

# COMPARISON BETWEEN UNDERGRADUATE PLACEMENT EXAMINATION (LYS) IN TURKEY AND EDEXCEL INTERNATIONAL ADVANCED LEVELS EXAMINATION (IAL) IN THE WORLD

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## ABSTRACT

Universities have a tremendous impact on deciding people's personal satisfaction in professions for their future life. Every student dreams to study at a prestigious university and achieve higher education in order to learn and develop his/her skills to pursue the desired career. Each country has its own set of methods for conducting external placement examinations for undergraduate students. However, it is expected to encourage any sort of criticisms regarding these external examinations for the amelioration of the state and its nation to avail upgrades in teaching, learning and evaluating. This study is aimed to examine the differences between Undergraduate Placement Examinations (LYS) in Turkey and the Edexcel International Advanced Levels Examination (IAL) in the world which is recognized by more than 70 countries<sup>1</sup>, mostly in British Post-Colonial Countries around the globe. The findings disclose the differences, after elucidating both the examinations, which are in practice in different continents with different educational methods, the study found the features and lacking of these two dissimilar examinations as there are Multiple Choice Questions in Turkish placement examination and several other types of questions in Edexcel International Advanced Levels Examination. The study presents that the examinations' practice and acceptance in their regions stem from their historical background. By presenting narrative descriptions of both external examination systems with their benefits and drawbacks, this research may give the readers a vivid picture of advantages and disadvantages of these two placement examinations.

**Key words:** LYS, IAL, External examinations, YOK, OSYM, Undergraduate

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Manfredi (2004) abridges the education system as topping off the students' cerebrum with heaps of information while Matheson (2014) describes the students' role during learning as 'learning machines' and Erdogan (2015) perceives schools as factories; however education leaders need to believe that education has much larger concept for the learners since it is an important and significant tool that is implemented in the present world to thrive and succeed, as it alleviates the challenges which are faced and confronted in life. The knowledge and information expanded

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through education that facilitates individuals' talent and potential to be optimally utilized owing to training and preparation of the human mind. Schmeck (2013) states that everyone's experience of learning is not same. Nevertheless doors of opportunities can be opened in regards to better prospects in career growth with properly carried out education.

Education has played a dominant and vital role in the contemporary industrial world. The present development and improvement in technology have been enhanced largely by education, as individuals are able to apply the skills obtained in real life leading to innovations and advancements.

This study presents the differences of Turkish Undergraduate Placement Examination, which is second-round<sup>2</sup> state exam of the universities' entrance system in Turkey and having Turkish abbreviation-`LYS`, and the UK based private British Edexcel International Advanced Levels (IAL) Examination, which is the international version of Edexcel GCE A Levels, organize by Pearson;<sup>3</sup> however, it is more commonly known as the A-Level Examinations in the British post-colonial countries around the world, so we'll use `A Levels` more than `IAL`. Abrams and et al (2003) state that students' performance on external examinations can bring about expanded levels of anxiety, stress, and fatigue. Each of the three has disadvantageous effects on the student's performances. As Popham (2005) summarized that the external examinations are one-size fits-all. Test things are not generally adjusted to the instruction, and there is by all accounts a jumble between what is taught and what is tested.

The GCE A-level is a linear qualification taken over two years starting from grade 11 by students at school in the UK only. Both GCE A-level and IAL offer qualifications up to 50 subjects<sup>4</sup> in national and international level depending on session and country while IAL is only for international students. International students can still take GCE, which is equivalent of IAL, but they should note that they will take regional versions and will sit for the examination at slightly different times. The grades obtained from per subject can be converted to approximate UCAS<sup>5</sup> points for application to UK Universities.

A Level Examinations are especially for students who are studying outside of the UK. It follows a modular and segmental structure, so a student can build the qualification over time. Examinations take place in every January and June. The readers of this article will get the opportunity to find out sophisticated statistics, reliable data and dependable information with comparisons of both the systems. Also they can acquire knowledge concerning reliability, validity, importance and

significant values, recognizing differences and assessing objective of the aforementioned examinations.

## 1.1 Research Question

This study has aimed to find out the answer to the unique question of:

- Contrast Edexcel International Advanced Levels Examination with Turkish University Placement Examination.

## 2. COMPARISON BETWEEN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN TURKEY AND THE UK

Descriptive data were collected to provide the details of education systems in order to offer the readers of this study an opportunity to comprehend the differences between the two systems.

### 2.1 The Turkish Educational System

According to official website of Ministry of Education in Turkey, (MEB website 2016) in 1924, madrasas were closed and Ataturk set up new secular schools by making elementary school attendance compulsory to establish a contemporary Turkish Educational System. In 1997, the ministry introduced a new system. The duration of obligatory primary education was extended from five to eight years. Prior to 1997, primary education comprised of five years of mandatory primary school and three years of optional middle school, or junior high school. In 2011 the duration of obligatory primary education was extended from eight to twelve years.<sup>6</sup> Dinç et al (2014) state that University Entrance Exams have been reorganized a couple of times in the previous decades in Turkey.

Sisman (2007) says compulsory education became public policy and according to a statistics in Radikal Newspaper (2013), the ruling government in Turkey brought 13 changes and variations in Education System, almost once every year since 2012, and Akpınar et al (2012) state that the latest one is named '4+4+4 System' (as it is called in Turkey); mandatory primary, mandatory secondary and mandatory tertiary education for 4 years each. According to Ministry of Education of Turkey (MEB 2013), percentage of private high school students in Turkey is 3.14% only while primary and secondary school students' percentage is much lesser.

### 2.1.1 Elaboration of YOK and OSYM

According to its official website of the Council of Higher Education (YOK 2016), which is known as YOK in its Turkish abbreviation, in accordance with the new Higher Education Law, the administration of higher education in Turkey was comprehensively restructured in 1981. The system thereby became centralized, with all higher education institutions tied to the Council of Higher Education (Yükseköğretim Kurulu, or YOK). After governmental restructuring, all kinds of higher education institutions fell into the category of 'universities'.

Olcme, Secme ve Yerlestirme Merkezi (OSYM), Measuring, Selection and Placement Center, which was founded in 1973, is the body responsible for organizing the national level university entrance examination of YGS-LYS, and several other large scale examinations in Turkey.<sup>7</sup>

### 2.1.2 YGS and LYS Examinations

Yildirim (2010) mentioned in his study that there are not many studies conducted on the external university entrance exam in Turkey. Admission process for undergraduate study programs in Turkey is based on nation-wide high stakes standardized selection tests. Koçak (2012) states that the university entrance exam has changed throughout the years. The framework in 2015 is a two-phase examination system where students firstly take YGS (Transition to Higher Education Examination), and after that LYS (Graduate Placement Exam). Dinc et al (2014) explain that YGS is the first round external examination and LYS, is the second round.

These central university entrance examinations, namely YGS and LYS, are two staged, held once a year and administered by the Measuring, Selection and Placement Center (OSYM). Candidates secure access to the institutions of higher education based on their composite scores comprising of the marks on the selection examination and their high school grade point averages. Students, who are only appearing in the YGS, where they have to answer 160 questions in 160 minutes, are able to apply for associate degree programs. Koçak (2012) states that candidates, endeavoring to join a higher education institution, have to take both of these examinations. These YGS and LYS examinations in Turkey are really one-size fits-all as they are external examination tests with their unique features.

In Turkey, the only way to enter a university after completing public high schools, private high schools or foreign establishment, is to appear in these external mandatory YGS-LYS examinations. In 2015, 2,126,681 students from different high schools took YGS exam and around 1,000,000 of them received the opportunity for placement into universities.<sup>8</sup>

### 2.1.2.1 Elaboration of YGS

It is mentioned in the prospectuses of OSYM that (OSYM, 2016), transition to Undergraduate Examination, known as YGS in its Turkish abbreviation, comprises of 40 questions covering four subjects-areas with a total of 160 questions to be completed within 160 minutes. University placement examinations include 2 rounds; first step is called YGS and second round is LYS.

YGS's numbers of questions and subject names have been provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Numbers of questions and subject names of YGS (OSYM, 2016)

<i>Exam Type</i>		<i>Number of Questions</i>	
Turkish Language			40
Basic Mathematics	Mathematics	31	40
	Geometry	9	
Social Studies	History	17	40
	Geography	14	
	Philosophy	9	
Science	Physics	14	40
	Chemistry	13	
	Biology	13	
<b>Total Number of Questions</b>			<b>160</b>

### 2.1.2.2 Elaboration of LYS

LYS is the second stage of the university entrance external examinations providing direct admission to higher education in Turkey and 17 affiliated universities<sup>9</sup> abroad. An examinee qualified for LYS has to pass the score of the exam in YGS, which is 150 marks for two-year bachelor of education programs and 180 marks for 4 or more years undergraduate programs.

Dogan et al (2015) state that the second stage consists of five tests: LYS - 1 (Mathematics and Geometry), LYS - 2 (Science), LYS - 3 (Turkish Language & Literature, and Geography 1), LYS - 4 (History, Geography 2, and Philosophy Group), and LYS - 5 (Foreign Languages). All Turkish students may enter any one of these set external examinations. For example, if a student wants to be doctor, he/she has to appear in LYS-1 and LYS-2 both, if a student wants to be a history teacher, he/she has to appear in LYS-3 and LYS-4 both, if a student wants to be English language teacher, he/she has to appear in LYS-3 and LYS-5 both.

Table 2: Number of Questions and duration at LYS (OSYM, 2016);

<i>Exam code</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Number of Questions</i>	<i>Duration</i>	<i>Total</i>
LYS-1	Mathematics	50 questions	75 minutes	80 questions, 120 minutes
	Geometry and Analytic Geometry	22+8=30 questions	45 minutes	
LYS-2	Physics	30 questions	45 minutes	90 questions, 135 minutes
	Chemistry	30 questions	45 minutes	
	Biology	30 questions	45 minutes	
LYS-3	Turkish Language & Literature	56 questions	85 minutes	80 questions, 120 minutes
	Geography - 1	24 questions	35 minutes	
LYS-4	History - 2	44 questions	65 minutes	90 questions, 135 minutes
	Geography - 2	16 questions	25 minutes	
	Philosophy Group(Physiology, Sociology &Logic)	30 questions	45 minutes	
LYS-5	Foreign Language (English, German, French)	80 questions	120 minutes	80 questions, 120 minutes

## 2.2 General information about Education System in the UK<sup>10</sup>

Education in England may differ from the system used elsewhere in the United Kingdom. Basically, there are two systems: one implemented in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and another implemented in Scotland. Two of the education systems have different importance and prominence emphases. Now a days the education system in Wales differs and varies slightly from the system in England.

In 2002, the Welsh Assembly decided to abolish the tests at Key Stage One. Instead, the optional teacher assessment materials were provided to schools in 2003 in English, Mathematics and Welsh. These had been adapted from materials that had originally been developed by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) and the other test agencies to be used as statutory assessment materials for 2003. Education in Scotland differs from the system elsewhere in the United Kingdom. Thus English, Welsh and Northern Irish students tend to sit for a small number of more advanced examinations and Scottish students tend to sit for a larger number of less advanced examinations. Education in Northern Ireland differs slightly from the system used elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

## 2.2.1 Elaboration of IAL Examination

According to official website of Edexcel (Pearson 2016), IAL is a two year programme leading to externally set, marked and certificated examinations by Pearson (Edexcel) which is one of the greatest seven UK Examination boards. According to official website of Edexcel (JCQ 2016), the UK Examination boards are AQA (AQA Education Ltd), CCEA (Northern Ireland Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment), City & Guilds, OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations), Pearson (Edexcel), SQA (Scottish Qualifications Authority) and WJEC and they are organized under JCQCIC which is a membership organization representing these seven largest national awarding bodies offering qualifications in the UK. These qualifications include GCSEs, A levels, and Scottish Higher as well as vocational qualifications.

Pearson offers world-class academic and general qualifications include GCSEs, A levels (IAL) and International GCSEs (O Level), as well as some vocational qualifications, including NVQs and Functional Skills. It provides examinations to thousands of schools around the world. Examinations take place in every January and June.

The contents of various IAL courses are “tailored to a global student body of rich diversity,” which is recognized by UCAS5, by universities in England, and by universities overseas as “equivalent grade-for-grade, with the UK [United Kingdom] GCSE qualifications” and is for 14-16 year-old students.

IAL Examinations are taken in class 11 and 12 after O Level (IGCSE) examinations which are taken in class 9 and 10. According to the official website of the United Kingdom, [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk), the examinations are organized by 7 different awarding bodies, which are mentioned above, in the UK. Edexcel and CCEA are international while others are local in the UK. There is no alteration among these examination grades. Students may appear in any of them and their score will be valued everywhere in the world with the same worth. For the purpose of the research, it was wise to choose to compare LYS with Pearson Company’s Edexcel because it seems it is more popular and widespread than others.

There are two types of IAL examinations. An IAL curriculum is made up of AS (advanced subsidiary) and A2 units. AS level is the first stage in IAL. In the first year (usually year 11), students can normally choose to study up to four IAL subjects and sit for the AS level examination. They can take an AS level only and gain a recognized qualification. To have a full IAL result, they continue for one more year studying A2 units. There are different subjects from the categories of Art, Business/Finance, Humanities, Mathematics, Science, English and Languages.

### 2.2.2 International GCSE

According to Boyle (2008), students aged 14-16 mostly take International Ordinary Levels, which is commonly known as O Levels, as these are designed for “a multi-cultural, multilingual student group” and are similar to IALs. In order to meet particular local needs, some O Level syllabuses have been developed (e.g., Turkish O Level). They are alike IALs and lead directly to “A/AS GCE levels or employment, and are available within national education systems” in several countries (Pearson 2016).

## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Denzin et al (2000) state that qualitative research puts more emphasis on detection and description of perceptions and experiences, along with its objectives like extracting concepts from perceptions and interpreting the meaning of experiences from the provided information. To understand the nature of examinations and their relation to each other, in-depth interviews and observations were vital to collect data. In order to accomplish the study properly, qualitative research method was chosen as it describes the kind and quality of a subject, while interpreting and attempting to understand an event. Being qualitative in nature, it was difficult to use too much of statistical data to measure kinds and qualities of stated examinations.

This study is an exploratory research as it was conducted to compare clearly what LYS and A Level are. There are studies which are conducted separately for YLS and A Level but, as we understand, this is the first study to compare the aforementioned examination systems. We have presented the details of the given examinations and introduced their advantages and disadvantages for students, teachers and parents. This study is a descriptive research as well since it permits descriptions of LYS and A Level examinations. The authors here gave details of the examinations to have proper exploratory research.

Data were collected for this comparison. However, after examining magazines, books, journals and other materials; there were articles in different areas of education but there was hardly any article, thesis or survey available solely in comparison of LYS and A Level. Though there exist scanty materials relating to LYS and A-Level Examinations separately, none of them included comparison. Being the former student in Turkey who completed the high school before appearing in university placement examinations; presently called YGS-LYS examinations and now having teaching proficiency in A Level examination system helped a lot to practically comprehend the differences of the examination systems to write and prepare this article.

#### 4. DATA COLLECTION

The books related to LYS and A-Level examinations have been used as a useful resource for the data collection. Information regarding OSYM or LYS was found mainly in Turkish Language, so it was necessary to translate dozens of relevant pages. On the other hand, having access to brochures and detailed analysis about A Level at its website in English was of great help, especially in saving time.

We were extremely privileged to have in-depth interview with the teachers of the most reputed schools and coaching centers in Turkey over phone including the author's sibling, Mr. Ali Akbas, who has been teaching Math in Isparta, Igdir, Mus, Istanbul and Ankara since 1994 and who was the teacher of several highest scorers in Math in different years in Turkey in LYS examinations, whom we're always very proud of.

In order to collect unblemished data, several interviews were conducted with the most reputed Int'l English Medium Schools' A Level teachers in Dhaka and Chittagong, Bangladesh, and Mr. Adnan Oztas and Mr. Bilal Sarimeseli were deliberately chosen for the interview as they are Turkish graduates, and are familiar with LYS system. Given that one of the best methods for the research is interviewing, the benefits of in-depth interviews with A Level teachers in Dhaka and Chittagong whose educational backgrounds were LYS and who were Turkish origin helped in giving better result for this study. The clear picture of the differences, benefits and drawbacks of each external examination and information about the comparison was provided by the interviewees.

Visiting British Council to collect documents and brochures about A Level examinations to find out their strengths aided a lot for this study. After inquiry, the concerned authorities were very helpful in providing booklets and catalogs about the system. There were internet links in the pamphlets.

#### 5. MAJOR FINDINGS

To find out the differences, the data were collected and scrutinized meticulously. Numerous sources, conducting in-depth interviews and observations gave results to present and show the comparison. Information in this chapter based on OSYM guideline, Edexcel webpage, interviews and personal observations and experiences. The list of differences and similarities are given below:

- 1) LYS is organized once a year in Turkey and A Level examinations are organized, for most of the subjects, twice a year in different countries<sup>1</sup>. Students are benefit

ed from A Level system by saving time, in case of appearing one more time within 6 months if the result is not up to the mark. There will be November session from November 2017 in addition to January and June sessions to facilitate the students in saving up time.

- 2) Dogan et al (2015) state that there are 5-package subjects in LYS. Students have to pick set packages designed by the state in Turkey. a) Mathematics and Geometry, b) Science, c) Turkish Language and Literature, and Geography, d) History, Geography, and Philosophy Group, e) Foreign Languages  
A Level students have the freedom to choose any subject in any area as per their personal choice and interest.
- 3) 4 mistakes take away one correct answer's value in LYS examination while A level examinees' mistakes will not affect their right answers in A Level examination. In IAL, in marking schemes, there is a concept of 'error carried forward' which prevents the loss of marks for a further linked question in case of a mistake in the former question.
- 4) Optical answer sheets are checked digitally by optical mark recognitions and there is no possibility of malicious mistakes in LYS system. Students' marks may vary from one examiner to another in A Level system, mainly for language and social science subjects. Students may apply concerned examination boards in the UK for rechecking the examination papers and his/her result may be revised. Roediger et al (2011) state that, examinations and assignments are the two most commonly used approaches to assessment in education. Since testing consumes a large amount of students' and teachers' time, the evaluation process should be made more efficient. Valuation procedure is too efficient and fast for LYS examinations as the answer sheets are scanned and checked by optical reading machines.
- 5) LYS is valid only in Turkey and with few other affiliated universities<sup>9</sup> abroad whereas IAL is widely recognized globally. According to Pearson Edexcel (Pearson 2015), at present, 70 countries provide A level programme over 454 different choices of subjects and scores are accepted around the world. Overtime, new subjects are being introduced into the programme.
- 6) There are quotas for the high schools' highest scorers in each department in Turkish universities. It may seem to be advantageous for the brilliant or academic students; however it is regrettable to mention here that all the high schools do not have the same facilities and standards in every nook and cranny of Turkey. A 'weaker' highest scorer in a regular school than medium level one who is not

- a highest scorer in a much better school may get chance to be admitted with lesser mark due to the poor standard of his/her school. It causes discrimination and inequality among the highest scorers. 'Highest scorer' label in high school will not give A Level students any benefit for their A Level results. Only their knowledge and dedication towards studying and solving past papers will help them in achieving a good result.
- 7) LYS examinees may choose up to 30 departments from different/similar universities and any field as per their preference.<sup>11</sup> After the examination, there will be evaluations and computations and one of the choices may be granted or none of them may be granted depending on student's YGS-LYS scores. If they choose erroneous department or city for undesired placement, they have to wait for the next year for their application process and the examinee's mark will be reduced. The case for A Level is more equitable as students may apply in any university in any country for intended department; there is no constraint. The examinee's mark will not be changed or reduced.
  - 8) It is extremely important to find out a selected answer to the question as early as possible since there is very limited time in LYS examinations. In most of numerical questions or in most of math questions' steps, students are required to find out the answer mentally to avoid any question untouched. As Turkish Education Foundation had a 'Life=180' campaign once to raise the awareness of this problem as examinees' fate is squeezed into 180 minutes.<sup>12</sup> Students are given plenty of time in A Level examinations for finding out right answers. Students' knowledge is checked instead of their problem solving speed. Here we shall state that there is criticism of insufficient time in IAL exams, especially in science subjects.
  - 9) LYS has 13 subjects to study maximum (see Table 2) and students have to choose one of the set packages, nevertheless there are more than 45 subjects in A Level examinations and students may choose as many as they want or as proficient as they are.
  - 10) It is stated in The Board of Inspectors' (Teftis Kurulu Başkanlığı, 2010) booklet that students in Turkey need to graduate from formal or non-formal education programs in order to apply for university entrance. Schools in Turkey send 12 grade students' list to Measuring, Selection and Placement Center (OSYM), and students may collect their examination entry card from the school sent by OSYM. Students do not have to graduate, even don't go to school and not having at least 5% attendance, and it is not a bar to appear in A Level examinations. Examinees who do not study class 11 and 12 or who study 'never' may simply apply as private candidate or they may be registered from the coaching centers

after some payment. The A Level examination boards, like Edexcel, do not bother for the graduation as they consider their sky high revenue. It does not look professional for the consistency of education and it does not only affect number of students in higher classes deleteriously but also the income of private schools. Frivolity for the particular subjects, which students are not going to appear in, is becoming one of the discipline or attendance issues for the students in schools; nevertheless there are few renown schools which have compulsory attendance in return of registration from their school. Applying to a university requires certain important documents and one of them is school transcript for more serious universities. Here the point is not one of the formalities for application process. The problem which was mentioned here that some students are not serious for attending classes as it is not mandatory in English Medium Schools.

- 11) YGS and LYS examinations fees are cheaper since they are arranged by the state and the amount is 178 Turkish Lira (around \$60)<sup>13</sup> only. It is a gain for the under-privileged students. Students take 6 subjects in average in O Level and 3 subjects in average in A Level. Parents pay around \$ 672<sup>14</sup> for 6 O Level examinations and \$616 for 3 A Level examinations in class 11 and \$616 for 3 A Level examinations in class 12. Thus, a parent is paying almost \$1,900 in total. This figure is almost 32 times pricier than LYS examinations. There are some students who take more subjects, like 10 O Levels and 7 A Levels examination, who need to pay near about \$4,000.
- 12) LYS is MCQ examination and a careless mistake may cause students getting lesser score or students may get higher scores by random guessing even if they didn't study the topic. This unfairness is not applicable for A Level since these examinations are not mainly MCQ. All the necessary findings, methods and attempts must be shown clearly to get the full score and marks are given according to the mark scheme. Berberoglu (2012) states that the reliability of the scores of LYS is questioned in Turkey as four years of high school education needs to be verified only by multiple choice questions, which test mainly recall only, not other skills like essay writing, scientific experiments or practical foreign language skills, gained during high school education. But the case is different for A Level examinations as there are almost all types of questions during English Medium students' education before they sit for IGCSE exams and similar type of questions are there during their vitally important exams.
- 13) There are several examinations organized by OSYM4, which are for the employment, promotion, selection, equivalence, entrance, or evaluation for governmental concerns; but concerned British examination board is organizing A Level and some related examinations to evaluate the progress of the students for their

readiness to sit for A Level Examinations. One is Edexcel Check Point Examinations for the students of Class 5 and Class 8 together with O Level examinations and many others like BTEC examinations, functional skills, NVQ and competence-based qualifications.<sup>15</sup> Edexcel Check Point Examinations which are held for the students of Class 5 costs \$32 per subject while O Level costs \$113 per subject.<sup>16</sup> The concerned boards are having huge earnings in this way as well.

According to official website of the UK government, (HM Government 2013), it was mentioned in International Education: Global Growth and Prosperity Prospectus that in the schools sector, there were 3.1 million pupils studying at over 6,300 English-medium schools worldwide in 2012. Fee revenue in 2012 at English-medium schools worldwide was £20bn with an estimated £9.6bn coming from British Schools Overseas. The number of students at English-medium schools worldwide is forecast to increase to over 4.4 million in 2017 and nearly 6.2 million in 2022. British international qualifications such as the IGCSE and Cambridge International A Level are the national secondary qualifications in some countries. Total income from overseas activities was around £210m in 2011.

14) Students' unexpected diploma result may affect them throughout their lives in LYS system; however A Level system does not check students' diploma score and appraises only students' knowledge during examination time. If an unfortunate student starts studying hard after Class 8 or 9, there is possibility to get an expected score and getting chance for placement in a university which is better than ordinary one in A Level system. Students' GPA is affecting their score in LYS, so it is not easy for an unfortunate student who starts studying hard after class 8 or 9 for an anticipated score. There are some criteria for the evaluation of the marks in LYS and one of them is the type of school they study.

The net score will be multiplied according to students' school they graduate. Average success rate of secondary education (GPA) score is multiplied by 0.12 and the result is added to find the placement score. The final placement scores for `any vocational high schools` students for their fields which they study in are calculated as having additional mark of  $(0.06 \times \text{GPA})$ . It seems unfair for some students since there might be some acceptable reasons for their failure, like; incurable diseases or serious health problems which obviously affect their attendance and marks during their high school life. Another difficulty might be that, the student who chooses wrong type of high school after secondary school will get less mark for the desired department.

Highest mark in LYS is 500 while lowest one is 180. If 490 score is required for a department to get admitted, there will be, approximately, 500 to 1,000 students between 489.0 and 490.0 scores. The case is absolutely different in poorer scores. If 210.0 score is required for a department, there will be, approximately, 50,000 to 100,000 students between 209.0 and 210.0 scores; hereby students' average success rate in secondary education is extremely important since thousandths in a student's score is equivalent to ten thousands of examinees. In A Level, students may choose any subjects and as soon as they change their mind, they start studying in some other subjects. The difference may be 6 months or a year, but it is possible at least.

- 15) Students cannot use calculator in LYS examinations while it is permitted in A Level examinations. Whether a student is going to be a CEO in a company or cashier in a common place kiosk, (s)he is going to use calculator certainty. It seems there is no point of not allowing calculator in LYS examinations.
- 16) There are practical examinations in A Level like ICT or lab related exams for science subjects while it is missing in LYS. Edexcel stopped taking practical examinations 3-4 years back and the examination board understood its necessity again and they'll restart from 2017 on.
- 17) LYS is more theoretical than A Level examinations. There are more questions from practical aspects of life in A Level examinations.
- 18) After LYS examinations, answer key and the question papers where examinees had their solutions or scores are announced. In A Level system, even though it is costly, students have chance to check their own evaluated papers' scanned copies. Not only answer keys, but also how to solve out the problems & questions are publicized. In both examination systems, students may see their scanned paper for what they did during examinations.
- 19) Students' A Level results are valid throughout their life while Turkish students' LYS examination results are valid only for one year. If a student decides to change the department or city before or after getting admitted into a university, (s)he has to appear in LYS examination again. Another disadvantage here is the student's additional mark for GPA will decrease by 50%.
- 20) Edexcel A Level examinations are arranged by non-governmental establishment. As the primary aim of private company is to earn money, there feel necessity of regular updates and they are frequently upgrading themselves. LYS is organized by the state and they don't feel its necessity of ensuring regular updates.

- 21) Students need to blacken the circles on bubble sheets and careless students may have inadvertent mistakes during marking. Thus, it will cause to postpone of students' higher studies dreams. There is no such leeway in A Level examinations.
- 22) Students may be specialized in subjects in A Level examination system as students may choose few subjects as long as they are clear about their aim. In A Level system, since students are evaluated subject wise, students' weak and strong points can be identified definitely. As for LYS, students have to follow uniformly structured group subjects for particular departments. Since LYS examination evaluates a student based on average mark obtained, it is quite impossible to see the stronger and weaker points of a student on particular subjects.

One use of this is while applying in universities. As for A Level system, universities check students' success in certain subjects, not in general. For example, if math and physics marks are the key criteria of admission for a university, then a student with grades B in math and physics will be considered as eligible. However, in LYS system, a student who is good in physics and math but not in biology and chemistry will get low marks in average and (s)he will be considered as a poor student and his/her success in Physics and Math will remain hidden. It shows that, A Level system focuses on specialization of students in certain subjects that they need particularly in the future instead of requiring knowledge of many subjects at a time which will be not that much necessary in their future life.

It needs to be emphasized here that subjects' value vary from department to department in LYS. For example, biology mark's value in medicine department is higher than physics while physics mark's value in engineering department is higher than biology.

- 23) If a question is not solved out by all the students, the concerned board will cancel the question and students will get full mark in that specific question in A Level examinations. In LYS system, there is no such option.
- 24) In LYS system, students' percentage in their scores is more important than their actual scores. If there are much more successful students in that year, students need to have more correct answers to get chances in better universities. As for IAL, a mark is indicated near the question and if a student's answer is wholly correct, (s)he will get full mark in that question and other students'

failure or brilliancy will not affect his/her mark directly. In IAL system, there is also a unification system for the marks depend on how the candidates scored in that sitting. But still IAL has advantages since the candidates can apply to different countries with the same result even they are rejected from a country. But in LYS, students can only apply to Turkish universities and 17 other universities abroad if they could not take place at a certain percentage, they will not have any other option but sitting for the exam of next year.

- 25) A-Level students get marks for not only as per their correct answers, but also for the steps they have shown in their scripts. If there are 10 steps in the solution in a math question and if a student's final answer is wrong, the examiner will give some marks for the correct steps according to the mark scheme.<sup>17</sup> In LYS system, examinee's final answer is checked, not steps, and even if there is guessing. There is only 1 probable answer out of 5; A, B, C, D or E. Students' future and reveries are within the MCQ answer sheet circles.
- 26) A Level students sit for examinations subject-wise or even part of the subjects, minimum 6 units for each subject. For example, if a student wants to appear in biology examination, there is option to take the full subject once or assigned 6 units of biology topics. This convenience is not available in LYS system.
- 27) In LYS system, students get score for their group and not separately for each subject; (see Table 2). A Level students get score separately for each subject.
- 28) There are essay writings in A Level for foreign language examinations while there is no writing part in LYS examinations.
- 29) A regular learner in a school does not need to be enrolled in coaching centers for A Level examination although most of the students attend coaching centers for different reasons; like the friends environment, inadequate school support or to have a positive psychological mood. Dinc et al (2014) state that the data in their study demonstrated that the participants did not get adequate backing and guidance during the transition from secondary to higher education in Turkey. In particular, they said about absence of family and school support. A few members likewise expressed that the main backing and guidance they got was given by private preparation courses, named "dershane", which means coaching center or cram school in Turkish, as students have regular written examinations throughout their studies while they face MCQ examinations within limited time to study at a university, whether it is public university or private one.

Tansel (2013) explains that MCQ test system applied in the transition to a higher level of education is believed to whip up the demand for Private Courses. These `dershane` play a vital role to make students more familiar with MCQs by providing thousands of LYS-leveled questions and dozens of mock examinations. Yalcin Dogan (Dogan 2006), a journalist of Hurriyet Daily, cited form Turkish Education Foundation (TED)<sup>12</sup> that families spend 8 billion dollars every year in preparation for university exams, and this amount is mostly spent for private preparation courses. Parents pay coaching centers in Turkey from 1,000 TL (\$345) to 30,000 TL (\$10,350) for one year package programme.

- 30) If a student applies a university with his/her A Level mark sheet, s/he is suggested to have some supportive documents; like participation certificates in scientific Olympiads, sports tournaments' certificates, recommendation letter or so forth. The students will be evaluated not only academically, but also with their social, community and sportive involvements with certified proofs. The more they have supportive documents, the greater options they'll have. A student's LYS mark sheet is the only ticket to the future. How many times a student participated in sports or academic Olympiads or interschool tournaments are not checked. If a student gets the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBİTAK)<sup>18</sup> medal and if they are finalist in national or international sports organizations, they'll have additional marks<sup>19</sup>.
- 31) Bishop (1995) states that backwash effects are harmful impact for external examinations. It is very apparent in light of the fact that students are not eager to learn the spelling or pronunciation of the words for foreign language examinations in Turkey. Most of the Turkish students learn till Grade 12 with Grammar Translation Method. It is depressing to divulge here that this method edifies the students for direct grammar translation; on the other hand it does not nurture students in spoken or writing. It is believed that, students in Turkey are incapable of writing an intermediate level essay in English even, as because students subtly know well that they are not going to have any kind of essay writing during their LYS. It is widely heard that the Turkish novice employees at foreign missions, embassies or elsewhere undergo having understanding, spoken or writing problems in English; nevertheless they have exemplary abilities on paper translation with proper grammar.

As for IAL, the examinees require the knowledge of vocabulary and structure in foreign language examinations with proper writing. There are some QwC question, Quality of Written Communication, mostly in science subjects in A Level examinations. To have full mark in this type of questions, the candidate must organize his answer in a well-structured language skills as if (s)he is explaining

the answer to the examiner face to face. If the examinee gives the answer in bullet point way, the student will not get desired mark. QwC questions are indicated with asterisk to notify the students.

32) There are regular training programs or seminars organized by concerned examination boards for A Level examinations. Some of them are free of charge and some other are on payment. We can give example of seminars which were held and we attended in Dhaka in 2013 or in Abu Dhabi in 2016, which were entirely free except for air tickets. Authorities charge for the seminar or training programs and they provide certificates to embolden partaking. Although consultants may charge the teachers or administrators, their primary aim is to keep A Level examinations popular. There is no training programs or seminars for teachers organized by OSYM authorities for LYS examinations. These are state examinations and concerned authorities do not feel its necessity; however coaching centers play a vital role to train up the cram school teachers.

33) AQA, CCEA, City & Guilds, OCR, Edexcel, SQA and WJEC provide documentation, books, mobile applications, e-books and more to the teachers and students while OSYM does not provide any of these; instead, coaching centers provide necessary documents, books, mobile applications, e-books and much more.

34) Highest mark in LYS is 500 while lowest pass mark is 180. A Level marks are mostly between 100 and 300, depending on the subjects.

35) There are several different examination papers with same questions but question sequence was changed to avoid cheating during LYS, while there are same questions in same sequence in A Level Examinations.

36) Although there is no difference among examination boards for the grades, the candidates may get different subjects which may seem easier or harder from different boards. Mathematics may seem harder in Cambridge board while economics subject may be easier in Edexcel as per students' perception. But in LYS, every candidate sits for the same examination and answers to the same questions. So in this sense, LYS is totally objective.

37) In IAL system, the entry process is checked by the university personals whose personal ideas may affect students' chance. But in LYS system, entry process is done totally in digital through computers and it seems it is more objective. Students' nation, origin, country, appearance, religion, beauty, interview performance or so forth do not affect his access to university in LYS.

## 6. CONCLUSION

As Lee (2009) states, British people gave importance to education in colonies for training an indigenous elite class. Later, schools mushroomed everywhere even in the remote areas of British colonies and missionaries were recruited as teachers. Frankema (2012) says the mission schools, mainly run by converts, provided the bulk of education at extremely low costs. Sharma (2015) stated that in the colonial scenario, the question of education was no longer a question but answered in favor of English and its teaching in schools and universities.

Not only did mission education strengthen colonial rule, but it also weakened traditional societies and implemented standards of British education. As Lee (2009) states that, since there were two different reasons; strengthening colonial rule by edifying indigenous elite class and spreading their belief, after independence of most of colonial countries, the British rulers decided to take advantages of having hundred thousands of schools with millions of students worldwide with keen interest of learning one of the most widely spoken languages in the world.

The General Certificate of Education - GCE was first examined in England, Wales and Northern Ireland in 1951. To ensure perfectly maintained commercialized system, Edexcel, CCEA, ORC, AQA and WJEC provide documents and organize student-based examinations. Edexcel and Cambridge examination boards always struggle for keeping A Level examinations popularized in postcolonial countries and the system itself provides more opportunities and simplicity to ease students. The system does not cause that students getting tensed, losing time unnecessarily, assessing the knowledge with useful means-such as experiments, essays or so forth, ensuring several subjects taken, furnishing evaluated scanned exam papers to provide students for their checking to maintain reliability, facilitating international or frequently emigrating parents same system in different continents to avoid student-distress due to curriculum changes, providing certificates to the administrators or teachers after trainings to inspire them, teaching foreign languages in desired way, inspiring students to specialize in specific subjects and much more.

There were proper madrasas, one in each street at least, which were not only teaching religious studies and memorization of Holy Quran, but also science and contemporary education during 18th and 19th centuries in Ottoman Sultanate, Indian Subcontinent and other Islamic countries.<sup>20</sup> The administrators organized admission examinations and they selected their own students by themselves, as stated by Acar et al (2012) for Memluki time and as stated by Sanal (2000), Olmez (2014) for Ottoman time.

Demirtas (2007) states that there was no centralized or consolidated examinations. Winter (2005) mentioned in his book that the first university, Darulfunun University, was founded in 1870 in European standard by Sultan Abdul Aziz during Ottoman period. This university also enrolled its students by its administrator team like other educational institutions in Ottoman. Till 1981, self-applying system remained valid in the Republican Turkey as well. There was military coup in 1980 in Turkey and the generals in the parliament unified the undergraduate placement examination on the ground of pre-coup time troubles and rumors for favoritism, nepotism and discriminations.

After the establishment of Council of Higher Education (YOK) and Measuring, Selection and Placement Center (OSYM), according to different sources [CNN-TURK TV 2016; osym2016; Hurriyet Daily 2013; NTV TV 2011], some selected professors get together every year in a `deaf-and-dumb compound` for few weeks and prepare the examination questions. All these examination questions are printed and distributed from one publishing house in Ankara and sent to the other cities by police escorts. All examination papers come back to Ankara to be evaluated after examinations by police escorts as well. LYS system is based on equality in selection and there are some advantages of optical mark recognitions, albeit it is having some disadvantages in some areas.

The study illustrates us that the present placement exams in Turkey and British post-colonial countries stem from unambiguous reasons and they have certain explanations for having such exams even if the exams have their own strengths and weaknesses.

### Endnotes:

1. Edexcel International Advanced Levels Examinations are taken in 70 countries. Adapted from < <https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/International%20Advanced%20Level/psychology/2015/specification-and-sample-assessments/IAL-Psychology-SAMs.pdf> > (last accessed on 10 June 2016).
2. There is YGS, as first round placement examination and LYS, as second round placement examination.
3. Since 2005, Edexcel has become part of a Pearson group, the world's largest educational services company.
4. <http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels.html>, last accessed on 04 January 2016.

5. <http://www.allaboutcareers.com/careers-advice/ucas/what-is-ucas>.
6. Adapted from <[http://www.valeu.org/resources/27/doc\\_1323852368.pdf](http://www.valeu.org/resources/27/doc_1323852368.pdf)> (last accessed on 06 December 2014).
7. <http://osym.gov.tr/belge/1-23724/2016-sinav-takvimi.html>, last accessed on 03 January 2016.
8. <http://www.egitimajansi.com/haber/33-universite-tum-kontenjanlarini-doldurdu-haberi-43046h.html>, last accessed on 04 January 2016.
9. <http://dokuman.osym.gov.tr/pdfdokuman/2014/OSYS/osys-ek/t-4-baski15092014.pdf>, last accessed on 12th June, 2016.
10. Information in this section is cited from Edexcel's brochure, available at<[www.edexcel.com/international/aboutus/Documents/Edexcel-International-GCSE-8pp-Aug2012-web.pdf](http://www.edexcel.com/international/aboutus/Documents/Edexcel-International-GCSE-8pp-Aug2012-web.pdf), last accessed on 06th December 2014.
11. [http://dokuman.osym.gov.tr/pdfdokuman/2015/YGS/2015\\_OSYS\\_KILAVUZ.pdf](http://dokuman.osym.gov.tr/pdfdokuman/2015/YGS/2015_OSYS_KILAVUZ.pdf), last accessed on 03 January 2016.
12. <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yalcin-dogan-life-180-minutes-4166181>, last accessed on 9th May, 2016.
13. Converting rate for TL-\$ was calculated as \$1 = 2.9 TL.
14. A Level and related exams' figures were provided as per fees of Edexcel in Bangladesh. Fees may vary from one board the other. Converting rate for BDT-\$ was calculated as \$1 = 80.4 BDT.
15. For more information: [http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications.html?utm\\_source=communities&utm\\_medium=Display&utm\\_campaign=PERF\\_12MAY2014\\_qual](http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications.html?utm_source=communities&utm_medium=Display&utm_campaign=PERF_12MAY2014_qual).
16. Edexcel Achievement Test in Bangladeshi Taka is (TK) 2,600 per subject, O Level exam is TK. 9,000 per subject and A Level exam is Tk. 16,500 per 3 topics in a subject in grade 11 and same amount for same number of topics in grade 12.
17. Marking scheme is school children's, students' written works' or their external examinations' guideline used in the marking by teaching staff.
18. <http://www.tubitak.gov.tr/tr/kurumsal/hakkimizda/icerik-biz-kimiz>, last accessed on 03 January 2016.
19. [http://dokuman.osym.gov.tr/pdfdokuman/2015/YGS/2015\\_OSYS\\_KILAVUZ.pdf](http://dokuman.osym.gov.tr/pdfdokuman/2015/YGS/2015_OSYS_KILAVUZ.pdf), last accessed on 03 January 2016.
20. <http://www.muslimheritage.com/article/curricula-ottoman-madrasas>, last accessed on 11 May 2016.

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