

REVIEW ARTICLE

Restructuring of Higher Education in the Context of Bologna Process: Reflections on Turkey

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Abstract

Higher education institutions, which have a history of nearly a century, have survived until today with the great changes they have gone through. Due to the intense changes in recent periods, the importance of higher education has increased more and efforts to access information and to become an information society have gained momentum. The Turkish higher education system is also in an effort to keep up with this change and development. The aim of this study was to discuss the impact of the Bologna process within the scope of the restructuring of higher education studies in Turkey. Our mission is to offer solutions to the problems encountered in our higher education system and the growth of our higher education worldwide. The research was conducted using the document analysis method, one of the qualitative research designs. The decisions of the Bologna process, the reports on universities published by organizations such as METU Informatics Institute URAP Research Laboratory, HEEACT, US News & World Report were analyzed and various comparisons were made. It is clear that Turkish higher education will grow in the upcoming periods and increase its importance in world higher education. It can be said that in order to achieve this situation, our universities need a strong paradigm shift towards the needs of society and changes in the world.

Keywords: Bologna process, higher education, higher education reports, restructuring.

Introduction

Higher education institutions, which have a history of nearly a century, have survived until today with the great changes they have gone through. Universities are divided into three generations according to the changes they have undergone: first-generation or medieval universities, second-generation or Humboldt-type universities, and third-generation universities that are an advanced stage of the current universities (Wissema, 2009, p.3). With the recent intense changes, the importance of higher education has increased in the globalizing world, and efforts to access information and to become an information society have gained momentum. While the information society is seen as a powerful tool for social change, it is regarded as a fundamental building block in the formation of a competitive and sustainable information economy. In order to create an information society, higher education institutions undertake important duties in the training of high-level manpower and in the production of new information.

Europe has an important place in the world with the world's oldest higher education institutions, cultural, social and technological opportunities. While approaching the end of the twentieth century, Europe has begun to lose its central role in higher education. In the international competition between higher education institutions, US institutions are ahead of the European higher education institutions. The USA has become a preferred country both for those who want to study and those who want to do research.

European higher education institutions, which had to struggle with this situation in the international competition environment, started to change. The higher education strategy, which will be a solution to the growing problems of higher education at national and institutional level over time, has begun to take shape as a result of these moves. The Bologna Process, which includes 47 European countries and takes its name from the city where the world's first university is located, with the new participation that started with 29 member countries in 1999, can be summarized as the establishment of a "European Higher Education Area" that is compatible, complementary and competitive (Amaral & Magalhaes, 2004; Council of Higher Education [hereafter YÖK], 2003). European countries have committed to restructuring their higher education systems in order to create a field called the European Higher Education Area, where degrees, qualifications, periods of education and diplomas are mutually recognized, allows student and academic mobility, and where quality is improved in cooperation (Lazetic, 2010). The restructuring of higher education aims to increase the competitiveness and quality of European higher education institutions in the international arena, as well as the creation of a more prosperous European Knowledge Community (Furuzan, 2012)..

Philosophical Foundations of the Bologna Process

In 1817, Marc Antoine Jullien thought that many problems in Europe could be solved by reforming education systems. Jullien expected that comparative education studies would give information about which European countries lagged behind and which had good systems and practices (Aytaç, 1985). The 1st and 2nd World Wars, which took place about a century after Julien, had important effects in determining the education policies of the countries. After the wars, it is seen that many countries around the world have gone to improve their education systems through

school reforms. Since this period, the interest and demand for education has started to increase rapidly.

Since the second half of the 20th century, the effects of globalization have been felt in all areas. As a result of this change, new international actors have emerged in the world order instead of poles and instead of opposing the globalization process, they have developed strategies to manage it (Gümrukçü, 2011, p.3). The European Higher Education Area (hereafter EHEA) can be considered as an outcome of the strategies that are being developed. European universities, which had an important impact on the development and expansion of the university institution, lost these advantages to the US universities since the twentieth century. EHEA considers higher education as an important market by looking from a neoliberalist perspective. In order to benefit from this market, it initiated the harmonization of higher education systems of European countries, which have many different university traditions and most importantly, quality and education processes, and the establishment of a common EHEA in the long term (Sultana, 1995).

The EHEA has grown since its inception, transcending the borders of continental Europe and moving towards the "world higher education area", which means more and more global meaning. The Bologna process has come to a very different and unpredictable point than where it started now (Froment, 2006, p. 9).

Historical Development of the Bologna Process

The starting point of the Bologna Process is Magna Charta Universitatum. In order to celebrate the 900th anniversary of the University of Bologna, which was established in 1088, the Rectors of European Universities came together in Bologna, Italy (Caddick, 2008). Rectors have published the Magna Charta Universitatum, which will guide policymakers and indicate the importance of universities to remain autonomous institutions, and determine a set of principles that will better serve the development of the cultural heritage of European society (Gümrukçü, 2011, p.13). In Magna Charta Universitatum, the autonomy of universities, which fulfill the mission of spreading culture through teaching and research activities, the necessity of conducting education and research in universities, protection of the humanist values of Europe, tolerance and dialogue-based principles were emphasized (Magna Charta Universitatum, 1988). Ten years after the publication of the Magna Charta Universitatum, the Sorbonne Joint Declaration was published by the ministers of France, Italy, Germany and the United Kingdom who came together at the Paris Sorbonne on May 25, 1998, for the 800th anniversary of the Sorbonne University (Nohutçu, 2006). In the declaration, attention has been drawn to the intellectual, social and cultural characteristics of Europe as well as its economic features. While emphasizing the importance of the information society, the need for regulation of the European higher education system was stated in the declaration (Sorbonne Joint Declaration, 1988).

Bologna Process

The Bologna Process started in 1999 with the participation of the ministers responsible for higher education from 29 countries, with the aim of making the higher education systems of the countries transparent, comparable and competitive with the world. The process is the fastest and most comprehensive structuring of higher education in recent years, a higher education reform process that developed with the interaction of the members and stakeholders of which 47 countries

are members in 2010 (Erdoğan, 2013, p.28). Gümrükçü (2011) defines the Bologna Process as “a process that envisages the realization of the EHEA, which is harmonious, mutually complementary and competitive, until 2010” (p. 14). The countries that participated in the Bologna process from 1999 to 2013 are listed in Table 1 over the years.

Table 1. Countries participating in the Bologna Process and their ways to participate

Declarations	Participating Countries	Number of Participants
Sorbone 1998	France, Italy, Germany and England	4
Bologna 1999	Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, UK and Ireland.	29
Prag 2001	29 member countries, with the participation of Croatia, Cyprus, Liechtenstein and Turkey,	33
Berlin 2003	33 member countries with the participation of Albania, Andorra, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Vatican Republic, the Russian Federation, Serbia-Montenegro and Macedonia.	40
Bergen 2005	40 member countries with the participation of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.	45
London 2007	45 member countries with the participation of Montenegro.	46
Leuven 2009	-	46
Budapest-Vienne 2010	46 member countries with the participation of Kazakhstan.	47
Bucharest 2012	-	47

The Extent of Bologna Process

Since the adoption of the Bologna Declaration, the ministers responsible for higher education of the member countries have determined the action titles to be followed in reaching the goals of the process in their meetings every two years. According to Feces (2006), the Bologna process is a "voluntary organization that you can stay in or out of" countries with a free choice, and there is no central power on how to carry out activities.

Bologna Declaration (1999)

The Bologna Declaration was signed in Bologna, where Europe's oldest university is located, with the aim of realizing the goals and vision set in the Magna Charta Universitatum and the Sorbon Declaration. The declaration, which constitutes a turning point in the development of the

European higher education system, is the key document of the process (Bologna Declaration, 1999).

The issues covered in the declaration are the acceptance of an easily understandable and comparable degree system and the implementation of the Diploma Supplement. Implementation of two basic stage degree systems (undergraduate and graduate). Using credit systems such as the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) to encourage mobility. It is the promotion of mobility by removing the barriers to free movement and encouraging cooperation in the field of quality assurance (Bologna Declaration, 1999).

Prague Declaration (2001)

Two years after the Bologna Declaration was signed and 3 years after the Sorbonne Declaration, the Ministers responsible for Higher Education from 32 European states met in Prague to review the progress made and to determine the direction and priorities of the process for the coming years. Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to the establishment of the European Higher Education Area by 2010 (Prague Declaration, 2001).

The issues discussed in the declaration are the adoption of an easily understandable and comparable degree system, the adoption of a two-stage degree system, the establishment of the credit system, the promotion of mobility, the promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance, and the support of the European dimension in higher education (Prague Declaration, 2001).

Berlin Declaration (2003)

On September 19, 2003, Ministers of 33 European countries in charge of higher education met in Berlin to set priorities and new targets for the coming years and review progress in order to accelerate the establishment of the EHEA (Berlin Declaration, 2003).

The topics covered in the declaration are the orientation towards the 3-degree system with the inclusion of the doctorate, the recognition of degrees, the participation of higher education institutions and students in the process, making the EHEA attractive, the establishment of the credit system, lifelong learning and quality assurance (Berlin Declaration, 2003).

Bergen Declaration (2005)

The Bergen Declaration was adopted at the end of the meetings of the ministers responsible for higher education in the countries participating in the Bologna Process between 19 and 20 May 2005 in Bergen, Norway. The purpose of this conference is to make an interim evaluation about the point reached and to determine the correct goals and priorities for 2010.

Topics covered in the declaration are higher education and research, support and priority to socially disadvantaged groups, mobility, attractiveness of the EHEA and cooperation with other regions of the world, situation assessment reports and quality assurance (Bergen Declaration, 2005).

London Declaration (2007)

In the London Declaration, it was stated that the goal of establishing the EHEA was approached with the developments taking place in two years since 2005. On the basis of Europe's cultural heritage, it was emphasized that an area of higher education was created based on

institutional autonomy, academic freedom, equal opportunity and democratic principles in order to facilitate mobility, improve employment and increase Europe's attractiveness and competitiveness, and in order to protect the competitiveness of the higher education area, The necessity of the participating countries to constantly keep up with the changes in higher education systems was underlined.

The declaration welcomes the support and determination of all partners involved in the process, and thanked the working groups for their contribution to the progress of the process. At the London Meeting, the progress made between 2005-2007 was evaluated with the situation assessment reports prepared by The National Unions of Students in Europe (hereafter ESIB). In the meeting, a consensus was reached on action titles such as three-stage degree system, quality assurance, duration of education and recognition of degrees and especially mobility, social dimension of Bologna Process, employment. The Bologna Follow-Up Group (hereafter BFUG) was asked to prepare a report covering all developments in this area at national and institutional levels across Europe until 2009 (London Declaration, 2007).

Leuven Declaration (2009)

The declaration, whose purpose is to evaluate the developments in the Bologna Process until 2009 and to determine the priorities for the EHEA for the next ten years, determined the priority areas in the process until 2020. These areas include the social dimension of the process, namely equal access, employability, lifelong learning, student-centered learning and the teaching task of the higher education institution, innovation in education and research, international openness, mobility, data collection, multidimensional transparency tools and financing of higher education.

The implementation of the three-tier system of higher education has been modernized with the application of European criteria in quality assurance. In addition to these, it is seen that The European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) has been established for quality assurance and learning outcomes and national competencies framework in line with the European Qualifications Framework are being established. In addition, the Bologna Process encouraged transparency and recognition in higher education using the diploma supplement and ECTS (Leuven Declaration, 2009).

Budapest - Vienna Declaration (2010)

Ministers responsible for higher education in the countries participating in the Bologna Process met in Budapest and Vienna on 11 and 12 March 2010, as foreseen in the 1999 Bologna Declaration, in order to establish the EHEA.

The declaration addressed the vision of an internationally competitive and attractive 2010 EHEA, enhancing cooperation and dialogue policies with partners worldwide, ensuring the accountability and autonomy of higher education institutions, ensuring academic freedom, and continuing cooperation in quality assurance (Budapest-Vienna Declaration, 2010).

Bucharest Declaration (2012)

Ministers responsible for higher education participating in the Bologna Process met in Bucharest on 26-27 April 2012 in order to evaluate the current situation of the European Higher Education Area and determine future priorities and signed the Bucharest Declaration.

The declaration focuses on investing in higher education for the future, the past, present and future of the EHEA, quality higher education for all, strengthening employability, mobility and transparency (Bucharest Declaration, 2012).

Functioning the Structure of Bologna Process

The structural functioning of the Bologna Process is carried out at three levels: international, national and institutional. Ministerial Conferences held every two years at the international level are the places where the “Declarations” are adopted where the situation is evaluated and the basic policies for the future are established. At the international level, the body responsible for the development and coordination of the process is the BFUG. The BFUG was established at the 2001 Prague European Ministerial Meeting in order to decide on the measures to be taken to achieve the goals foreseen by the Bologna Process and to follow the process of development and consists of the representatives of the countries involved in the Bologna Process. European Commission, Council of Europe, European University Association (EUA), The National Unions of Students in Europe (ESIB), European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE) and UNESCO Higher Education Center (UNESCO-CEPES) have been included in the BFUG as advisory members. In general, the duties of the BFUG Board formed to support BFUG activities are to ensure the successful execution of the process, to monitor and coordinate the implementation of the work program (Bologna Process, 2008).

Policy Forums

Simultaneously with the Ministerial Conference in 2010 and 2012, Policy Forums have been held with the participation of ministers of higher education from different parts of the world like the USA, China, Japan, Korea, Australia, Canada, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Mexico, Saudi Arabia and Ethiopia since 2009, prepared declarations and carried out studies in line with common goals.

The Policy Forum, which came together for the third time in Bucharest in 2012, formed important collaborations in terms of showing that the Bologna Process, which started as a regional structuring and process, gained a global character (Bologna Process, 2008).

Bologna Ratings in Turkey

Turkey officially joined the Bologna Process in 2001. The first-degree responsible institution for the implementation and monitoring of the process is the Council of Higher Education (YÖK). The YÖK accepts the Bologna Process as an appropriate tool for the restructuring of our higher education system (Gümrükçü, 2011, p. 44). Bologna studies in our country are carried out within the scope of "Bologna Experts National Team Projects" supported by the European Commission. The National Team of Bologna Experts was created to bring together experts on certain subjects, to help the realization of Bologna goals in line with national needs and goals and to introduce the Bologna Process. He advises higher education institutions on national team quality assurance, triple degree system, curriculum reform, national and European qualifications frameworks and recognition (YÖK, 2003).

Table 2. Assessment report of the bologna process in Turkey

		Bergen 2005	London 2007	Leuven 2009	Bucharest 2012
Degree System	Level of application of the binary system	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent
	Switching between levels	Very good	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent
	The ratio of students in the binary system	Excellent	-	-	-
	Level of application of the national qualifications framework	-	Good	Good	Very good
Quality assurance	Quality assurance system development level	Middle	Very good	Good	Good
	Students' level of participation	Middle	Very good	Excellent	Good
	International level of participation	Middle	Good	Very good	Weak
Recognition of Diploma and Duration of Education	Diploma Supplement Application Level	Very good	Very good	Very good	Very good
	Ratification of the Lisbon Recognition Convention	Good	Very good	Excellent	-
	ECTS application level	Very good	Excellent	Good	Good
	Recognition of prior education	-	Good	Weak	Weak

Restructuring of Turkish Higher Education

Our higher education system, which is regulated by the law numbered 2547, is organized in an introverted, centralized, inflexible structure in terms of both its philosophy, principles, aims and content (Erdoğan, 2013). From 2001 to 2005, when the country became a member of the Bologna Process, there has not been much work done at national or institutional level in order to comply with the joint work activities with the member countries. Following the initiation of the Bologna Process National Experts Team Projects supported by the European Commission since 2004, the use of EU Education and Youth programs (Erasmus +) and the realization of "short-term student exchanges", the activities towards the implementation of the tools of the Bologna Process have found their way into Turkish higher education and gained momentum.

In 2005, the national competences' framework was determined at the Bologna Ministerial Summit in Bergen, Norway. Turkey has started to work within the Council of Higher Education

for higher education qualifications (YÖK, 2005). The most important regulation in this regard is the establishment of the National Qualifications Commission and Working Group established within the YÖK in 2008. The Commission and the Working Group has defined the competences acquired minimum knowledge, skills on higher education in all levels (undergraduate, graduate, masters and doctorate) and based on this context, learning outcomes Turkey Higher Education Qualifications Framework (THEQF) has prepared (Erdoğan, 2013).

The last stage of qualifications studies is the registration of qualifications created at national level. Despite the decision of the General Assembly of the Council of Higher Education on this issue, it is seen that until the end of 2012, it was far from reaching the targets on this matter. However, it should be emphasized that achieving the goals within the Bologna Process is a serious problem for all countries in the EHEA. As of 2012, only 10 countries (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania and the United Kingdom) have fully completed their qualifications studies.

The General Assembly of the YÖK, meeting on February 3, 2011, published a statement on the restructuring of higher education. According to this explanation, the restructuring of higher education is "to equip individuals with the knowledge, skills and competencies that can adapt to the changing conditions of the world, to be active citizens who do not hesitate to take initiatives and assume responsibility, have critical thinking skills, sensitive to human rights and democracy, environmental, cultural and aesthetic values, and also It was emphasized that the education provided should reach large masses and develop the competitiveness of the country, the researches should be directed towards the production of science and art that are internationally respected, support the competitiveness of the country, and aim to make the activities serving the society effective and sustainable ". The new system will have a structure that can learn, develop and constantly renew itself.

The most important qualitative and concrete result of the national studies was realized with the amendment made in the 44th article of the Higher Education Law No 2547 in the Law No. 6111 dated 13.02.2011. In this sense, the legal basis has been established in terms of adaptation to the European Higher Education Area:

"Course credits are determined by the senates of higher education institutions, taking into account the credit range determined by the Higher Education Council according to the diploma level of the relevant program and the higher education qualifications framework for the field and the working hours of the students. Course credits are calculated within the framework of the principles determined by the senates of higher education institutions, taking into account the learning gains that express the contribution of that course to the knowledge, skills and competencies to be gained by the student who has completed the relevant diploma program, the theoretical or practical course hours clearly determined and the working hours required for other activities for the students."

While German Professor Brenner criticized the Bologna Process "taken as a whole, the rectors and professors of German universities have fulfilled the regime that the majority of them rejected" with a great obligation, "it is our duty to protect the university even under the conditions of the Bologna process." (Gümrükçü, as cited in Peter J. Brenner, 2011), has demonstrated its attitude towards the process.

Criticism of the Bologna Process

The links between the state and the higher education system are very old. Nowadays, states are trying to be the regulators, not higher education service providers. From this point of view, the Bologna Process is interpreted as a neoliberal movement that serves the purpose of reducing the social responsibility of the state (Amaral & Magalhaes, 2004).

It is stated that the real purpose of the Bologna Process is to build an alternative system that can compete with the American higher education system, to commercialize higher education and to ensure the migration of specialized workforce to EU countries (Hamzaoğlu, 2011).

Hoca (2011) states that the Bologna process has three main objectives: "First, the relatively high-quality production branches of the imperialist countries of the EU (especially service sectors: design, informatics, finance, trade, marketing, health, education, architectural R&D) meeting the labor force needs by reducing the cost of labor by shaping the education systems of European countries and creating competition; In other words, it is to create a huge army of labor-power, qualified and mobile to suit their needs. The second in conjunction with the former is to ensure that sufficient and cheap labor-power is available for their own investments in dependent European countries beyond their own. The third element is to create an enormous education market by commodifying education together.

Guy Neave (2002), using the expression "Hamlet without the constitutional prince" for the Bologna Process; It criticizes the restructuring of higher education without the establishment of a supranational mechanism and the failure to implement reforms on a democratic ground.

While German Professor Brenner criticized the Bologna Process that "taken as a whole, the rectors and professors of German universities have fulfilled the regime that the vast majority of them rejected", "it is our duty to protect the university even under the conditions of the Bologna process" (cited Gümrükçü, 2011), and displayed his attitude towards the process.

Conclusion

This study tries to pursue the Bologna Process and the reflections on the Turkish Higher Education System. It can be easily said that Turkish Higher Education has taken successful steps in adaptation to the process in the last fifteen years. The Bologna process stands out as a path where we have achieved important gains in many areas such as the level of implementation of the national qualifications' framework, the ECTS application level, and the Diploma Supplement Application Level. It is seen that the process has contributed significantly to the progress of Turkish higher education in the international arena. Undoubtedly, many important deficiencies in our higher education system still continue to be resolved. It is extremely important to increase the number and quality of academic staff who will work in the international arena, to realize structural reforms that our universities can compete in the international arena, to determine the general strategy, need areas, goals and standards of higher education by taking into account internal and external dynamics.

It is clear that Turkish higher education will and should grow in the coming periods. For that purpose, there should be universities that will undertake the locomotive role in this growth. Moreover, our universities need a strong paradigm change that can prepare themselves according

to the needs of the society and market conditions. Considering the Bologna process as a whole, it is inevitable that our higher education system contributes in terms of internationalization and adaptation to innovations faster.

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