

AN EXAMINATION OF MASTERS AND DOCTORAL DISSERTATIONS REGARDING BOLOGNA PROCESS IN TURKEY ON THE DIMENSIONS OF QUALITY

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to investigate the master's and doctoral dissertations in Turkey on how the aspects of Bologna Process and dimensions of quality in higher education are discussed. The idea of creating a common higher education area throughout the Europe came in sight at the meeting in Sorbonne in 1998 by the declaration of France, Italy, Germany and England's ministers of education. Following this meeting the foundations of Bologna Process took shape and the process was launched with the participation of 29 countries in 1999. The effects of the process were not only apparent in European higher education system but affected Turkish higher education as well. Basically, the process aimed at carrying out a series of implementation in order to improve the quality in higher education such as the mobility of students and instructors, European Higher Education Area (EHEA), European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), binary system of higher education which includes undergraduate-post graduate and diploma supplement. In this study master's and doctoral dissertations partaking in Council of Higher Education thesis center, were analyzed by the use of literature review method.

Keywords: Bologna Process, Quality

INTRODUCTION

It is hard to define "the decent education" because of the differences between countries and as there is no universally accepted criterion. Moreover, differences can exist even between the groups that are effective for the education such as academic managers, government, and tax payers (Chalkley, Fournier and David, 2000)

In the literature there are different inferences about the term of "Quality". It is also relevant in view of the "processes" and "outcomes". In higher education there are lots of shareholders just as students, lecturers, government and etc. Each of them has diverse view on Quality. Quality is also a slippery concept such as "liberty" or "equality". According to Harvey and Green (1993) there are 5 concepts of Quality:

- *Quality as Exceptional*
- *Quality as Perfection or Consistency*
- *Quality as Fitness for Purpose*
- *Quality as Value for Money*
- *Quality as Transformation*

The process of transition to information society has started for the last quarter of 20th century and a new economic structure named as information economy has been formed. In this structure, it has become measurable with knowledge and learning level of individuals and competitive capacity, human and social capital of countries. This process increased the expectation from universities that are in charge of information production and dissemination at the first level and higher education has become the area of interest for nearly all universities. In this direction, a settlement which can meet the demands in higher education is brought up (YÖK, 2007)

The aim of Sorbonne declaration that was signed by ministers of four countries (France, Italy, Germany and United Kingdom) in 1998 was to form a collective frame for European Higher Education Area that encourages not only instructors' but also graduate students' and undergraduate students' mobility. Declaration also aims to provide to be encouraged proficiencies in home market (EHEA, 2016).

The aim of the Bologna Process is to enhance the attractiveness of the areas that it covers. Thus the prevention of brain drain and increase in the number of students from outside was foreseen. Two of the main targets of the process are to bring graduates into a comparable condition in terms of qualities and qualifications and the increase of qualified labor force in the economic territory of Europe. The creation and documentation of National

Qualifications Framework coherent with European Qualifications Framework are important tools for the harmonization of the institutions. Internal and external quality assurance systems, development of programmes that are suitable for the outputs of National Qualifications Framework and shifting into the system of ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) stand out as other important tools for the process (Edimself, 2008).

Bologna Process came in sight with the Sorbonne Declaration that was signed in 1998 by the ministers of education of four country, Italy, Germany, France and England. Following year the process began by Bologna Declaration with the signature of 29 European Countries. Declaration of Prague followed Bologna Process in 2001. Declaration of Berlin in 2003, Leuven in 2009 and Budapest in 2010 were other steps of the Process (YÖK, 2010). By the year of 2016 there are 48 members of the process with the European Commission (EHEA, 2016).

The aim of this study is to investigate which aspects of the quality and Bologna Process that the masters and doctoral dissertations focus on about Bologna Process in Turkey that is found on the database of the Council of Higher Education for the further researches.

COMMON TARGETS OF BOLOGNA PROCESS

The main objectives of the Bologna Process can be summarized as follows (YÖK, 2010):

- *Creation of comprehensible and comparable diploma and higher education degrees (Development of diploma supplement).*
- *Binary degree system in higher education consisting of undergraduate and graduate education.*
- *The application of ECTS (European Credit Transfer System).*
- *Ensuring and extension students' and lecturers 'mobility.*
- *The application and extension of quality assurance network in higher education.*
- *Enhancing the dimension of Europe in higher education.*

In Bologna Declaration the adoption of higher education with two main cycles was emphasized. The first part of this system is undergraduate education. In order to continue the second cycle which is graduate education a student should complete undergraduate education which lasts at least three years. Another tool for higher education emphasized in the declaration was the Diploma Supplement which was developed in 90's by European Commission, the council of Europe and UNESCO. It includes the description of the nature, level, context, content of the studies and workload completed by the student that is noted on the original diploma. In Berlin, the ministers agreed that from 2005 all graduates should receive the Diploma Supplement free of charge (EACEA, 2012).

Another key aspect of Bologna Process is the creation of European Higher Education Area. Almost all European Countries had some regulations for their own higher education problems. The differences between countries triggered the creation of European Higher Education Area. It has significant importance in view of accreditation, recognition of diploma and mobility of students and services as well as developing competitive capacity between universities thanks to collaboration between universities (YÖK, 2007).

Three more elements were emphasized in Prague Communiqué. That was declared in 2001 two years after Bologna Declaration (EURYDICE, 2010):

- *Development of lifelong learning.*
- *Involvement of higher education institutions and students.*
- *Promotion of attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).*

THE DEVELOPMENTS TOOK PLACE IN HIGHER EDUCATION OF TURKEY WITH BOLOGNA PROCESS

The goals of the Bologna Process also provide appropriate tools for higher education of our country. Turkey joined the Bologna Process with the Prague Declaration in 2001 (YÖK, 2010).

Two years after signing the Bologna Declaration the ministers of education from 32 European countries came together in Prague to review the progression and priorities of the process for the future. In that meeting the need for the establishment of European Higher Education Area (EHEA) was emphasized. Apart from that, the recognition of the current national legal regulations and the units of education, grades and other achievements of higher education institutions came up. The binary system (undergraduate – graduate cycle) that was previously proposed in Bologna was emphasized. In the declaration, the necessity of credit system regulations (ECTS-European Credit Transfer System, or a system compatible with ECTS) that provide an opportunity credit transfer

for flexible learning and qualification processes has been mentioned. Besides; the importance of mobility of the students, teaching staff, academic and administrative staff has been repeated. Ministers emphasized quality assurance, the importance of safety Networks and also have invited to parties in non-ENQA countries (national agencies, ENQA, higher education institutions) (YÖK, 2016).

In 2005 for the creation of international accordance “*Commission for Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement in Higher Education*” was formed. “*The Regulation of Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement*” (YÖDEK) was enacted in 2005. The regulation ensures the internal assessment of activities and administrative actions in higher education institutions. Starting from 2006 every year this assessment takes place. The results of the assessment are open to public. While YÖDEK sets forth the standards and guidelines at institutional level A are responsible for academic Assessment and Quality Improvement Boards (ADEK are responsible for the coordination and organisation of the process (YÖK, 2016a).

Association for Evaluation and Accreditation of Engineering Programs (MÜDEK) is a non-governmental organization whose aim is to improve the quality of education in engineering programmes in Turkey, providing the accreditation and evaluation of and information services for engineering education programs in branches (MÜDEK, 2016).

METHOD

This study was based on document analysis method. It is a type of analysis that has significant benefits in terms of including long term changes of a situation or an event. (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). During the analysis of documents, five gradual processes by Foster (1995) were followed (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2011: p. 193):

- (1) *Accession of the documents*
- (2) *Control of originality (fit for purpose)*
- (3) *Understanding the documents*
- (4) *Analysis of the data*
- (5) *The usage of the data*

There are 11 dissertations about Bologna Process on the database of the Council of Higher Education 8 of the dissertations are open-access. 3 of the dissertations are restricted until 2018. 1 of the restricted dissertation replied the request to gain access to his dissertation. 2 of the restricted dissertations didn't reply. 9 of the dissertations were analyzed in total. The dissertations of Durdu (2011), Kıyıcı (2012), Akbuz (2009), Dalgıç (2008), Akman (2010), Görkem (2013), Altan (2013), Şahin (2008), Özkan (2015) were analyzed in view of the dimensions of quality and. In his book *Quality in Higher Education*, Ruben (1995) lists three main dimensions of quality:

Academic Quality:

- *Instruction*
- *Research*
- *Service/Outreach*

Administrative Quality:

- *Processes*
- *Systems*
- *Procedures*
- *Information Flows*

Relationship Quality:

- *Relations with consumers*
- *Interpersonal Sensivity and Skill*
- *Cooperation and collaboration*
- *Service Orientation*

The limitations of the study are:

- *The study is focused on the masters and doctoral dissertations.*
- *Dissertations that are found on the database of the Council of Higher Education were analyzed.*
- *Only open access dissertations were analyzed.*

- *Keywords: “Bologna” and “Bologna Process” was used for the research.*

FINDINGS

4 of the dissertations are based on literature review of the Bologna Process and its progress in Turkey. 3 dissertations are based on survey and 2 dissertations are based on case study. When the dissertations are analyzed according to the contexts they consisted of different subjects. The most frequent subject (8 of the dissertations) is “Education and Training”. “Public Administration” is the second most frequent subject (4 of the dissertations); Following subjects took place in only one dissertation each these are; “Business Administration”, “Political science”, “Finance” and “Computer Engineering”.

8 of the dissertations included the signs of academic quality as a literature review section or used for statements in survey used for the dissertations. 6 of the dissertations included the signs of Relationship quality as a literature review section or used for statements in survey (*Relations with consumers – interpersonal sensitivity and skill, cooperation and collaboration, service orientation*). 5 of the dissertations included administrative quality (Processes, Systems, Information flow).

CONCLUSIONS

Within the contexts of the dissertations following items were underlined. Bologna process enabled the creation of national frameworks. In order to create a higher education area, recognition, accreditation and mobility are key elements of the process. Thus a national framework for higher education is an important tool for the member countries. Turkey is one of those countries that implemented national framework. In this scope the importance of the mobility was another key topic discussed in the dissertations. Additionally accreditation and definition of workloads with ECTS contributed mobility. The process also reinforced quality assurance and national legislation for quality in higher education. YÖDEK and MÜDEK are two examples of the implementation of quality assurance.

Two of the dissertations discussed binary / ternary education system which consists of undergraduate, graduate and doctorate education system in view of vocational education by stating concern about how to adapt programmes that have much workload such as the programmes in medical faculties. Additionally there are some questions about the mobility of the students. Diploma supplement is another topic that is open to question. The literature criticize that not all the universities are giving diploma supplement with no charge after graduation. Although European Higher Education Area made European higher education more visible throughout the world and there are some questions about whether creation of such an area could create harm for the diversity.

The dimension of administrative quality of the higher education institutions can be studied as it is the least emphasized dimensions that took place in the dissertations. The debate on whether the process encourages the diversity or not can be a significant issue for further researches. Application of binary / ternary higher education and different workloads of some programmes can be a challenge for the recognition.

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