Critical voices against the Bologna Process in Turkey: Neo-liberal governance in higher education

Ayhan Kaya

Abstract

This article analyzes critical voices raised against the Bologna Process by various stake-holders of higher education in Turkey, such as rectors, professors, international office staff, students, and civil society organizations. The data collected through in-depth interviews were analyzed using the discourse analysis method on the basis of the interlocutors' reflections on the Bologna Process. It is claimed in the article that most universities in Turkey have attempted a process of internationalization and institutionalization, but that there have been several impediments during the implementation of the Bologna Process. Rising Euroskepticism in Turkey has also changed the process of Europeanization in the universities. It is revealed that the structural changes made in line with the Bologna Process are perceived by several different stake-holders as neo-liberal acts, and are presented as activities of internationalization, but not of Europeanization.

Keywords: *Higher education*; *Europeanization*; *internationalization*; *Bologna Process*; *neo-liberalism*; *Turkey*.

Higher education differs from one country to another, as it reflects the relation between the university and society. However, homogenization of higher education seems to be the primary trend in the European education space shaped by the Bologna Process, and it accompanies the universalization of knowledge,

Ayhan Kaya, Department of International Relations, Jean Monnet Chair of European Politics of Interculturalism, İstanbul Bilgi University, Eski Silahtarağa Elektrik Santralı, 34060 Eyüp, İstanbul, ayhan.kaya@bilgi.edu.tr.

the possibilities of studies, and the establishment of criteria for what knowledge is, as well as increased mobility. However, there is no single way to move toward these goals, and there are opinions opposed to the homogenization of higher education. The main focus of this article is to scrutinize the critical voices behind the Bologna Process that have arisen since its inception in Turkey. This article relies on primary sources (Bologna documents,[1] higher education acts and regulations in Turkey), interviews with different stake-holders in higher education (experts, rectors, academics, international office staff, and students), and secondary literature. The method of triangulation is employed; that is to say, data have been collected from interviews, legal documents, reports, and other relevant secondary literature. The article employs the methodological toolkit of process tracing in trying to explain how the Bologna Process evolved at the EU level and its impact at the national level as well as on universities. The focus is on how the discourse of change is framed by experts within the national framework, and how it is critically viewed by various stake-holders in higher education in Turkey.

In the course of the fieldwork—conducted within an EU-funded FP7 project (Identities and Modernities in Europe)[2]—30 different stake-holders in the higher education system have been interviewed, comprising six professors, two former rectors, four international office staff of various universities, four members of relevant civil society organizations, and fourteen university students from different scientific disciplines enrolled at various public and private (foundation)[3] universities in and around İstanbul. The interviewees will be indicated by capital letters—A, B, C, etc.—as the interviews were conducted under condition of anonymity. İstanbul was selected as the city in which to conduct the fieldwork because it hosts the highest number of universities in Turkey.[4] Another reason for limiting the fieldwork to İstanbul is that the city hosts a diverse group of students coming from all around the country. However, I cannot claim to
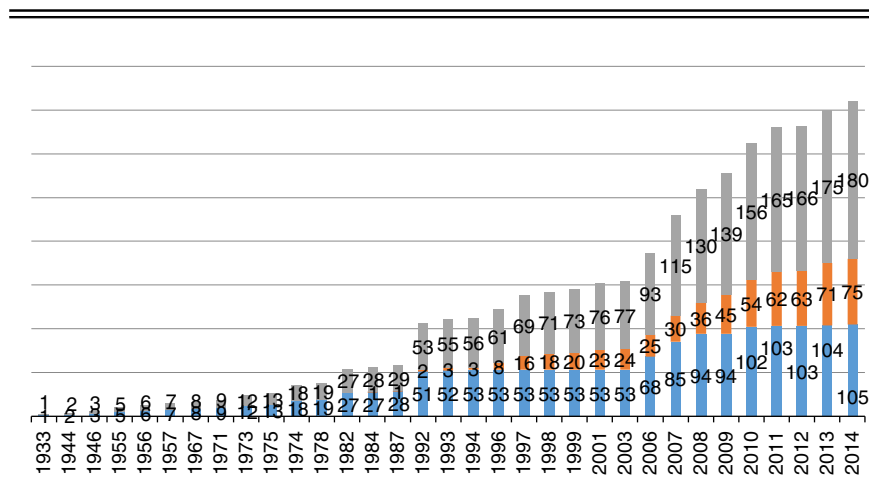
---

1   A detailed account of the Bologna preparation process is accessible on the official website of the Council of Higher Education (*Yükseköğretim Kurulu*, YÖK) at https://bologna.yok.gov.tr/?page=anasayfa&dil=en.

2   The project entitled "Identities and Modernities in Europe: European and National Identity Construction Programmes and Politics, Culture, History and Religion" (IME, SSH-CT-2009-215949) investigated the notions of national identity, European identity, and modernity via case studies. Reports pertaining to the Turkish case are available at: http://fass.kingston.ac.uk/public/ime/.

3   Higher Education Law No. 2547 made it possible for private universities to be established by non-profit foundations; these are sometimes referred to as "foundation universities" for this reason. In the remainder of the text, I will use the term "private" rather than "foundation" for the sake of the international readership. See Law on Higher Education (1981).

4   As of the year 2013, İstanbul hosts 49 universities (9 public and 40 private) out of a total of 175 in Turkey. See also Table 1.

Table 1. Number of public (blue) and private (orange) universities (total number in gray) since 1933.

[Stacked bar chart showing number of universities by year. Gray = total, blue = public, orange = private.]

Years: 1933, 1944, 1946, 1955, 1956, 1957, 1967, 1971, 1973, 1975, 1974, 1978, 1982, 1984, 1987, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014

Total (gray) values: 53, 55, 56, 61, 69, 71, 73, 76, 77, 93, 115, 130, 139, 156, 165, 166, 175, 180

Private (orange) values: 30, 36, 45, 54, 62, 63, 71, 75

Public (blue) values: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 18, 19, 27, 28, 29, 51, 52, 53, 53, 53, 53, 53, 53, 68, 85, 94, 94, 102, 103, 103, 104, 105

Source: The Council of Higher Education [YÖK], http://www.yok.gov.tr). Note that the figure given for 2014 is predicted in accordance with the number of five new university proposals (1 public and 4 private) made to the YÖK.

provide the reader here with a representative work, but rather only with an illustrative work.

In selecting the rectors and professors, those highly engaged in the Bologna Process were chosen.[5] Students were selected on the basis of a quota sampling to ensure a diverse set of students with regard to ethnic, religious, and educational background. The students who participated in the fieldwork were predominantly of middle-class or working-class background. The staff members of the international offices were selected through snowball sampling from both public and private universities. Finally, leading members of certain relevant civil society organizations—such as the Education Reform Initiative (*Eğitim Reformu Girişimi*, ERG)[6] and the Women Entrepreneurs' Association of Turkey (*Türkiye Kadın Girişimciler Derneği*, KAGİDER)[7]—were interviewed with regard to their perspectives on the

---

5   I am aware of the limitations of this work, as it does not cover the perspectives of those universities that kept away from the Bologna Process as much as possible. Including some of those universities would certainly change the content of discussion in this article. Due to the lack of time and space, as well as the limitations of the relevant FP7 projects (IME), I have chosen to concentrate on those universities engaged in the Bologna Process.

6   For the ERG, see http://erg.sabanciuniv.edu/en.

7   For KAGİDER, see http://www.kagider.org/.

changing role of higher education in contemporary Turkey. The interviews lasted between 50 and 90 minutes. All interviews were recorded with the interlocutors' consent, and the recordings were transcribed. These interviews were then analyzed using the discourse analysis method, with specific emphasis on the concepts of Europeanization and higher education.[8] Going through the transcribed interviews, I looked for the main argumentation strategies, or the main discursive topoi,[9] which enable us to understand how individuals' discourse of the Bologna Process is constructed and articulated. Although the main unit of analysis of this article is the interlocutors and their interpretation of the Bologna Process, the article seeks to critically analyze the Bologna documents in order to study the ways in which the neo-liberal discourse on Europeanization and European higher education space has evolved.

The Europeanization of higher education

In the literature of European studies, there are various approaches to the processes of Europeanization in different social, political, legal, economic, and cultural contexts. As the main focus of this article is not the Europeanization of higher education in Turkey, I will only briefly touch upon the most relevant theories of Europeanization. According to the traditional rationalist outlook, Europe is largely conceived as an emerging political opportunity structure, which offers certain actors additional legal and political resources to exert influence while constraining others to pursue their goals.[10] This definition makes sense for the Turkish experience in policy areas where pressure from the EU is more direct, especially between 2002 and 2005, when the government of the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) enacted reforms regarding the removal of capital punishment, the termination of military tutelage, and the extension of

---

8   Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992); Ruth Wodak, *The Discourses of Politics in Action: Politics as Usual* (London: MacMillan Palgrave, 2010); Jacob Torfing, "Discourse Theory: Achievements, Arguments, and Challenges," in *Discourse Theory in European Politics: Identity, Policy and Governance*, eds. David Howarth and Jacob Torfing (Houndmills and New York: Palgrave Macmillan), 1–32.

9   Reisigl and Wodak define "topoi" as parts of argumentation that belong to the obligatory, either explicit or inferrable, premises. Topoi are the content-related warrants or "conclusion rules" that connect the argument or arguments with the conclusion or claim. As such, they justify the transition from the argument or arguments to the conclusion. In other words, topoi are highly conventional and core elements of argumentation. See Martin Reisigl and Ruth Wodak, *Discourse and Discrimination: Rhetorics of Racism and Anti-Semitism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001).

10   Tania Börzel, "Member State Responses to Europeanization," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40 (2002): 193–214; Mark A. Pollack, "The New Institutionalism and European Integration," in *European Integration Theory,* eds. Antje Wiener and Thomas Diez (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004): 125–143.

minority rights.[11] Corresponding to a "logic of consequentialism," this approach takes interests, identities, and norms as externally given. Actors engage in strategic interactions using their resources to maximize their utilities on the basis of given, fixed, and ordered preferences.[12] Thus, Europeanization is perceived as a process that gives rise to a distinct opportunity structure, which empowers, or disempowers, different actors.

The sociological-institutionalist approach, on the other hand, assumes that Europeanization is a process generating a "logic of appropriateness," which is defined by Tania Börzel as collectively shared understandings of what constitutes proper socially accepted behavior.[13] Accordingly, these collective understandings and intersubjective meaning structures strongly influence how actors set their goals and what they perceive as rational action. Rather than maximizing their subjective desires, actors strive to fulfil social expectations in a given situation.[14] According to this approach, actors are socialized into new norms and rules of appropriateness through processes of persuasion and social learning, and they redefine their interests and identities accordingly.[15] One could use this approach to explain more conveniently the ways in which both state actors and civil society actors institutionally transform themselves into more democratic, transparent, and accountable stake-holders collaborating with each other as well as with their European stake-holders.

There is a third approach to explain the process of Europeanization: the policy transfer model. This model is more helpful in understanding the processes of Europeanization taking place in policy areas where pressure from the EU is less direct, such as educational policy. Claudio M. Radaelli defines Europeanization as processes of construction, diffusion, and institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, ways of doing things, and shared beliefs and norms, which are first defined and consolidated in the EU policy process and then incorporated into the "logic of domestic discourse" and into identities, political structures, and public policies.[16] This approach is more useful in understanding the ways in which educational policies are being transformed in Turkey within the framework

---

11 Ayhan Kaya, *Europeanization and Tolerance in Turkey: The Myth of Toleration* (London: Palgrave, 2013).

12 Tania Börzel and Thomas Risse, "When Europe Hits Home: Europeanization and Domestic Change," *EUI Working Papers* 56 (2000); Tania Börzel and Thomas Risse, "Conceptualizing the Domestic Impact of Europe," in *The Politics of Europeanization*, eds. Kevin Featherstone and Claudio M. Radaelli (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 57–82.

13 Börzel, "Member State Responses," 195–196.

14 See Börzel and Risse, "When Europe Hits Home."

15 See Börzel and Risse, "Conceptualizing the Domestic Impact of Europe."

16 Claudio M. Radaelli, "Policy Transfer in the European Union: Institutional Isomorphism as a Source of Legitimacy," *Governance* 13, no. 1 (2000): 30.

of the Bologna Process, as in Turkey there is no direct incentive or pressure.[17] The policy transfer was at work when Turkey's Council of Higher Education (*Yükseköğretim Kurulu*, YÖK), the supreme authority regulating higher education since 1981, decided to adopt a research-based higher education system underlining the need for elite universities, centers of excellence, and project-based funding.

One could also find such mimetic effects very much in the new draft law prepared by the YÖK in 2013, which was later shelved.[18] In addition to the YÖK, there are certain other state institutions transferring European policies on science and research through the implementation of various research schemes, such as the Framework Projects (now Horizon 2020) and the Marie Curie Projects. For instance, the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (*Türkiye Bilimsel ve Teknolojik Araştırma Kurumu*, TÜBİTAK) has generated several different programs to attract qualified researchers, scientists, and Ph.D. students of Turkish origin to conduct their research facilities in Turkey by providing them with financial resources for their research activities under the project named Target Turkey (*Hedef Türkiye*).[19] The Turkish Academy of Sciences (*Türkiye Bilimler Akademisi*, TÜBA) has also recently become active in designing programs within the framework of newly established research schemes to attract researchers of Turkish origin to conduct their research in Turkey.[20] Similarly, the Turkish Research Space (*Türkiye Araştırma Alanı*, TARAL) was designed in 2004 to foster research and development facilities in the country. TARAL has radically increased the volume of expenses made on research and development activities.[21] Accordingly, I will, by and large, rely on this kind of definition of Europeanization throughout the article in order to scrutinize the ways in which the Bologna Process has impacted the higher education system of Turkey.

There are only a few existing academic studies regarding the Europeanization of Turkish higher education. To cite a few of these, Bülent Tarman examines the Europeanization of Turkish educational policy by focusing on the

17 See Özge Onursal, "Constructing the European Education Space: The Case of Turkish Higher Education," (Ph.D. dissertation, European Union Institute, Marmara University, İstanbul, 2012).

18 The new draft law was publicly discussed, as it also proposed to deliver the right to grant such academic credentials as associate professorship and professorship, as well as the right to nominate the board of trustees of private universities to the YÖK. For further discussion, see A. Kadir Yıldırım, "The Slow Death of Turkish Higher Education," *Daily Al-Jazeera*, July 10, 2014, http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/07/turkish-higher-education-reform-20147106282924991.html.

19 The official website of TÜBİTAK is http://www.tubitak.gov.tr.

20 The official website of TÜBA is http://www.tuba.gov.tr.

21 See http://www.tubitak.gov.tr/en/about-us/policies/content-turkish-research-area-taral.

Turkish history and social sciences curriculum.[22] He looks at the impact on Turkish higher education of the Council of Europe (CoE) programs and related EU initiatives. Maja Stolle concentrates on the Erasmus program's impact on five Turkish universities.[23] There are also the works of Fatma Mızıkacı, which dwell on the impact of European educational policy on mobility and quality systems in Turkey.[24] A study by Nevzat Evrim Önal brings a new dimension to the debate on the Bologna Process in Turkey by compiling the works of various authors who analyze and criticize the process from a socialist perspective.[25] Finally, the most comprehensive work on the Europeanization of Turkish higher education and the Bologna Process is Özge Onursal's unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, which focuses on the European educational space and the diffusion of its norms into Turkey.[26] She eloquently outlines how the agents of change in Turkey construct and shape the policy diffusion process by means of the policy transfer model.

The Bologna Process and the Lisbon Strategy

The Bologna Process was launched after 29 education ministers signed a declaration in Bologna in June 1999[27] to reform and harmonize the structures of their higher education systems. Each signatory country committed itself to reform its own higher education system in order to create overall convergence at the European level by 2010. The objectives adopted included a common framework of readable and comparable university degrees; the introduction of two cycles of degrees at the under-graduate and postgraduate levels in all countries, with the first degrees no shorter than three years; equipping universities with the instruments to respond to the needs of the labor market; and providing universities with possibilities of mobility for students, academics, and administrative staff. The declaration also referred to the creation of a European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). The goal is to render higher education

---

22 Bülent Tarman, *The European Union and the Modernization of the Turkish Education System* (New York: Cambria Press, 2008).

23 Maja Stolle, "Student Mobility in Progress: Reforms in Anatolian Universities," (master's thesis, İstanbul Bilgi University and European University of Viadrina, 2009).

24 Fatma Mızıkacı, "Quality Systems and Accreditation in Higher Education: An Overview of Turkish Higher Education," *Quality in Higher Education* 9, no. 1 (2003): 95–106; Mızıkacı, "Prospects for European Integration: Turkish Higher Education," *Higher Education in Europe* 30, no. 1 (2005): 67–79.

25 Nevzat Evrim Önal, ed., *Bologna Süreci Sorgulanıyor: AB'nin Akademik Tahakkümünün Sosyalist Tahlil, Eleştiri ve Reddiyesi* (İstanbul: Yazılıma, 2011).

26 Özge Onursal, "Constructing the European Education Space."

27 Additional process extensions occurred in 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, and 2010. The Bologna Process now encompasses 47 countries.

throughout Europe more compact, comparable, and compatible, and to increase student mobility.[28]

The process originated from the recognition that, in spite of their "valuable differences," European higher education systems face common internal and external challenges related to the diversification of higher education, the employability of graduates, and the expansion of private and transnational education. The Bologna Process has thus urged member states to respond to the growth of today's challenging knowledge society and the impacts of globalization by rendering the "Europe of Knowledge" more internationally competitive. In practical terms, the process refers to the harmonization of cycle degrees and to the creation of a common credit transfer system and evaluative criteria that enables students to address demanding labor market needs and the impact of globalization.

The Bologna Process and the Lisbon Strategy have been designed in parallel by the member states of the European Union in order to come to terms with the economic challenges of the globalizing world. These two policy processes have provided new opportunities for the commission to become more involved in the higher education policy field. By financing a range of research initiatives, such as Framework Programs 6 and 7 (now Horizon 2020) and the Bologna reform projects, the commission has become directly involved with numerous "grassroots" activities to increase the EU's visibility and significance for universities.[29] The EU heads of state and government, meeting in Lisbon for the EU's Spring Council of 2000, pledged to work toward making the EU the most "dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world" by 2010.[30]

In the official discursive topoi of the Bologna Process, one can trace the repetition of the concepts of flexibility, credibility, rationalization, efficiency, and openness, along with references to the topoi of employability, inter-disciplinarity, economic competitiveness, and the internationalization of student programs aimed at enabling national education systems to respond to current global labor market challenges as well as to the Lisbon Strategy by incorporating best practices from other European experiences.[31] The Lisbon

---

28   For the official website of the European Higher Education Area, see http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/.

29   Ruth Keeling, "The Bologna Process and the Lisbon Research Agenda: The European Commission's Expanding Role in Higher Education Discourse," *European Journal of Education* 41, no. 2 (2006): 205.

30   *Presidency Conclusions*, Lisbon European Council, March 23–24, 2000, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/lis1_en.htm.

31   Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak, "The Bologna Process and the Knowledge-based Economy: A Critical Discourse Analysis Approach," in *Higher Education and the Knowledge-based Economy in Europe*, eds. Bob Jessop, Norman Fairclough, and Ruth Wodak (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2008), 109–126. For a detailed analysis of the Bologna documents in historical sequence, see the official website of the European Higher Education Area at http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/.

Strategy focuses on five main areas, as sketched out by Wim Kok: the knowledge society, the internal market, the business climate, the labor market, and environmental sustainability.[32] The popularity of this kind of neo-liberal discourse was also evident in preceding official documents of the EU produced in the late 1990s and early 2000s. A critical discourse analysis of these documents reveals that the EU was giving priority to such terms as skills, market, efficiency, competitiveness, internationalization, and the global market in order to be able to show its determination to catch up with leading world economic powers like the United States of America and Japan.[33]

The early days of the construction of the Bologna Process coincided with a set of neo-liberal efforts dedicated to the extension of traditional European values that in fact constitute European identity narratives. For instance, the Lisbon Strategy forms part of the official discursive construction of European identity narratives, securing and legitimizing the standardization and the implementation of new policies on the one hand and a new value set on the other hand.[34] Such a discourse-historical analysis explains why the Bologna Process, as well as many other attempts in other policy areas seeking to standardize policies in all nation-states, cause so much tension: national identity constructions collide with transnational strategies and aims in a way that leads to hegemonic struggles over values, discourses, and social practices, as well as to nationally context-dependent recontextualization and policies of implementation.

However, one should note that the Bologna Process is a learning process. As is clearly seen in the official documents of the process, the ministers of education of the member states to the Bologna Process are keen on taking critics into account when making projections for the future. For instance, in the official Budapest-Vienna Declaration of the European Higher Education Area (March 2010), it is openly stated that the ministers have taken note of the independent assessment and the stake-holders' reports, and that they welcome their

---

32 According to Kok, the policy areas of the knowledge society and of the internal and labor markets are closely linked to the development of education and research policies at the European level. Under the knowledge society policy area, it is possible to frame the initiatives that aim to promote Europe's capacity of attractiveness to researchers; under the internal market policy area, the Lisbon Strategy points to the creation of an internal market of services where the provision of crossborder education services could fit in; under the labor market policy area are promoted a lifelong learning strategy and partnerships between the HEIs and industry that may increase the employment rate. See Wim Kok, *Facing the Challenge: The Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Employment* (Luxembourg: European Communities, 2004).

33 Similarly, Ruth Wodak also reveals the discursive shift of the European Commission in the same period, concentrating on the ways in which the commission perceived multilingualism; see Wodak, *The Discourses of Politics in Action*.

34 Ibid.

affirmation that institutions of higher education, staff, and students increasingly identify with the goals of the Bologna Process. They also reflect upon the recent protests taking place in some countries *vis-à-vis* the Bologna Process. As will be claimed in the following sections of this article, they also argue that these developments and measures are not necessarily related to the Bologna Process, and that some of the Bologna aims and reforms have not been properly implemented and explained in the member countries. The willingness of the Bologna team to acknowledge and to listen to critical voices raised among staff and students should be certified here.[35] A critical analysis of recent official documents and declarations also indicate that the decision makers of the Bologna Process, primarily the ministers, are sensitive about changing their discourse from a market-oriented neo-liberalism to a more social-oriented classical liberalism.[36]

Higher education as a neo-liberal form of governmentality

Several critical scholars have made interventions with regard to the growing neo-liberal aspects of higher education in Europe. James Wickham eloquently argues that the origins of the Bologna Process actually lie in the attempt to use the European education system as a tool for the creation of "European identity."[37] What excites university authorities across Europe is a different aspect of the so-called knowledge-based society; namely, an attempt to emulate American "excellence" in university research. The new European Research Council (ERC) was established to fund a small number of elite researchers, while national governments promote the idea of a small number of elite universities within their mass third-level systems.[38] Indeed, as Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller observed long ago, introducing the principles of economy and finance into the management of social conduct is one of the hallmarks of advanced liberal government,[39] or "neo-liberal

---

35 See Article 6 of the Budapest-Vienna Declaration of the Bologna Process, adopted by the ministers of education on March 12, 2010. The official declarations of the Bologna Process since 1999 may be seen on its official website at http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/Bologna/2010_conference/index.htm.

36 For the emphasis on social cohesion, equality, and quality in higher education, see the Budapest and Vienna Declaration (2010) and the Bucharest Declaration (2012).

37 James Wickham, "Worshipping at the Shrine of the Knowledge-based Soci*ety?*" in *Innovation in Low-Tech Firms and Industries*, eds. Hartmut Hirsch-Kreinsen and David Jacobson (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2008), 274.

38 Susan L. Robertson and Ruth Keeling, "Stirring the Lions: Strategy and Tactics in Global Higher Education," *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 6, no. 3 (2008): 234; and Wickham, "Worshipping at the Shrine," 275.

39 Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller, "Political Power beyond the State: Problematics of Government," *The British Journal of Sociology* 43, no. 2 (1992): 173–205.

forms of governmentality."[40] Cris Shore and Mira Taitza argue that much of this restructuring in higher education has been based on ideas from new institutional economics that were originally confined to a small number of countries characterized by the so-called "Anglo-Saxon" model of capitalism.[41] These neo-liberal principles and practices have now become widely disseminated throughout Europe and beyond via such international policy forums as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and, more recently, through the EU's Lisbon Strategy and Bologna Process.[42]

The insertion of economic and financial tenets into higher education has radically transformed universities, which were previously perceived by the public as places of advanced learning and critical thinking. Accordingly, in the former understanding of the university, higher education was regarded as a "public good" whose social mission was to reproduce national culture, decrease social inequalities, and serve the public interest in the form of civic education. However, this kind of Humboldtian universalist understanding of higher education has now been replaced by the narrower instrumental view of university knowledge as a personal investment and form of training.[43] Within this new knowledge-economy paradigm, students have been recast as "rational, self-interested, choosers and consumers," while education itself is increasingly being reframed "as a commodity: something to be sold, traded and consumed."[44] Furthermore, in a global neo-liberal environment, universities are seen as key drivers in the knowledge economy and, as a consequence, higher education institutions have been encouraged to develop links with industry and business in a series of new venture partnerships.[45]

---

40 For further information about the notion of governmentality, see Michel Foucault, "Governmentality," *Ideology and Consciousness* 6 (1979): 21. Foucault describes the concept of governmentality as a collection of methods used by political elites to maintain their power, or as an art of acquiring power. In other words, governmentality refers to the practices that characterize the form of supervision a state exercises over its subjects, their wealth, misfortunes, customs, bodies, souls, and habits. It is the art of governing.

41 Cris Shore and Mira Taitza, "Who 'Owns' the University? Institutional Autonomy and Academic Freedom in an Age of Knowledge Capitalism," *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 10, no. 2 (2012): 202–203.

42 Angelo Romano, "Studying Anthropology in the Age of the University Reform," *Social Anthropology* 18, no. 1 (2010): 60–61.

43 Husén Thorsten, "The Idea of the University: Changing Roles, Current Crisis and Future Challenges," in *Higher Education in an International Perspective: Critical Issues*, eds. Zaghloul Morsy and Phillip G. Altbach (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996), 4–5.

44 Shore and Taitza, "Who 'Owns' the University?", 203; and Peter Roberts, "Neo-liberalism, Performativity and Research," *Review of Education* 53, no. 4 (2007): 350–351.

45 See Mark Olssen and Michael A. Peters, "Neo-liberalism, Higher Education and the Knowledge Economy: From the Free Market to Knowledge Capitalism," *Journal of Education Policy* 20, no. 3 (2005). One should also recall that the American higher education system has actually deepened

The state of higher education reforms in Turkey

University reforms in Turkey can be perceived as systematic attempts to model the educational system in line with the topoi of the "democratization," "Westernization," and "secularization" of education. According to Ayşe Öncü,[46] the educational reforms implemented in 1933 (Law No. 2252), 1946 (Law No. 4936), 1981 (Law No. 2547), and 1991[47] coincided with the changes seen in national political dynamics, though the primary objective continued to be modernization, Westernization, and seculariza-tion.[48] In 1981, the Council of Higher Education (*Yükseköğretim Kurulu*, YÖK) was established as an autonomous body in accordance with Articles 130 and 131 of the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey and Higher Education Law No. 2547. Primary academic appointments and promotions—starting with the selection of rectors, deans, and professors— became contingent upon the approval of the YÖK. As the 1980 military coup had been legitimized on the grounds of halting the social and political cleavages that had become very visible in the public space, the YÖK was also designed in such a way as to contribute to this objective by means of depoliticizing universities and equipping university students with Kemalist principles.[49]

In accordance with the 1991 regulations governing foundation universities, the number of private universities has increased significantly over the years: 1 in 1984, 3 in 1993, 8 in 1996, 15 in 1997, 20 in 1999, 30 in 2007, 54 in 2010, and 71 in 2013.[50] Nevertheless, there is a visible inequality in the distribution of

---

social inequality in the United States since the late 1970s, rather than decreasing it; see Wickham, "Worshipping at the Shrine," 276.

46 Ayşe Öncü, "Academics: The West in the Discourse of University Reform," in *Turkey and the West: Changing Political and Cultural Identities*, eds. Metin Heper, Ayşe Öncü, and Heinz Kramer (London: I.B. Tauris and Co., 1993).

47 See the reform act under the title "*Vakıf Yükseköğretim Kurumları Yönetmeliği*" (Regulations for Foundation Universities) in the *T.C. Resmî Gazete*, no. 20841, April 10, 1991. This act was later revised in 2005; see *T.C. Resmî Gazete*, no. 26040, December 31, 2005.

48 Due to lack of space, I cannot give a detailed account of the higher education reforms in Turkey. For further details, see Dölen, *Türkiye Üniversite Tarihi* and Öncü, "Academics." For more about the ways in which the Turkish political elite have always perceived higher education as an instrumental tool to reinforce the modernization of the country—and hence, how there has always been a positive correlation between modernization and higher education in the habitats of meaning of the Turkish political elite—see Andris Barblan, Kemal Gürüz, and Üstün Ergüder, *Higher Education in Turkey: Institutional Autonomy and Responsibility in a Modernising Society: Policy Recommendations in a Historical Perspective* (Magna Charta Universitatum Observatory Publications, 2008), http://www.magna-charta.org/pdf/proceedings_atti_2008.pdf.

49 See Article 4 of Law No. 2547. For more discussion on the principles of higher education in Turkey, see Armağan Erdoğan, *Türk Yükseköğretiminin Yeniden Yapılanma Çalışmaları: Küresel Eğilimler ve Uluslararasılaşma Çerçevesinde Değerlendirmeler* (Ankara: SDEY Press, 2013), 13.

50 See http://www.yok.gov.tr.

students, with private university students registered at the following four universities: Yeditepe (İstanbul), Bilkent (Ankara), Başkent (Ankara), and İstanbul Bilgi University (İstanbul). While in some private universities the ratio of teaching staff per student is closer to that of the public universities, the overall difference in the ratio between public and private universities is explanatory of why some private universities are preferred by applicant students.

Despite the fact that the domestic and international contexts significantly differed during the times of these reforms, they all shared one crucial common denominator: they have all been legitimized on the basis of "Western models." To put it differently, the political choices have always been made among both academics and politicians using the impartial language of alternative "Western models."[51] The same discourse of Westernization is also visible in the educational reforms that took place in the 2000s and introduced the Bologna Process.[52] Hence, the construction and reconstruction of an ideal Western-type university has always been the core element of the discourse of academic reforms throughout the republican era.

Turkey and the Bologna Process

Turkey officially joined the Bologna Process in 2001. However, Turkey did not perform very well in complying with the Process' regulations until 2004. It was only after that year that the National Agency (*Ulusal Ajans*), which was established within the jurisdiction of the State Planning Organization (*Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı*, DPT), made some attempts to create an awareness in higher education institutions regarding different aspects of the Bologna Process, such as the introduction of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and Socrates-Erasmus academic exchange programs. The YÖK only became actively involved in the Bologna Process after 2008, when it started to impose itself on higher education institutions so as to harmonize them with the European Higher Education Area. Accordingly, on February 13, 2011, an addendum was made to Article 44 of the Law on Higher Education (Law No. 2547) to prompt universities to make the required changes in their administrative and academic structures regarding the introduction of ECTS, learning outcomes, course descriptions, student workloads, and diploma supplements.[53]

---

51 Öncü, "Academics," 144.

52 In the 2000s, a few regulations were prepared by the YÖK to harmonize Turkish higher education with the Bologna Process. For a detailed overview of these regulations, see the YÖK's official website at http://www.yok.gov.tr/documents/10279/30217/yuksekogretimde_yeniden_yapilanma_66_soruda_bologna_2010.pdf/f3ec7784-e89d-4ee0-ad39-9f74532cd1dc.

53 Erdoğan, *Türk Yükseköğretiminin Yeniden Yapılanma Çalışmaları*, 34–35.

Since then, the Bologna Process has had a considerable impact on higher education policy in Turkey and on the course and program structures of both state and private universities. The Bologna Process is generally accredited by the Turkish universities, but the associated implementation instruments are not sufficiently supported at the national level. It can be seen that, in private universities, the implementation and adaptation of the Bologna Process followed rather quickly, while state-funded universities first had to take advantage of the opportunity to open up new revenue streams through, for instance, cooperative programmatic and research activities.[54] The mobility factor also considerably affects higher education.[55]

The ways in which the Bologna Process has been accommodated, negotiated, debated, or rejected in Turkey reveal that there are certain societal and political tensions regarding the question of whether the Process should be perceived as an expression of internationalization, Americanization, or Europeanization. Another source of tension springing from the interpretation of the Bologna Process concerns the standardization and commercialization led by the transformation of the European higher education area. Euroskepticism is another source of tension, one which is used differently by various stake-holders in higher education. Sometimes it manifests itself through the voice of dissident students, who use a Euroskeptic discourse to express their opposition to the Bologna Process. And sometimes Euroskepticism becomes something to be criticized by those stake-holders who are outspokenly critical of the governing Justice and Development Party's (AKP's) growing Euroskeptic and Islamist discourse. The ways in which the Bologna Process has been perceived by some stake-holders, such as left-wing student groups, also indicate that the process is sometimes utilized by stake-holders as a source of resilience against the AKP government, which is perceived as the perpetrator of the process. Finally, geographical mobility seems to attract most of the stake-holders, as it is believed to be an opportunity for cultural exchange and linguistic competence. In what follows, these tensions will be revealed through in-depth interviews.

Tensions between Americanization, Internationalization, and Europeanization

The Bologna Process is an important reflection of the processes of liberalization and globalization in the field of Turkish higher education. On the structural

---

54 Figen Arkın, "Quality Assurance or Assuring Quality: The Experience of Turkish Higher Education on Bologna Process and Quality Assurance," *EUL Journal of Social Sciences* 4, no. 2 (December 2013): 55–69 and Onursal, "Constructing the European Education Space."

55 For further discussion on the Bologna Process and Turkey, see Şule Erçetin, "Turkish Higher Education Institutions in Bologna Process," *Humanity and Social Sciences Journal* 1, no. 1 (2006): 18–27.

level, Turkey has been efficient in fulfilling the requirements of the process. In that regard, the director of a center working on equal access to education, who is also the former rector of a prominent public university, emphasized that, in his personal experiences with the implementation of the structural reforms, he has not come across challenges, but has rather observed supplementary additions to the existing structure.[56] He attributed the lack of challenges to the "American model," which has been implemented in Turkey since the 1950s.[57] In that regard, he also noted that the educational system in Europe utilizes the "American model" as a benchmark, and is thus complementary to the institutional structure in place in Turkish universities. The American legacy also explains the insertion of the term "competition" into Turkish higher education long before the introduction of the Bologna Process. As such, various aspects of the Bologna Process—such as competitiveness, employability, and efficiency—had already been introduced into Turkish higher education. However, the approach to research had always been lacking in Turkey before being introduced via the implementation of various European-based research schemes, such as FP6, FP7, and now Erasmus.

It is possible to observe that modern education and/or the modernization of education is often discussed in reference to the United States by interlocutors in the 20–45 age bracket. As previously indicated, such references appear to be both positive and negative. Nonetheless, the American model introduced in the 1950s still constitutes an important element in individuals' opinions of the higher education system in Turkey. I argue that the way in which the Bologna Process, as the most comprehensive and recent attempt to Europeanize the system, is framed as "internationalization" contributes to the lack of information on the impact of the European Union *vis-à-vis* modernity in Turkey. In that regard, while Westernization and Europeanization can be used interchangeably to refer to the modernization of Turkey, it is found that market-driven "Americanization" as a source of standardization is also an important element of the Turkish education system.

Maja Stolle has revealed in a study that the idea of Europeanization triggered a wide range of mobility initiatives in Turkish universities, forcing them

---

56 Personal interview, İstanbul, February 5, 2010.

57 While the "Humboldtian German Model" remained intact in some universities together with the legacy of German scientists escaping the Nazi regime in the 1930s and 1940s, the postwar period was also marked by the rise of the so-called "American model." For instance, Atatürk University in Erzurum was initially funded by the United States, and English was chosen as the teaching language for Middle East Technical University in Ankara. See Fritz Neumark, *Boğaziçi'ne Sığınanlar: Türkiye'ye İltica Eden Alman Bilim, Siyaset ve Sanat Adamları 1933–1953*, trans. Talip Doğan Karlıbel (İstanbul: Neden Kitap, 2008); Emre Dölen, *Türkiye Üniversite Tarihi 1: Osmanlı Döneminde Darülfünun 1863–1922* (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi University Press, 2009); and Öncü, "Academics," 159–160.

to professionalize the organization of student mobility.[58] Nevertheless, the motives behind the Bologna Process have been called into question in Turkey. Most significantly, the rise of Euroskepticism in the second half of the 2000s has encouraged policy makers to frame the Bologna Process in terms of globalization and internationalization rather than of Europeanization. Özge Onursal has drawn attention to the discursive shift in Turkish higher education circles with regard to the promotion of the Bologna Process, due both to rising Euroskepticism and to the expansion of the Bologna space.[59] She states that the term "Europeanization" has now been hijacked by the term "internationalization," and that rectors prefer to use a discourse underlining that "the Bologna Process is designed to create world citizens," rather than "European citizens."[60] The idea of decoupling the policy transfer from the EU and the accession process seems to have an intentional motive.[61] The stake-holders have been careful not to link the process of policy transfer to the EU due to Euroskeptical sentiments in Turkey. As Onursal captures very well in her fieldwork with the relevant stake-holders, "the fear was that if the universities see the Bologna reforms as part of the accession process, the situation might become politicised."[62] This could have become a major impediment for the reforms, as there might have emerged a backlash against "another imposition" from the EU.

There are arguments that underline how the Bologna Process is based on neo-liberal motivations and is, in fact, market-driven, thereby leading to concerns regarding the quality of education, in parallel with the critics of James Wickham, as stated above.[63] In order to understand the significance of the Euroskeptic terminology, one should note that, under the AKP, Turkey has become more active in establishing relations with regional actors, while a growing emphasis has also been placed on multilateral relations with actors from the Middle East, Africa, the Caucasus, the Central Asian republics, and Russia. Consequently, one can observe that the EU is no longer perceived by the ruling government as the sole anchor.[64] Therefore, the term "internationalization" has come to be preferred over "Europeanization," since the latter implies an attachment to one

---

58 Maja Stolle, "Student Mobility in Progress."

59 Onursal, "Constructing the European Education Space."

60 Personal interview with Özge Onursal, İstanbul, March 5, 2010.

61 Onursal, "Constructing the European Education Space," 145.

62 Ibid.

63 Wickham, "Worshipping at the Shrine." There are also several scholars in Turkey who explicitly oppose the Bologna Process; see, e.g., the anti-Bologna blog at http://anti-bologna.blogspot.com/.

64 Kemal Kirişçi, "Turkey's 'Demonstrative Effect' and the Transformation of the Middle East," *Insight Turkey* 13, no. 2 (2011).

particular region. Nevertheless, concerns over the outcomes of the process, such as the quality of education and market orientation, have been eclipsed by concerns over the structural requirements, as well as over social and economic problems that prevent students' participation in the process.

Despite growing Euroskepticism in the state bureaucracy and the AKP government, many of the interlocutors defined the Bologna Process as an attempt to Europeanize higher education in Turkey. One of the former rectors interviewed indicated that the process is indeed a process of Europeanization, a statement differing from those of many acting rectors, who have recently generated a politicized discourse in line with the AKP government.[65] Similarly, J, a program officer in a civil society organization specializing on social, political, and economic policy issues as well as a columnist, observed the following:

> The process is in line with the EU's *raison d'être*. The most important element of the process is to encourage mobility among students and academics as well as administrative staff. It is a reasonable process in terms of the requirements of the new global economy.[66]

A discourse analysis of the interlocutors underlining the element of Europeanization along with the Bologna Process indicates that their primary motivation in referring to Europeanization results from their resistance to AKP rule, which since 2005 has gradually become more Euroskeptic, Islamist, and neo-Ottoman.

Challenges against standardization and commercialization

The harmonization efforts proposed by the Bologna Process are not just about Europe, but rather about Europe's aim to become a stronger force in the process of globalization.[67] Due to enlargement and globalization, debates changed the focus of the integration process from uniting the peoples of Europe under a common destiny to finding urgent and joint responses to new challenges. According to Luce Pépin:

> It was now more necessary than ever to create this "ever closer union among the people of Europe" which had been asserted since the beginning by successive treaties and could not be achieved by economic integration alone.

---

65 Personal interview with A, a former rector, İstanbul, February 10, 2010.
66 Personal interview with J, a program officer in a civil society organization, İstanbul, February 11, 2010.
67 Brad K. Blitz, "From Monnet to Delors: Educational Co-operation in the European Union," *Contemporary European History* 12, no. 2 (2009): 197–212 and Ruth Keeling, "The Bologna Process."

The globalisation of trade and the information and communication technologies had an ever greater impact on how and where knowledge was transferred, education and training systems being at the top of the list.[68]

Indeed, the 1994 White Paper with the title of *Growth, Competitiveness, Employment: The Challenges and Ways Forward into the 21st Century* supported the need to take action in the field of lifelong learning. In 1995, the White Paper *Teaching and Learning: Towards the Learning Society* began constructing the Europe of the future. Europe's culture and civilization appeared as of less significance in this new official discourse: "Tomorrow's society will be a society which invests in knowledge, a society of teaching and learning, in which each individual will build up his or her own qualifications. In other words, a learning society."[69]

Sotiria Grek eloquently exposes the discursive shift in the European Commission from defining the European identity by means of a common culture and civilization to depicting it by means of a process of learning governed by numbers, skills, qualifications, growth, and competitiveness, which are all indicators of what Nikolas Rose (1991) calls a neo-liberal form of governance.[70] In regards to the widely acknowledged debates on the neo-liberal nature of the Bologna Process, A (a former rector) stated: "I agree with the criticisms of the process with regard to neo-liberal motivations. If skill-based education is accentuated, then higher education will resemble occupational schools."[71] Similarly, B (a sociologist), who referenced the importance of local characteristics, argued:

> In terms of the arguments regarding the Bologna Process being skill-based, I think that if the mentality behind the process begins to obliterate local characteristics, then there might be a problem. Nevertheless, this process exists independent of the Bologna Process as well. Also, the things that we designate as skills change rapidly. For example, once we used to teach the IT students MS-DOS systems, which became obsolete upon their graduation. I think it's more important to relay a more critical perspective.[72]

---

68 Luce Pépin, *The History of European Cooperation in Education and Training: Europe in the Making – An Example* (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2006), 156.

69 European Commission, *Teaching and Learning: Towards the Learning Society* (Brussels: European Commission, 1995), 2.

70 See Sotiria Grek, "From Symbols to Numbers: The Shifting Technologies of Education Governance in Europe," *European Educational Research Journal* 7, no. 2 (2008): 208–218; Nikolas Rose, "Governing by Numbers: Figuring out Democracy," *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 16, no. 7 (1991): 673–692. For further discussion on neo-liberal governance, see James Wickham, "Worshipping at the Shrine."

71 Personal interview with A, İstanbul, February 5, 2010.

72 Personal interview with B, a professor of the sociology of education, İstanbul, February 12, 2010.

On this issue, C, the former chairperson of a women's association and a member of the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, CHP), emphasized a very important aspect of skill-based education, one that is also a vulnerability of this system, when she stated:

> It is often the case that [skill-based] education does not support a critical mind. In effect, skills are like Word or Excel, the philosophy is the Windows operating system. Without a philosophical foundation, the system will always send off an error. Actually, philosophy is a dimension that extends through everyone.[73]

While the interlocutors were divided in terms of their reflections on the framework of the Bologna Process, standardization is often perceived to be problematic. When asked about the Process' framework, B, a professor of the sociology of education in a private university in İstanbul, critically questioned the homogenizing effect of the Process on the national and local element of higher education. He argued that the level of standardization required by the Process and the establishment of a language of education should not surpass locality:

> I think standardization, McDonaldization, and making everything modular should be criticized within the framework of the Bologna Process. When we look at Europe, we see that the differences in education, for instance in England, the Netherlands, and France, can be attributed to their experiences with migration and cultural diversity. If the use of one language is used as a way of standardization, then there might be problems with regard to locality. I believe that there won't be any universality without locality.[74]

B draws our attention to the fact that university education is raising students who comply with the status quo without ever trying to challenge and transform it. His response is similar to that of Paulo Freire, whose pedagogy is based on the assumption that modern education should promote participation and critical personal and social reflection among students.[75] Freire makes a critical analysis of modern education, which, he believes, turns young people into passive receivers:

> The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their

---

73 Personal interview with C, a former chair of a women's association, İstanbul, February 15, 2010.

74 Personal interview with B, a professor of the sociology of education, İstanbul, February 12, 2010.

75 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Penguin Press, 1970) and Paulo Freire, *Letters to Christina: Reflections on My Life and Works* (London: Routledge, 1996).

intervention in the world as transformers of that world. The more completely they accept the passive role imposed on them, the more they tend simply to adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmented view of reality deposited in them.[76]

Accordingly, one could argue that the widespread student demonstrations that have occurred in Turkey since September 2007 have been an attempt to show that university students not only protest the process of commercialization of higher education in Turkey, but are also trying to transform society and politics as insurgent citizens.[77]

Nevertheless, it is important to note that the majority of the interlocutors indicated that this process is not well known in Turkey. Those students critical of the process have mainly been engaged in left-wing social movements. D was one of them. She framed this process within the sphere of capitalist motivations and the interests of transnational companies, stating as follows:

> I think this is about capitalism; they want a productive individual rather than a thinking one. It is all about profit. A sailor working on a boat knows more than I do. Our educational system is based on memorization, we don't get to practice. I am an engineer but I have no practic[al experience].[78]

There were also arguments criticizing the ways in which this process might hinder individuals' outlooks on the world. These individuals were mainly graduates of the social sciences. E, for instance, stated:

> I think an engineer with no understanding of the world is not a good engineer. Skill-based education is acceptable for vocational schools, but a person should be equipped to face the world when they graduate from a university.[79]

The interlocutors indicated that they have a general distrust in the current higher education system due to the YÖK's top-down approach and the reformation process. F, a faculty member in social sciences at a private university, argued that the system is "overwhelmed with reforms" and the "rationale" of the Bologna Process has been omitted in the relaying of the

---

76 Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 54.

77 For a detailed map of the students' demonstrations against the commercialization of higher education in Turkey, see http://anti-bologna.blogspot.com.tr/. This blog contains critical voices of academics, students, and relevant civil society organizations.

78 Personal interview with D, İstanbul, February 25, 2010.

79 Personal interview with E, İstanbul, February 27, 2010.

necessary reforms.[80] Nevertheless, in terms of the higher education system, my findings have not yielded information sufficient to be able to generalize private individuals' perceptions of the notions of modernization in terms of the Bologna Process.

The disciplinary backgrounds of interlocutors and students are influential factors in determining their perception of, and attitude toward, the Bologna Process and its emphasis on skills. Within this framework, the purpose of higher education is perceived either as the production of an efficient labor force, and for the interlocutors competition, or as the cultivation of the critical faculties of individuals. One could argue that those who have an educational or professional background in engineering (forestry, metallurgy, agriculture, and the like) have analyzed skill-based education as a positive feature. G, a female engineering student from a public university, argued that she perceived the process and market orientation as a positive, and she argued that, in general, the high level of unemployment in certain sectors is due to the graduates' lack of skills. Like several other students in engineering and natural sciences, student G further noted that "theory and practice have to go hand in hand" to improve the graduates' skills and thus their employability.[81]

In comparison to the critical voices on the Bologna Process with regard to its market-oriented approaches, and in a similar fashion to those engineering students who praised the Bologna Process, H, the director of the international office of a private university in İstanbul, assessed the process in a positive manner in that it has contributed to the establishment of a platform for discussion on higher education and set an agenda with regards to the necessary reforms. Nevertheless, in terms of the discussions related to the market orientation of the process, she elaborated as follows:

> Access to higher education is not an inherent right. The Turkish economy cannot accommodate the employment of all higher education graduates. Everyone acts as if a higher education is a "must," but the economy also needs medium-ranged employees.[82]

However, she also drew attention to the negative consequences of the "top-down approach" of the reformation process and indicated the following:

> Turkey can reform the higher education system on its own, but we should carry out a reformation process in line with those in Europe and the world.[83]

---

80 Personal interview with F, an academic in the social sciences, İstanbul, February 27, 2010.
81 Personal interview with G, an engineering student at a public university, İstanbul, February 21, 2010.
82 Personal interview with H, İstanbul, February 26, 2010.
83 Personal interview with H, İstanbul, February 26, 2010.

She also made statements confirming what was stated by the other inter-locutors with regard to the lack of institutionalization of the Bologna Process in Turkey. The Bologna Process seems to be far from institutionalization, as it is still being undertaken by volunteering individuals who have internalized it. The Bologna offices at universities are often run by individuals who are very supportive of the process. However, their hard work is not accompanied by the institutionalization of the process.

Students opposing AKP rule

In the meantime, in Turkey certain societal tensions emerged and mobilization was carried out against the Bologna Process, which was interpreted by left-wing student organizations as market-driven and conforming to neo-liberal directives. Such dissenting voices were coupled with strong feelings of Euroskepticism and anti neo-liberalism. However, the protests failed to achieve the larger support of society and remained confined to the student body, despite students' efforts to spread the protests out into the larger society. It is very likely that the Bologna Process became a frame of reference for left-wing student groups[84] to express their opposition to the acting neo-liberal and conservative gov-ernment of the AKP, which since the mid-2000s has been increasingly setting up a societal challenge against the secular and liberal segments of Turkish society in a way that re-Islamizes the public space.[85] The main motivations behind these protests—which took place at various public universities in İstanbul, Ankara, Eskişehir, and İzmir between 2010 and 2012—were partly similar to the motivations of university students who actively took part in the #Occupygezi movement in İstanbul and elsewhere in May and June 2013. To put it differently, the student protests that revolved around the claims that the Turkish higher education was becoming more and more commercialized, skill-based, and market-orien-ted as a result of the Bologna process were indeed the precursor of the massive protests. The protests began in late May 2013 as a response to the condescending discourse of then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who was attempting to shape social life through his Islamic references,

---

84 A similar pattern was observed among the students and academics protesting the Bologna Process in France, Greece, and Croatia, where the protesters instrumentalized the process as a frame of reference to express their dissident voices against their neo-liberal governments. For further discussion of this issue, see the website of the FP 7 Project entitled "Identities and Modernities in Europe" (2008–2011) at http://fass.kingston.ac.uk/public/ime/.

85 For further information on the students' protests against the Bologna Process, see the website of the Transnational Work Group on Academic Liberty and Freedom of Research in Turkey at http://gitamerica.blogspot.com/2012/03/bologna-burns-2010-vienna-protests-and.html.

the police brutality carried out against a handful of environmentalist protesters in Gezi Park in Taksim, and the new alcohol regulations of the AKP government that banned the sale of alcohol in off-license shops after 10 pm.[86]

Bottom-up Europeanization: The mobility of university students

Despite the fact that the Bologna Process is far from being institutionalized in Turkey and operationalized by volunteering rectors, professors, and international office staff, there is one element of this process that has been very well received by students and other stake-holders; namely, student mobility. The OECD's report on internationalization and student mobility reveals that the concentrations of incoming and outgoing students vary among countries as well as regions. It seems that Turkey sends students and academic staff off rather than taking them in.[87] The statistics show that, between 2004 and 2013, the total number of incoming Erasmus students amounted to 24,961, while the number of outgoing Erasmus students was 70,943. In terms of academic teacher and staff mobility, between 2004 and 2013, the total number of outgoing individuals was 15,794, while the number of incoming individuals was 10,321. In comparison with the student mobility figures, Turkey can thus still be considered a "sending" country (Table 2).

In line with the Bologna Process, Mızıkacı observes a shift from bilateral cooperation programs to multilateral cooperation programs owing to the European integration process.[88] In her research on Turkey's status within OECD countries, she observes that Turkish students study mostly in Germany and the United States, followed by France, Austria, and the United Kingdom, where state and public funding is available for foreign students. Among OECD countries, most of the incoming foreign students in Turkey are from the Russian Federation, Jordan, and Greece.[89] It should also be noted that the Bologna Process Reports of 2005, 2007, and 2009 identify the issue of financial inequality as a problem at the national level as it pertains to the notion of equal access for students from different

---

86 For further detail on the #Occupygezi movement, see Ergun Özbudun, "AKP at the Crossroads: Erdoğan's Majoritarian Drift," *South European Society and Politics* (June 2014), doi:10.1080/13608746.2014.920571 and Soli Özel, "A Moment of Elation: The Gezi Protests/Resistance and the Fading of the AKP Project," in *The Making of a Protest Movement in Turkey, #occupygezi* (London: Palgrave, 2014): 7–24. And also for further discussion on the new alcohol regulations, see "Turkey alcohol laws could pull the plug on İstanbul nightlife," *The Guardian*, May 31, 2013, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/may/31/turkey-alcohol-laws-İstanbul-nightlife.

87 Mızıkacı, "Prospects for European Integration," 71.

88 Ibid., 72.

89 Ibid., 73–74.

Table 2. Statistics on Erasmus Student and Teacher Mobility.

Year	Outgoing student	Incoming student	Outgoing Teaching Staff	Incoming Teaching Staff
2003–2004	128	17	–	–
2004–2005	1,142	299	339	218
2005–2006	2,852	828	581	440
2006–2007	4,438	1,321	1,378	666
2007–2008	7,119	1,982	1,905	932
2008–2009	7,794	2,658	1,595	1,184
2009–2010	8,758	3,336	1,740	1,321
2010–2011	10,065	4,320	2,166	1,660
2011–2012	11,782	4,700	2,643	1,900
2012–2013	16,983	5,500	3,886	2,000
Total	70,943	24,961	15,794	10,321

Source: Turkish National Agency (http://www.ua.gov.tr).

socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as at the international level, since students require scholarships to afford their tuition and living expenses for exchange programs.

In terms of internal mobility, Mızıkacı notes that with the rise of private universities, internal mobility has risen as well. She argues that private universities have been able to provide students with scholarships, further training abroad, and employment in associate companies, and that, due to their reputation and marketing strategies, they have been attracting students who would otherwise have preferred to study abroad.[90] Furthermore, the Erasmus student and academic mobility programs, as well as the Bologna Process, have considerably altered the university structure in Turkey. The scope of Europeanization embedded in these programs has emphasized the change of the institutional structure shaped by policy transfer, which has made student mobility and the transformation of curricula easier.[91] Recently, the Europeanization of the Turkish higher education system through the Bologna Process and the Erasmus exchange program has also produced something new with respect to student and teaching staff mobility within Turkey: the Farabi Exchange Program.[92] This program facilitates university students and teaching staff members continuing their education and

---

[90] Ibid., 75.

[91] Eren Özalay-Şanlı, "Evaluating Current Turkish Politics in Light of Democratization and Europeanization Theories: The Case of Education Reforms," *Boğaziçi Journal: Review of Social, Economic and Administrative Studies* 25, no. 2 (2011); and Maja Stolle, "Student Mobility in Progress."

[92] Al-Farabi was a scientist and philosopher who lived in the 9th and 10th centuries. It is not settled among historians whether he is of Turkic or Arabic origin.

training at an institution of higher education in Turkey other than their own for a period of one or two semesters.[93] It is evident that the mobility programs of the EU have so far contributed to the transformation of higher education institutions and students, and that Europeanization has underlined the processes of cultural exchange among students, academics, and administrative staff.

Conclusion

The policy transfer model put forward by Radaelli best explains the Europeanization of higher education in Turkey, ranging from the implementation of the Bologna Process that emphasizes the concepts of employability, efficiency, competition, skill-based education, and research to the harmonization of degrees in the European higher education area, or from the implementation of research schemes by TÜBİTAK to the formation of the Farabi Exchange Program. According to the new institutionalism, actors follow rules, shared interpretations, symbols, schemata, and meanings. Policy transfer, on the other hand, assumes that policy diffusion is a rational process wherein imitation, copying, and adaptation are the consequences of rational decisions by policy makers.[94] While one should not ignore the constitutive relationship between structure and agent, the policy transfer model seems to place more emphasis on agency.[95] Accordingly, many of the interlocutors who were interviewed were inclined to perceive the Europeanization of Turkish higher education as an expression of a process of marketization, because the Europeanization of higher education in Turkey does not mean the acquisition of values of a "social Europeanness," inspired by European political and social achievements. Instead, the Europeanization of higher education in Turkey has meant the transfer of neo-liberal "best practices" that are being enforced through the European integration process.

It can be argued that Turkey's education policy has been Europeanized to a large extent, with the misfits between the two levels of policy being brought to a minimum. Turkish universities have been actively engaged in the Bologna Process and are very supportive of the Erasmus exchange program. However, rising Euroskepticism in Turkey has also changed the process of Europeanization in universities. Now, activities undertaken within the framework of the Bologna Process are being presented by rectors as activities of internationalization, not of Europeanization. Furthermore, the discourse of raising

---

93 See http://www.yok.gov.tr/web/farabi/anasayfa.
94 Radaelli, "Policy Transfer in the European Union," 28–9.
95 Onursal, "Constructing the European Education Space," 47.

Europeans is now being replaced by that of raising world citizens. While, for Europe, the Bologna Process has been *a European response* to internationalization, for Turkey it has been *a process of internationalization*. Europeanization can here be seen as both a "bastion against globalization" and a "manifestation of globalization."[96] However, one cannot deny the fact that the Bologna Process has been an instrument for Turkey to integrate into the world system in the area of higher education. One should not also forget that some of the stake-holders tend to employ a Euroskeptical discourse to implicitly express their dissatisfaction about the liberalization and Europeanization of higher education in Turkey, as well as in other parts of the EU.

Discourse analysis of the interviews conducted with rectors, professors, and experts indicates that the relevant stake-holders in higher education interpret the Bologna Process in two different dimensions. First, the discourse in Turkey underlines that the Bologna Process has been undertaken in the name of much-needed domestic reforms so as to comply with the requirements of the new global economy. In other words, the Bologna Process was instrumentalized as a way to justify the legal changes being undertaken in Turkey. Secondly, it was often explicitly stressed that these changes already fit the Turkish higher education system due to the fact that it was closer to the American model.

It was also revealed that Europe and the related university reforms appear, to a certain extent, as modernization projects coming from abroad, beyond the nation and its citizens. At the same time, the Bologna Process was perceived as bringing forward a "new model" aiming at international competitiveness, while universities' ability to "do good" for society was rather held back. Following the adoption of the Lisbon Strategy, externally defined standards and goals; demands for results that can be documented in numbers; flexibility; mobility; and external monitoring units—all have contributed to the dominance of the "knowledge economy" over the "knowledge society," while reference to the construction of Europe as a political community and the social cohesion of European societies are absent in European and national state actors' discourses on the Bologna Process.

Finally, the study has shown that the Bologna Process seems to be far from being institutionalized in Turkey, as it is still being implemented by volunteering individuals who have internalized it. The Bologna offices of each university are frequently run by individuals very supportive of the process, although their efforts have not been accompanied by an institutionalization of the process. On the other hand, the skill-based nature of the Bologna Process was criticized by the interlocutors, as it aims to create skilled individuals

---

96   Simon J. Bulmer and Claudio M. Radaelli, "The Europeanisation of National Policy," *Queen's Papers on Europeanisation* 1 (2004).

equipped to fulfill the requirements of the new global economy in a way that leads to a kind of dehumanization of individuals. Moreover, the interlocutors also addressed the negative aspects of the standardization and homogenization of higher education in Europe, leading to the disappearance of local motives.

References

Arkın, Figen. "Quality Assurance or Assuring Quality: The Experience of Turkish Higher Education on Bologna Process and Quality Assurance." *EUL Journal of Social Sciences* 4, no. 2 (December 2013): 55–69.

Barblan, Andris, Kemal Gürüz, and Üstün Ergüder. *Higher Education in Turkey: Institutional Autonomy and Responsibility in a Modernising Society: Policy Recommendations in A Historical Perspective* (Magna Charta Universitatum Observatory Publications, 2008). http://www.magna-charta.org/pdf/proceedings_atti_2008.pdf.

Blitz, Brad K. "From Monnet to Delors: Educational Co-operation in the European Union." *Contemporary European History* 12, no. 2 (2009): 197–212.

Bologna Process National Report, Turkey, 2004–2005. http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Documents/National_Report_Turkey_05.pdf.

Bologna Process National Report, Turkey, 2005–2007. http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Documents/National_Report_Turkey2007.pdf.

Bologna Process National Report, Turkey, 2007–2009. http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Documents/National_Report_Turkey_2009.pdf.

Börzel, Tania and Thomas Risse. "Conceptualizing the Domestic Impact of Europe." In *The Politics of Europeanization*, edited by Kevin Featherstone and Claudio M. Radaelli, 57–82. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

——. "When Europe Hits Home: Europeanization and Domestic Change." *EUI Working Papers* 56 (2000).

Börzel, Tania. "Member State Responses to Europeanization." *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40 (2002): 193–214.

Bulmer, Simon J. and Claudio M. Radaelli. "The Europeanisation of National Policy." *Queen's Papers on Europeanisation* 1 (2004).

Dölen, Emre. *Türkiye Üniversite Tarihi 1: Osmanlı Döneminde Darülfünun 1863–1922*. İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi University Press, 2009.

Erçetin, Şule. "Turkish Higher Education Institutions in Bologna Process." *Humanity and Social Sciences Journal* 1, no. 1 (2006): 18–27.

Erdoğan, Armağan. *Türk Yükseköğretiminin Yeniden Yapılanma Çalışmaları: Küresel Eğilimler ve Uluslararasılaşma Çerçevesinde Değerlendirmeler*. Ankara: SDEY Press, 2013.

European Commission. *Teaching and Learning: Towards the Learning Society*. Brussels: European Commission, 1995. http://europa.eu/documents/comm/white_papers/pdf/com95_590_en.pdf.

Fairclough, Norman and Ruth Wodak. "The *Bologna Process* and the Knowledge-based Economy: A Critical Discourse Analysis Approach." In *Higher Education and the Knowledge-based Economy in Europe*, edited by Bob Jessop, Norman Fairclough, and Ruth Wodak, 109–126. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2008.

Fairclough, Norman. *Discourse and Social Change*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992.

Foucault, Michel. "Governmentality." *Ideology and Consciousness* 6 (1979): 5–21.

Freire, Paulo. *Letters to Christina: Reflections on My Life and Works*. London: Routledge, 1996.

——. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Penguin Press, 1970.

Grek, Sotiria. "From Symbols to Numbers: The Shifting Technologies of Education Governance in Europe." *European Educational Research Journal* 7, no. 2 (2008): 208–218.

Internationalisation and Trade in Higher Education: Opportunities and Challenges. OECD, 2004. http://www.oecd.org/edu/skills-beyond-school/33730019.pdf.

Kaya, Ayhan. *Europeanization and Tolerance in Turkey: The Myth of Toleration*. London: Palgrave, 2013.

Keeling, Ruth. "The Bologna Process and the Lisbon Research Agenda: The European Commission's Expanding Role in Higher Education Discourse." *European Journal of Education* 41, no. 2 (2006): 203–223.

Kirişçi, Kemal. "Turkey's 'Demonstrative Effect' and the Transformation of the Middle East." *Insight Turkey* 13, no. 2 (2011): 33–55.

Kok, Wim. *Facing the Challenge: The Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Employment*. Luxembourg: European Communities, 2004.

Mızıkacı, Fatma. "Prospects for European Integration: Turkish Higher Education." *Higher Education in Europe* 30, no. 1 (2005): 67–79.

——. "Quality Systems and Accreditation in Higher Education: An Overview of Turkish Higher Education." *Quality in Higher Education* 9, no. 1 (2003): 95–106.

Neumark, Fritz. *Boğaziçi'ne Sığınanlar: Türkiye'ye İltica Eden Alman Bilim, Siyaset ve Sanat Adamları 1933–1953*. Translated by Talip Doğan Karlıbel. İstanbul: Neden Kitap, 2008.

Olssen, Mark and Michael A. Peters. "Neo-liberalism, Higher Education and the Knowledge Economy: From the Free Market to Knowledge Capitalism." *Journal of Education Policy* 20, no. 3 (2005): 313–345.

Önal, Nevzat Evrim, ed. *Bologna Süreci Sorgulanıyor: AB'nin Akademik Tahakkümünün Sosyalist Tahlil, Eleştiri ve Reddiyesi*. İstanbul: Yazılıma, 2011.

Öncü, Ayşe. "Academics: The West in the Discourse of University Reform." In *Turkey and the West: Changing Political and Cultural Identities*, edited by Metin Heper, Ayşe Öncü, and Heinz Kramer, 142–176. London: I.B. Tauris and Co., 1993.

Özalay-Şanlı, Eren. "Evaluating Current Turkish Politics in Light of Democratization and Europeanization Theories: The Case of Education Reforms." *Boğaziçi Journal: Review of Social, Economic and Administrative Studies* 25, no. 2 (2011): 7–25.

Özbudun, Ergun. "AKP at the Crossroads: Erdoğan's Majoritarian Drift." *South European Society and Politics* (2014). doi:10.1080/13608746.2014.920571.

Özel, Soli. "A Moment of Elation: The Gezi Protests/Resistance and the Fading of the AKP Project." In *The Making of a Protest Movement in Turkey: #occupygezi*, edited by Umut Özkırımlı, 7–24. London: Palgrave, 2014.

Pépin, Luce. *The History of European Cooperation in Education and Training: Europe in the Making – An Example*. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2006.

Pollack, Mark A. "The New Institionalism and European Integration." In *European Integration Theory*, edited by Antje Wiener and Thomas Diez, 125–143. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Presidency Conclusions. Lisbon European Council, March 23–24, 2000. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/lis1_en.htm.

Radaelli, Claudio M. "Europeanisation: Solution or Problem?" *European Integration Online Papers* 8, no. 16 (2004): 143–164.

——. "Policy Transfer in the European Union: Institutional Isomorphism as a Source of Legitimacy." *Governance* 13, no. 1 (2000): 25–43.

Reisigl, Martin and Ruth Wodak. *Discourse and Discrimination: Rhetorics of Racism and Anti-Semitism*. London and New York: Routledge, 2001.

Roberts, Peter. "Neo-liberalism, Performativity and Research." *Review of Education* 53, no. 4 (2007): 349–365.

Robertson, Susan L. and Ruth Keeling. "Stirring the Lions: Strategy and Tactics in Global Higher Education." *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 6, no. 2 (2008): 221–240.

Romano, Angelo. "Studying Anthropology in the Age of the University Reform." *Social Anthropology* 18, no. 1 (2010): 57–73.

Rose, Nikolas. "Governing by Numbers: Figuring out Democracy." *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 16, no. 7 (1991): 673–692.

Rose, Nikolas and Peter Miller. "Political Power beyond the State: Problematics of Government." *The British Journal of Sociology* 43, no. 2 (1992): 173–205.

T.C. Başbakanlık Secretariat General for EU Affairs. *Turkey's European Union Communication Strategy (EUCS)*. Ankara, January 2010. http://www.abgs.gov.tr/files/strateji/abis_en1.pdf.

Shore, Cris and Mira Taitze. "Who 'Owns' the University? Institutional Autonomy and Academic Freedom in an Age of Knowledge Capitalism." *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 10, no. 2 (2012): 201–219.

Tarman, Bülent. *The European Union and the Modernization of the Turkish Education System*. New York: Cambria Press, 2008.

Thorsten, Husén. "The Idea of the University: Changing Roles, Current Crisis and Future Challenges." In *Higher Education in an International Perspective: Critical Issues*, edited by Zaghloul Morsy and Phillip G. Altbach, 3–20. New York: Garland Publishing, 1996.

Torfing, Jacob. "Discourse Theory: Achievements, Arguments, and Challenges." In *Discourse Theory in European Politics: Identity, Policy and Governance*, edited by David Howarth and Jacob Torfing, 1–32. Houndmills and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

Wickham, James. "Worshipping at the Shrine of the Knowledge-based Society?" In *Innovation in Low-Tech Firms and Industries*, edited by Hartmut Hirsh-Kreinsen and David Jacobson, 267–284. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2008.

Wodak, Ruth. *The Discourses of Politics in Action: Politics as Usual*. London: MacMillan Palgrave, 2010.

Yükseköğretim Kurulu (YÖK). *Türkiye'nin Yüksek Öğretim Stratejisi*. Ankara: YÖK, 2007. http://www.yok.gov.tr/documents/10279/30217/yok_strateji_kitabi/27077070-cb13-4870-aba1-6742db37696b.

——. *Vakıf Üniversiteleri Raporu*. Ankara: YÖK, 2007.

Yükseköğretim Kanunu (Kanun No. 2547). Law on Higher Education (Law No. 2547). *Resmî Gazete*, no. 17506, November 6, 1981.