I thought of it as a place away from parents, somewhere I can be with friends all the time and in which you can do anything you please but now university is like a brake for me because you are learning to stop yourself although there is no one to stop you”.

Place with cultural diversity

Views of three students from among the group of students who perceived university as a place with cultural diversity prior to university entrance changed for the negative (Table 7). Expressions of following students display disappointment. S 59 (E, Male): “*University was the world for me. I thought it to be different from primary and secondary education with many individuals from different cultures and believed the life was good at the university. But now I am here, it is like a prison. Students are coming to school in a bored state and they come only to keep attendance*” and S 125 (C; Male): “*University was like a different planet for me before I started university. For me, there were different cultures and everything was different. But after I started university it is like a high school. There is nothing different from high school, it has*

no specific characteristics. We had to do rote learning at high school and it is the same here”.

Students whose positive ideas continued subsequent to university entrance displayed diversifications in their views. Students who regarded university as a place of cultural diversity prior to university entrance and did not change their views subsequently focused on cultural diversity issues as found in the following statements. S 124 (C; Female): “*University was like a foreign land before I came because going to another province to study and to meet different persons felt like that. But now I am here the university is like the United Nations. There are people from all provinces, all walks of life, from the east and from the west. You get to know many individuals and that is very good*”, S 28 (SS; Male): “*University was like the television for me. As there are different programs in television, there are different people and different ideas at the university. It is now like a mosaic with different views, different cultures, the integration of people from different provinces, a cultural richness*”. S 4 (SS, Female) emphasized that the university is a new beginning in her expressions: “*University was like a flower garden before I came because it felt like a place in which many cultures lived together in harmony. But now I am here, it is like a ladder because you start everything about life here”.*

Vocational/professional center

There are 9 views expressing that university is a center that provides vocational/professional training (Table 8). One of these views changed negatively as found in the

Table 8. Distribution of subsequent views of students who defined university as “vocational/professional center” prior to university entrance.

Prior to University Entrance			Subsequent to University Entrance	
Code	Metaphor	Category	Negative Change/Metaphor	Category
127	Treasure		Sunken ship	Disappointment
Code	Metaphor		Positive Change/Metaphor	
11	Crown of education		Land of wonders	
100	Pomegranate		Family	Happy environment
117	Water	Vocational/ Professional center	Rose garden	
24	Factory		Jug	
26	Bridge		Bridge	Professional Training
49	Start Line		Travel agency	
79	Dam		Library	
82	Factory		Scientific technical box	Research

following statement that displays disappointment. S 127 (C; Male); “*University was like treasure before I came here. I thought all the people who would provide me with information to get a profession were there. But now it is like a sunken ship. You feel you would feel relaxed when you get into university but when you realize that it is no different from high school; you understand you are in a sunken ship*”.

Positive views expressing that the university is a center to provide professional training continued positively including also new expressions such as a happy environment, professional training center and research center. S 26 (SS; Female) who continued to uphold the same view of university as a professional training center stated that “*It was like a bridge for me before I started university because I cannot do my dream job without getting sufficient training about it at the university. I need to store some things in my brain in spite of all the knowledge I already have. That’s why university is the preparation for my profession in one sense. It is still like a bridge for me now because university means doing good things and storing knowledge. I believe that the more I develop myself here, the more successful I will become in the future.* S 79 (T, Male) emphasized that the university is a place of research and study in the following statement: “*University reminded me of a dam before I started university. Just like a dam transforming incoming water to energy, the university provides students with professions with the help of the training provided there. But now I am here, it is like a library. University is an actual house of science*”.

RESULT, DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Categories regarding university

Although demands for universities which have crucial impact on shaping individuals’ future professions, careers,

income levels, statuses, life standards and social lives are increasing day by day, having a profession is getting more and more difficult in Turkey as well as employment conditions and in the meantime, inadequacies of universities to meet the demands are causing student accumulation during university entrance process. In addition to these, the university entrance exams that require a lengthy and tiresome preparation process cause negative impact on the youth. Therefore, universities are perceived by students as institutions that are hard to get into. Student perceptions about university prior to university entrance such as “*place where hard work is rewarded, place that is difficult to reach, personal development center, a free place, culture center and vocational/professional center*” shows that. Studies in the literature also emphasize characteristics of universities such as preparing for life, personal development-maturity, transfer of knowledge-education, social and cultural activities, variety, transformation and production centers, tools, social learning and sharing, a family environment, entertaining environment, freedom, a place to experience various cultures, necessity, hard/boring/negative environments, disappointment and sadness (Dalgıç et al., 2012; Bozdemir and Uluman, 2012; Konaklı and Göğüş, 2013).

One of the salient findings is the fact that professional/vocational employment opportunities provided by universities were mentioned as a last item prior to university whereas they were cited as the first item upon entrance. This finding may be related to the fact that students regard universities as difficult to get into and focus on studying before they start focusing on their functions as providers of employment opportunities. Students believe that they will be rewarded for their hard work after going through this challenging process to get into university. Diversifications were observed in students’ views subsequent to university entrance. The most often repeated views subsequent to university entrance included perceptions of universities as *professional/vocational centers* and also the existence of

feelings of *disappointment*. The fact that professional/vocational employment opportunities provided by universities were mentioned as a last item prior to university whereas they were cited as the first item upon entrance shows that students became aware of this function of universities got they became disappointed since they could not meet their expectations there. Students also considered the university as *a culture center, research place, a happy environment, a new beginning, life example, loneliness and hardship* subsequent to university. Comparison of the conceptual categories for “before and after” university entrance shows that all prior perceptions regarding universities are positive, which is an interesting finding. This may be related to the positive mission attributed to universities by students and the society. However, some of the positive perceptions turned into negative perceptions subsequent to university entrance and the university was defined as disappointment, loneliness and hardship. This finding may be related to the inadequacy of universities to fully meet student expectations as well as the necessity to live in a different environment for the first time by leaving their families and face some problems for the first time on their own. In their study conducted on high school students’ perceptions regarding university, Korkmaz and Bağçeci (2013) similarly found the categories of a place with different characteristics, a process, future, cultural diversity and pessimism.

Common characteristics of universities

One of the categories formed in line with the most often used metaphors regarding perceptions (heaven, lush prairie, culture center, sky, holiday village etc.) is *the place where hard work is rewarded*. This finding shows that students define the university as a place they will receive the reward of hard work after a lengthy and challenging process of preparation. Although it was identified that previously positive views continued to be positive, some negative changes were observed due to the use of metaphors related to disappointment such as empty box, nightmare, prison and village and some students were disappointed. This and similar findings may be regarded as indicators that show universities cannot meet the expectations of students. Students with positive views diversified their views subsequent to university entrance and different characteristics of universities previously regarded as places where hard work is rewarded were started to be used such as research (camp, short cut etc.), life example (farm, sky), variety (world, potpourri), a happy environment (pigeonhole, above the clouds), professional training (atelier, mill, factory) and a new beginning (bridge of transition, a second world). Universities should be institutions that contribute to student development and transformation, make them happy to be there and accommodate varieties that will allow work and study options and present

different environments in addition to providing students with employment opportunities. Findings obtained in the study can be regarded as indicators that universities provide students with these opportunities, although they do not provide all the opportunities mentioned above.

Another category often mentioned by students prior to university entrance was found to be *place that is difficult to reach*. Intensive use of metaphors such as castle, Mount Kaf, summit of Himalayas and steel door shows the fact that students regard the university as a place whose entrance is difficult to achieve prior to university entrance. Some of the views regarding university as a difficult place to reach were changed for the negative subsequent to university entrance. Loneliness (a foreign country), hardship (a challenging race track), and disappointment caused by reasons such as not finding what they hoped for (low wall, corn poop) point to this fact. Disappointment may be caused by negative experiences other than not finding what they hoped for such as feelings of loneliness and emptiness because most students at university have left their homes and families for the first time and are alone in a foreign environment and have to live with strangers. This situation can cause undesired feelings such as loneliness in many students. The reasons of disappointment are varied based on both individual and institutional characteristics. Therefore universities should focus on not causing disappointment in students and they should be able to meet their academic, social, cultural and psychological expectations. Students’ views that continued to be positive were also diversified subsequent to university entrance. These students mentioned university characteristics such as variety (wheel of fortune, world, aquarium), research (data bank, library), and vocational/professional training (furniture atelier, field). When the metaphors used and the categories created are taken into consideration it can be argued that positive perceptions regarding the functions (providing employment opportunities, research and doing science, provision of social development) of universities are ongoing.

The negative changes in the views of students who considered universities to be *personal development centers* with metaphors such as center of science, education, art, sports and research are almost non-existent subsequent to university entrance. Two students changed their views negatively and defined the university as a disappointment (deserted island) and hardship (stone). Students whose views continued to be positive defined universities as professional/vocational center (door to opportunity, factory), life example (spider web, school of life), variety (culture palace, fruit garden), research (scientific/technical box, old man), happy environment (amusement park, home) and a new beginning (valley). These findings show that positive perceptions of students who regarded the university as a personal development center continued subsequent to entrance and not only does the university undertake this function but it diversifies it.

Prior to university entrance, 18 students defined university as a *free place* by using metaphors such as land of freedom, statue of liberty, island of freedom, kite and sky. The land of freedom metaphor is the most frequently used metaphor. This finding shows that university is regarded as a place free from responsibilities where all dreams come true. The task of universities is to educate individuals who consider the world from a wide perspective and who knows how to earn and keep their freedom (Gökçe, 1990). The university entrance examination process which requires preparation not only causes them to limit themselves in many respects but also stay away from social life and many activities that will add color to their lives. Stress to pass or fail the exam results in a more difficult process for students. In this context universities are like the keys to freedom for students who are restricted from various activities. The fact that students who start university stay by themselves can also be regarded as freedom. Universities, representatives of scientific research and freedom, are massive organizations that include a wide variety of students and staff. Ongoing news about universities by the media and communication channels and the fact that students are faced with such information regarding the characteristics of universities may have caused this perception of universities as a place of freedom. The perception of universities as a place of freedom continued subsequent to university entrance in the form of variety (culture palace, aquarium), professional/vocational training (mill, bridge), study/research (military) and a new beginning (rebirth, birthday cake). However, five students provided negative views subsequent to university entrance and defined the university as a disappointment (empty box, prison) and loneliness (foreign country).

Three of the 14 students who defined university as cultural diversity with the use of metaphors such as album, flower garden, ocean and fair prior to university entrance displayed negative views subsequent to university entrance and defined it as a disappointment (prison, high school). Views that continued to be positive subsequent to university entrance were diversified in the form of a new beginning (ladder, step), life example (life coach), professional/vocational training (door to opportunity, atelier), variety (mosaic, museum) and a happy environment (house with a garden).

The perception regarding *the professional/vocational training* function of university identified with the metaphors such as crown of education, treasure and dam prior to university entrance is infrequently observed (n=9). There is one student whose positive views changed towards negative and who defined the university as a disappointment. Positive views regarding the university as a professional vocational center continued positively subsequent to university entrance as a happy environment (land of wonders, family), professional/vocational training (jug, bridge) and a place of research (scientific/technical box, library). Although universities are perceived as

intuitions that first and foremost provide employment opportunities (Ceylan, 2008) it is a positive development to identify other functions of universities as well because the only function attributed to universities shouldn't be related to employment opportunities.

Suggestions developed in line with research findings are as follows:

The reasons why positive students' perceptions prior to university entrance changed negatively to disappointment, loneliness and hardship should be investigated. Necessary precautions should be taken by the universities so that feelings such as disappointment, loneliness and hardship are not experienced. Programs may be developed to present universities to high school students, instructors can be invited as experts and informative trips to nearby universities can be organized. Metaphors obtained in the study may be used as supporting tools by universities that want to renew themselves in making sense of their culture and their standings.

Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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