

The effects of the Bologna Process on the implementation of Quality Assurance in
Turkish Higher Education:
a case study

by

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Abstract

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This thesis analyses the effects of the Bologna Process on the implementation of Quality Assurance standards in Turkish higher education. Using a qualitative case study approach, this thesis explores the changes and policies that have been adopted to promote quality assurance at the institutional, national and international levels. In order to better understand how quality assurance systems are shaped within the Bologna Process, I conducted interviews with eight Turkish Bologna experts. The experts provided first-hand experience and knowledge of the QA systems implementation process. Further, I performed a detailed document analysis to examine the policies related to the quality assurance system. Through these methods, I uncovered a number of unique challenges faced by the Turkish higher education system in the implementation of a sound quality assurance system. One of the most significant challenges relates to the fact that the Council of Higher Education has still not established a fully functional national QA agency in accordance with the European Standard and Guidelines. This discrepancy affects the implementation of a uniform QA system at all levels. The findings suggest that the Bologna Process, which aims to improve transparency in the European Higher Education Area, has had positive impact on QA systems in Turkish HE. The positive effects demonstrate the capacity of the Turkish HE to respond to an increasing need for a highly qualified workforce. With an improved adaptability on the part of the institutions,

graduates of Turkish universities will be able to comparably compete with those from other European institutions.

Keywords: Turkish Higher Education, Bologna Process, European Higher Education Area, Quality Assurance

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List of Acronyms

ABET	Accreditation Board of Engineering and Technology
ADEK	Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement Board
CoHE	Council of Higher Education
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance
E4	Group EUA, ENQA, ESIB, and EURASHE
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
EUA	European University Association
EURASHE	European Association of Institutions in Higher Education
ESG	European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance
ESU	European Students' Union
EUR-ACE	European Accreditation of Engineering Programs
ISO	International Standards Organization
IUC	Inter-University Council
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSYM	Student Selection and Placement Center
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
YOK	Higher Education Council
YODEK	Commission for Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement in Higher Education

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Dedication

Tezimi hayatimin her asamasinda beni destekleyen ve sevgilerini hic eksik etmeyen anne ve babama ithaf ediyorum, iyiki varsiniz.

I dedicate my thesis to my mother and father who give me unconditional love and support in every phase of my life. I am so glad I have you.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Higher education institutions (HEIs) around the world have been implementing Quality Assurance (QA) systems since the 1980s. Stansaker (2008), a researcher at University of Oslo, states that “from being a novelty a couple of decades ago, quality assurance is slowly but steadily becoming an integrated part of higher education” (p. 3). Over the past two decades, higher education has gained importance due to an increased connection between economy and knowledge. According to the OCED report, the knowledge based economy has pushed economies towards a greater dependence on knowledge, information, a highly skilled labor force, as well as an increasing need for business and the public sector to have ready access to these resources (OECD, 2005). As a result, higher education is now required to meet the demands of a changing labor market, which has increased competitiveness between higher education institutions (HEIs). Competitiveness and economic changes have become driving forces for most European countries seeking international recognition of their universities, the achievement of which requires the implementation of a number of QA systems.

For those reasons, in 1999 the European countries signed the Bologna Process which is an agreement between European countries designed to ensure comparability in the quality of higher education qualifications. According to Vaira (2007), in *Sociology of Cultural and Communicative Processes*, QA systems have gained a supranational dimension and legitimization, particularly in the wake of the European Union’s agreement to start the Bologna Process.

Turkey joined the Bologna Process in 2001, and, since then, has considerably improved access to higher education. According to the 2011 UNESCO report, the tertiary education enrolment in Turkey increased from 22 percent in 1999 to 43 percent in 2008. Between 1923 and 2009, Turkish higher education experienced remarkable growth; the number of universities grew from one in 1923 to 177 in 2013 and student enrolments expanded from 2,914 to 4,315,836 over the same period. The annual number of graduates rose from 321 to 520,938, and the number of academic staff and professors has increased from 307 to 118,839 (Student Selection and Placement Center Statistic, 2012).

Since the signing of the Bologna Declaration, Turkey has implemented a number of changes to align its higher education system with those of other European nations. This study focuses on the increasing use of Quality Assurance (QA) in the Turkish higher education system, which includes all institutions offering at least two years of post secondary education. The system comprises both state and private universities, as well as non-higher education institutions (e.g., police and military academies and colleges). More specifically, universities generally include those institutions that provide bachelor's degrees, four-year vocational training programs, and two-year vocational schools offering exclusively vocational education through short-term programmes.

Over the last decades, quality assurance has been on the agenda of many Turkish higher education institutions. The quality assurance systems are affected by international actors and policies such as the Bologna Process which plays a significant role in the elaboration and diffusion of quality assurance policies in Turkey. After signing the Bologna Declaration in 2001, Turkish university administrators became increasingly

concerned with QA standards due to the international accreditation for academic programs.

According to the Bologna Process scorecard of Turkey, the implementation of the QA systems is one of the most challenging reform areas compared to other reform areas of the Bologna Process because of the country's unique higher education system that differs significantly in its hierarchical structures from all of the other signatory countries of the Bologna Process. Specifically, the Turkish higher education system is governed by the Council of Turkish Higher Education (CoHE), or the *Yuksekk Ogretim Kurulu* (YOK), which is a unique regulatory body not found in other European countries. Under the Bologna Process all member countries are required to establish an independent QA agency in order to oversee the quality of individual institutions. However, in Turkey all higher education institutions fall under the purview of the Council of Higher Education, which restricts their autonomy. While the CoHE is in existence, it will be difficult to form an independent national QA agency, which would adopt European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). For these reasons, establishing a fully functional QA agency in accordance with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) takes Turkish HEIs considerable time and effort.

The purpose of this study is to examine how the Bologna Process affects QA policies in Turkish higher education. Specific attention is given to the changes that took place in the policies related to quality assurance at institutional, national and international levels and the responses of higher education institutions. I employed a qualitative case study approach in order to address the following research questions:

1. What are the effects of the Bologna Process on the implementation of QA systems in Turkish higher education?
2. What specific policies have been adopted by Turkish institutions of higher education to promote QA?
3. What changes have taken place in Turkish higher education to improve the QA at institutional, national and international levels within the Bologna Process?
4. What are the specific challenges Turkey faces while implementing QA?

Background

Historical Overview of Turkish Higher Education

Institutions of higher education in Turkey have undergone a number of structural reforms throughout the country's long education history.

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the *Seljuk Turks* (considered the ancestors of Western Turks) founded the earliest institutions of higher education in Turkey, called *medreses* or madrasahs. These schools employed a curriculum which was based on the Islamic religion. In the late thirteenth century, the madrasahs were adopted by the Ottoman Empire as the primary model for higher education. However, Umunc (1986) stated that in the 17th century, madrasahs faced “a period of intellectual degeneration and tenacious dogmatism” (p. 434). The Ottoman sultans realized that the period of “degeneration and tenacious dogmatism” caused inadequate economic, scientific and industrial developments of their empire which made Turkey lag behind other European countries of the time. In response, the Ottoman sultans established the first military school of engineering in 1734 in order to compete with other nations. The Sultans hoped

that this and other schools would help the empire compete with other European nations and would bring much needed educational success. These hopes were short-lived, and within a decade, the military schools had failed.

However, the failure of the military schools did not stop the Sultans from subsequently opening new institutions. In 1773, the Imperial Naval Engineering College (*Mühendishane-i Bahri-i Hümayun*) was founded, followed by the Imperial Military Engineering College (*Mühendishane-i Berri-i Hümayun*) in 1795. The Imperial Medical College (*Tibbiye*) and the Imperial Military College (*Harbiye*) were established 1827 and 1834, respectively, in the Ottoman Empire. The first Imperial University called *Dar'ul funun* (Schools of Sciences) was opened in 1846.

Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the first Turkish President, founded the Turkish Republic in 1923. Atatürk implemented a number of state level reforms that brought secularism, democracy and modernization to Turkey. A year after the establishment of the Turkish Republic, madrasahs, which very much lagged behind in the area of modern sciences, were abolished. In 1933, the Turkish parliament called the Grand National Assembly passed several important laws in order to reform Turkish higher education. As a result, the old *Dar'ul-fununi* institution was disbanded and, in 1933, the new Istanbul University opened its door to students. By the 1940s, the number of universities in Turkey increased from one to three. In 1946, the Universities Law No. 4936 came into force. This law granted academic freedom and autonomy to Turkish universities (Umunc, 1986). However, from the 1950s onwards, Turkish universities became increasingly politicised, which significantly affected their autonomy. While rectors were statutory heads of universities, their powers were limited

and directly dependent on the administrative authority within the university and the political partisanship (Umunc, 1986).

In spite of these political and social issues, throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the number of universities increased to nineteen in Turkey. University administrators expressed the need for new laws in order to stabilize the higher education system and govern the newly created universities. Despite extensive amendments in the 1960s, the Universities Law of 1946 was not relevant for the growing higher education system. Finally, in 1973, in the midst of a great deal of academic and political controversy, the government adopted the Universities Law No. 1750 which brought integrity to higher education (Umunc, 1986).

In the early 1980s, universities in Turkey were influenced by contemporary economic and political issues. A particularly significant event took place on September 12, 1980 when the military took over of the government. *Yuksekk Ogretim Kurulu (YOK)*, the Council of Higher Education (CoHE) was established in 1982 after the military coup, and the Turkish military regime placed universities under the administrative control of the CoHE. The establishment of the Council is believed to be the second most important reform in Turkish history after the 1933 university law reform. A decade and a half into the twenty-first century, the Council is still the governing body of all higher education institutions in Turkey.

The Current State of Turkish Higher Education

At present, higher education is administered by the Council of Higher Education (CoHE) *Yuksekk Ogretim Kurulu (YOK)*. The CoHE is a fully autonomous corporate public body responsible for the planning, coordination, governance and supervision of

higher education within the provisions set forth in the Constitution (Articles 130 and 131) and the Higher Education Law (Turkish Higher Education Council, 2011). The higher education system consists of 177 universities; 108 public institutions including 6 military academies, and 69 non-profit foundation institutions including 7 vocational institutions (Turkey National Report, 2012). Access to higher education institutions in Turkey is dependent upon a student's high school grade point average and pre-university exam scores. In order to study at the university, students graduating from high school are required to take the Transition to Higher Education Examination (YGS) in April of their senior year, in accordance with the CoHE regulations. The exam is the first in a series of examinations given in the new university entrance system, established in 2010 by the CoHE. Those who pass the YGS have to take the Undergraduate Placement Examination (LYS), the second exam in the new system which is administered in June. In order to take admission exams, prospective students need to have completed a high school diploma. Admission to the university is managed by the Student Selection and Placement Center (OSYM) associated with the CoHE.

The Turkish educational system includes primary and secondary as well as institutions of higher education (see Appendix 1). The higher education system incorporates all institutions offering at least two years of higher education after secondary school; it is comprised of both state and private universities and non-higher education institutions (e.g., police and military academies and colleges). Each university has faculties which provide Bachelor's Degrees, four-year schools with vocational training, and two-year vocational schools offering exclusively vocational education through short-term programmes.

Higher education institutions have always been important cultural institutions in Turkey. At the same time, these institutions have been constantly influenced by socio-economic and technological developments as well as global market forces. The transformation from a “collegial university” into a “market model university” is a good example of the way in which the market has triggered changes in the academic environment (Kurul, 2007).

In Turkey, as in other countries, higher education institutions do not simply provide higher education they also prepare qualified people for the labor market, promote cultural development, and contribute to the advancement of science and knowledge. While, these institutions need autonomy, they also have to be accountable to a society that demands quality higher education (Strydom, 2001). According to Machado and Taylor (2010), major shifts in the market and society are forcing HEIs to adopt a more proactive approach to their operations and to take a business perspective on education “in order to be strategically positioned to seize opportunities and confront threats in an increasingly competitive environment” (p. 1). In addition to these market driven forces, Turkish higher education is also affected by forces of globalization, much like other education systems around the world. Formerly viewed as the ivory tower, accessible only to a small portion of elite students, modern Turkish universities have to respond to an increasing demand for higher education from a broader and more economically diverse public.

Over the last few years, higher education institutions have increasingly gained importance in Turkey because of the wider recognition of universities’ significant role in the economic, scientific and technological development of the country. In addition, there

has also been an increasing demand for higher education in Turkey in recent years as a result of the fact that European nations are expanding their participation in higher education across the globe and are becoming more competitive in international labor markets. For instance, in 2010, approximately 1.6 million young people applied for the university exam and only 5.5 percent (about 88 000) students could enroll in Turkish universities (Student Selection and Placement Center Statistics, 2012).

Recently, the Council of Turkish Higher Education has responded to these national and international demands by acknowledging the need to take an active part in international higher education in order to compete with other countries. By introducing QA systems, autonomy and accountability in higher education, Turkey has set priorities in aligning its higher education system with those of other European countries. This has steered Turkey's educational system onto a path of internationalization, which is projected to produce internationally competitive students.

The European Higher Education Area and the Bologna Process

International co-operation between European higher education institutions has a long tradition. However, European rectors who gathered at the University of Bologna in 1988 to celebrate the 900th anniversary of the oldest university in Europe opened a new page in the history of European university collaboration by signing the Magna Charta Universitatum. In the Magna Charta Universitatum, universities stated several core values of higher education such as knowledge creation and dissemination, the autonomy of higher education institutions and academic freedom. Acknowledging these important academic values European rectors agreed to establish formal co-operation between European universities.

It took eleven years to realize the aims of the Magna Charta Universitatum. In 1998, four education ministers representing France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom signed the Sorbonne Communiqué at the University of Paris. In this Communiqué, the ministers stated that countries needed to strengthen and build upon the intellectual, cultural, social and technical dimensions of their continent and decided to form the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) (Sorbonne Joint Declaration, 1998). One year later, the Bologna Declaration was signed by 29 European countries. The aim of the Bologna Process is to form a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) based on international cooperation and academic exchange that is attractive to European students and staff as well as to students and staff from other parts of the world (The Bologna Process, 2010). The Bologna Process, perceived as the largest higher education reform in Europe, has opened a new chapter in European Higher Education. The Process has been defined by Floud (2005 as cited in Dow, 2006) as the single biggest change in higher education in Europe since the foundation of the University of Bologna in the eleventh century. As of 2013, the decade old Bologna Process gained 47 signatory member countries and continues to strongly influence European education.

The Bologna Process does not force national governments and higher education institutions to participate in the process. Rather, “it is a commitment freely taken by each signatory country to reform its own higher education system or systems in order to create overall convergence at the European level” (Bologna Declaration, 1999, p. 3). The Bologna Process aimed at establishing a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010, however, to date, some countries are still attempting to make the necessary change, so the initial deadline has been extended.

The Bologna Process set the following goals in order to promote a European system of higher education world-wide:

1. Adoption of a system of *easily readable and comparable degrees*, also through the implementation of the Diploma Supplement, in order to promote European citizens employability and the international competitiveness of the European higher education system.
2. Adoption of a system essentially based on *two main cycles*, undergraduate and graduate.
3. Establishment of a *system of credits - such as in the ECTS system* – as a proper means of promoting the most widespread student mobility. Credits could also be acquired in non-higher education contexts, including lifelong learning, provided they are recognized by the receiving universities concerned.
4. Promotion of *mobility* by overcoming obstacles to the effective exercise of free movement with particular attention to students' access to study and training opportunities and to related services. For teachers, researchers and administrative staff: recognition and valorization of periods spent in a European context researching, teaching and training, without prejudicing their statutory rights.
5. Promotion of European co-operation in *quality assurance* with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies.
6. Promotion of the necessary *European dimensions in higher education*, particularly with regards to curricular development, interinstitutional co-operation, mobility schemes and integrated programs of study, training and research (Bologna Declaration, 1999, p. 4).

Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area

The enactment of Quality Assurance (QA) in higher education is one of the main goals of the Bologna Process. The importance of QA has been referred to by almost every higher education document written in Europe since the Bologna Declaration was signed. For example, the Commission of the European Communities' report (2009) stated that the "borderless" delivery of higher education made cross-border quality assurance increasingly significant. QA provides transparent and trustworthy higher education for European citizens and employers as well as for students and scholars from other continents.

Understanding the significant role of universities in knowledge dissemination, the European Ministers have focused on increasing QA in higher education. In September of 1998, the Council of the European Union recommended that Member States create transparent QA systems in the field of higher education in order to improve the quality of higher education and to promote cooperation between the authorities responsible for quality assurance in higher education (Council Recommendation, 1998).

Furthermore, at the 2001 meeting in Prague, the European Ministers of Education invited the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) to collaborate on establishing a common framework of reference for QA. These partners were to work toward establishing the European quality assurance framework by 2010 (ENQA, 2011). In the Berlin Communiqué (2003), ministers stated that "the quality of higher education has proven to be at the heart of the setting up of a European Higher Education Area (EHEA)" and promised to support further development of QA at institutional, national and European levels. Additionally, they recommended that the

ENQA contribute even more directly to the European quality assurance process. In the Berlin Communiqué, ENQA received more responsibility from the Ministers to explore ways to ensure an adequate peer review system for quality assurance agencies and to develop an agreed-upon set of standards, procedures and guidelines on QA (ENQA, 2011).

In 2005, the European Ministers adopted the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)¹ as proposed by the ENQA in Bergen. They agreed to introduce the proposed model for peer review of QA agencies on a national basis, while respecting the commonly accepted guidelines and criteria. The ministers requested that the practicalities of implementation be further developed by the ENQA in cooperation with the European University Association (EUA), the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE) and the European Students' Union (ESU) which would report back to them through the Follow-up Group. They highlighted the importance of cooperation between nationally recognized agencies with a view to enhancing the mutual recognition of academic credentials and quality assurance decisions (ENQA, 2007). The ENQA report (2011) stated that the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) consisting of three parts including internal QA of higher education institutions, external QA of higher education, and quality assurance of external QA agencies (ENQA, 2009) had a major impact on the quality assurance of higher education within the European higher education area (ENQA).

Currently, the function of the ENQA is to support the quality of European higher education and to act as “a major driving force for the development of quality assurance

¹ Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area can be found at: http://www.enqa.eu/files/ESG_3edition%20%282%29.pdf

across all the Bologna signatory countries” (ENQA, 2011). The ENQA has produced publications focusing on the developments in the European QA. To conclude, the aims of the ENQA are: to be a main political actor within the decision-making processes at the European level, to be recognized as the core source of expertise and information in the field of quality assurance at the European level and to deliver the core values of quality assurance as stated in the ESG, and to develop quality assurance processes for both enhancement and accountability purposes. In order to achieve these aims, the ENQA needs to involve QA agencies from all countries in the EHEA, to be inclusive and actively involved with all members (ENQA, 2010).

Statement of the Problem

As one of the main requirements of the Bologna Process, Quality Assurance, is mentioned in all Bologna Ministerial Communiques (see Appendix II). For example, Education Ministers first outlined the priorities for increasing quality assurance in the 2003 Berlin Communique in which they acknowledged that the quality of higher education was at the heart of establishing the European Higher Education Area. They committed themselves to supporting further developments of quality assurance at institutional, national and European levels emphasising the need to develop “mutually shared criteria and methodologies on quality assurance” (Berlin Communique, 2003, p. 3).

The participants of the Bologna Process demonstrated varied degrees of progress in implementing Quality Assurance. While in some countries, the QA systems were not implemented properly on any level, in others, they were highly successful. Turkey, one of the signatory countries of the Bologna Process, has also adopted new policies and

made structural changes to implement QA in its higher education institutions. Although documents show that a number of projects and changes to improve quality in Turkish higher education institutions were implemented, many commitments for developing QA have not been realized. Durman (2011) stated that Turkey showed good progress in implementing many proposals of the Bologna Process, however, despite these efforts, a fully functional QA system that includes a national system of external quality assurance has not been established yet. QA is still one of the weakest areas in the implementation of the Bologna Process.

Another problem discussed by researchers is insufficient information about the implementation of QA in Turkey. Despite an increased interest in QA in the universities, little empirical research has been conducted on the topic. Very few studies have focused on how quality assurance is being implemented at the institutional, national and European levels. Similarly, very few studies address the challenges faced by institutions and policy-makers during the QA implementation process. While several documents including national reports prepared by the Turkish experts and reports presented by national teams of the Bologna experts provide general overview of the QA implementation process, they do not offer any critical assessment. For that reason, I decided to investigate this problem in detail.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study is to examine the effects of the Bologna Process on the quality assurance systems in Turkish HEIs. In this study, I explain how quality assurance mechanisms are developed and implemented in Turkish universities by discussing policies envisioned by the Bologna Process and the CoHE and analyzing the

challenges that Turkish higher education faces during the implementation of quality assurance.

Research Questions

The proposed research aims are to investigate the implementation of Quality Assurance in Turkish higher education within the framework of the Bologna Process. The study is guided by the following questions:

1. What are the effects of the Bologna Process on the implementation of QA systems in Turkish higher education?
2. What specific policies have been adopted in Turkish institutions of higher education to promote QA?
3. What changes have taken place in Turkish higher education to improve the QA at institutional, national and international levels?
4. What are specific challenges Turkey faces while implementing QA?

Significance of the Study

My interest in pursuing this research comes from my personal experience: I was born in Turkey and am familiar with the Turkish education system because I was enrolled in Turkish schools from primary to undergraduate degree. Long before coming to Canada to pursue a Master's Degree, I wanted to explore Turkish higher education reform and raise awareness of the issues associated with reforms among other researchers and policy makers in Turkey as well as internationally. By reviewing other higher education systems, I found that the implementation of QA within the framework of the Bologna Process is one of the most challenging topics to research because the member countries need to make radical changes in order to embrace the new quality assurance systems. The

starting point for my thesis was the need to improve the quality of higher education in Turkish universities in order to achieve international recognition.

Joining the Bologna Process is currently assumed to be the most important step in higher education reform in Turkish history due to the all-encompassing changes that are underway. The Bologna Process requires that each signatory country implement QA systems, and Turkey has started to employ a number of QA system throughout higher education institutions. The establishment of QA systems in higher education brings both transparency and rigorous standards, which should help to ensure the international recognition of qualifications. This study addresses the importance of QA systems for Turkish higher education, and seeks to understand the issues faced by Turkish policy makers and stakeholders of the Bologna Process.

The results of the study can be used by higher education institutions and experts, academic communities, and policy makers in Turkey. Students engaged in quality studies in higher education can also benefit from my research findings. The findings of my study highlight the problems in establishing QA systems for policy makers who seek the best practices of improving quality. My findings give policy makers options for replicating successful policies and systems in poor performing higher education institutions.

Future research could benefit from these findings because this is currently the only study that includes opinions and ideas of the Turkish Bologna experts. Especially useful will be the detailed account of the challenges faced by Turkish HE in adopting QA systems. Future review of these challenges will help to measure whether Turkey has succeeded in overcoming these challenges. Because the Bologna Process is an evolving process, and there are ongoing efforts to improve the QA activities, future researchers

may want to investigate the new improvements, changes and challenges associated with the implementation of QA in Turkish HE.

Definition of Terms

Accreditation: As defined in the Bologna Declaration, accreditation is a central instrument to support the necessary processes of changes in European higher education systems. Accreditation serves to assure quality when implementing new degree programs and also to monitor existing ones (ex post steering) (ENQA, 2003). In Europe, the first forms of accreditation appeared in Eastern and Central Europe at the end of the 1980s (Miraz, 2007). Accreditation insures a unified trust in all the diplomas that will eventually be offered in the European Higher Education system. Within the Bologna process framework, the concept of accreditation was addressed during the Salamanca Convention of 2001.

Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG): The main follow-up structure for QA implementation is the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG). The BFUG is composed of the representatives of all members of the Bologna Process and the European Commission, with the Council of Europe, the EUA, EURASHE, ESU, UNESCO-CEPES (European Centre for Higher Education), Education International, ENQA and BUSINESSEUROPE, as consultative members. The BFUG is being co-chaired by the country holding the EU Presidency and a non-EU country, which rotate every six months. The vice-chair is a representative from the country organizing the next Ministerial Conference (European Higher Education Area, 2011). The BFUG meets at least once every six months, usually for one-and-a-half days, and is in charge of overseeing the Bologna Process between the ministerial meetings. The BFUG is responsible for setting up working groups to deal with

specific topics related to the implementation of QA in more detail. The group receives input from the Bologna Seminars.

Diploma Supplement: A document developed by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO in order to improve international transparency among institutions of higher education and governing bodies, and to spread academic recognition of qualifications. The document is appended to a higher education diploma and contains (in English and a language chosen by the student) information regarding the language, level, context, content and status of the studies that were pursued. The Diploma Supplement provides additional information, on the national higher education system, in order to fit the qualification into the relevant educational context (ENQA, 2003).

European Association for Quality Assurance for Higher Education (ENQA): The European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education was established in 2000 to promote European co-operation in the field of quality assurance. In November 2004, the General Assembly transformed the Network into the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). The idea for the association originated from the European Pilot Project for evaluating quality in higher education (1994-95), which demonstrated the value of sharing and developing experience in the area of quality assurance. Subsequently, the idea was given momentum by the Recommendation of the European Council (EC) co-operation in quality assurance in higher education and by the Bologna Declaration of 1999. As an important actor in the Bologna Process, ENQA proposed standards and guidelines for quality assurance in its report for the Bergen Conference in 2005. The European Ministers adopted these guidelines and will follow

progress with regard to their implementation. ENQA is a consultative member of the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) (Glossary on the Bologna Process, 2006).

European Credit Transfer System (ECTS): The ECTS is one of the Bologna Declaration's main principles. It is used for credit recognition and for learning and facilitating the movement of recognized credits between institutions and across national borders (Harvey, 2004 cited in Jezierska, 2009). The ECTS uses the information package, the learning agreement, and the transcript of records, called Diploma Supplement (Jezierska, 2009) to facilitate academic recognition amongst institutions.

European Higher Education Area (EHEA): Constructed in 2010 the European Higher Education Area is defined as a framework in which students and staff may move freely while maintaining recognition of their qualifications. This is a primary goal of the Bologna Process (Bologna Declaration, 1999).

Higher education institution: An educational body which carries out higher education activities based on legally approved programs of study. Any higher education organization must follow an external evaluation procedure in order to assess its quality and to acquire the provisional functioning authorization, followed by its official accreditation, as well as the accreditation of its programs of study. Generally, this requirement is compulsory for all higher education institutions that provide educational programs and activities. It entitles these institutions, upon successful completion, to use the name 'university' or other similar legally recognized name. Also, these institutions have the primary responsibility for the quality of their provision and its assurance. Higher education institutions may differ in size, quality, resources, number of teaching staff and

students, etc. Successful institutions have to find a balance between often conflicting stakeholder demands and institutional values (Vlasceanu et al., 2007).

International Standard Organization (ISO 9000): The ISO 9000 systems were developed for the manufacturing industry. Their implementation in the education sectors is relatively new. Different educational organizations have translated the terms and items used in the ISO terminology and systems into terms and guidelines that are applicable to them (Borahan & Ziarati, 2002).

Inter-University Council (IUC): The Inter-University Council is an academic advisory body, comprising the rectors of all universities and one member elected by the senate of each university (National Report, 2005).

Knowledge based economy: “The knowledge based economy” is an expression coined by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development to describe advanced economies trends that define a move towards greater dependence on knowledge, information and high skill levels, and the increasing need for ready access to all of these resources by the business and public sectors. Knowledge and technology have become increasingly complex, raising the importance of links between firms and other organizations as a way to acquire specialized knowledge. A parallel economic development has been the growth of innovation in services in advanced economies (OECD, 2005).

Magna Charta Universitatum: On 18 September 1988, in the presence of many political leaders and representatives of the public, 388 rectors from Europe and beyond signed the Magna Charta Universitatum. This document has since become the major reference for the fundamental values and principles of the university. Meanwhile the

Magna Charta has been signed by some 700 rectors from all over the world and each year more universities commit themselves to the principles laid out in the Magna Charta. The higher education scene has developed significantly since 1988 but the relevance of the Magna Charta has remained unchanged (Magna Charta Observatory, 2011).

Quality Assurance: Quality assurance is an umbrella term for several instruments which are concerned with the monitoring and development of quality. These instruments include evaluation, accreditation, benchmarking and quality management tools. The promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies, is one of the main objectives of the Bologna Process (Glossary on the Bologna Process, 2006).

Quality Culture: Is defined as “an organizational climate in which groups of staff work together to realize their specific tasks” (European University Association, 2004, p. 11). Furthermore, a quality culture has two components: an organizational/structural aspect, which refers to tasks, standards and responsibilities of individuals, units and services; and a psychological aspect, which refers to understanding, flexibility, participation, hopes and emotions. Both components are linked in practical terms by communication and career paths. The term “culture” provides the conceptual frame for these different aspects taking into account organizational as well as psychological and motivational features which refer to individuals (European University Association, 2004).

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter presents a summary of existing literature on QA systems in Turkish higher education institutions prior to and after the Bologna Process. Additionally, it develops a general definition of quality in the context of the European Higher Education Area and explains the significance of quality in this context. Last, it provides a detailed account of the international experience of establishing QA in higher education.

Defining Quality

Mishra (2007) argued that quality is a “much used and least understood term” (p. 16). In large part, this is due to the fact that quality is a general term that encompasses different meanings that are heavily dependent on a specific context. In this study, quality is discussed within the context of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). At the Salamanca Convention, quality was defined as the basic underlying condition for trust, relevance, mobility, compatibility and attractiveness in the EHEA (Salamanca Convention, 2001). The term used for improving the quality in the documents of the EHEA is “Quality assurance” (QA). Quality assurance is defined as an ongoing process that ensures the delivery of agreed upon standards, which should ensure that every QA recognized educational institution has the potential ability to achieve a high quality of education (European Student Union, 2003). The purpose of QA in higher education is to meet the required standards, defined by a quality assurance body, to encourage educational improvement, and provide accountability to the universities. The increasing use of QA systems in higher education has become a necessary element for national and

international improvement because there is a strong correlation between a country's competitiveness and the quality of the higher education provided within that country (Borahan & Ziarati, 2000).

In recent years, there has been a greater recognition of the profitability for the economy and labor market in investing in education. This recognition has given the notion of quality a greater importance in higher education. More and more employers are seeking highly skilled graduates. This has led employers to question the quality of education being provided by the institutions these graduates come from. The increasing demand of employers for highly skilled graduates has given way to a plethora of new universities. With this onslaught of new universities, it is becoming more difficult to evaluate the quality of education they offer their students. Moreover, the growth in "diversification and privatization" of higher education systems has also raised quality concerns in regards to higher education processes and outputs, in both developed and developing countries. In addition to the demand for highly skilled graduates emerging from quality programs, Strydom (2001) argued that there are many other reasons to enhance quality assurance systems. These include (1) high demand for higher education; (2) increased competition in higher education due to globalization; (3) the need for socio-economic development; (4) massification of higher education; (5) the rise of private education and new partnerships; (6) professionalization of academia (staff, labor relations, equity, etc...); (7) matching programs to labor/employment needs; (8) increased mobility and trade agreements. Strydom's reasoning demonstrates some of the same issues the Bologna Process was designed to address, mainly underscoring the importance of QA in producing students with uniformly reliable skills. Like other European

countries, some of the most urgent reasons why Turkey prioritized the Bologna Process and the implementation of QA systems was increased competition in higher education due to globalization, matching programs to labor and employment needs, as well as more prevalent mobility and trade agreements. After defining the QA and explaining its purposes for EHEA, I will briefly look at the implementation of QA in other countries outside EHEA.

International Experience with QA Systems

While the EHEA aims to provide uniformity in QA systems across European institutions, many other countries use different approaches to assure the quality of higher education. For example, the notion of QA in higher education first appeared in the United States in the late 1800s with the establishment of accreditation systems. In the US, the form of external quality evaluation is accreditation, a QA process based on a system of peer review (Saunders, 2007). According to Pagliarulo (1986) “when accreditation is viewed and administered appropriately, it is an opportunity for self-improvement and a tool for quality assurance” (p. 1). Accreditation systems in the US are voluntary, non-governmental and often administered by non-profit bodies (Rhoades & Sporn, 2002). American universities “agree to engage in a self-study operating within the guidelines of a recognized accrediting agency” (Bloland, 2001, p. 9). The American system consists of six regional associations which are in charge of institutional accreditation, as well as a great number of professional bodies involved in the accreditation of professional study programs (Hernes & Martin, 2005). State governments do not govern the quality levels of universities, nor do they control

any changes to the quality levels. Instead, regional accreditation agencies concentrate on the educational capabilities of universities and oversee the tasks involved in the QA process.

Pagliarulo (1986) stated that accreditation of the US postsecondary education system has evolved since its inception at the turn of the twentieth century. Accreditation has been described as “an elusive, nebulous, jellyfish term that means different things to different people and different things to the same people” (Pagliarulo, 1986, as cited in Young, 1986, p. 14). This description suggests that in the late 1900s, accreditation processes remained less than straight forward in the US. Bloland (2001) mentioned there was a high level of awareness of the existence of accreditation, but it was generally not well understood by either educational practitioners or the public. Charles (2007) discussed the question of why there has never been complete government control over higher education and accreditation in the United States despite recent trends toward centralized control. His answer was that out of the federal government’s attempts to influence standards in higher education evolved “a paradigm of non-coordinating agency and non-coordinating policy towards universities and colleges, which supports the reasons why there has never been complete government control over higher education and accreditation” (p. 18). For this reason, accreditation is executed by private agencies in the US.

Presently, American higher education research is recognized and utilized by many other countries because the QA conceptions and practices from North West

Europe and the US are becoming globally diffused (Harvey & Williams, 2010 cited in Maximova, 2011).

The Bologna Process in Turkey

In 2001, Turkey signed the Bologna Declaration and gradually started a process of educational reforms to improve the higher education system. The Bologna Declaration, signed at a meeting in Prague, has had a great impact on Turkish higher education. In Turkey, the CoHE and Inter-University Council (IUC) are the responsible bodies for the implementation of the Bologna Process at the national level (National Report, 2009). The 2010 Trend report states that Turkey is one of seven countries that certified the Bologna Process as the most powerful development affecting higher education institutions (Trend, 2010). The findings of the 2006 Bologna Survey indicated that Turkey did not encounter any serious difficulties in implementing most of the Bologna Declaration objectives (AESOP Bologna Survey, 2006). However, improving the QA systems in higher education was one of the most challenging objectives to implement in Turkey, as was the case in many other countries.

The Council of Higher Education (CoHE) gave more importance to the promotion of QA systems as a main requirement of the Bologna Process. Mizikaci (2003) stated that Turkish higher education has a highly “heterogeneous structure” in terms of the quality of education because of the “involvement of the private sector and already existing differences in educational opportunities and resources” (p. 97) in the regions. Some universities provide very high quality education and have excellent research and graduate reputations, while others do not meet these standards. For example, private universities required the reformative actions, however, the state institutions had already adopted

existing quality assessment systems (Mizikaci, 2003). Upon realising there was such a wide discrepancy among the universities, the CoHE and many universities acknowledged the need to have QA systems and to increase standardization.

Quality Assurance in Turkish Higher Education Prior to the Bologna Process

Over the last decade, a variety of QA mechanisms to promote quality in universities were introduced in Turkish higher education. Harman (1998) stated that while there has been considerable borrowing and sharing of experience between countries, most have tried to adopt approaches to suit their particular needs, accommodating their unique political, economic, and other constraints.

Past studies demonstrate that the Turkish higher education council (CoHE) developed several projects to promote QA programs prior to the Bologna Process. For instance, in 1997, a pilot project, "Quality Assessment in Turkish Universities," was initiated by the Turkish higher education council which tried to adapt the British higher education QA system to its institutions. The UK model included four major assessments: Teaching Quality Assessment (TQA), Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), Quality Audit, and External Examination. During the 1997-98 academic year, Turkey piloted two programs: Teaching Quality Assessment (TQA) and Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) in 13 Turkish Universities. This project was accepted for research but not for educational assessment by the Rectors' Council (Akduman et al., 2001). The CoHE aimed to develop an academic assessment mechanism which would provide a model accreditation and quality assurance system similar to other OECD and EU countries. Several seminars were conducted, and speakers from the UK, the US, the Netherlands, and France presented a variety of QA practices in order to provide a comparative

perspective on external QA in different countries. The seminars uncovered the need for international convergence on external QA systems. After the seminars, the systems of the Netherlands and the UK, which have their own QA agencies with an independent inspectorate, were found to be most suitable to the needs of Turkey (Gozacan & Ziarati, 2000). The report demonstrated that despite the CoHE's pilot program, most universities, specialists and reporting assessors agree that Teaching Quality Assessment (TQA) based on a modified UK model is the most appropriate model for Turkish universities. This model would be easy to modify for use in Turkey. However, a substantial number of people involved did not fully subscribe to this view and many had suspicions about the specific aspects of the practice and its appropriateness for application in Turkey. Additionally, Akduman et al., (2001) stated that the results of the pilot project were useful to universities as the principles of the underlying model were found to be generally appropriate to Turkish universities, but the model needed to be modified for specific Turkish conditions.

Another significant step to establish an accreditation system for teacher training in Turkish higher education was undertaken by the Turkish Higher Education Council (CoHE) in collaboration with the World Bank Pre-Service Teacher Education Project in the 1998-99 academic year. The CoHE aimed to improve the quality of teacher training programs in Turkey. As a result, teacher training programs in faculties of education were restructured. Although the project established a standard in the quality of teacher qualifications nationwide, no changes took place in a standardized curriculum prescribed by the CoHE. According to Eris and Durman (2011), the project did not increase flexibility and diversity in higher education to meet the current requirements of training.

Grossman, Sands, and Brittingham (2010) argued that this happened due to disagreements about how the process could be completed and a lack of follow-up after the pilot projects. As a result, the CoHE needed to continue to work on creating a national system of accreditation for teacher training in Turkish higher education.

Billing and Thomas (2000) explored the transfer of QA systems from one country to another based on this pilot project, and researched the feasibility of introducing the UK-style system of QA in Turkish universities. The results showed that significant cultural, structural, political and technical issues that influenced the transfer of the UK system to the Turkish one affected the implementation strategy. These issues have wider implications for the international transferability of QA and assessment systems between nations. Lastly, the 2005 Turkey Progress Report stated that “the Project covered a wide variety of programs and higher education institutions but did not result in the establishment of a national quality assurance system” (European Commission, 2005, p. 15). This project has not been further developed or implemented.

In another study, Gozacan and Ziarati (2002) developed a generic quality model for application in higher education institutions. They explored the role that the International Standards Organization (ISO) 9000 model requirements could play in a generic model. A Turkish university was chosen to examine the applicability of the various elements of the generic and ISO models and how the two approaches could be merged and what else needed to be considered. They concluded that substantial work needed to be done to determine the standards of performance of a given institution of higher education, and further work to relate these standards to a particular quality system (Gozacan & Ziarati, 2002).

Chapter 3

Research Design

The purpose of this study was to examine how the Bologna Process affects QA policies in Turkish higher education. This study provides an in-depth analysis of the quality assurance implementation across Turkey. Additionally, the study provides an overview of the QA policies adopted at the European level and how these have affected Turkey's approach to quality assurance in education over the past two decades. The following four main research questions serve as the framework for the study:

1. What are the effects of the Bologna Process on the implementation of QA systems in Turkish higher education?
2. What specific policies have been adopted by Turkish institutions of higher education to promote QA?
3. What changes have taken place in Turkish higher education to improve the QA at institutional, national and international levels?
4. What are specific challenges Turkey faces while implementing QA?

Design of the Study

A qualitative research study approach was the research strategy employed to examine the implementation of QA systems in Turkish higher education and to answer the main research questions stated above. Berg (2001) defines qualitative research as that which refers to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols and descriptions of things. Merriam (1988) adds that in a qualitative approach to research the paramount objective is to understand the meaning of an experience. It is important to

thoroughly comprehend Turkey's experience in implementing QA systems in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in order to understand why Turkey needs to establish QA regulations in accordance with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). Since the essence of a case study is to illuminate a decision or set of decisions — why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result (Schramm, 1971 cited in Yin, 2009) — a case study approach is the best method to understand how the implementation of QA systems in Turkey has been, and continues to be, shaped by the framework of the Bologna Process.

Additionally, the case study model was chosen because this study focuses on a *bounded system* of higher education (Smith, 1978). A bounded system is that in which whatever 'case' is being studied is bounded by certain parameters such as location, time, political structure, etc. These parameters define or 'bound' the system or 'case' that is being studied (Creswell, 1998). The bounded unit is most applicable to studying the implementation of QA systems in Turkey because this study focuses on a specific time period and defines how quality assurance systems in Turkish higher education institutions have been developed since Turkey joined the Bologna Process. This framework falls in line with Stake's definition of a case study approach which is bounded by time and activity, and researched through the collection of detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time (Stake, 1995).

Specifically, I focused on the changes that took place between 2001, when Turkey joined the Bologna Process, and 2012. I began the research process with the motivation to answer the question of how the Bologna Process effected QA implementation in Turkey, per Yin's (2009) definition of a case study as that which addresses the 'how' and 'why'

questions and their definition as the first task of the researcher (p. 27). Yin's approach to research was particularly useful in uncovering the challenges and successes of implementing QA systems in Turkey. According to Yin (2003), case study research can be based on *single- or multiple-case* studies. Whether single or multiple, the case study can be *exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory*. In the exploratory case study, Yin asserts that "fieldwork and data collection are undertaken prior to the final definition of study questions and hypotheses" (Yin, 2003, p. 6). However, explanatory case studies present data bearing on cause-effect relationship (Yin, 2003, p. 5). Following Yin's model this study uses a descriptive case study method which presents a complete description of a phenomenon within its context (Yin, 2003). Because the purpose of the study is to develop an in-depth understanding of the QA systems in Turkish higher education specifically, the research was conducted according to a descriptive case study model. This approach was selected in order to most successfully frame the single case study, QA in Turkey, while allowing for a unique focus on how quality assurance systems are being implemented in one member country of the Bologna Process.

Data Collection

The data for this case study were collected from multiple sources including policy documents and interviews. According to Yin (2003), "there are six possible sources of evidence for case studies: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation, and physical artifacts" (p. 83). The documents analyzed in this study provided the framework for understanding the issues affecting the implementation of QA in Turkish higher education. Yin states that documentary information is likely to be applicable to every case study because the documents are broad and likely include

more detailed points (Yin, 2009). For this study, the data were gathered from various documents such as “National,” “Stocktaking” and “Trend” reports which provide necessary background information for the research. These documents provided a holistic understanding of the QA systems within the frame of the Bologna Process and allowed for analysis of information at a much more sophisticated level of detail. For example, the National Trend and Stocktaking Reports explain how QA systems are implemented in higher education. Review of these documents allows for a better understanding of what is at stake in the implementation of the Bologna Process and why it is important. These reports also track progress made during implementation and verify whether the original goals of the Bologna Process were actually being achieved.

National reports include studies on developments taking place in signatory countries since joining the Bologna Process. Because they are prepared by participant countries, these types of documents are particularly helpful in understanding at which level and how each member country implements the QA guidelines. Equally valuable to the understanding of the progress that has been made towards achieving the goals that were set by the Ministers in the Communiqués are the Stocktaking reports, which demonstrate the scores of participant countries on the implementation of the Bologna Process. Finally, the research utilized Trend reports which aim to analyze the implementation of the Bologna Process in the context of the much broader set of changes that have affected higher education in Europe in the past decade, and to propose an agenda for the future of both the Bologna Process and the EHEA (Trends, 2010).

In addition to National, Stocktaking, and Trend reports, the QA policies of the Turkish higher education institutions were analyzed to understand the internal processes

associated with their implementation. Additional documents were selected from the CoHE, and international organizations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the European University Association (EUA) and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Furthermore, official documentation published by the Bologna Meetings of Ministers ensured rich evidence for the formal evaluation of the new QA system at national and European levels.

Interviews generated rich multifaceted data that went beyond factual information from documents and enriched the understanding of quality assurance systems in Turkish higher education. According to Merriam (1988), “in case study research of contemporary education, some and occasionally all of the data are collected through interviews” (p. 71). Interviews are considered one of the most common research methods used in social sciences because it is an effective method which provides information about the experiences, attitudes, opinions, complaints, senses and beliefs of those involved (Briggs, 1986).

For this study, I used purposive sampling to select my participants. Purposive sampling “is based on the assumption that one wants to discover, understand, gain insight; therefore one needs to select a sample from which one can learn the most” (Merriam, 1988, p. 48). Maxwell states that some people are uniquely able to be informative because they are experts in an area or privileged witnesses to an event (1996). Participants in this study were the members of the Turkish National Team of Bologna Promoters, which was established by the Turkish National Agency in July 2004 to uphold the European Commission’s requirements to promote QA in the participant

countries (Turkey National Report, 2005). Every signatory country has a National Team of Bologna Promoters which consists of five to fifteen members. In 2004, the Turkish team included 12 members; however, this number increased to 15 promoters in 2009.

There are several reasons why I interviewed the National Team of Bologna Promoters for this study. First, the National Team of Bologna Promoters consists of individuals who occupy leadership positions; most of them are rectors, deans, senior academics, directors of study, higher education experts and student representatives (Restricted Call, 2004). This means that the team members are professionals active in higher education and know how the Bologna reforms are being introduced. Second, according to the European Commission's restricted call, the team of Bologna Promoters must have the knowledge and experience to provide advice to higher education institutions on the three Bologna priorities defined by European higher Education Ministers in Berlin: QA (internal and external) accreditation; the three cycle system, and mutual degree recognition (ECTS and diploma supplement) (Restricted Call, 2004). In addition, the report states that at least one third of team members must be experts in either quality assurance, the three cycle system or recognition of degrees. For that reason, it is expected that the team who is responsible for QA has the best knowledge of this area in Turkey. Finally, the National Team of Bologna Promoters has been an active participant in the implementation of the Bologna tools at the institutional, national and international levels. The team members contribute to the implementation of the Bologna Process via the dissemination of knowledge and good practices through conferences, seminars and site visits (National Report, 2009). Since the Turkish Bologna experts have

visited many Turkish universities to introduce Bologna reforms they have a first-hand experience and knowledge of the QA systems implementation process.

Prior to recruitment, the research procedures were approved by the University of Victoria Human Research Ethics Board for use with human subjects. Before commencing the interviews, a number of ethical issues were explained to the participants. These included protecting participant confidentiality, through the use of pseudonyms, throughout this paper as well as the secure storage of interview audiotapes and the transcribed data.

I decided to conduct individual interviews with the Turkish National Team of Bologna Process because interviews are generally perceived as a valuable information source due to the fact that through individual interviews researchers can find out what participants think (Alasuutari, 1995). I collected data through individual interviews using open-ended questions such as “What important changes have been adopted to promote quality assurance since Turkey joined the Bologna Process?” followed by specific probes to fully understand the QA implementation. Before I contacted the Bologna experts, I had sent an e-mail to one of the executive members of the Council of Turkish Higher Education who is responsible for the Turkish Bologna Experts. We arranged a meeting to discuss my program of study and research agenda. I traveled to Ankara, the capital city of Turkey, to meet with this official, who was very helpful in giving me information about the Bologna experts involved in QA activities. He gave me a list with contact information of the Bologna experts and suggested that I contact each member of the Bologna Process via e-mail or phone.

Following the advice of the executive member of the Council of Turkish Higher Education, I sent letters of invitation via e-mail to 11 members of the National Team of the Bologna Process. I received replies from eight members of the Bologna Process team. When the participants agreed to take part in the interviews, I sent the consent forms to them and I arranged appointments with each of the participants. Out of eight experts who took part in my study, five were female and three were males. As most Turkish Bologna experts live in different cities, the interviews were organized to accommodate the participants. I conducted four face-to-face interviews which took place in participants' offices in Ankara; two e-mail interviews, as two professors preferred email interviews allowing flexibility to answer the questions at their convenience; one on-line video conference interview; and one telephone interview. All participants signed consent forms either in person or via e-mail. Face-to-face, telephone, and on-line interviews lasted between 45 to 60 minutes.

Before each interview, I provided participants with a brief introduction about the research and the purpose of the study. During the interviews, I tried to steer the conversation slightly, but also prompted the individual's personal and work experience to guide the interview. My interview questions were structured around the problem statement as I attempted to gain a better understanding of how the Bologna Process influenced higher education in Turkey. I also prepared follow-up questions to prompt participants to provide detailed information and in order to obtain best responses from them. Participants were receptive to my questions and willing to discuss the research topic. Face-to-face and phone interviews were audiotape-recorded and the online interview was recorded using an online recorder. Interviews were transcribed verbatim.

There were some setbacks during the interview process. First, it was difficult to take notes while communicating via the telephone. Therefore, I used a phone hands-free option and recorded the voice of the participant. This insured that I did not miss anything during the interview. Second, one of the face-to-face interviews was conducted in a noisy environment because of a big meeting held near the participant's office. For that reason, the recording quality was not good and some parts of our conversation were difficult to comprehend. To solve this problem, I asked the participant to review the transcript of the conversation and to complete the missing parts. Lastly, during the online video conference, the Internet connection was lost, and the online recorder stopped. However, we reconnected a few minutes later, and the second part of interview was recorded successfully. Because the first part of the interview was missing and I had only my notes, I sent an e-mail to the participant and explained this unfortunate situation. I shared my notes with the participant and asked him to fill in the missing parts of our conversation. He kindly accommodated my request.

Data Analysis

Data collected from policy documents and interviews were analyzed according to the qualitative content analysis. Berg defined content analysis as an “objective coding scheme that must be applied to the notes or data” (2001, p. 238). I began by reading each transcript and document from beginning to end. Then, I re-read them carefully while focusing on the research questions below:

1. What are the effects of the Bologna Process on the implementation of QA systems in Turkish higher education?

2. What specific policies have been adopted by Turkish institutions of higher education to promote QA?
3. What changes have taken place in Turkish higher education to improve the QA at institutional, national and international levels?
4. What are specific challenges Turkey faces while implementing QA?

I highlighted the words, phrases, and sentences that are related to QA implementations in Turkey, and wrote comments in the margin of texts (Patton, 1987). After open coding each transcript and document, I made a separate preliminary code for each analysis. Once all transcripts had been coded, I examined all data within a particular code (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). Then, I defined the categories derived from data during data analysis as Hsieh and Shannon (2005) describes in a conventional approach of content analysis. Finally, I generated the coding scheme according to the combined analyses of the data gained from the two main sources. The list of interview codes were developed from the documents and interview transcripts in relation to the broader thesis questions. The codes were classed in three categories: effects, changes and challenges. All three categories were further subdivided according to institutional, national and international level. For example, one of the institutional effects of QA is the establishment of the Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement Board (ADEK) in Turkish HE. Interview codes are available in the Appendix IV.

Finally, I concluded the final analysis and write-up of the thesis report. For the study to be replicable, I monitored and reported my analytical procedures and processes as completely and truthfully as possible (Patton, 2002). The trustworthiness of the study

was provided by using triangulations and member checks which are explained in the next section.

Issues of Validity and Reliability

Case studies have been criticized by some as lacking scientific rigor and reliability (Patton, 1987). Leedy and Ormrod (2005) argued that “case research’s major weakness is that, especially when only a single case is involved, we cannot be sure that the findings are generalizable to other situations” (p. 135). Also, several writers have identified other weaknesses of case studies that may affect the reliability and validity. For example, Nisbet and Watt (1984) think that the results of case studies may not be generalizable except where other readers or researchers see their application. While the findings may not be generalizable to other countries because every signatory country shows different levels of success in implementing the quality assurance systems, they can be used and applied by higher education institutions in Turkey.

Another concern raised by Nisbet and Watt (1984) relates to selectivity, bias and subjectivity. In this study, I analyzed a number of national reports completed by countries participating in the Bologna Process. Because these reports are prepared by member countries, they might give an unduly optimistic picture of the implementation of QA in Turkey and elsewhere. To address this situation, the study used multiple sources of data. Yin (2003) asserts that “using such multiple sources strengthens case studies, and when findings, interpretations, and conclusions are based on such multiple sources, the study data will be less prone to the quirks deriving from any single source, such as an inaccurate interviewee or a biased document” (p. 83). The document analysis was combined with interviews conducted with participants who are actively involved in the

implementation of quality assurance systems in Turkish higher education. Additionally, the QA policies of the institutions were analyzed to understand the internal processes.

To address the observer bias and increase reflexivity (Nibert & Watt, 1984 as cited in Qi, 2009), I made use of triangulation involving utilization of diverse sources of evidence (Yin, 1994). I have also conducted member checks to ensure that the interview data were accurate.

Recognizing the case studies' weaknesses, researchers suggest that qualitative research should be judged as "credible and confirmable as opposed to valid and reliable" (Merriam, 1988, p.163). Yin (2009) and Merriam (1988) proposed several tactics to overcome the limitations of case studies and to maximize the quality of case studies through the following critical conditions. The first critical condition is the internal validity of a case study. Internal validity deals with the question of how one's findings match reality (Merriam, 1988). Internal validity is addressed by using triangulation, checking interpretations with individuals interviewed or observed, peer examination and clarifying researcher biases and assumptions. The second critical condition is external validity which deals with knowing whether the findings are generalizable beyond the immediate case. Merriam (1988) states that in order to increase the possibility of a case study's results being generalizable in any of these senses (working hypotheses, concrete universals, naturalistic generalization, and user generalization), the researcher has to provide a detailed description of the study's context. The description must cover everything that a reader may need to know to understand the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985 as cited in Merriam, 1988). The researcher provided a rich and thick description to improve the generalizability of her findings. The last critical condition is reliability, the

extent to which there is “consistency in one’s findings” (Merriam, 1988, p. 183). Yin (2009) states that the objective is to be sure that, if a later researcher followed the same procedures as described by an earlier researcher and conducted the same case study all over again, the later researcher should find the same result. I followed these suggestions to enhance the reliability by describing in detail how the study was conducted and how the findings were derived from the data. Additionally, in order to address these issues, I used specific procedures to provide more “credible and confirmable” study with reliable findings, valid arguments and conclusions. These procedures include triangulation and member checks.

Triangulation

Yin states that a major strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence. The most important advantage presented by using multiple sources of evidence is the development of converging lines of inquiry, a process of triangulation and corroboration (2009). Berg (2001) states that triangulation is used largely to describe multiple data-collection technologies designed to measure a single concept or construct (data triangulation). Moreover, triangulation involves utilization of diverse sources of evidence to alleviate any potential bias. Through the combined analyses of the data gained from document analyses and interviews, I answered the main research questions about how QA systems within the framework of the Bologna Process are being implemented in Turkish higher education institution. Lastly, the use of both document analyses and interviews helped to identify the discrepancies between publicly proclaimed policies and real practices (Maximova, 2011).

Member Checks

I conducted member checks after the interviews had been transcribed to ensure the accuracy of interviews and their subsequent interpretation and translation into the English language. Merriam defined the member checks as “taking data and interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking if the results are plausible” (1988, p. 169). I asked the interviewees to review the transcripts of the interviews and, if necessary, to provide clarification of specific points. Foreman recommended member checks or “review by subjects or functionaries” to increase validity of research (Foreman, 1948, cited in Merriam, 1988).

Chapter 4

Findings

This chapter discusses the main findings of my study, beginning with a discussion of how the Bologna Process has affected the implementation of Quality Assurance (QA) in Turkish higher education and the specific policies that have been adopted to improve QA in Turkey. Thereafter, I consider the challenges associated with the implementation of QA at the institutional, national and international levels.

Effects of the Bologna Process on QA in Turkish HE

This section focuses on the effects of the Bologna Process on the QA studies in Turkish HE. I examined these effects at the institutional, national and international level. The results of my study strongly indicate that the Bologna Process has had a considerable impact on the QA activities in Turkish HE at all levels.

To answer the research questions, I conducted a number of interviews with Turkish National Team of the Bologna experts. The majority of experts that I interviewed agreed that the Bologna Process, which aims to improve transparency in the EHEA, had had positive impact on QA systems in Turkish HE. One expert I spoke with said she believed every activity associated with the Bologna Process would increase the quality of Turkish HEIs overall. Another participant in my study stated that the “Bologna Process has become a turning point that has enhanced the QA in Turkish HE”. Given that the Bologna Process is seen as an overall success, the following section will detail how the Bologna Process has impacted on QA studies on an institutional level.

The Effects of the Bologna Process at the Institutional Level

In 2009, the CoHE collected general assessment data from Turkish HEIs that demonstrated a widespread need for re-structuring of the entire Quality Assurance System under the provisions of the Bologna Process. This was especially true for Science and Technology departments at major universities that were eager to improve quality of education (Kaplan, 2009). According to results gathered from interviews with the Bologna experts and document analysis, it is evident that Turkish HEIs were motivated to establish the Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement Board (ADEK) and the Bologna Coordination Commissions (BCC) after joining the Bologna Process.

The experts explained that every Turkish HEIs formed an institutional committee called the Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement Board (ADEK). These units are responsible for organizing and conducting institutional wide QA activities. ADEK consists of up to 18 academic members selected by the senate of each HEI. ADEK prepares an annual report and submits it to the CoHE for academic assessment and quality improvement. The Bologna experts agreed that the enactments of the Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement Board (ADEK) and the Bologna Coordination Commissions (BCC) at the universities in 2008 were some of the institutional improvements that had recently occurred in QA studies. BCCs are intended to be a higher level structure, which works on the realization, dissemination, monitoring and evaluation of the Bologna reforms in HEIs in coordination with other structured units established within the context of the Bologna Process (National Report, 2009). One expert told that:

“Auditing is an important indicator to track whether a study has been carried out properly or not. The studies of the Bologna Process are reviewed by the Bologna

Coordination Commissions (BCC) twice a year. HEIs declare their annual improvement with these reports”.

Furthermore, the Bologna experts said that BCCs had undertaken a set of tasks aimed at setting institutional level policies. This commission also organizes an evaluation meeting every six months and prepares the annual plan about the Bologna Process working fields, which is sent to the CoHE. The experts stated that these annual plans helped to demonstrate how an institution was implementing improvements on the QA studies.

The National Report (2009) stated that the CoHE formed the Bologna Follow up Group in 2009 to provide support for developing policy proposals, meant to implement the Bologna Process, and also to expand the diversity of representatives. It seems that the establishment of the ADEK, BCC and the Bologna Follow up Group made it easier to assure the quality of Turkish HEIs.

Additionally, the participants stated that another effect of the Bologna Process on the extent of internal QA processes in HEIs has been that almost 30 HEIs in Turkey were assessed by the Institutional Evaluation Program (IEP) of the European University Association (EUA). IEP intends to support the participating institutions in developing their strategic management and internal quality cultures (National Report, 2009).

Furthermore, the Bologna Experts I interviewed mentioned an increase in the awareness of the importance of student participation in QA activities. They considered this another important development in quality assurance in Turkey. Within the framework of the Bologna Process, students are seen as the most significant stakeholders because they contribute to the implementation of the Bologna Process. Student involvement in QA has also increased in other Bologna Process countries. For example, according to the

London Communiqué (2007), since 2005, external quality assurance has improved considerably and student involvement in QA at all levels has also increased. It is evident that the trends should continue in this direction.

In Turkey, the CoHE introduced the new Regulation for Student Councils of HEIs and the National Student Council (NCS) of HEIs on September 20, 2005. All HEIs are required to include a student representative appointed by the NCS. At the institutional level, Academic Assessment and the Quality Improvement Board (ADEK) audit the student participation at each Turkish HEIs. The president of the university student union can attend the Senate and the Executive Board meetings if the subject is related to students. At the national level, one student member appointed by the National Student Council represents students in the Commission for Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement in Higher Education (YODEK). Further, a president of the national student council can attend the General Board of CoHE and the Interuniversity Board meetings upon the invitation of the President of the CoHE when student related issues are discussed. However, one shortcoming of the existing HE Law is that student representatives do not have the right to vote (National Report, 2007).

According to the National Report (2007), the new regulation ensures “students with complete bottom-up organisational power in the most democratic manner starting from the departmental, programme and major level at the bottom to the HEI and national level at the top” (p. 7). The purpose of this policy is to enhance student participation, involvement and contribution at every level of academic and administrative activities in higher education institutions. Student representation at national and international level through the national student councils of higher education institutions is also very

important. Furthermore, the National Report (2009) stated that students should be full members of external review teams.

Although Turkey is not a member of the European Student Union (ESU), its National Student Council (NSC) plans to apply for the membership in the ESU. For example, the article on the Bologna Process in Turkey written by the ESU pointed out that many Turkish student representatives at the international meetings used the opportunity to discuss the importance of having a stronger Turkish voice at the European level. They recognize the importance of communicating with student unions from other European countries and sharing their experiences with the Bologna Process and higher education policies. According to the article, Turkish students expressed a strong interest in joining the ESU (2011).

In general, the participants stated that the Bologna Process has had the positive effects on QA activities in Turkish HE. For example, one participant said that “within the scope of the Bologna Process, internalization has become important in QA studies as Turkish HEIs gave more attention to implementing the internal evaluation in their institutions”.

Other experts expressed their praise of the Bologna Process by acknowledging that the Bologna Process had succeeded in bringing awareness and making Turkish HEIs more transparent and sustainable by implementing the QA activities. Additionally, the awareness raised in Turkish HEIs within the framework of the Bologna Process had positively influenced the QA studies.

My analysis of the data obtained from interviews and documents reveals that the Bologna Process has had a considerable impact on the QA activities in Turkish HE.

Further, the evidence shows that the Bologna Process has brought vast improvements to the culture of QA at Turkish universities. HEIs have recognized the importance of internal and external institutional evaluation in improving the quality of the education they provide to their students. Not only did the Bologna Process raise the awareness of QA in Turkish HE, it also helped to establish significant QA activities that promote transparency, sustainability and internationalization.

The Effects of the Bologna Process at the National Level

The Bologna Experts stated that at the national level, there have been great improvements in the QA activities within the framework of the Bologna Process in Turkey. At the national level, the CoHE created the Commission for Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement in Higher Education (YODEK). The Bologna experts considered the creation of the YODEK a significant move. According to one participant, the CoHE first issued the Regulations of Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement in Higher Education in 2005, and then established the YODEK in accordance with these regulations. The YODEK reviewed the “Guide on Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement in HEIs” considering stakeholders’ views and opinions and published a more comprehensive version of the guide in 2007, which now includes an expanded list of standards and performance indicators for the use of HEIs and QA Agencies in their internal and external quality assurance procedures (National Report, 2009). The YODEK requires that all universities form Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement Board (ADEK), which are responsible for academic evaluation and quality improvement activities within their institutions.

According to the participants and documents analysis, another important improvement is an approval of the Turkish Qualifications Framework for higher education (NQF- HETR) (*Turkiye Yuksekogretim Yeterlilikler Cercevesi*) (TYYÇ) by the CoHE. Qualifications Frameworks were mentioned for the first time in the 2003 Berlin Communiqué which stated that:

Ministers encourage the member States to elaborate a framework of comparable and compatible qualifications for their higher education systems, which should seek to describe qualifications in terms of workload, level, learning outcomes, competences and profile. They also undertake to elaborate an overarching framework of qualifications for the European Higher Education Area. (p. 4)

Additionally, in Bergen Communiqué (2005), Ministers asserted that they adopt an overarching framework for qualifications in the EHEA, consisting of three cycles, generic descriptors for each cycle based on learning outcomes and competences, and credit ranges in the first and second cycles. Ministers also committed to “elaborating national frameworks for qualifications compatible with the overarching framework for qualifications in the EHEA by 2010” (Bergen Communiqué, 2005, p.2).

A national framework of qualifications for higher education is defined as:

The single description, at national level or level of an education system, which is internationally understood and through which all qualifications and other learning achievements in higher education may be described and related to each other in a coherent way and which defines the relationship between higher education qualifications. (QF-EHEA, 2005, p. 30)

The London Communiqué (2007) pointed out that there had been initial progress on implementation of national qualifications frameworks, however, more work was needed. For this reason, ministers suggested implementing national qualifications frameworks, certified in accordance with the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA, by 2010. However, in the Leuven Communiqué (2009), the deadline was changed; it was decided that countries would develop national frameworks compatible with the EHEA framework and prepare for self-certification by 2012. Several member countries of the Bologna Process including Belgium, Denmark, and Germany, Ireland, Malta, the Netherland and the United Kingdom have already completed their self-certifications (Bergan, 2011).

In Turkey, the CoHE formed the National Qualification Framework (NQF) in 2006. The Commission for HE qualifications completed the draft report of NQF in 2007. The consultations and national discussion were carried out in 2009. The NQF in Turkish HE was fully approved in 2010. Finally, the implementation at institutional/program level was scheduled for December 2012. It was also decided that the self-certifications of compatibility with European Framework also was to be created by 2012. However, there is no information to indicate if these commitments were fulfilled by the Turkish HEIs.

Currently, two types of qualifications frameworks exist in Europe. The first one is the Overarching Framework for Qualifications of European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA) created only for higher education in 2005. The other is the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF- LLL) created at all levels of education in a lifelong learning perspective in 2008. The report of the QF-EHEA (2005) pointed out the reasons for an effective overarching Framework for Qualifications of the

EHEA. First, it establishes real transparency between existing European systems of higher education through the development of a shared basis for understanding these systems and the qualifications they contain. Second, this will help “the recognition of foreign qualifications, enhance the mobility of citizens and make credential evaluation more accurate” (p.19). Another reason for the overarching framework is that it assists the countries creating their national frameworks. Finally, it provides a shared context for effective quality assurance (QF-EHEA, 2005).

The NQF-HETR defines HE qualifications as “what a person achieving any higher education degree is supposed to know, do and be competent about”. Durman (2011) stated that the major input supporting a meaningful and successful quality assurance in learning programs should be based on the evaluation of the outputs that are the learning outcomes of the programs and course units. The Bologna Experts emphasized the importance of the Turkish National Qualification Framework for QA studies in HEIs. Learning outcomes are defined as a statement of what a student should understand and be able to do as a result of what he or she has learned after completing the course of study (National Report, 2012). One expert pointed out that: “if learning outcomes of a course unit or a program of study’s are not defined, it is difficult to say whether they provide necessary qualifications and meet the requirements of the Quality Assurance”. Therefore, determining learning outcomes is essential for enhancing the QA in higher education.

The National Report (2012) stated that Turkey provides specific support measures on the national level. The Council of Higher Education arranges meetings in universities

in order to increase awareness of learning outcomes and organizes site visits and workshops in the universities.

Additionally, the development of the Turkish National Qualifications Framework helped improve student/learner-centred approaches in HEIs. The NQF focuses on the needs of the student. For example, learners will know in advance what competency they will obtain and can choose their educational program based on their interests. Moreover, the CoHE strongly believes that the establishment and implementation of a national higher education qualifications framework will contribute to the employability of university graduates as all stakeholders, including representatives from the business world and trade associations, are taking part in the consultation process (National Report, 2009). Further, according to the Bologna Experts' project (2009), the improvements of the National Qualifications Framework contributed to a better understanding of QA and assistance in its implementation in Turkey. Additionally, activities related to the NQF were one of the major foci of the previous Bologna Experts' projects (Compendium, 2011).

One interviewed expert described the impacts of QA improvements within the Bologna Process in the following manner:

“Turkish universities are now more sensitive to learning outcomes, competences and qualifications. The NQF encourages HEIs to create new and flexible programs to enhance learners with generic and subject specific competencies to use in a fast changing, global working environment.”

Another participant pointed out that prior to the Bologna Process, test scores of university entrance exams were the only way to understand students' achievement in Turkish HE.

Further, it was not clear what skills and competencies graduates possessed after completing their education. Today, higher education institutions clearly define measurable learning outcomes they expect their students to have by the end of the learning process.

Turkey emphasises the necessity of the NQF in insuring transparency and in promoting the recognition of its higher education. As mentioned above, the establishment of the NQF for HE is a work in progress: a special commission and a working group have been formed to carry out the NQF for HE and to prepare a timetable for its implementation across all universities.

The most notable effect at the national level for QA studies is that the CoHE began working on the establishment of a National Quality Assurance Agency in 2005. As mentioned in former chapters, a national quality assurance system could not be established with the exception of new practices brought by law no 2547 (Durman & Eris, 2011); however, both the CoHE and the University Board have shown an eagerness to create a national Quality Assurance (QA) system and have already started to work on the establishment of a National QA agency. Durman (2011) stated that since the establishment of the new regulations in 2005, the foundation of a fully independent National Quality Assurance agency has been on the national agenda of the CoHE and HEIs. Moreover, the new amendment to HE Law 2547 stressed the urgent need of establishment of a fully functional QA system, which all internal and external stakeholders of Turkish HE have been very much looking forward to.

Most of the Bologna Experts emphasize the importance of forming a National QA agency with a full membership in the ENQA. First, the national QA agency will be

responsible for the supervision of the quality of Turkish Higher Education. Second, the agency will develop external quality assurance procedures in accordance with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) for Quality Assurance in the EHEA in order to gain recognition by international quality assurance agencies. Third, the national QA agency will evaluate quality of institutions and educational programs. Finally, the agency will maintain the National Framework of Qualifications for the development, recognition and award of qualifications.

One of the study participants mentioned that in the past two years, some progress was made in the establishment of a National QA agency in Turkey. Several alternatives have been discussed including the establishment of a fully independent agency with a new law, an agency independent from the CoHE, but in accordance with the Higher Education Law 2547 and an agency within the legislative framework of the Association Law with the support of HEIs or licensing of a completely private establishment or association. Currently, it has been decided to establish a National QA agency in line with the Association Law. However, this decision should be approved by the rectors of HEIs.

While two of the Bologna experts agreed that the studies on the establishment of the QA agency were going very well and would come to end soon, another expert was less optimistic, pointing out that the process was taking quite a long time. I agree with the expert who thought the process to establish the National QA agency was going slow because the process started two years ago and has not been completed at the time of this study. Moreover, despite the Council's of Higher Education (CoHE) decision to establish the National Quality Assurance agency in 2005, this has not been accomplished. One of the participants said that they were working on the project for a long time and, only

recently, concrete measures have been implemented. The expert thought that Turkey had spent considerable time trying to understand and plan this process. He felt that the two years spent in creating the QA agency were not useful, but that Turkey needed time to embrace the process.

Considering the importance of quality assurance for Turkey, I feel that the country should accelerate its introduction in order to establish a National QA agency compatible with other EHEA countries. Having a fully independent National QA agency would bring many advantages to Turkish HE because the national QA agencies develop a culture of quality and set up the policies and guidelines concerning the external evaluation of HEIs, which facilitates quality improvement and accountability (ENQA, 2011). Furthermore, the QA agency will foster the quality of Turkish higher education and promote best practices in quality assurance that will be comparable and compatible with those in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

Effects of the Bologna Process at the International Level

From the interviews and my careful review of policy documents, I found that the Bologna Process has significantly affected the Quality Assurance activities in Turkish HE at the international level. The Bologna Process has urged Turkish higher education to establish quality assurance systems which are comparable and compatible with other European systems. For instance, Turkey has set the regulations complying with European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) aiming to assist and guide higher education institutions and other relevant agencies in developing their own culture of quality assurance (ESG, 2005).

The study participants stated that membership in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) and European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) was significant for Turkish HE. The CoHE (Turkish Higher Education Ministry) is an official member of the EQAR which manages a register of quality assurance agencies operating in Europe to ensure that they comply with European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) for QA. Further, the Commission for Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement in HE (YODEK) is an associate member of the ENQA, a major driving force for the development of quality assurance across all the Bologna signatory countries.

Another significant improvement in Turkish higher education is the quality culture development activities carried out by the European University Association (EUA). The first EUA quality initiative, “Quality Culture Project” started in 2002. Today, 5 Turkish universities – Bosphorus, Uludağ, Yıldız Teknik, Istanbul Teknik and Mersin – participate in developing and sharing quality culture among the Bologna countries. The second EUA initiative, “Institutional Assessment Program,” is designed to support the participating institutions in the continuing development of their strategic management and internal quality culture. During the interviews, respondents stated that the EUA institutional evaluations helped to establish the quality culture in Turkish universities.

The aim of the Qualifications Framework for European Higher Education (QF-EHEA) is to promote international relations among the higher education institutions and to support the Bologna countries in establishing their own national qualification frameworks. The Turkish National Qualification Framework was approved in 2010 and its implementation started in all HEIs at the end of 2012. Turkish HE formed

qualifications at the Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral levels in regard to achievement level, learning outcomes, competences, and student workload. The participants agreed that national qualifications helped create a system of easily understandable and comparable degrees. Additionally, the Bologna experts believed that the qualification frameworks increased the international transparency and recognition of academic degrees among the Bologna Process countries.

Quality Assurance in Turkish HE: Changes and Policies

This section describes the changes and policies adopted at institutional, national, and international/European levels by Turkish HE during the QA implementations of the Bologna Process. My analysis of policy documents and interviews with the Bologna Experts has demonstrated that QA is essential to creating the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Most participants stressed that the Quality Assurance was on the Turkish government's agenda even before the Bologna Process. However, they agreed that the Bologna Process had accelerated the QA studies and introduced the quality culture in Turkish HEIs. One of the interviewees stated that the QA had gained importance during the last ten years, especially since 2001, when Turkey had joined the Bologna Process. The participants also pointed out that although there was no national QA agency established by the CoHE, except for the criteria for opening a university, department and a program that are governed by law no 2547, Turkey now had enough knowledge to implement quality assurance policies. In recent years, the country was eager to establish the National QA Agency complying with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). In the following paragraphs, I discuss the implementation of new policies meant to align

Turkish QA systems with the regulations set by the Quality Assurance Standards and Principles in European Higher Education Area.

The New Changes and Policies at the Institutional Level

The quality assurance system at the institutional level includes internal and external quality assessment approaches. One of the study participants said that internal quality assurance system is formed by the university itself through stakeholders including rectors, directors (academic and administrative), head of departments, member of the university, our most important stakeholders are students, and from the outside, such as those in the business sector. Further, he said that the experts conduct conferences and workshops about periodic self-assessment and other measurement and evaluation techniques on internal QA systems.

In response to the questions about QA approaches at the institutional level, one of the experts stated that:

“The quality assurance is provided by the Department of Internal Auditing at the institutional level. Are they working very well? No, they are not. They mostly control the financial matters. Every institution has a strategy development department which prepares a strategic plan to ensure QA. These departments are controlled by the university administrators. We also provide expert advice during the QA strategic planning.”

It is clear from the above statement that universities have some problems with the current auditing system. The expert also described how internal QA systems work. Many experts asserted that at the institutional level, Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement

Boards (ADEKs) are responsible for conducting activities and enhancing the implementation of quality assurance.

For this study, I analyzed several policy documents related to internal QA systems in Turkish HEIs. The National Report (2009) states that the internal QA system in Turkey is based on continuous and sustainable institutional improvements of the mission and autonomy of HEIs. In 2005, the CoHE adopted “The Regulations on Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement in Higher Education Institutions” complying with the criteria of the Berlin Communiqué and the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) for QA in the EHEA. These regulations set the principles for improving the quality of HEIs. They are based on the 5 key elements of the Berlin Communiqué: internal assessment, external review, participation of student, publication of results and international participation. According to these regulations, in 2005, the Turkish government established “the Commission for Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement in HE” (YODEK). According to the YODEK regulations, all universities are asked to form Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement Boards (ADEK) responsible for academic evaluation and quality improvement activities within their institutions.

One of the study participants stated that the ADEK boards are responsible for forming evaluation groups which prepare internal and external assessments for their institutions.

“According to reports received from evaluators, ADEKs prepare their self-assessment reports periodically in January and February and they submit their reports to YODEK in April. In accordance with these reports received from HEIs,

the YODEK evaluates the results of the assessments, prepares a national report in March and May and sends it to CoHE. The CoHE should give feedback and make these reports open to the public. Unfortunately, HEIs have not received any feedbacks or publications.”

The expert stated that the reason universities have not receive any feedback is due to the insufficient academic staff for evaluating the reports received from HEIs in the CoHE. However, the President of the Commission for Academic Assessment and Quality Improvements (YODEK), Durman (2011) stated that this cycle of implementation has, so far, worked efficiently and particularly contributed to the internal quality systems and institutional quality culture being established within the HEIs. However, because of the uncertainties and inconsistencies in data HEIs provided, assessment results have not been published at the national level.

I additionally found some criticism of the internal QA activities and their implementation. The study participants were outspoken and pointed out problems, critiquing frankly issues with the implementation of QA. Based on my research and interviews, it can be understood that auditing systems are not working efficiently. In addition, the CoHE has not published any assessment results based on the reports sent by the HEIs. One expert said that the CoHE does not have enough staff to read all the reports. The expert suggested that the CoHE should hire new staff in order to increase their efficiency and effectiveness.

As mentioned above, institutional evaluation requires annual internal assessments and post-assessment studies to be carried out by HEIs. The National Report (2009) stressed that the internal assessment is the central part of QA system in Turkey. HEIs

follow the standards and guidelines defined by the YODEK in order to provide internal assessment and quality improvement in HEIs. The experts said that the YODEK requires that the HEIs carry out the following activities to assure the internal QA system: (1) Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement; (2) Strategic Planning; (3) Institutional Assessment (self and environmental); and (4) Periodic Review and Improvement.

Turkish HEIs are also required to present annual institutional assessments, describe their measurable strategic objectives within the context of their missions and strategic plans, publish, and periodically review and improve their practices (National Report, 2009).

Another institutional QA system is the “institutional external assessment” activities. One of the Bologna expert said that YODEK regulations also require HEIs to carry out “institutional external assessment” every five years. However, according to Durman (2011), “there is no statutory body specifically charged with performing the external institutional evaluation and assessment of HEIs” (p. 6). This is the biggest challenge for Turkish HE systems. In some cases, universities that seek international recognition of their programmes have invited the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) to conduct the external program evaluation.

According to the National Report (2009), the YODEK regulation aims to establish independent national external QA agencies. The Association for Evaluation and Accreditation of Engineering Programs (MUDEK) created with the contribution and efforts of the Conference of Deans of Engineering Faculties in 2002 is one of the existing independent national external QA agencies in Turkey. One expert stated that the MUDEK was modeled after the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) which is one of the American accreditation boards that has been rather

successful. The MUDEK gained a license for external assessment of engineering programs and obtained an accredited status as an independent external quality assurance agency in 2007. The agency is authorized by the European Network for Accreditation of Engineering Education (ENAAEE) to award EUR-ACE Label. According to Durman (2011), the MUDEK had accredited more than 90 engineering programs in 17 universities between 2002 and 2013.

Two more external QA agencies called the Association for Evaluation and Accreditation of Science and Art Programs (FEDEK) and the Association for Turkish Psychologists (TPD) applied to the YODEK to become independent national accreditation agencies. Recently, both agencies have acquired the recognition of the CoHE and were licensed as national quality assurance agencies in the related fields. In addition, faculties of Agriculture, Veterinary and Architecture have also applied to the YODEK to acquire the license for an independent external QA agency. Most Bologna Experts expressed their hopes for expanding the number of such agencies that would relate to all fields of study in Turkish HE.

The New Changes and Policies at the National Level

This section explains the QA approaches in Turkish HE at the national level. In Turkey, the CoHE and the Inter-University Board are responsible for Quality Assurance activities at the national level (National Report, 2005). At the national level, the CoHE is one of the main actors of QA within the Bologna Process. The organization is a powerful stakeholder of QA activities in Turkey. I asked one of the experts about the ways in which the CoHE ensured that universities provide and maintain Quality Assurance. According to the expert, the CoHE did not respond to university demands if the

institution failed to guarantee quality of education. For example, when an institution that needs academic staff for its program applies to the CoHE, the council makes sure that this program is accredited and its education is based on specific learning outcomes. The expert stated that the CoHE does not control the university like an agency, but it forces universities to implement QA activities.

The Bologna Experts agreed that the establishment of the Commission for Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement in Higher Education (YODEK) was an important step in QA studies at the national level. The YODEK consists of 9 members selected by the Interuniversity Board and one representative from the National Student Council (National Report, 2007). According to the National Report (2009), the YODEK is an independent body for quality assurance at the national level responsible for providing principles, standards and guidelines related to internal and external quality assurance activities in HEIs. One of the participants stressed that the YODEK was not a national QA agency that directly assured the quality at national level; rather, it was a commission that defined the guidelines and principles for how QA activities should be organized in Turkish HEIs. Considering this, “we are establishing a national QA agency in Turkey in approximately two years”.

The report, “Focus on the HE in Europe” (2007) stated that seven countries including Georgia, Greece, Lithuania, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Slovenia and Turkey have an independent national body that is not a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). The YODEK has been an associate member of the ENQA since 2007. One expert asserted that because Turkey did not have a national quality agency, the YODEK was currently

responsible for QA activities at the national level. However, after a national QA agency is established in Turkey, the YODEK will remain a body of the CoHE to coordinate activities of the CoHE and the national QA agency.

Another significant achievement in QA in Turkish HE is the establishment of independent external QA agencies. One of the participants stated that the Association for Evaluation and Accreditation of Engineering Programs (MUDEK) is one of the more successful agencies. In 2008, the MUDEK completed qualifications for all levels of engineering programmes based on learning outcomes compatible with the European Quality Framework. However, these external agencies need the input from HEIs to carry out their program accreditation activities properly. For that reason, HEIs should provide to external agencies, outputs based on the National Qualification Framework (NQF). According to Durman (2011), the MUDEK was successful in preparing bachelor's degree (first cycle) engineering programs in Turkey seeking accreditation. This success motivated the deans of other faculties to initiate similar activities in various fields of study.

Currently, the results of QA evaluations are made available to the public through the agencies' websites (Turkey's National Report, 2012). This will help the public to find out about the accredited university programs. According to the National Report, to date no negative program evaluations have been published.

The New Changes and Policies at the International/European Level

This section discusses the QA approaches that Turkish HEIs have been implementing at the international and European level. The Turkish higher education institutions are open to evaluation from foreign universities. Many institutions are

currently engaged in the international peer review process (*Focus on the Structure of the Bologna Process*, 2007). According to the National Report (2012), Turkish HEIs are able to choose a quality assurance agency from outside of the country. Participants of the study stated that at the international/ European level, Turkish HEIs were collaborating with the European Association for Quality Assurance (ENQA), the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR), the European University Association (EUA), and the Accreditation Board of Engineering and Technology (ABET), which are the most important international stakeholders in Turkish HE.

The European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) was created in 2000 to enhance European co-operation in the field of quality assurance. In 2004, the General Assembly renamed the ENQA Network, *the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education*, but retained the acronym ENQA. According to the agency, out of the 47 signatory countries of the Bologna Process, only 24 have at least one agency that is a full member of ENQA (ENQA, 2011). Turkey became an associate member of ENQA in 2007, and established its own QA agency.

In 2007, the ENQA presented a Report to the London Conference of Ministers on a European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies prepared by E4 Group that included European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), European University Association (EUA), European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE) and European Students' Union (ESU). Following this report, in 2008, the ministers proposed to establish the European Quality Assurance Register in Higher Education (EQAR). The register was created by E4 Group, a representative body of quality assurance agencies, students, universities and other higher education institutions.

The EQAR publishes and oversees a registry of QA agencies that substantially comply with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) to provide the public with clear and reliable information on QA agencies operating in Europe. The purpose of the web-based and freely accessible registry is “to increase confidence and transparency regarding quality assurance in higher education” (The European Higher Education Area, 2011, para.7).

According to the Bologna Experts, the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) and the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) have much influence on the QA studies in the EHEA. The CoHE is one of the government members of the EQAR. Further, as mentioned before, the YODEK, an associate member of the ENQA, follows the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) that were designed by the ENQA.

Among other international quality assessments exercised by Turkish HEIs is the “Quality Culture Project” of the European University Association (EUA), which is a quality culture development activity of HEIs in Turkey. Since 2002, five Turkish universities have been evaluated by the EUA as part of this project. The project aims to improve the quality culture among the Bologna countries (Eris & Duman, 2011).

Another popular quality assessment activity emphasised by Turkish universities is the Institutional Evaluation Program (IEP) of the European University Association (EUA) (Duman & Eris, 2011). This program is designed to support participating institutions in developing their strategic management and internal quality culture. So far, 28 universities in Turkey have participated in this assessment process. Various opinions exist about the EUA evaluation. One of the study participants said that although the

Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) is an independent membership service of the European University Association (EUA), it was becoming popular in Turkish HEIs aiming to increase their strategic management and internal quality culture. Further, Erguder (2006) stated that Turkish universities have become very good “customers” of the EUA. He explained that competition was the driving force for this as there was neither official encouragement nor official recognition that a university had adopted the EUA quality process (p. 6).

At present, no national accreditation board operates in Turkish HE. However, several independent external agencies gained official recognition from the CoHE. The Association for Evaluation and Accreditation of Engineering Programs (MUDEK) is one of these agencies that provide accreditation of bachelor’s degree in engineering programs in Turkey. In the past, due to lack of accreditation agencies in Turkey, some universities were accredited by foreign accreditation agencies. For instance, in the 1990s, the Engineering College of the Middle East Technical University (METU) applied to the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) to be the first Turkish university to gain accreditation. Higher education accreditation studies started in Turkey with the accreditation of the Engineering College of the Middle East Technical University (METU). After the first initiative, three more engineering programs sought accreditation. The Istanbul Technical University (ITU), Bilkent University and Bogazici University were all evaluated by the ABET and received certificates of ‘substantial equivalency’ to accredited engineering programs in the USA. These universities are still co-operating with the ABET to improve the QA of their engineering programs. Meanwhile other higher education institutions have also joined the process.

The Implementation of QA in Turkish Higher Education: Challenges at the Institutional, National and International Levels

Like many countries, Turkey has also encountered several challenges during the implementation of Quality Assurance. In this section, I discuss the challenges faced by Turkish universities at institutional, national and international levels. Conclusions are based on the responses provided by the study participants, as well as my research and analysis of official documents.

Challenges at the Institutional Level

At the institutional level, the implementation, staff resistance, standardization, and issues faced by students are the primary challenges of QA that Turkish HE should overcome for achieving the successful QA systems.

Implementation. The majority of the interviewed study participants agreed that the first serious problem in implementing QA standards was the lack of an overall quality culture in Turkish HEIs. University leaders including department chairs and academic administrators do not fully understand the importance of quality assurance. According to one respondent, “some long established universities see the QA activities as something that is being forced upon them”.

To rectify this situation, almost all participants stressed that Turkish HEIs should build a quality culture and internal quality assurance systems to ensure the improvement of QA at the institutional level. For example, one of the participants suggested that rectors and deans should recognize the QA activities within the Bologna Process. Furthermore, they should work to eliminate the barriers to the implementation of QA

measures by providing financial planning and resolving the shortage of necessary programs and limited physical spaces. Another participant emphasized the problem that most deans and rectors, with expertise in different disciplines, had no knowledge of the Bologna Process. My research corroborates the participants' comments. I found that many professors do not have enough information about the importance of the Bologna Process and have limited commitment to the implementation of QA standards.

Another important factor affecting the successful implementation of QA measures at the institutional level is the varying quality of education among Turkish universities. One of the study participants specifically focused on this issue, stating that Turkish institutions differ in the size and the year of foundation, and, therefore, in institution's prestige. For that reason, when discussing the implementation of QA, the differences between various universities should be taken into account. Many well established universities face technical barriers to developing the necessary QA activities. For instance, some universities have insufficient facilities, including lack of buildings in which to hold classes, limited library collections, contemporary materials and lab facilities; they experience the shortage of teaching staff. More recently established Turkish universities also struggle to develop the necessary QA activities because they too have to solve problems of infrastructure and shortage of academic staff. These common issues prevent many universities from effectively implementing QA systems at the institutional level.

According to the Bologna Experts, another challenge relates to the performance of Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement Boards (ADEK) themselves. According to the documents I reviewed, some of the ADEKs failed to regularly send their annual

reports. At the same time, the experts stated that the CoHE could not provide regular feedback on these reports, which would have motivated institutions to develop effective quality assurance systems. To improve the overall culture of quality in Turkey it is essential to ensure better communication standards at both institutional and national levels.

The Bologna Experts also pointed out that it is practically challenging to implement QA systems criteria in universities. Participants agreed that the goal of QA should not be the production of multiple documents, but the actual implementation of policies. Through my research, I discovered that several reports and QA documents posted on universities' websites did not reflect the true situation concerning QA. On paper, universities appear committed to the implementation of the QA criteria. However, in reality, institutions failed to properly meet all of the stated criteria. For instance, several problems exist in implementing learning outcomes. The documents suggest that students engage in face-to-face discussion, express their ideas, and choose their own projects. In reality, instructors still create a "formal assessments such as pen and paper tests" even though this technique is considered inappropriate for evaluating student learning. Thus, at the institutional level, the instructors need to use appropriate instruments of assessment to accurately evaluate students' achievement as defined by the Bologna standards.

Staff Resistance. Negative attitudes of university teaching staff is another inhibiting factor in QA implementation that needs to be addressed. One of the participants stated that at some universities faculty members are adamantly resistant to changes required by the Bologna Process. This is partly due to the fact that "teachers do

not approach the implementations of the Bologna Process with enthusiasm because it increases their teaching workload.” For instance, instructors often complain about the amount of paperwork that they have to fill out. One expert said that “They feel like slaves” because they have to demonstrate which techniques and tools they are using in the form of an official written statement. In addition to added workload, faculty do not want to implement the QA requirements because it would require them to be observed while teaching – a QA criteria requirement they particularly dislike. Faculty are reluctant to show how and what they teach; they say that “I am a popular teacher at a university which has a good reputation in Turkey. Why do I have to report everything I teach in class”. In order to successfully implement QA systems at the institutional level, teaching staff should recognize the importance of reporting their teaching and research activities. Being accountable to stakeholders and comparable with other institutions are the primary goals of the Bologna Process. Faculty need to understand that by being accountable and comparable, universities will improve their quality at the national and international levels.

Standardization. Another challenge in implementing institutional QA activities relates to the standardization brought by the Bologna Process. Some professors think that the objectives of the Bologna Process impede the development of national and cultural diversity in higher education systems. Similarly, Telegina and Schwengel (2012) pointed out that the QA debate within the EHEA raised major concerns about the impact of regional standardization on institutional autonomy and academic freedom. However, this subject raises questions among supporters and opponents of the Bologna Process as some documents stated that the Bologna Process aims at creating convergence and does not

support the “standardisation” or “uniformisation” of European higher education. The fundamental principles of autonomy and diversity are respected (CRE, 1999).

On the other hand, supporters argue that the Bologna Process’ standardization of education processes in European higher education is necessary as it proposes a system of comparable academic degrees. A standardized educational system among European nations seems like an idea whose time has come. As the borders between European nations become less apparent, as monetary systems become uniform, as commerce and industry increasingly become multi-national, and as Europe is regarded as a single entity on the international stage it makes sense to develop a uniform educational system (Bucker & Woodruff, 2008).

According to the study participants, most Turkish professors perceived that the objectives of the Bologna Process constrained freedom of teaching. They did not like being directed by the new teaching methods that the Bologna Process had brought to Turkish HEIs. Further, some senior professors supported the traditionalism in Turkey. Especially, some faculty members of the first established universities were not open to changes and showed resistance to innovations. Most of the Bologna Experts verified that senior teachers were against the new discourses and continued to use the traditional methods. Karseth (2006) pointed out that the new forms of curriculum management in higher education adapted by the Bologna Process represent values and visions that do not correspond with the traditional discourses, which are challenged by a discourse emphasising flexibility, employability and mobility within a European market. As one expert explained, some Turkish universities still use outdated lesson materials and textbooks from the 1970s. Many experts said that during the adaptation to new teaching

approaches, one of the experts' responsibilities is to motivate the academic staff to adjust the new system.

The new teaching methods, as an important part the Bologna Process, should be introduced across all Turkish universities. The Bologna Experts should take more responsibility for introducing the new curricular structures and credit system put forward by the Bologna Process to the teaching staff and students.

Student Participation in QA. In my research, I have identified several major challenges related to student issues which present serious barriers to improving the institutional QA activities in Turkish HE. The first one is the insufficient student participation in QA activities. According to Kaplan (2009), the involvement of students in QA activities in Turkey is limited. The participation of students is not only a problem in Turkey, other countries also have experienced the same issue. According to the ENQA report, in some countries, students are not always involved QA on a compulsory basis. The ENQA strongly recommends the involvement of students in QA especially in external quality assurance. The involvement of students is compulsory or recommended in about half of the Bologna Process countries. Turkey also recognizes that students should be included in the QA systems at all levels (*Focus on ...*, 2007). The importance of student involvement in QA activities is also emphasized in the Bergen Communiqué (2005), which states that: while almost all countries have made provision for a quality assurance system based on

the criteria set out in the Berlin Communiqué, “there is still progress to be made in student involvement” (p. 2).

The serious lack of student involvement in QA implementation was addressed in the Luxembourg Student Declaration, which stated that while some progress in the implementation of systems of quality assurance in several Bologna participating countries was reached, the student union was still dissatisfied with the insufficient involvement of students (ESU, 2005). The survey conducted by the ESU demonstrates that in the vast majority of countries that fall under the Bologna Process, students are not fully involved in all parts of internal and external quality assurance. The ESU pointed out that in order to be full partners, students must always be included in all aspects and levels of the quality assurance process in HE (ESU, 2005). The European Ministers also acknowledged the importance of the administrative staff and students’ involvement at European, national, and especially institutional levels to achieve the European Higher Education Area. As a result, the Ministers agreed to fully support staff and student participation in decision-making structures at all levels (Budapest-Vienna Declaration, 2010). It is additionally important to note that students should be closely involved in the decision making processes necessary to improve quality in Turkish HEIs because they are seen as the most significant stakeholders within the Bologna Process.

Lack of student-centered teaching is another issue challenging Turkish HEIs. Before the Bologna Process, Turkish universities practiced a teacher-centered approach known as the traditional approach to teaching. Under the traditional approach, students did not participate actively in the process of learning. On the other hand, the new discourse put forward by the Bologna Process advocates student-based learning and a

'learner-centred' curriculum, which focuses on the student needs and encourages them to become more active learners. According to the Turkish National Report (2012), student-centered learning is based on student workload, qualifications framework, learning outcomes, program qualifications, employability, stakeholders participation. The Trend VI report (2010) asserted that "there is a reasonable consensus that a move to a more student-centered approach to higher education is desirable and should be an important aspect of the European Higher Education Area" (p. 31).

Although a more student-centered approach to teaching is desirable, one expert pointed out that some students resisted the increased workload brought by the approach as recommended by the Bologna Process. According to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) workload standards, a first cycle student should study 1500 to 1800 hours a year compared to the more traditional 900 hours a year. This is a significant increase, almost doubling a student's time commitment. It is no wonder that, as one expert said that "students do not have positive feelings towards a more student-centered approach".

Another study participant emphasized the difficulties of moving to a more student-centered teaching model. Studies carried out in Turkish universities demonstrated that student-centered teaching was practically very challenging and rigid because of the excessive number of students per class and the resulting increase in student workload. The experts agreed that excessive numbers of students make the internships and practical lessons difficult in Turkey because in most European countries, class size ranges between 15 to 20 students. At the same time, classes in Turkey consist of 70 students. One expert argued:

“How can we provide student-centered teaching in these huge classrooms?

Generally, the instructors even do not know their students’ names. It is almost impossible that one teacher can succeed to give a project for each student independently, to evaluate their oral and written examination.”

According to the Bologna Process implementation report, training programs on student-centered learning are accessible in many countries. The participation in the training programs is voluntarily in some countries and mandatory in others. Turkey is one of the countries where the training participation is mandatory (EHEA, 2012). Positive changes are taking place in the training programs on student-centered learning which involve leaders, deans, the Bologna coordinators and quality officers at higher education institutions in Turkey. However, to successfully implement student-centered education in Turkey, all participants, especially the instructors who are vital to the teaching process, should get involved in the training programs. While there is an effort to implement student-centered education in Turkish HE, the student-centered learning model has not been fully employed.

International student exchange, which is limited due to insufficient funding and insufficient knowledge of foreign languages required for academic exchange, is another issue affecting the implementation of the Bologna Process. One of the Bologna Experts claimed that there are two big problems related to low levels of student participation in international exchange. First, Turkish students have problems with learning a second language because of inadequate language classes. For example, students have to learn a second language for two years to obtain the Diploma Supplement. However, most universities do not provide sufficient language courses to help students gain competency.

The second problem is the insufficient funding provided by the CoHE to students. These challenges create an important obstacle to students' mobility. Most of the participants advised that the CoHE increase the funding for student exchange programs, and also open new language classes so that Turkish students can gain the language competencies necessary to be competitive with students from other countries.

The document review and interview findings demonstrate that Turkish HEIs face a considerable number of challenges in QA activities at the institutional level. These problems should be recognized by individual universities and addressed by the CoHE who is responsible for the implementation of the Bologna Process.

Challenges at the National Level

At the national level, Turkish universities struggle with several challenges in trying to improve QA systems. These challenge including ideological barriers, participation of industrial sector, as well as supply and demand are discussed in next sections.

The Ideological Barriers. The Bologna Process has brought institutional reforms that are greatly impacting on the Turkish HE system at all levels. As discussed in the previous section, these reforms have resulted in some varied and often negative responses from academic staff in HEIs. The Bologna Experts I spoke with revealed that there are some ideological barriers that are working against the improvement of QA activities. According to one expert, some professors are opposed to what they perceive to be a move towards a more 'capitalist system' under the Bologna Process, which shifts educational goals to preparing students for the labor market. The expert stated that these professors think that the implementation of the Bologna Process aims to prepare students just for

labor market. Further, the professors support the idea that the universities work like a factory because student employability is one of the prior aims of the Bologna Process.

Similar statements are found in many reports published by the organizations involved in the Bologna Process and the OECD. For example, the QF-EHEA (2005) document states that the major purposes of the Bologna Process reforms are “preparation for labor market, preparation for life as active citizens in a democratic society, “personal development”, and “the development and maintenance of a broad, advanced knowledge base”. Furthermore, the Bologna Report Canada (2009) affirms that the Bologna reforms aim to provide the quality of education and training that meet the needs of the labor market for high level competencies. The preparation for the labor market and increasing employability are essential for the European area. During the last few decades, there has been an increasingly stronger relationship between knowledge and economy. The OECD (1996) report states that the term “knowledge-based economy” results from the recognition of the role of knowledge and technology in economic growth. Knowledge, as represented in human beings (as “human capital”) and in technology, has always been central to economic development (OECD, 1996). Before the Bologna Process, employers were complaining about the education systems of many European countries providing students with insufficient preparation for the labor market (QF-EHEA, 2005). Seeing that the demand for highly skilled labour has increased in many European countries, the Bologna Process takes into account this demand and through its regulations attempts to thoroughly reshape the outcomes of the European higher education system. Some of the study participants suggested that the professors who are not in agreement with the idea of

preparing students for the labor market should recognize the in this age of technology there is an required link between private sector companies and universities.

The Participation of the Industrial Sector. The Bologna Coordination Commissions (BCC) reports explain that the participation of the industrial sector is below expectation in Turkish HE (2009). The Trend report (2010) pointed out that one of the current challenges for the next decade is to provide for the continuing engagement of all stakeholders, including those from the private sector, in quality assurance developments. The Bologna Experts Project (2009) recognized that before the Bologna Process, most HEIs in Turkey did not pay much attention to the needs of the business sector, since private sector was not sufficiently developed at that time. However, currently, the private sector has become one of the essential stakeholders of HEIs. The demands of the business sector are pivotal for the graduates seeking employment. Due to these shifts, it is now important to involve all partners in the policy-making process, especially at the national level.

The Bologna Experts Project (2009) also emphasized that in the phase of preparation of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), the support of the private sector and other stakeholders of HEIs was undeniable. One of the participants suggested that universities should cooperate with “Professional Qualifications Authority” (MYK) in the phase of development of the National Qualification Framework to meet the needs of the labor market. The Bucharest Declaration (2012) also stated that “realising the full benefits of qualifications frameworks can in practice be more challenging than developing the structures,” however the qualifications frameworks must continue to be developed so that “they become an everyday reality for students, staff and employers” (p.

3). The Bologna Experts said that although some progress has been made, much more needs to be done in this respect.

The Issue of Supply and Demand. Another main challenge in implementing national QA activities is that Turkey's demand for higher education is much higher than what the system can currently provide (National Report, 2009). The interviews also revealed that in recent years, the number of Turkish universities and the number of students in these universities have increased. One expert stated that the number of universities grew considerably from one in 1923 to 177 in 2013. This rapid increase caused a concern in Turkish HEIs. Some expert said that they need to keep the number of universities under control to avoid chaos and to provide financial support and recruit academic staff. Other study participants stated that Turkey plans to merge some universities and to limit the overall number of universities in order to become more competitive with other countries. Universities believe that they will gain strength and impact if they come together and increase their rankings.

One of the study participants expressed similar concerns about the excessive number of students and increasing numbers of universities, saying that the number of students at HEIs should be reduced in order to provide quality education in Turkey, otherwise this issue might negatively affect Turkey's competitiveness with other European countries which have a reasonable number of students in their classroom. According to the EHEA report (2012), Turkey has the second highest number of tertiary education student after Russia in the EHEA. This report also showed that the total number of students enrolled in tertiary education between 2003/04 and 2008/09 increased to 48.2%. Kaplan (2009) stated that the CoHE has set up more than 60 HEIs in the last 3

years and that number is still increasing due to a high demand for higher education coming from a large number of students completing high schools. The newly established universities put forth the greatest effort to catch up with the old universities and to meet the increasing demands of students; yet, Quality Assurance activities often lag behind (Kaplan, 2009).

Challenges at the International Level

Turkey wants to become internationally recognized in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). In order to do so, the country has established the necessary principles for the new reforms put forward by the Bologna Process. Yet, despite its best efforts Turkey still has several barriers to overcome. This section of my thesis discusses the challenges that Turkish HE faces in implementing the framework of the Bologna Process QA studies at the international level.

According to my analysis of the interviews, the absence of the National Quality Assurance Agency that complies with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESU) in Turkish HE presents the primary challenge in the implementation of QA at the international level. In addition, a careful analysis of the documents associated with the implementation of QA in Turkish HE demonstrates that Turkey needs to further develop an external quality assurance system. For example, the scorecard indicator in the EHEA report (2012) shows that a fully functioning quality assurance system has not been established in Turkey nationwide. Moreover, the QA system has not been successfully evaluated against the European Standards and Guidelines in the EHEA.

Another important issue in implementing QA at the international levels is whether the main focus of quality assurance is on institutions, programs, or both. It is notable that

most QA systems now focus on a combination of institutions and programs (24) rather than on either programs (7) or institutions (4) (EHEA, 2012). On the other hand, one of the participants stressed that the external QA systems invited by Turkish HEIs mostly focus on the institutional evaluation rather than program evaluation, such as Institutional Evaluation Program (IEP) conducted by the EUA in Turkey. The Bologna Experts stated that Turkey should establish its own national QA agency and focus on both institution and program evaluation.

The 2009 Stocktaking Report stated that a country scores high if all institutions are reviewed by an external quality assurance agency which is assessed by an external team of experts (Rauhvargers, Deane & Pauwels, 2009). Unfortunately, Turkey does not belong to the 18 countries which fulfill these conditions (EHEA, 2012). The report demonstrated that Turkey needs to increase its score of external QA systems by establishing a National QA Agency in accordance with the ESG and be evaluated by external experts. Additionally, the Turkish National Report (2009) pointed out the improvement of the quality of education and full implementation of a national quality assurance system should be internationally accepted.

Another challenge that Turkey has to overcome is the low level of international participation in external quality assurance. According to the reviewed documents and interviews, the development of the external QA system and the international participation in the external QA are the most significant challenges for Turkish HE that aims to increase the quality of education in HEIs and competitiveness. According to Rauhvargers et al. (2009), if a country engages in international participation in external reviews of institutions and courses, that country will be a “high achiever” in the internationalization

of quality assurance (p. 63). However, the EHEA (2012) report shows that Turkish HE does not participate in international external quality assurance activities. The report asserts that the countries' score will only be high if they meet the following four criteria:

1. Agencies are full members of ENQA and/or listed on EQAR
2. International peers/expert participate in governance of national QA bodies
3. International peers/experts participate as members/observers in evaluation teams
4. International peers/experts participate in follow-up procedures

According to this report, Turkey does not meet any of the above requirements. Turkey is an associate member of the European Association for Quality Assurance (ENQA) and a governmental member of the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR). However, Turkey needs to become a full member of these two associations to increase its international participation in external QA.

Chapter 5 Conclusion and Recommendations

The study results suggest that the Bologna Process has affected the implementation of Quality Assurance in Turkish higher education and the specific policies that have been implemented to improve QA in Turkey. The CoHE (Council of the Higher Education) set up the new QA regulations based on the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) in order to be comparable and compatible with those in other European countries. The study also analyzed the problems encountered during this process. I employed a qualitative case study approach, conducted interviews with the Turkish Bologna Experts and a detailed document analysis in order to better understand what changes and policies adopted by the Turkish higher education to promote and improve QA. The document analysis provided the framework for understanding the issues affecting the implementation of QA in Turkish higher education. The aim of the interviews was to gain a better understanding of the challenges associated with the implementation process. The first-hand experiences and opinions of eight members of the Turkish National Team of the Bologna Process on the QA studies provided critical information on problems faced by Turkish HEIs during the implementation of the Bologna Process.

The data gathered from various documents, such as National, Stocktaking and Trend reports, offered necessary background information for contextualizing how QA systems are developed in Turkey within the Bologna Process. As I have demonstrated, National reports were particularly instructive for this study because they are prepared by participant countries themselves and include studies on the developments taking place in signatory countries of the Bologna Process. The Stocktaking reports contained similarly

useful information on the implementation of the Bologna Process in participant countries. Lastly, the Trend reports supplied detailed analyses of the implementation of the Bologna Process in the context of the much broader set of changes that have affected higher education in Europe in the past decade; they also proposed an agenda for the future of both the Bologna Process and the EHEA (Trends, 2010). The documents revealed that Turkey has established the new regulations and created ADEK (Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement Board) at the institutional level and the YODEK (the Commission for Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement in Higher Education at the national level) to assure the quality.

In addition to these documents, I have analyzed the QA policies of the Turkish higher education institutions in order to understand the internal processes. At the institutional level, ADEKs, in each university, prepare self-assessment reports periodically in January and February and submit these reports to the YODEK in April. In accordance with these reports received from HEIs, the YODEK evaluates the results of the assessments, prepares a national report in March and May and sends it to the CoHE. The CoHE should give feedback and make these reports open to the public.

For the purposes of this study I also reviewed policy documents produced by the CoHE, and international organizations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), European University Association (EUA) and Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). These international documents helped to understand how QA systems are shaped in other European countries and how other countries overcome the challenges faced during the initial phases of implementation. Furthermore, official documentation published at the Bologna Meetings

of Ministers ensured rich evidence for the formal evolution of the new quality assurance systems at national and European levels.

Through the analysis of the interviews with the Bologna experts and review of the documents and policies, I have identified a number of challenges associated with the implementation of QA at the institutional, national and international levels. At the institutional level, these challenges include (1) the lack of an overall quality culture in Turkish HEIs; (2) the resistance to changes required by the Bologna Process; (3) the belief that the Bologna Process brings standardization to HEIs; and (4) the insufficient student participation in QA activities.

At the national level, some professors are opposed to what they perceive to be a move towards a more capitalist system under the Bologna Process, which shifts educational goals to preparing students for the labor market and other challenge is that the participation of the industrial sector in QA activities is below expectation in Turkish HE. Last challenge in implementing national QA activities is that Turkey's demand for higher education is much higher than what the system can provide.

At the international level, the absence of the National Quality Assurance Agency that complies with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESU) in Turkish HE presents the primary challenge. Another challenge that Turkey has to overcome is the low level of international participation in external quality assurance.

This study is the first to uncover the effects of the Bologna Process on the QA improvements that have happened in Turkish HE at the institutional, national and international level. After signing the Bologna Process, Turkish HEIs set new regulations in order to increase compatibility with other European universities. The findings showed

that the establishment of the ADEK (Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement Board) and the BCC (Bologna Coordination Commissions) were some of the most significant improvements at the institutional level. The Bologna experts believed that the introduction of the Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement Board (ADEK) and the Bologna Coordination Commissions (BCC) at the universities in 2008 ensured accountability for the QA activities among Turkish HEIs. At the national level, the Bologna experts considered the establishment of the YODEK an important step in promoting quality assurance in Turkey.

This research has also focused on the international effects of the Bologna Process. The Bologna Process has urged Turkish higher education to establish quality assurance systems comparable and compatible with those in other European countries. Turkey set the regulations complying with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) aiming to enhance assistance and guidance to higher education institutions and other relevant agencies in developing their own culture of quality assurance (ESG, 2005).

A general conclusion of this study is that the Bologna Process has had positive effects on Turkish HE; it has accelerated the QA activities in Turkey. The findings show that while Turkey has made major progress in implementing QA activities, it is yet to establish a fully functional national QA agency that complies with the European Standard and Guidelines (ESG).

In the following paragraphs, I provide specific recommendations for stakeholders and policy makers in Turkish HE to address the issues associated with the implementation of quality assurance culture and to overcome existing challenges. I hope that these recommendations will prove to be useful in overcoming the challenges that

Turkish HE encounters while introducing the Bologna Process requirements. These recommendations are based on my analysis of the Bologna Experts' interviews and document analysis.

Recommendations to Implement Quality Assurance in Turkish Higher Education

The first aspect that needs to be addressed by Turkish HEIs is the introduction of a quality culture that recognizes continuous quality enhancement among the administrators, faculty and students. Because HEIs have the important responsibility of maintaining quality within institutions, university leaders should promote quality enhancement mechanisms in order to continue the development of quality cultures in individual universities. The Bucharest Declaration (2012) emphasizes that, “the development of more efficient governance and managerial structures at higher education institutions” is very important for increasing the education quality in Turkey (p. 2).

Further, universities in Turkey need to be both autonomous and accountable. The Trend VI report (2010) underlined that there should be a heightened awareness among university leaders and policy makers that institutional autonomy is the keystone for an effective and efficient higher education sector able to respond to the changes and challenges. In addition, HEIs should raise awareness about the importance of quality assurance among the teaching staff and encourage them to work towards higher quality standards. Because of the heavy teaching workload, experienced by much of the staff, institutional administration should motivate instructors to develop creative approaches to teaching and ensure staff promotion. The Trend VI report (2010) also emphasized that “the successful implementation of the Bologna Process is partly conditional on the capacity of institutional leaders to bring institutional coherence to a multi-dimensional

change agenda, and to explain, persuade and motivate staff members, and students” (p. 91). For that reason, the CoHE and the institutional leaders in Turkish HEIs should provide incentive and reward programs that motivate and engage the staff in order to achieve the aims of the Bologna Process.

The second important recommendation is to promote student-centered learning and the involvement of the student body in QA activities in Turkish HE. Gvaramadze (2008) argued that a quality culture supports individual learners in their learning experiences and helps to them to develop as autonomous learners. In the Bucharest Declaration (2012), the European ministers committed to “promote student-centred learning in higher education, characterised by innovative methods of teaching that involve students as active participants in their own learning” (p. 2). Further, the Bucharest Declaration set out the priorities for 2012- 2015 to provide opportunities to foster student-centred learning, innovative teaching methods and a supportive and inspiring working and learning environment. Therefore, Turkey should build student-centred learning, in which students participate actively in the process of learning in order to successfully implement the QA studies.

The third recommendation is to implement the mechanisms of international recognition in Turkish higher education in order to provide a more uniform system of academic recognition across Europe. Therefore, the CoHE should establish a national QA agency that complies with the European Standards and Guidelines. The Bologna Experts stated that despite significant accomplishments made to create the national QA agency, the CoHE should accelerate the research and establish the responsible body as soon as possible in order to ensure international recognition of Turkish HE.

The last recommendation relates to the full implementation of the National Qualification Frameworks based on learning outcomes in Turkish HE, which was emphasized by the Bologna Experts. They agreed that academic recognition across Europe can be achieved within the context of qualifications. Thus, the Bologna Experts suggested that the National Qualification Framework (NQF) complying with the European Qualification Framework (QF- EHEA) should be put into practice immediately. In the Bucharest Declaration (2012), the European Ministers stated that they welcomed progress in developing qualifications frameworks and improved transparency that would enable higher education systems to be more open and flexible. Furthermore, Ministers realized that some countries faced challenges in finalising national frameworks comparable with the EHEA; they recommended to continue efforts and to use the experience of other countries in order to reach this goal (Bucharest Declaration, 2012).

I am hoping that the recommendations given in the study will help Turkish policy makers to see the quality assurance issues at the institutional, national and international level and overcome them in the future. However, future researchers may want to examine the new developments, changes and challenges during the implementation of quality assurance in Turkish HE because the Bologna Process is an evolving process, and there are ongoing efforts to improve the quality assurance activities.

In summary, this study aimed to explain the changes made and the policies adopted by Turkish higher education institutions in order to implement quality assurance activities within the Bologna Process. In this study, I analyzed the effects of the Bologna Process on the implementation of the QA studies and pointed out the challenges faced by

Turkish HEIs. The study revealed that Turkish HEIs have improved their QA systems since Turkey joined the Bologna Process. Further, the CoHE has established the new evaluation boards in order to implement QA. However, the CoHE still has not established a fully functional national QA agency that complies with the European Standard and Guidelines.

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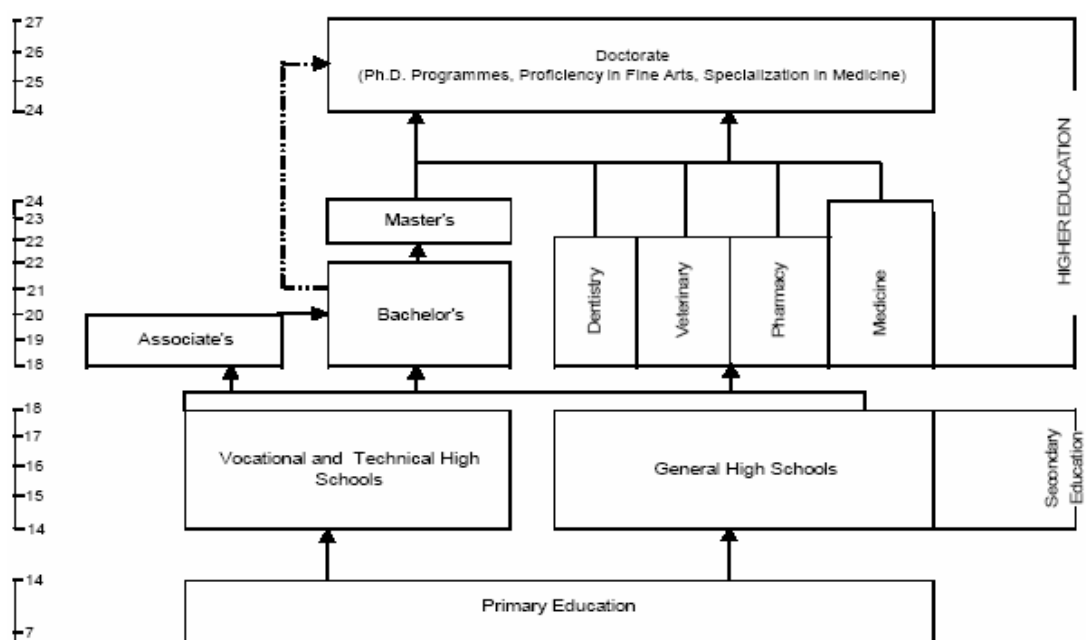
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APPENDIX I

Structure of Turkish Educational System

(Age shown on the left)



Source: EIE Surveyor, TR: Turkey, (2005-2008)

APPENDIX II

Developments in Ministerial Conferences

Bologna Declaration 1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easily readable and comparable degrees • Mobility of students, teachers, researchers and administrative staff • <i>Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance</i> • Promotion of the necessary European dimensions in higher education
Prague Communiqué 2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social dimension of mobility • Fair recognition, Development of recognised Joint degrees • Lifelong learning (LLL) • ECTS and Diploma Supplement (DS) • <i>Promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance and recognition professionals</i> • Attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area
Berlin Communiqué 2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portability of loans and grants, Improvement of mobility data • Inclusion of doctoral level as third cycle • Recognition of degrees and periods of studies Joint degrees • Equal access • Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) • ECTS for credit accumulation • <i>Quality assurance at institutional, national and European level</i>
Bergen Communiqué 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitation of visa and work permits • FQ-EHEA Adoption of National Qualifications Frameworks • Strengthening of the social dimension • Flexible learning paths in higher education • <i>European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance</i> • International cooperation on the basis of values and sustainable development
London Communiqué 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges of visa and work permits, pension systems and recognition • National Qualifications Frameworks by 2010 • Work towards a common understanding of the role of higher education in LLL • Partnerships to improve employability • Need for coherent use of tools and recognition practices • <i>Creation of the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR)</i> • Strategy to improve the global dimension of the Bologna process adopted
Leuven Communiqué 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benchmark of 20 % by 2020 for student mobility • National Qualifications Frameworks by 2012 • National targets for the social dimension to be measured by 2020 • LLL as a public responsibility requiring strong partnerships • <i>Quality as an overarching focus for EHEA</i> • Enhance global policy dialogue through Bologna Policy Forum
Budapest-Vienna Declaration 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More cooperation among the higher education and research systems of the different world regions • A Higher Education Area based on trust, cooperation and respect for the diversity of cultures, languages, and higher education systems • Enhance graduate employability • <i>Establishment of Quality Assurance agencies.</i>

Source: Focus on Higher Education in Europe 2010, EURYDICE

APPENDIX III

Interview Questions

1. Please explain your role on the National team of Bologna Experts.
2. What is your main area of responsibility within the National team of Bologna Experts?
3. What quality assurance approaches are in place in Turkish higher education institutions?
4. Who is responsible for promoting and improving the quality assurance systems of higher education institutions?
5. What important changes have been done to promote quality assurance since Turkey joined the Bologna Process?
6. How has the Bologna Process been affecting the quality systems in higher education? Do you think the Bologna Process has accelerated the implementation of quality assurance in Turkish higher education?
7. What are the challenges and barriers you have experienced or are experiencing now?
8. What should be done to overcome these challenges?

APPENDIX IV

List of Interview Codes

1. Effects
 - a. Institutional Level:
 - i. The establishment of the Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement Board (ADEK)
 - ii. The establishment of the Bologna Coordination Commissions (BCC)
 - iii. The Bologna Follow up Group
 - iv. The Institutional Evaluation Program (IEP)
 - v. Increase in the Awareness of the Importance of Student Participation
 - vi. Improvements on the culture of QA
 - vii. Achievement of the Transparency and Sustainability in Turkish HEIs
 - b. National Level
 - i. The establishment of the Commission for Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement in Higher Education (YODEK)
 - ii. The approval of Turkish National Qualification Framework
 - iii. The Programs based on Learning outcomes
 - iv. The work on the establishment of the National QA Agency
 - c. International Level
 - i. The establishment of the QA systems, which is compatible and comparable to other European QA systems
 - ii. The forming of the regulations to comply with European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)
 - iii. The Quality Culture Projects of European University Association
 - iv. The development of Quality Culture among Bologna countries
2. Changes and new policies
 - a. Institutional Level
 - i. The establishment of the Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement Board (ADEK)
 - ii. The establishment of the internal QA system
 - iii. The invitation of the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET)
 - iv. The establishment of external QA agencies
 - b. National Level
 - i. The establishment of the Commission for Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement in Higher Education (YODEK)

- ii. The establishment of the Association for Evaluation and Accreditation of Engineering Programs (MUDEK)
 - c. International Level
 - i. The initiation of an international peer review process
 - ii. The collaboration with international stakeholders of QA
 - iii. The associate member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)
 - iv. The “Quality Culture Project” of the European University Association (EUA)
 - v. The Institutional Evaluation Program (IEP) of the European University Association (EUA)
 - vi. The cooperation with the foreign accreditation agencies
- 3. Challenges
 - a. Institutional Level
 - i. The lack of quality culture in Turkish HEIs
 - ii. The differences among universities
 - iii. The performance of Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement Boards (ADEK)
 - iv. The problems in the student evaluation system
 - v. Staff resistance
 - vi. Excessive workload
 - vii. The standardization of education processes
 - viii. Traditionalism
 - ix. The insufficient student participation in QA activities
 - x. The lack of student-centered teaching
 - xi. Insufficient funding
 - xii. The deficiency of foreign language
 - b. National Level
 - i. Ideological barriers
 - ii. Negative responses from academic staff
 - iii. The participation of the industrial sector
 - iv. The essential of private sector
 - v. High demand for HE
 - c. International Level
 - i. The absence of the National Quality Assurance Agency
 - ii. The need for an external quality assurance system
 - iii. The requirement of the program assessment by external QA agency
 - iv. The low level of international participation in external quality assurance

APPENDIX V

Participant Consent Form



British Columbia • Canada

You are invited to participate in a study entitled “The Implementation of Quality Assurance in Turkish Higher Education: A Case Study” that is being conducted by Sehriban Bugday.

Sehriban Bugday is a Graduate Student in the department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies at the University of Victoria. You may contact her if you have further questions by email at sbugday@uvic.ca or phone at (332) 447-2606.

As a Graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in Masters of Arts, Leadership Studies. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Tatiana Gounko. You may contact her by telephone at (250) 721-7772.

Purpose and Objectives:

The purpose of this case study is to describe quality assurance systems (QA) in Turkish higher education institutions. The study will define how quality assurance mechanisms are developed and implemented in Turkish universities. The researcher will discuss policies envisioned by the Bologna Process and Turkish Higher Education Council (CoHE), and will analyse the challenges that Turkish higher education faces during the implementation of quality assurance.

Importance of this Research:

This research is important because joining the Bologna Process is assumed to be the most important higher education reform in Turkish history. Turkey has started to implement QA systems in higher education as one of the main requirements of the Bologna Process. The establishment of QA systems in higher education will bring transparency and rigorous standards which will help to ensure the international recognition of qualifications. Very few studies have focused on how quality assurance is being implemented at the institutional, national and European levels in Turkey. Similarly, limited studies address the challenges encountered during the quality assurance implementation process, and what has been done to overcome problems. This study will address the importance of QA systems for Turkish higher education, and increase awareness of the issues faced by Turkish policy makers and stakeholders of the Bologna Process. The results of the study can be made use of by higher education institutions and experts, academic communities, and policy makers in Turkey. Since the study will point out the challenging issues and gaps regarding the implementation of quality assurance systems, it will help policy maker and higher education institutions to improve quality in Turkish higher education. The study results will help to illuminate problems on existing quality assurance systems for policy makers who seek the best practices of improving quality. The study findings will provide a scope for replicating successful policies and systems within poor performing higher education institutions.

Participation:

- You are being asked to participate in this study because you are one of the National Team of Bologna Promoters. As a member of the Bologna Promoters with knowledge of quality assurance systems in Turkish higher education, your opinions are uniquely valuable for this research.
- Participation in this project is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at anytime.

- Your participation will consist of one audio-taped interview. The focus of the interview will be on your experience on QA studies in Turkish higher education institutions.
- You will have an opportunity to review a transcript of the interview.
- **THE INTERVIEWS WILL BE APPROXIMATELY ONE HOUR.**

Inconvenience:

I do not anticipate that involvement in this research would involve any substantial inconvenience for you other than the time to travel and to participate in the interview.

Risks:

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research.

Benefits:

Participants will have an opportunity to consider and reflect upon their own thinking on this important topic. It will provide a space of critical reflection as a Bologna Promoter in Turkey to discuss and share their ideas.

Withdrawal of Participation:

- You may withdraw at any time or refuse to answer certain questions without explanation or consequence.
- Should you withdraw, your data will not be used in the analysis unless you indicate that you will allow us to maintain and use your data as part of the study, if not your taped interview data will be erased and the transcript and all field notes or data associated with you will be destroyed.

Anonymity and Confidentiality:

- In terms of protecting your anonymity, your name will not be recorded on the transcribed data, on the interview tapes, or in the reports of the research results. A code number of pseudonym will be assigned and used in place of your name.
- **IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT YOU DO NOT SHARE CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION WITH OTHER PARTICIPANTS**
- Your confidentiality will be protected by storing interview audiotapes and the transcribed data in a locked filing cabinet. Only the researchers will have access to the data. The audio-tapes from your interview, the transcribed data, and any notes taken during the interview will be destroyed after five years.
- **PLEASE NOTE THAT DUE TO THE NATURE AND SIZE OF THE SAMPLE FROM WHICH PARTICIPANTS ARE DRAWN MAKES IT POSSIBLE TO IDENTIFY INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPANTS.**

Research Results will be Used/Disseminated in the Following Ways:

It is anticipated that the results of this study will or may be shared with others in the following ways: a thesis project, a published article or chapter in a book, a presentation at scholarly meetings, a presentation in university class, and in direct dissemination to participants.

Disposal of Data:

Data will be kept for five years after the study and then destroyed by shredding documents and erasing taped transcripts.

Questions or Concerns:

- If you have any concerns regarding the research, feel free to contact the researcher or her supervisor, Dr. Tatiana Gounko, referred to at the top of this consent form.
- In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

