

A Phenomenological Study on the Effectiveness of Curriculum and Course Information Packages in the Bologna Process

Bologna Sürecinde Program ve Ders Bilgi Paketlerinin Olgubilim Çalışması ile İncelenmesi

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Özet

Araştırmanın amacı Eğitim Fakültesi ve Eğitim Bilimleri Bölümü öğretim programının (program ve ders bilgi paketlerinin) Bologna süreci bağlamında incelenmesidir. Fenomenoloji araştırma yöntemine göre desenlenen araştırmada “Bologna süreci bağlamında eğitim programlarının etkililiği” problemi incelenmiştir. Veriler öğrenciler ve öğretim elemanlarından oluşan iki ayrı odak grup görüşmesi ile toplanmış ve Miles ve Huberman’ın aşamalarına göre analiz edilmiştir. Araştırmanın bulguları hazırlama, uygulama, ve kalite güvencesi olmak üzere üç araştırma problem çerçevesinde raporlanmıştır. Araştırmanın bazı sonuçları şunlardır: Sürecin olumlu yönü olarak hem öğrenciler hem de öğretim elemanları sürecin bilgiye ulaşmayı ve seçmeli dersler yardımı ile ders seçim sürecini kolaylaştırdığı konusunda ortak görüş bildirirken; tüm katılımcılar bilgi akışındaki eksiklikten, verilen görevlerin net olmamasından, sürecin önemine inanılmamasından, hazırlama sürecine gösterilen dirençten, adil olmayan iş yükü dağıtımından, yeterlilikler ve derslerin eşleştirilmesindeki hatalardan yakınmıştır. Ayrıca öğretim görevlileri, gözden geçirme ve dönüt süreçlerindeki problemlerden de bahsetmiştir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Bologna süreci, fenomenoloji, öğretim programı, program bilgi paketi.

Abstract

The aim of the present study is to analyze the School of Education and Department of Educational Sciences’ curricula (program and course information packages) with respect to the Bologna process. Designed in line with phenomenology, the study focuses on the phenomenon of “the effectiveness of curricula with respect to the Bologna process”. The data were collected by interviewing two separate focus groups of students and lecturers, and analyzed by using Miles and Huberman’s stages. The results of the three research questions are explained in terms of preparation, implementation, follow-up and revision, and quality assurance. The results are as follows: Considering the positive aspects of the process, both lecturers and students agreed that the process eased access to information and course selection with the help of elective courses; however, all participants complained about the lack of information flow, unclear tasks and process, disbelief in the importance of the process, resistance to the preparation process, unfair work distribution, and the mismatch between competencies and courses. Lecturers also mentioned problems related to the revision and feedback processes.

Keywords: Bologna process, curriculum, curriculum information package, phenomenology.

The Bologna process officially started in 1999 with the meeting of the higher education ministers of 29 European states in Bologna and the signing of the Bologna declaration in order to create a common higher education area in Europe. Although the goal stated in the declaration was to create a European higher education area by 2010

(Çelik, 2012), the target date for this goal was revised as 2020 with the Leuven Declaration (Süngü, 2009). In 2001, Turkey joined the Bologna process which aims to bring standards to higher education in Europe, and in 2015 the number of member states increased to 48, with the entry of Belarus (European Higher Education Area, 2015).

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The Bologna process aims to introduce equivalent degrees into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA); follow a common European credit transfer system; popularize student, lecturer, administration and researcher mobility; encourage student-centered education; form a network for quality assurance systems (Sağlam, Özüdoğru, & Çiray, 2011); and introduce quality assurance, which led to the Quality Assurance in Higher Education Directive in 2015 (Yükseköğretim Kalite Kurulu, 2017a). According to the Eurydice Report (2017), the participating higher education institutions and stakeholders must follow a harmonization process by making higher education systems more competitive, modernizing educational structures, and strengthening quality assurance mechanisms. On the other hand, cooperation has been recommended by policymakers between academic staff and students in order to learn from each other beyond countries and borders, and to identify achievable, measurable targets. In Turkey, external evaluation field visits had been completed in 14 state universities and 6 foundation universities by February 2017 (Yükseköğretim Kalite Kurulu, 2017b).

What is intended with the Bologna process and conceptualized as a European Higher Education Area and European Research Area is not a uniform education system. On the contrary, it aims to provide a balance between diversity and unity (YÖK, 2010). Concepts that are frequently mentioned in the Bologna process, such as information society, employability, mobility, lifelong learning and quality assurance, express the intended goals of the process on one hand, and lead to dispute on the other (Gümüş & Kurul, 2011). Despite not being openly discussed in formal documents, this seems to be an attempt to break the US dominance in higher education, given that the US universities attract a greater number of students from Europe, Asia and other parts of the world. The Bologna process is not only related to higher education, but is also a version of globalization. According to Pursainen and Medvedev (2005; cited in Süngü, 2009), particularly with the development of student mobility, it is now possible for individuals, ideas and information to roam freely beyond national borders and, consequently, the internationalization of higher education may accelerate. Indeed, while the Bologna process is believed to increase the quality of higher education (Yükseköğretim Kalite Kurulu, 2010), it is at the same time criticized for increasing bureaucracy in higher education in Europe and Turkey, for leading to uniformity and thus for failing to reach its own goals (Appleton, 2009; Çelik, 2012; Grove, 2012). Even though the criticisms in Turkey seem to focus on the failure to obtain stakeholder participation, there is no scientific evidence for this claim (Edinsel, 2008). Therefore, there is a need for studies

which will contribute to the field by producing scientific data about the Bologna process.

Studies aiming to evaluate the Bologna process have helped identify the direction and purpose of this study. For instance, Aittola et al. (2009) studied lecturers who reported that the Bologna process was making European higher education more harmonious and comparable, and was allowing more student exchange opportunities. European Students' Union (2012), on the other hand, stated that the process of quality assessment for identifying European Credit Transfer System credits and workload was not sufficient or transparent, and did not involve students as stakeholders. Todorescu, Greculescu, and Lampa (2014) showed in their study that most universities focused on meeting the requirements of the Bologna process, involving stakeholders in administration and students in the administrative decision-making processes. In a study by Bahia, Freire, Estrela, Amaral, and Espírito-Santo (2017), lecturers shared positive views regarding students, but negative ones about bureaucracy and careers.

Similarly, Altunkaynak, Uysal, Akman, and Durmuşoğlu (2016) examined the views of lecturers and teacher candidates from different departments of the School of Education, and found that most of the participants defined the Bologna process as one which protects student benefits and increases quality in higher education, but is applied without sufficient preparation. Dalgıç (2008) showed that lecturers had gaps in their knowledge, did not understand the process adequately, and the universities did not implement effective work related to the Bologna process. Kazu and Demiralp (2016) reported that lecturers found the processes of transfer to European Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (ECTS), the building of Qualification Framework for European Education Area (QFEEA), and the identification of learning outcomes insufficient both on paper and in practice. Korkut and Mızıkacı (2008) stated that the Bologna process was only embraced in their university on a theoretical level, and applied only in the Psychological Counseling and Guidance (PCG) curriculum. Sakarya and Kahraman (2011) showed that practical courses were needed and the curriculum had to be redesigned to become more student-centered.

Of the aforementioned studies, those conducted in Europe voice positive views about issues such as student exchange or harmonizing with the process, but also list problems related to ECTS, workload decisions or meeting the requirements. Those from Turkey, on the other hand, mostly focus on collecting views on the Bologna process or identifying the status quo. As can be seen, the common denominators among these studies are evaluating the Bologna process from different perspectives and contributing to the improvement of the process.



The problems with the Bologna process revealed in these studies suggest that it may benefit from various improvements. On the other hand, none of the studies have examined the Bologna process by taking into account the views of all stakeholders. However, a study that brings together the voices of the many stakeholders of the Bologna process may provide detailed feedback about the implementation and the quality of the process, help the monitoring and improvement of problems in the system, offer recommendations and ideas to run the system more effectively, help evaluate curriculum in other faculties and schools, and even set an example for other universities. Determining the effectiveness of the Bologna process is a vital need, not only for curriculum and development but also for quality assurance. Therefore, this study examines the effectiveness of the School of Education, Educational Sciences department curricula (curriculum and course information packages) with respect to the Bologna process, based on student, lecturer, Education Faculty Bologna team, and curriculum and development specialist views. Answers to the following research questions were sought: (1) What are the views of lecturers, Education Faculty Bologna team members and the curriculum and development specialist about the effectiveness of Education Faculty and School of Educational Sciences curriculum (curriculum and course information package) preparation process? (2) What are the views of students, lecturers, Education Faculty Bologna team members and the curriculum and development specialist about the effectiveness of Education Faculty and School of Educational Sciences curriculum (curriculum and course information package) implementation, evaluation and revision processes? (3) What are the views of students, lecturers, Education Faculty Bologna team members and the curriculum and development specialist about the suitability and feasibility of the quality assurance criteria and the external evaluation system?

Method

This study adopts a phenomenological design. Phenomenology aims to study and understand phenomena (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005). The phenomenon examined in the present study was the effectiveness of curricula with respect to the Bologna process.

Participants of the Research

Before giving information about the participants of the study, it would be useful to give information about the university, institute and school of education. As one of the research universities in the country, Hacettepe is a state university located in Ankara with 14 Faculties, 14 Graduate Schools and Institutes, 2 Applied Schools, 1 Conservatory, 5 Vocational

Schools, and 105 Research and Application Centers. The total number of students is 49,582, and the total number of the academic staff is 3638 (Hacettepe University, 2018a). Hacettepe University's Graduate School of Educational Sciences has a 50-year history of postgraduate programs in education. Since 1967, its Graduate Education Faculty has been offering graduate level programs in the field of education through 17 graduate programs in six major science fields. The Graduate School of Educational Sciences offers graduate education to researchers from 47 universities within the framework of scientific research agreements. The graduate programs have successfully produced 118 master's and 103 doctorate theses in the last three years (Hacettepe University, 2018b). The Faculty of Education was founded in the 1983–1984 Academic year with 14 Faculties, 14 Graduate Schools and Institutes, 2 Applied Schools, 1 Conservatory, 5 Vocational Schools, and 105 Research and Application Centers. The total number of students is 3889, and the total number of academic staff is 243 (Hacettepe University, 2018c).

The criterion for participating in the study was defined as knowing about the Bologna process and volunteering. Two focus group interviews were held with students, lecturers, Education Faculty Bologna team, and a curriculum and development specialist. Lecturers in this study were both teaching in their departments and had taken part in the creation of course information packages in their respective departments. The Education Faculty Bologna team were teaching in their departments, had taken part in the creation of curriculum and course information packages in their departments, and also acted as contact people with the university administration. The development specialist in the study was both teaching and guiding the curriculum and development process. The first focus group interview included 8 individuals. This group comprised four undergraduate (3F, 1M) two Master's (2F) and two doctoral (1F, 1M) students. The group had one male and seven female participants. The second focus group consisted of seven individuals from the Departments of Educational Sciences (four lecturers), Mathematics and Science Education (two lecturers), and Elementary Education (one lecturer). The group had one male and six female participants. The participants were coded as BT for Bologna team, L for lecturers, CS for curriculum specialist, U for undergraduate students, MA for master students and D for PhD students.

The Preparation of the Data Collection Tool and Data Collection

The data were collected via semi-structured interview forms developed by the researchers. These forms included questions



related to personal information as well as the effectiveness of the implementation, follow-up and revision processes of the curriculum. The students in the first focus group were asked how they made use of and benefited from the curriculum and course information packages, and what their views were about the workload and elective courses. The lecturers in the second focus group were asked how the course and curriculum and information packages were organized and used, and what their views were about the workload, quality assurance and elective courses. For instance, the students were asked “How do you use the program and course catalogs?” while the lecturers were asked “How were the program and course catalogs prepared?”.

The focus group interviews were conducted separately. Each focus group interview was held face to face, in a single sitting. Both focus group interviews were moderated by the same lecturer from the research team. The first focus group meeting took approximately 70 minutes, and the second one took approximately 90 minutes. The participants in the focus groups were informed that participation was voluntary.

Data Analysis

The main data source of the current study is the focus group interview transcription. Data analysis was conducted according to Miles and Huberman’s (1994) qualitative data analysis stages. These stages are as follows: (1) Coding the data from observations or interviews; (2) Noting reflections, personal impressions or words in the margins; (3) Identifying the distinguishing differences between similar expressions, variables, patterns, categories, sub-categories and common sets; (4) Identifying these patterns and processes, similarities and differences and using them in the future data collection stage; (5) Expanding the generalizations covering the consistent points in the database; and (6) Comparing these generalizations within the framework of the information structure.

These stages were selected as they allow the comparison of findings from each research question, thus enabling the researcher to examine the entire data as a whole. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), this allows for deeper and more detailed data analysis as well as more diversity by supporting the validity of the research process.

The data were audio-recorded with the permission of the participants. When the recordings were transcribed, a 46-page document was obtained. The data were analyzed by three researchers together. In line with Miles and Huberman’s (1994) stages, the coding was performed on the data set from student and lecturer interviews including questions about the preparation process, implementation, follow-up, revision and

quality assurance. Similar and different statements were spotted, which later led to the emergence of categories and sub-categories. With the generalizations and comparisons obtained, the categories and sub-categories revealing student and lecturer views for each research question were reorganized. The analysis was not interpreted in the context of any theory, only the current situation was described.

Quality Assurance of the Qualitative Research (Validity and Reliability)

In order to ensure the quality of validity and reliability studies, as recommended by Mertens (2005), credibility was used for internal validity, transferability for external validity, dependability for internal reliability, and confirmability for external reliability.

To ensure credibility, expert views were taken from two lecturers and two students in the focus groups. These people checked the raw data of the study and evaluated the meaningfulness of the analyses to ensure participant confirmation. In addition, analyses were checked nine times. An effort was thus made to support the claims with adequate data and interpretation. For the transferability of the study, the data were recorded with rigor. In addition, the data collection and analysis were explained, and the findings were described and reported in detail. In this way, it was made possible for readers to interpret and make personal judgments about the feasibility of the study. For the reliability of the study, the participants’ quotes, the categories, sub-categories and coding were analyzed by three researchers, not in one single sitting but in ten different sessions, and were reviewed separately three times after completion. The research process was also separately analyzed three times. This ensured the reliability of the analysis and findings. For confirmability, the findings were presented without comments and the discussion reflected the findings.

Results

The results of the three research questions below are explained in terms of preparation, implementation follow-up and revision, and quality assurance.

Preparation

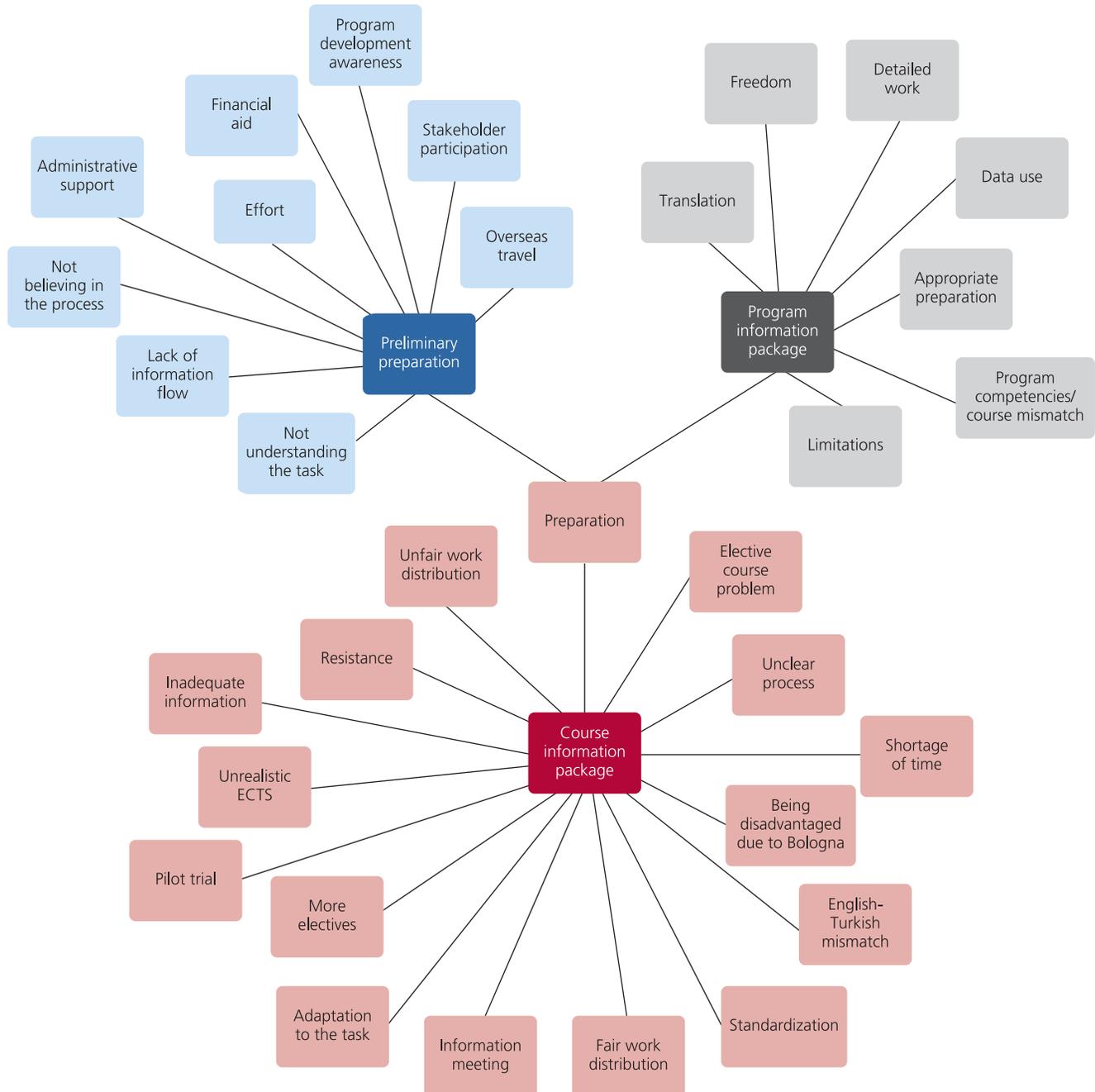
Regarding the first research question, the categories revealed by the analysis were preliminary preparation, course information package, and curriculum and information package, as presented in ■ Figure 1.

The “course information package” stage of the preparation process included more sub-categories than the “prelimi-

nary preparation” and “curriculum and information package” stages. The common point of the elements in the preparation of course information packages was the ambiguity in the work to be done, and the resulting resistance and impression of unfair work distribution.

Preliminary Preparation

In this category, the most frequent sub-categories were support from the administration, lack of information flow, and lack of belief in the process. Regarding the sub-category of administrative support, BT2 from the Bologna team empha-



■ **Figure 1.** Lecturer, Education Faculty Bologna team members and curriculum development specialist views about the preparation process.



sized the support given by the university administration during the adaptation of curricula to the Bologna process. In the lack of information flow sub-category, L2 stated:

“... there was serious support and cooperation, but perhaps this support was not adequately visible to the lecturers in some departments.”

The curriculum specialist (CS) mentioned the importance of the Bologna process in raising awareness on the significance of curriculum and development as follows:

“the reconsideration of curricula that had not been touched in years, lecturers sitting together to prepare a syllabus (...) was a curriculum and design process (...) even though people complained a lot, sitting down and asking themselves ‘what do I teach in this course’ as they prepared course information packages (...), the curriculum and revision was really meaningful to me.”

Course Information Packages

The most frequent sub-categories in this category were showing resistance, unfairness in work distribution, and inability to understand the process.

According to the lecturers, certain problems emerged in the pilot trial stage (unfair work distribution, lack of time, inability to understand the process, inadequate information flow, resistance, etc.). BT2 referred to the resistance in the pilot trial as follows:

“We didn’t understand much at the beginning (...) when it spread across the university, they held many training sessions, but in the process (...) I felt incredible prejudice and resistance (...) The process showed me that there were many groups, cliques in the university and now we were trying to break that.”

Even though a lecturer and the Bologna team stated that work distribution in the process of course package adaptation was fair, unfairness in work distribution was mentioned many times particularly by lecturers.

The inability to understand the process, which was one of the problems about the preparation stage and accompanied by insufficient information flow, affected both lecturers and the Bologna team (L1, L2, L3, BT2 and L4). In contrast, BT1 found the number of information meetings adequate, but the participation of lecturers was limited. Other topics mentioned by the lecturers (L3, L4 and BT1) included the standardization of course catalogues at universities, thus enabling access to knowledge even across different universities via the course information packages.

Curriculum Information Packages

The most frequent sub-category was about the translation of the curriculum and information package. According to BT2, even the translation of certain terms was problematic. L2 stated that when preparing curriculum and information packages, which necessitated detailed and hard work, she focused on curriculum and goals, literature survey, data and strategic planning. On the other hand, the lecturers in the study complained about the equivalence of course content, curriculum, and competencies.

Implementation, Follow-Up and Revision

Regarding the second research question, the categories were defined as implementation, follow-up and revision for both students and lecturers (lecturers, Education Faculty Bologna team and curriculum and development specialist, as presented in ■ Figure 2).

The lecturer and student views about implementation, follow-up and revision overlapped. Both the lecturers and students reported similar thoughts by viewing problems and issues from their own perspective.

Implementation

In this category, course selection, implementation, information acquisition, ECTS and pilot trial sub-categories emerged. The course selection sub-category touched upon informed course selection and elective courses. The most frequent one, for both the students and lecturers, was elective courses.

Some of the lecturers and students noted that elective courses gave students the right to select their courses (L3, BT1; D2, MA2, U3) but also brought problems such as not being able to take departmental courses and being forced to take required elective courses. Some students talked about the increased number of elective and free course selections, but at the same time complained about some elective courses that were not offered (MA1, U3), limited class size (U3), and difficulties with completing the necessary ECTS for graduation (U1, U2, U3, U4, MA1). At the same time, the students (D1, D2) and lecturers (L3, BT1) emphasized that the Bologna process was important for informed course selection. To illustrate, BT2 stated that following the Bologna process allows students to choose courses freely while at the same time equipping them with the opportunity of informed selection.

On the other hand, due to the quota, the risk of not being able to choose from departmental courses was a negative point mentioned by the lecturers. However, according to D2,

the majority of the problems in the implementation stage stemmed from the implementers.

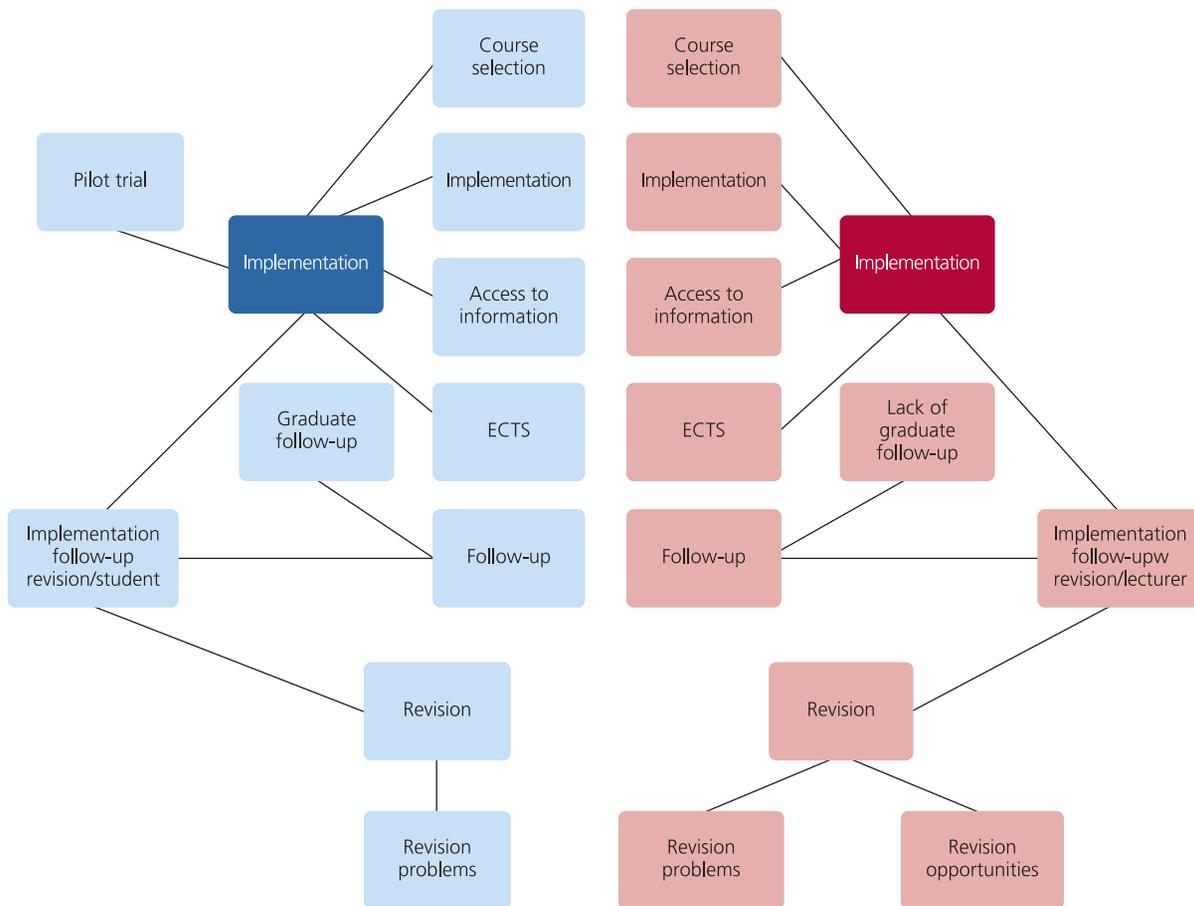
Regarding the implementation sub-category, the lecturers and students mentioned following the course information package or failing to do so. On the other hand, the students mentioned course preparation and deficient course content, while the lecturers referred to students' using the course information package or failing to do so. Some lecturers (L1, L3) and students (MA1, U3, MA2, U4, D2) mentioned congruence and incongruence with the course information package in the instructional process organization stage. Some sample quotes about this point are given below.

“It depended on the lecturer. Some lecturers took it seriously. They wrote down exactly what they would do in class. They filled the forms seriously. Others gave them to their assistants, who completed the forms by using Google” (L1).

In the access to information sub-category, some lecturers mentioned giving students information about course information packages and implementation before actually taking the course as a positive point (L1, L3, BT1).

The students and lecturers often emphasized the university website as important. According to L4, the new website bridged a significant gap. Thanks to the course information packages, the lecturers could also access information about the courses when they needed it. In the same vein, U3 and D2 also discussed the importance of the website where they could reach course and curriculum and information packages with the Bologna process. BT1 stated that the students were informed at the start of the term about the course catalogues and made decisions about the course based on the course information package:

“In all my courses, I show them what course catalogues are for, how they can look them up. I even open the page to



■ **Figure 2.** Student, lecturer, Education Faculty Bologna team members and curriculum development specialist views on implementation follow-up and revision.



my own course and tell them to have a look. I tell them that if I don't meet these expectations later, they can ask me why."

Regarding the ECTS sub-category, the student interviews revealed problems with completing their ECTS. MA1, U3 and U4 particularly complained about this. U4 said the following:

"In our first year, our department (...) had an ECTS problem about the sociology course. We were told that this was due to some problem in the Bologna process. When I heard this, I checked out what Bologna was. It affected me because it was going to affect my graduation".

Follow-up

Both the lecturers and students mentioned the importance of follow-up. During the interviews with the lecturers, L3 and BT2 complained about the lack of graduate follow-up. A similar view was voiced by D2:

"We don't know (...) what graduates are doing. So the feedback step is not enough as we don't have that data at hand."

Revision

Lecturers stated that although revision allowed self-development, having access to the system twice a year was a handicap, and the time allowed for revisions was not enough. Frequently mentioned by lecturers, the revision problem was also voiced by students (D2, MA1). Below is a quote from MA1:

"The Bologna package made us open new elective courses. One of our lecturers retired this term. Her elective course is still in the Bologna package. It was not offered this term. Other courses have been in the package for years but have never been offered. There are ECTS packages for these courses but lecturers choose not to give them."

D2 explained the revision problem as follows:

"Let's imagine there are four lecturers who can teach a certain course. One follows the package and others do not. --- When someone else is teaching it, they may want to make modifications."

Quality Assurance

Regarding the third research question, the categories were defined as professional profile, student mobility, diploma addition, accountability, accreditation, standardization, equivalence, and freedom. In addition to the categories that emerged from the analyses of the student data, interviews with the lecturers (lecturers, Education Faculty Bologna team and the curriculum and development specialist) yielded the

categories of comparability, supervision, the future of the process, and transparency, as presented in ■ Figure 3.

Student Mobility, Diploma Addition, Freedom

Students stated that they had information about student mobility, but not enough information about the diploma supplement (D1, D2). One strength mentioned by the students was that they could access course information packages of different universities with the Bologna process and learn about the course content via course catalogues (U4, MA1). L4 added that this also brings transparency and standardization, thus leading to information unity. These related processes, according to L8, also made universities somewhat more liberated environments. Freedom was expressed in a wide array of experiences ranging from the expansion of the course pool and enabling students to choose from many courses to allowing them to take courses from other departments without restrictions. MA2 referred to this as follows:

"Students can freely take the courses they wish without looking at the number of students. They are even free to choose courses from other departments. This provides room for personal development, which is what a university should offer."

Standardization, Transparency, Accountability, Comparability and Equivalence

Standardization, transparency, accountability, comparability and equivalence across curriculum increases the quality of education (MA2). L3 argued that this is partly related with Turkey accepting to be evaluated in the international arena regarding higher education. The lecturers particularly mentioned the reorganization of courses in line with the Bologna process and the requirement of accountability (L1, L3, BT1, BT2, L4). On the other hand, U3 stated the following about lecturers' lack of information about the process:

"We were given a lot of misinformation this year."

BT2 said the following about the ineffective feedback mechanism on lecturer evaluation:

"Students think that their feedback does not affect the lecturers, departments, or whatever. So we rated a lecturer poorly; we honestly did that, now what? Nothing (...) or maybe we rated a lecturer well, but there is no consequence. It is the same for the lecturer. A really poor rating or a good one, no difference."

In contrast, MA2 claimed that all these activities, and particularly standardization, would bring along quality.

Supervision

About the supervision of the process, lecturers mentioned the necessity of internal (L2) and external assessment (L2, BT1, BT2). L2 stated the following:

“... internal and external assessment of quality commissions may be functional as they have certain legal and administrative bases...”

BT1 said: “We are now moving onto a quality process.”

The Future of the Process

The views on the future of the Bologna process were generally negative. Examples of these negative views may be found below:

“Imagine a new process starts in Europe or elsewhere, are we going to adopt it as well? (L2).”

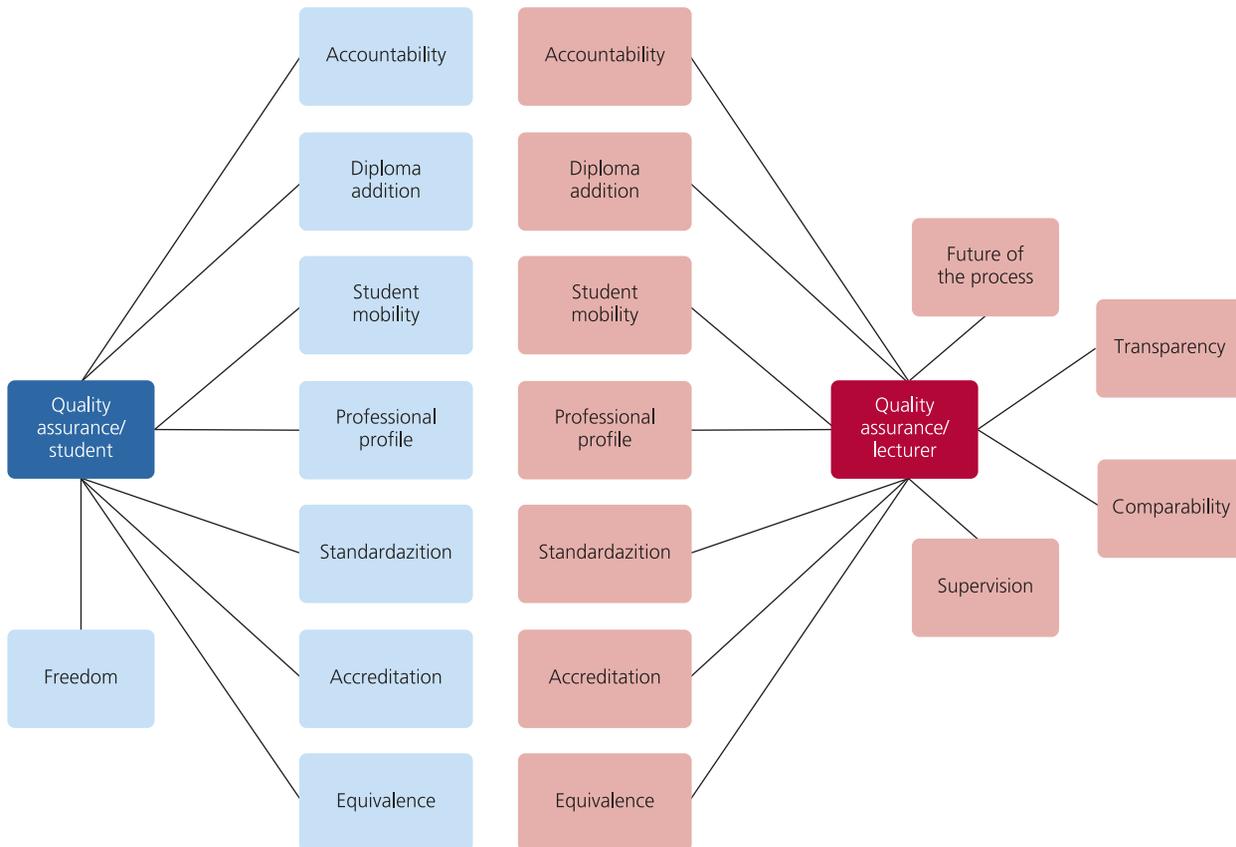
“I believe the decisions are highly affected by politics. I also think increased student mobility with Europe also has political and economic reasons. (...) But if tomorrow there is a crisis or they don’t want students from the Middle East and

surrounding countries, there may be a decision to remove Turkey from the Bologna process and we may get abandoned with our packages and courses (MA1).”

Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions

This study aims to find out the effectiveness of the School of Education and Department of Educational Sciences curricula (program and course information packages) with respect to the Bologna process. Adopting a phenomenological design, it examined “the effectiveness of curricula with respect to the Bologna process” as its phenomenon. In terms of the effectiveness of the curriculum and course information package preparation process, which constituted the first research question, the views of lecturers, the Bologna team and the curriculum and development specialist about both undergraduate and graduate curricula were largely similar and focused on similar strengths and weaknesses.

For example, the topics that drew positive comments from both the lecturers and the Bologna team included the



■ **Figure 3.** Student, lecturer, Education Faculty Bologna team members and curriculum development specialist views about quality assurance.



standardization of course catalogues and making information readily available on websites. Similarly, positive opinions such as motivating all lecturers who prepared and uploaded Bologna courses onto the system by giving them financial aid, and ensuring stakeholder participation were mentioned by all participants.

All participants complained about the problems in information flow, unclear tasks and process, not believing in the importance of the process, resistance to the preparation process, unfair work distribution, mismatch between the curriculum, competencies and courses, and equivalence problems between English-Turkish translations when preparing curriculum and course information packages. Moreover, the lecturers also complained about the complexity of the Bologna process and inadequate information. The lecturers and the Bologna team also stressed that including required courses in the elective course pool due to the required and elective course quota was a serious problem. Similarly, Dalgıç (2008) found that lecturers thought there was a lack of information about the Bologna process in their universities, the process was not clear enough, and effective work was not underway in their institutions regarding the Bologna process. Not embracing the process also emerged in Elmas' (2012) study.

The other finding of the study, the mismatch between curriculum and competencies and course content, is also echoed in Güneş's (2012) study. It is worth noting that the complaints related to the implementation stage, that is, the lack of transparency in relating the ECTS with the credits and leaving the process to the personal decision of lecturers, parallel the findings of the European Students' Union (2012) study. It is also noteworthy that similar findings were obtained from more than half of the students from 35 EHEA member countries.

The Education Faculty Bologna team was observed to have more supportive views about the preparations for the Bologna process than the other two participant groups. For instance, they supported the adaptation of curricula to the Bologna process, examined the experiences of universities from different countries that have completed the Bologna process, and included stakeholders in the process. The support is understandable, as the lecturers in this group are believed to participate and make an effort in challenging endeavors such as the Bologna process in addition to other tasks in the school. They may thus embrace the process more readily.

In relation to the second research question, the effectiveness of the implementation process showed that the student and lecturer (lecturers, Bologna team and the curriculum and development specialist) views about both undergraduate and

graduate curricula differed, but the lecturers seemed to harbor similar views. Another noteworthy issue is that the students mentioned similar concerns regardless of their department, or being undergraduate or graduate student.

The positive points about the implementation process on which the lecturers and students agreed included access to information about the courses via the course and curriculum and information packages created with the Bologna process, informed course selection by getting information about the course beforehand, and free course selection with the help of elective courses. Similarly, most of the teacher candidates and lecturers studied by Altınkaynak et al. (2016) mentioned the opportunity of selecting courses based on their interests in the Bologna process. On the other hand, all of their participants emphasized problems such as not being able to take departmental courses, the elective courses that do not open and limited class size turning some elective courses into required elective courses. Further, most of the teacher candidates they studied reported that there was a small number of elective courses. Also, Çınkır and Yıldız (2018) reported that students have difficulty related to the Student Information System, and communication with faculty members and their advisors. They also mentioned that students perceive course assessments as unfair and subjective.

The Bologna process emphasizes that in order to evaluate the quality of teaching in the university level, one needs to assess students' perceptions and the quality of teaching. Students' opinion and assessment of the quality of teaching presents an important segment of the evaluation of the quality of teaching at university level in accordance with the principles of the Bologna Process (Andelković, Dedjanski, & Pejić, 2018). A serious problem voiced by the majority of students was the belief that most problems in the implementation stage stem from the implementers as well as the issues with completing the ECTS required for graduation. On the other hand, in the organization of instructional processes stage, most participants mentioned harmony and its opposite, discord, in course information packages. This may be due to different types of course implementation.

About the second research question, even though both the lecturers and students voiced the importance of following up graduates, it was found that the students and the Bologna team complained about insufficient graduate follow-up. Lecturers stated that revision creates the opportunity for self-development, but time allowed was not enough to make revisions in the system which may be accessed twice a year. Frequently mentioned by the lecturers, the revision problem was also voiced by the students.



The results regarding the third research question, namely the suitability and feasibility of the criteria and external evaluation system used for quality assurance, showed that lecturers mentioned the provision of student mobility between universities and the emphasis placed on transparency and accountability by quality assurance. Organizing courses in line with the Bologna process and being accountable for this was particularly mentioned by the lecturers. Both the students and lecturers found “quality assurance” important, another concept that is valued in the literature as well. Gümüş and Kurul (2011) argue that these concepts are taken for granted in Turkey owing to “the adaptation of the process to the local, national and global markets in the framework of new functions” (p. 5). This acceptance may be related to “an inability to understand the process”, “failure to adopt it” or “insufficient information”, which were emphasized by the lecturers regarding the first research question about the preparation stage.

The issues that the participants criticized may be attributed to the lack of information and problems with the feedback processes (such as organizing assessment).

The students stated that they were able to obtain information about student mobility between universities, but not about diploma supplements. Indeed, being able to access the course information packages at different universities with the Bologna process and finding out about courses was a strength of the process for students, and it was associated with achieving holistic information on transparency and standardization. Achieving standardization, transparency, accountability, comparability and equivalence in curriculum may also lead to an increase in the quality of education. This was associated with the acceptance of Turkey to be evaluated in the higher education field in the international arena. These related processes may also be providing an atmosphere of freedom at universities. These freedoms include receiving education services from other universities, expansion of the course pool which enables students to choose from a wide array of courses, and even taking courses from other departments without restrictions.

Another major concept defining the Bologna process is mobility, which is closely related to globalization. Information and human mobility is inevitable because of global economy (Ahola & Mesikammen, 2003; Nohutçu, 2015). It is worth noting that the lecturers particularly emphasized that the direction of student mobility is not towards Turkey. This finding may be related to the development levels of countries. The present findings are parallel to those of Gümüş and Kurul (2011): Student mobility happens from Turkey to Europe. The Ministry of Development is making an effort to make

Turkish universities an attractive choice for international students. In a report by the Ministry of Development (Kalkınma Bakanlığı, 2014) there is an emphasis on increasing quality in the higher education system in order to create mobility towards Turkey. Similarly, the sub-themes which emerged in this study, “standardization, transparency and accountability”, are also concepts that stood out in the EHEA formation process, as stated by Fejes (2006). Also, Teplyakov and Teplyakov (2018) examined Russian Federal Education Programs in terms of their impact on student and academic staff mobility. They found out that students’ outward credit mobility is the least developed one among the indicators and very few higher education institutions came close to the target in 2016.

Another result of the study is that the Bologna process would increase quality in Turkish higher education. This finding is in accordance with the goals of YÖK (2010), the research project of the Ministry of Development (Kalkınma Bakanlığı, 2014) and Masic and Begic’s (2016) study. On the other hand, the process is criticized for its uniformity and for not being able to fully reach its goals (Ahola, 2012; Appleton, 2009; Çelik, 2012; Elmas, 2012; Grove, 2012). According to the analysis results, a large portion of the problems in the process stem from the implementers. Parallel to this finding, Öhlen, Furaker, Jakobsson, Bergh, and Hermansson (2011) examined the Bologna process in nursing education in Sweden and found that lecturers have an important role in making the curriculum meaningful.

The future of the process was among the controversial topics especially in the student focus group interviews. The future was found to be closely related with economic and political activities. Indeed, in a globalizing world order, it is impossible for the Bologna process, which was necessitated by a demand for high quality workforce and a need for high quality education, to stay immune to the rising economic, political and cultural trends. This was the main argument of the students who stated negative views about the future of the process. For instance, considering that the secession of the UK from the EU, the presidency of Donald Trump in the US, decision of the Catalans to leave Spain and the possession of economic power in Italy are recent examples of global reactions to globalization, it may be reasonable that similar views will affect the future of the Bologna process in a world order with continuously changing dynamics.

Regarding the supervision of the process, the lecturers stressed the importance of internal and external supervision. Indeed, internal assessment reports were written in the university for the first time in 2015 and 2016 in terms of quality



assurance. However, despite the varying views among participants about the future of the Bologna process, these were generally negative.

Thanks to the detailed feedback it offers, this study, which aims to make a comprehensive assessment of the multi-stakeholder Bologna process, offers implications to alleviate the problems in the preparation, implementation, follow-up, revision and quality assurance dimensions (such as inadequate information, mismatch between curriculum and competencies and courses, mismatch with course information packages, graduate follow-up, revision, ECTS problems, etc.) and the way the system runs. This comprehensive investigation may set an example for other universities, and thus pave the way for future Bologna process evaluation studies at other Turkish universities with the participation of different stakeholders.

In light of the findings, the following recommendations may be made: The number of information meetings with a standing evaluation committee in order to monitor and evaluate the process may be increased and these meetings may be announced effectively across the institution to encourage more participation. Studies to improve quality may also be organized, and the entire process may be evaluated after the quality assurance stage. Quality assurance is an important dimension of the Bologna process, and in line with Higher Education Quality Assurance Regulation, the writing of internal assessment reports may be prioritized for institutional evaluation. At the same time, the accreditation institutions approved by the Higher Education Council should also undertake curriculum and evaluation. Finally, institutionalizing the graduate follow-up practices may help solve the QA issues.

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