

UNIVERSITIES AND ACADEMIC LIFE IN TURKEY: CHANGES AND CHALLENGES

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Introduction

In Turkey, as in many countries throughout the world, social conditions and social relations have significantly influenced universities and academic life during the past two and a half decades. Transformation from a “collegial university” into a “market-model university” has triggered changes in the academic environment and academic content. A competitive environment created by high income, high social status positions in the job market has boosted the demand for higher education and increased the number of enrolled students. The number of academicians has also increased, although not in the same proportion as the increase in student numbers.

Today’s mass education approach has cut the lifelines to a quality and meaningful academic life both for academic staff and students. Market-oriented policies to reduce the cost of higher education and curb the demand of higher education have had an impact on university autonomy, freedom of learning and teaching and altered student and academician profiles. This process not only influences how academicians and students (two main components of a university) understand the change and construe academic life, but also the way they set their expectations from academic life.

This paper will describe the specific characteristics of this transformation in Turkish universities and depict how the university staff understand and interpret the new academic culture.

Markets, State and Universities

There is a wide range of literature on how developments that took place during the last 25 years have affected the structure of central and local governments and state universities in Turkey- the main theme of this paper. Recently, the number of studies on the changing characteristics of professionalism in academic life has increased significantly. We need to have a historic perspective to understand the recent global social conditions and global interaction, in addition to the social conditions and social interaction within Turkey to comprehend the transformation of the university and the crisis academic staff face.

Globalization does not only shape the structure of the state but it also outlines the framework of the powers that influences universities. Elwood depicts globalization as “a new word that defines an old procedure”¹. Globalization is in fact the story of transforming the local economies into a global one, that began 500 years ago with colonialism. Globalization, which gained momentum after the crisis capitalism faced during the 1970s, has received worldwide

¹ Ellwood, Wayne. (2003). *Küreselleşmeyi Anlama Kılavuzu. Antikapitalist Hareket İçin Kılavuzlar. İstanbul: Metis Yayınları.* p. 13.

attention recently. It is characterized by geographic expansion of trade, compression of time as a result of technological advances, and transfer of social responsibilities away from the state towards the market. The emphasis on a market economy has caused economic crises, lower economic growth rates, higher unemployment, exploitation of labor force, destruction of environment and the resulting destruction it has caused to the social fabric²

Economic globalization focuses on “comparative superiority of the countries”³ to create a framework and conditions for the operation of the international trade and international services sectors. Three global organizations were established to create the framework and conditions stipulated by free market economy and international trade: the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank (WB) and World Trade Organization (WTO). In order to help the geographical and market growth of multinational companies based in the United States, European Union and Japan, these three organizations are working to lay the ideological background supporting the initiative that a liberal economy is universal. They are also trying to convert local political mechanisms to their ideology⁴.

For global organizations, the state is the most important apparatus that has to be converted into their line of thinking, through economic, political and social programs. In other words, transformation aims at achieving a social state, which is the creation of a social contract and is defined by threats of alternative social formations (such as socialism). It also aimed at the nation state, which is defined by political and cultural qualities of the society. There are many studies on the transformation of state after the 1970s.

This paper studies the effects that the elimination of the social state serving the common needs of society and its replacement by a regulatory state is having on universities. This paper also includes different views on the transformation of the state. In her 2004 study, Tural identified various effects of globalization on universities in different countries. She concluded that: globalization makes the research and educational agenda of universities dependent upon the requirements of the markets and the state; forces universities to be more accountable to the state; eliminates the right to public higher education; emphasizes productivity rather than justice; and pushes for a qualitative change in organizational structure and culture. She also noted that new conditions imposed by globalization on universities not only erode the university autonomy and academic freedom, but also deepens inequality in the education system. Universities that are expected to create and disseminate knowledge by freely criticizing the system are gradually forced into silence⁵

There is no doubt that academic staff -junior and senior professors and research assistants- realizes the important university functions, such as teaching, research, and service to society. The globalization process that effects development, administration and financing of universities also defines the academic life. There is a transformation of university culture as university culture starts to differentiate and research and training the shifts towards “academic capitalism”⁶. Market oriented functions result in a number of important changes, including the loss of academic freedom for academic staff, more difficult working conditions, an increased work loads, contract based employment, greater accountability, reduced participation

² Ellwood, 2003, sp. 83-97.

³ Ellwood, 2003, p.16.

⁴ Sonay, Bayramoğlu. (2005). **Yönetişim Zihniyeti. Türkiye’de Üst Kurullar ve Siyasal İktidarın Dönüşümü**. İstanbul. İletişim yayınları. P.36-39.

⁵ For a further discussion of these points, Tural, Nejla Kurul. (2004). **Küreselleşme ve Üniversiteler**. Ankara: Kök Yayıncılık.

⁶ Slaughter, Shelia ve Larry L. Leslie (1997). **Academic Capitalism. Politics, Policies and Entrepreneurial University** London, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

in the decision making process, increased competition to fund research programs⁷.

Enders (2002) in his study said that past twenty years has seen broad changes for higher education and academic staff in Europe. The increase in student enrollments in higher education, financial constraints, accountability and performance evaluations and technological advances have had a deep impact on academic staff, according to Enders. The problems academic staff face are classified by Enders under four major topics. First, erosion in academic status is happening faster than ever. This erosion is reflected in relatively reduced salaries, lower salaries for new academic staff, and flexible employment with less job security. Second is the gradual reduction in public funds available for higher education. As a result of this in the name of efficiency, the

student/academic staff ratios have increased as funds for research have gone down. Third, there has been a weakening in academic unions or professional organizations as a result of increasing control over academic performance in parallel with a shift of power from elected bodies of universities to the administrative hierarchy. Fourth, academic staff has increasingly been criticized for not fulfilling the expectations of society.

In his 2001 study, Reedy⁸ discussed higher education in Africa today and the trends affecting its future within the context of the transformation of massification in higher education, globalization, and the relationship between governments and universities. Reedy elaborated on how globalization, with its new public administration paradigm has shaped teaching and research procedures. He also emphasized how university research programs have been formed to meet the demands of the government and industry. However, according to Reedy, professors are only “salaried” or “piece-work laborers.” This administrative paradigm has reduced the powers of the elected deans, marginalizing faculty councils and board of directors. This trend has also weakened traditional cooperation among the academic bodies.

Austin (2002) also studied factors that effect academics in developing countries. He emphasized five factors that have influenced academics. First, university education has become more responsive to the demands of labor market in line with the requirements of the market economy. Second, the ratio of students to academic staff has gradually increased. Third, adverse effects of fierce competition among universities have resulted from privatization policies targeting higher education institutions. Fourth, the

⁷ For a further discussion of these points, Chevaillier, Thierry. (2001). “French Academics: Between the Professions and the Civic Service” **Higher Education**. No: 41, s. 49-75.; Gamage, David T. Ve Elliot Miningberg. (2003). *The Australian and American Higher Education: Key Issues of the First Decade of the 21st Century*. **Higher Education**. 45: 183-202. ; Honan, James P., Damteff Tefferra. (2001). “The US Academic Profession: Key Policy Challenges”. **Higher Education**. No: 41, s. 183-203. Mora, Jose-Gines. (2001). “The Academic Profession in Spain: Between the Civic Service and the Market” **Higher Education**. No: 41, s. 131-155.; Moscati, Roberto. (2001). “Italian University Professors in Transition”. **Higher Education**. No:41, s. 103-129);Ordorika, Imanol. (2003). “The Limits of University Autonomy: Power and Politics at the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico”. **Higher Education**. 46: 361-388.;Slaughter, Shelia ve Larry L. Leslie (1997). **Academic Capitalism. Politics, Policies and Entrepreneurial University** London, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.; Weert, Egbert De. (2001). “Pressures and Prospects Facing the Academic Profession in The Netherlands”. **Higher Education**. 41: 77-101. Kluwer Academic Publishers; Askling, Berit. 2001. “Higher Education and Academic Staff in a Period of Policy and System Change” **Higher Education**. 41: 157-181

⁸Reddy, Jairam. (2002). “Current Challenges and Future Possibilities for Revitalization of Higher Education in Africa”. (Editor: Chapman David). **Higher Education in Developing World: Changing Contexts and Institutional Responses**. Westport CT, USA: Greenwood Publishing.

development of institutional autonomy with the help of the above mentioned factors, has forced new roles on academic staff, such as leadership, consultation and involvement in the duties of the executive branch. Fifth, higher education institutions, lured into income generating activities, are increasingly encouraging academic staff to work on profitable popular projects.⁹

According to Schimank¹⁰ (2005), the new public administration paradigm in the universities has reduced academic self governance in Germany. He argued that new perspective has become more powerful since the 1990s and identifies five changes factors. These factors are: the dependence of universities on regulation and financial support by the state, the orientation of state or other pressure groups including industry, institutional competition, hierarchic administration and the decline of academic self governance. These correspond closely to Burton Clark's "coordination triangle" ("state", "market" and "academic oligarchy"), along with his mechanism, "organization."¹¹ Schimank (2005) also agrees that with this new administrative perspective and the introduction of new procedures for budget, human resources and application of higher education programs, the state and markets have increased their intervention in universities. He also concludes that the deans and rectors have taken over and the powers of self governance have been weakened.

⁹ Austin, Ann E. (2002). "Academic Staff in Times of Transformation: Roles, Challenges and Professional Development Needs". (Editor: Chapman David). **Higher Education in Developing World: Changing Contexts and Institutional Responses**. Westport CT, USA: Greenwood Publishing.

¹⁰ Uwe Schimank, (2005). "New Public Management and the Academic Profession: Reflections On The German Situation". **Minerva**. 43:361-376.

¹¹ Burton Clark, **Creating Entrepreneurial Universities: Organizational Pathways of Transformation** (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1998).

Social Change and Universities in Turkey after 1980

With the proclamation of the republic on October 29, 1923, the Republic of Turkey replaced the Ottoman Empire which had lasted 600 years. Ottoman state organs were reviewed according to republican values and many of them were replaced with new ones. One of these state organs was the Darülfünun ("higher education" in English). Ten years after the proclamation of the republic, in 1933 what has been characterized as the Republican University period started. Turkish universities have gone through several changes since the 1933 reform. However, today they are passing through a transformation phase in which they are influenced both by global developments and developments unique to Turkey.

Universities in Turkey since the early 1980s have been widely affected by economic and political pressures¹². The most severe impact on the universities occurred on e September 12, 1980, with the most far-reaching of several military takeovers. As a result of this intervention, universities were placed under the administrative control of the Council of Higher Education or YÖK, created by the military regime under Law No. 2547. This system, which has severely harmed university autonomy and academic freedoms, has been revised over the years. However, its core is still the same. In addition to the nationalistic orientation, new universities were established in small cities throughout the country. This policy, however, has had the unintended consequence of strengthening religious-based groups, forcing the YÖK, which is unabashedly secular and Kemalist, to take serious measures¹³

¹² Timur, Taner. (2000). **Toplumsal Değişme ve Üniversiteler**. Ankara: İmge yayınevi.

¹³ Hatiboğlu, M. Tahir. (2000). **Yükseköğretim Mevzuatı. Yasalar ve Yönetmelikler**. Güncelleştirilmiş 5. Baskı. Ankara: Selvi Yayınevi.

The most important result of post-1980s policies has been that more conservative policies have dominated universities. Universities have come to be called higher education institutions and with this change in name has also come a greater emphasis upon their vocational preparation of students. This has coincided with a greater demand for education by Turkish youth and their parents and led to the criticism of university students as mostly apathetic, apolitical and self centered.

Since 1980, universities have also undergone important financial transformations. Downsizing the state, restructuring and privatization, economic crises that were hoped to be solved with foreign credits, deeply effected various public institutions including universities. Universities have been forced to create additional financial sources when demand for higher education faced with financial distress.

During the 1980s and 1990s, several foundations were allowed to establish universities in Turkey. The first was Bilkent University, quickly followed by others. These universities received significant financial support from the public sector. Universities established by foundations generally followed the motto “markets determine the best result”, and were guided by this perspective as they began started to shape the structure and culture of the university. These universities adopted self administration and academic freedoms with the help of academic staff imported from public universities. However, they have been affected by other factors such as the influence of students (customers) who pay high tuition fees, national and international companies that have engaged universities to carry out commercial research, as well as religious, ethnic and ideological groups that provide financial support to the foundations. Relatively higher salaries are paid to academic staff at private universities and competition among the academicians is additional factors that also affect the university culture. The existence of these universities has also feed expectations that public universities should establish

mechanisms to compete with private universities.

Public universities are going through dire financial straits as a result of the recent budgetary cuts, and have been forced to look for new sources of income. Many academic staff whose salaries went down significantly have been forced to live with this reality. Others, trying to generate additional income, have increased t the number of hours they teach or conducted market-oriented activities such as contract work with commercial private parties, work as consultants, or teaching in continuous education and distance learning programs. There are no concrete figures on how wide spread these activities are or how much financial income market-oriented activities generate for universities. However, the amount of these activities has increased as the amount of public funds provided to public universities has declined. As a result of this, academic staff have tended to increasingly worked as individuals rather than as part of long term team work.

In response to these demands for higher education, universities in developed countries have also started to develop strategies to compete in the global higher education market and create new financial sources for themselves. Universities, both public and private, are slowly but surely entering the Turkish market by providing courses over the internet, opening branches in Turkey, and establishing partnerships with public and private Turkish universities.

Academic Profession, Titles and Some Qualities Unique to the Academic Profession

Academic Titles

Higher Education Law No. 2547 stipulates that academic staffs at the higher education institutes are composed of professors, lecturers and assistants. Professors include full professors, associate professors, and assistant professors who have completed

their doctoral studies. Academic staffs are obliged to have completed a doctorate degree, or, in the case of assistants, be working on their degree.

The number of academic staff in Turkey, which was 21,940 for the 1984-1985 academic year, increased to 82,096 during 2004-2005 period. During the 2004-2005 academic year, 38.1 percent (31,298) of the academic staff were composed of professors with 36.4 percent (11,381) full professors, 17.4 percent (5,456) associate professors, and 46.2 percent (14,461) assistant professors. The second biggest group (28,271) among the academic staff was research assistants representing 34.4 percent of the total.

Entry into the Academic Profession

Research assistants are the main source of future professors. According to Article 33 of Law No. 2547, “a research assistant is an assistant academic staff member that helps with research, study and experiments”. Research assistants receive a three-year assignment, and at the end that term their contracts expire automatically. According to paragraph (d) of Article 50 of the Council of Higher Education research assistants can serve in institutions in Turkey or abroad. They are regarded as individuals who are completing their graduate studies while they work as a research assistant. After they complete their doctoral studies, their contracts are usually terminated. This means they do not have an opportunity to remain at the university they received their Ph.D. degrees from. However, if they can meet the promotion criteria of the universities, they can apply for a position as assistant professor. However this is a difficult and long process for research assistants who lose their job before applying for a new one.

Gender

More women are represented in the lower levels of the academic hierarchy than in the higher levels. However, the number of

women in the higher levels of the academic hierarchy has increased significantly between 1984 and 2004. According to 2003-2004 figures, 25.6 percent of full professors were women, 32.8 percent of the associate professors, and 30.2 percent of the assistant professors.¹⁴

An examination of the distribution of female academic staff indicate that the employment of women differ significantly according to their field of specialty. According to 2003 ÖSYM figures, female academic staff were represented most heavily in healthcare, and least in the agriculture and forestry fields. Thirty-three percent of female professors were in the healthcare services, 16.9 percent in technical fields and 13.6 in the agriculture and forestry fields¹⁵.

Evaluation of Academic Staff and Academic Promotions

In Turkey, academic promotions are determined by a jury composed of academicians representing a certain branch of knowledge who evaluate the candidate’s scholarly work, including the doctoral thesis and subsequent writings and publications, and his or her other professional experiences.

Full Professor Position

Law No. 2547 does not require knowledge of a foreign language for academic appointment, although it is required to earn an associate professor title. However, the law stipulates that to become a full professor, one has to serve successfully as an associate professor for at least five years. A jury composed of five full professors, at least three of whom are from different universities, evaluates the scholarly work of

¹⁴ ÖSYM. (1986). 1984-1985 Öğretim Yılı Yükseköğretim İstatistikleri. Ankara; ÖSYM. (2005) 2004-2005 Öğretim Yılı Yükseköğretim İstatistikleri. Ankara.

¹⁵ ÖSYM. (1986). 1984-1985 Öğretim Yılı Yükseköğretim İstatistikleri. Ankara; ÖSYM. (2005) 2004-2005 Öğretim Yılı Yükseköğretim İstatistikleri. Ankara.

the associate professor who has applied for promotion. The jury prepares a separate report for each candidate. The University board of directors then evaluates these reports and finally the rector makes the final appointment.

Associate Professor Position

The law governing academic staff does not require a fixed period of work experience to apply for an associate professor position. An associate professorship exam is organized by the Inter-University Board. Only candidates who have passed the foreign language exam, and have genuine research and publications and have completed a doctoral degree are eligible to take the exam. The Inter-University Board creates a three to five-member jury to evaluate the scholarly competency of the candidates. The jury's evaluation takes place in two rounds. First, the scholarly works of the candidate are judged, then successful applicants are called in to answer the questions and discuss several issues related to his or her field with the jury. Successful candidates earn an Associate Professor title.

Assistant Professor

As for associate professors, the law also does not require a fixed period of work experience to apply for an assistant professor position. An assistant professor is usually hired by the university according to the results of a foreign language proficiency exam and a report by an academic jury. Recently, candidates also have been asked to give a simulated class lecture in front of an academic jury.

As a result of recent standards introduced by the Higher Education Executive Board and the Inter-university Board, the promotion decision making process has been reorganized. Several high-prestige universities have set additional minimum requirements and guidelines for eligibility for all academic promotions. In these universities, juries use these guidelines in the preparation of their reports. This process is meant to replace personal preferences with clear standards for evaluation. The

most criticized standard is the requirement of a paper to be published in one of the ISI publications.

Work Conditions of Academicians and Salaries

Academic freedom is the foundation of the profession. The right to academic freedom was adopted in order to help academicians pursue and illuminate knowledge based on their investigations in their own field. As Brown and Thornton (1965) said, academic freedom ensures that the door to scholarly research is wide open; that others can be encouraged to pursue their own creative and original work; that academics can publish their innovations and pass it on to students; and that researchers will be protected from any harm that might result from their studies.¹⁶

Work Conditions

Law No. 2547 stipulates that teaching, scholarly research, publishing academic work and consulting are the duties of academic staff. Article 33 of the law also states that academic staff “will also carry out other duties imposed on them by relevant authorized bodies.” A professor teaches at least 10 hours a week, totaling 280 hours in a year.

In 200, Aytaç and his colleagues conducted a broad study of 3512 academicians from different universities.¹⁷ Their findings included several illuminating insights. According to the research results, weekly teaching hours varied from 5 to 30 hours.

¹⁶Brown, James W., James, W. Thornton. (1965). **Yüksek Öğretim**. (Çev: A. Ferhan Oğuzkan, Ahmet Akgün, Şefik Uysal). Ankara: Milli Eğitim Basımevi. pp.51-53.

¹⁷Aytaç, Mustafa, Serpil Aytaç, Zerrin Fırat, Nuran Bayram, Keser Aşkın. (2001).. **Akademisyonların Çalışma Yaşamı ve Kariyer Sorunları**. Bursa: Uludağ Üniversitesi Araştırma Fonu İşletme Müdürlüğü. pp.101-102,149) pp.173-179).

The field of the academic staff was also a decisive factor for the weekly teaching hours. Academic staff in language and literature taught 16 to 20 hours; in mathematics, science, engineering, agriculture and forestry they taught 11 to 15 hours; in social sciences and art 21 to 25 hours; and in applied social sciences 26 to 30 hours per week. Thirty-eight percent of the academic staff who participated in the research said that they were satisfied with their jobs, while 50 percent said their job was partially satisfactory and 13 percent said they were not satisfied with their job. Overall, the study concluded that academic staff felt that salaries were not satisfactory and that teaching loads were too heavy.

Korkut¹⁸ outlined the problems of research assistants using a survey of 1444 research assistants conducted at 34 universities. Most of the participants said they wanted to continue in their academic careers. Approximately 92.5 percent of the research assistants identified one of two major problems related to their position: that their duties are not outlined clearly in the law and that their salaries were low. Additionally, the study found that participants resented the three-year contract of their employment and the requirement that they leave the university from which they get their doctoral degree. Assistant professors who were in a similar category to research assistants also felt the pressure of the rules governing promotion of academic staff.

Yiğiter (2006)¹⁹, who studied the legal status of research assistants at private universities, concluded that the policies at the private universities were undermining research assistants of their job security. According to Yiğiter, as a result of success- and

performance-oriented policies, research assistants at private universities are at the mercy of the market economy. Their jobs are threaten by changes in market conditions.

Salaries

In her 2004 study, Tural emphasized that when compared to the salaries of academic staff in other countries, the salaries of Turkish academic staff are significantly lower. According to 2004 figures, the yearly income of a senior professor was \$ 18,624, a junior professor was \$ 15,996; an associate professor was \$ 12,492; an assistant professor was \$ 8,700; and a research assistant was \$ 6,528²⁰.

Methodology

This research is aimed at outlining the characteristics of change at universities in Turkey and how the academic staffs interpret the changing academic life.

Eighteen semi-structured interviews were conducted for this study. All of the interviewees work at the Ankara University. Academic staff to be interviewed were selected to create a stratified sample according to their rank (full professors, assistant professors and research assistants); academic field (social sciences, medicine and applied sciences) and gender. Using this process, 6 professors, 6 assistant professors and 6 research assistants from both genders and different academic fields were interviewed. There was a significant difference in work experience among the interviewees ranging from 18 to 43 years for full professors, 9 to 23 years for assistant professors, and 3 to 7 years for research assistants.

¹⁸ Korkut, Hüseyin. (2002). **Sorgulanan Yükseköğretim**. Ankara: Anı Yayıncılık. p. 178)

¹⁹ Yiğitler (2006). Yiğiter, Cem. (2006). "Türk Anayasa Sisteminin kamu Personeli Rejimi Çerçevesinde vakıf Üniversitelerinin Hukuki Durumu Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme". **Seminer Çalışması** Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü.

²⁰ For a further discussion of these points, Tural, Nejla Kurul. (2004). **Küreselleşme ve Üniversiteler**. Ankara: Kök Yayıncılık.

Data gathered during the research were analyzed and five broad themes were identified:

- Characteristics of change,
- Restrictions to academic freedoms,
- Participation in decision making process,
- Revision of personnel policies
- Academic promotions

Some of the academic staff was quoted to emphasize the results. Participants were coded to indicate rank (“P” for full professor, “Y” for assistant professor, “A” for research assistant) and each assigned a number within their rank group ex. P1, Y4, A6).

Findings and Interpretation of Findings

The Characteristics and Directions of Transformations of the University

All the participants agreed that universities are going through some level of transformation. Several interviewees tried to explain the transformation from a wider perspective based on its historic roots, while others emphasized some of the variables unique to universities. A number of the academic staff support the changes as they believe they come from inside and it was something everybody anticipated. Other participants claimed that the changes were producing negative results or related the change in universities to market-oriented economic policies.

Academic staff, who interpreted these changes as something anticipated and desired, supported the idea that universities are transforming from being introverted institutes where students are learning everything by rote into extraverted institutes which support social projects (Y4, Y5). They also said they believe that Turkey’s harmonization process with EU will improve the quality of research and

education (P1, Y4); “information and information technologies (would) have a positive impact on university life”, and “a new individualist and competitive culture is in the making” (Y6).

Academic staff that evaluated issues related to universities from a historic and political perspective claimed that despite the negative developments in the 1980s, universities started to open themselves up to society in the 1990s. Therefore as universities have become more democratic, the quality of research and teaching has increased (P5, P1, Y4, Y3).

The interviewees who held these views were mostly academic staff from the medical school and applied sciences. P5’s statement below best exemplifies the attitude of academic staff who support change.

As the world is changing, change in Turkish universities is inevitable. Post 1980 arrangements are also part of this change. The University system is shifting from the continental European system towards the Anglo-Saxon model. Information and communication technologies have a positive impact on university life. Universities should become more entrepreneurial (P5).

Academic staff that had similar thoughts on change believed that there was a need to transform the university. They viewed change within the context of the market-based approach as “opening up to society”, an “increase in the quality of research and education”, a “widening information and communications technologies” and a “social dialog”, and moving to a more “individualist and competitive society”. Of course, these can be seen as acceptable results of change. However, this approach cannot help us understand the reality of the current university system. Nor can it give us an idea about the changing function of universities or to whom the universities have started to serve.

On the other hand, academic staff that evaluate the transformation the university from a wider perspective and regarded the changes presently occurring as something

negative used very different language in their discussion. Their characterizations includes such phrases as: “changing academic staff and student profile”, “resistance to the elimination of the authoritative stance”, “loss of autonomy and academic freedoms”, “higher priority for market demands, privatization, commercialization”, “increasing control of the financial, political and cultural powers over the universities”, and “expansion of a culture of obedience and elimination of a culture of criticism” (P1, P2, P4, P6, Y1, Y2, A1). A senior professor of social sciences articulated this idea using a historical point of view.

Before the year 1980, the priority of academic staff was to improve university life and serve without expecting any personal gain. Autonomy, which means that one would feel responsible for all needs of the institution, was eliminated after 1980. Today, we have an employer-employee relation with our university. We are gradually moving towards a commercial grinding stone. Accountability was more common; there was an auto-control mechanism. Now everything is a part of a show; auto-control does not work.....Independence, responsibility and accountability are the true purposes of a university.... (P2)

Wide spread transformation caused by market-oriented activities, commercialization and privatization of universities is another issue academic staff discussed (P2, P4, P6, Y1, Y2, A1). A medical school professor described commercialization as follows:

Universities started to cater to the market. Medical academic staff commercializes health services. The private sector always existed in the health services market. However, recently health services have been commercialized....Privatization from within and no longer serving the public have become a wide spread practice (P4).

According to another professor, there were various dimensions of commercialization at universities. She elaborated:

We are talking about a transition from public university to private university (system). There is an increase in the fees taken from the students, social services are no longer free, temporary employment is being encouraged, new liberal slogans such as vision, mission, and performance criteria are becoming more and more popular every day. Self-regulation and a culture of questioning have been replaced by an endeavor to prove the productivity of universities to outside elements (P6).

According to participant Y1, with an increase in such tendencies in the academic culture, “competition has replaced solidarity”. As a result of this, a culture of conflict based on hierarchical stature has become more evident. Two academic staff, who emphasized changes in the quality of the research, criticized the new requirement that academic staff publish their papers in international publications. They claim that such a requirement only serves to reproduce knowledge respected in the dominant circles, but ignores national priorities, national problems or the genuine work of the researcher. (Y2). The requirement for academic staff to publish papers in international publications creates pressure on academic staff to censor themselves (P4). Same professor who claimed that establishing close ties with the state and the market had silenced universities and said that “Universities are not able to create opposition. Universities are not able to create social consciousness, nor are university senates able to make others listen to them. Universities are not able to voice anti-government views.” (P4).

One of the interview participants interpreted the requirement for having papers published in international publications and the EU harmonization as “cultural imperialism” (Y?). Another participant also claimed that “EU standards are forcing diverse societies into a single culture or dominant culture societies.” (Y1) He continued:

Universities are increasingly under the control of certain powers. These

powers, regardless of whether they are local or international, stem from financial, political and religious (cultural) authorities. Universities are transforming into a branch of the ruling power rather than being institutions that create knowledge for society and educate people. Aspects of the political apparatus, such as autonomy and academic freedom which can be used to slow down this dangerous trend, cease to exist or get weaker one by one (Y1).

According to this perspective, university autonomy has eroded and academic freedoms have been restricted as a result of the changing nature of the relationship between the universities and the state. These academics also believe that this has resulted from universities having become unduly influenced by the bigger national and international powers that oversee both universities and the state.

Main Characteristics of the Academic Profession

One of the questions the participants were asked was how they valued the academic profession and how they perceived the qualities that distinguished the academic profession from other walks of life. Senior professors in particular said that the stature of the academic profession had declined that. Once a prestigious and elite profession, it was losing social respect (P5, P2). According to those professors, although they have some impact on society, the indiscriminate distribution of academic titles, a growing emphasis on personal gain, authoritarian and hierarchical decision-making paradigm (P2) and the decline in salaries had caused erosion of stature and a loss of respect for universities by society (P5, P2)

Many of the interviewees identified specific roles that they believed characterized the profession. Some of the academic staff perceived the academic profession as being for the “pleasure of teaching and learning for the students, nation and state (P5, P3, P1, Y6, A3, A5). Those and other academicians

also outlined the main characteristics of the academic profession as;

- To question and to try to find answers to the question (P2, A2)
- To try to satisfy the limitless urge for knowledge”(P2, P6)
- To work according to his/her program in a free environment without feeling any pressure (P6, Y4, Y3, Y5, A1 A3)
- To explain world affairs with a wide, deep and critical view (A4)
- To determine and act upon the university’s social responsibility (A1)
- To create new points of views for various walks of life (P6)

Academic staff who emphasized intellectual curiosity, freedom and social responsibility, view the academic profession from a wide and deep perspective. One of the participants who questioned whether science should be for society or individuals, pointed out that academic staff should have the qualities of “intellectuals” and claimed that intellectuals should take their stand in line with the dominant powers or with the oppressed/forgotten people.

Restrictions of Academic Freedoms

Participants were asked whether they felt that their academic freedoms had been restricted or threatened by the current laws or by the policies governing universities while conducting independent research. As the participants were academic staff from Ankara University, which is a developed university with deep-rooted academic traditions, not surprisingly, most said that they enjoyed broad academic freedom. Academic staff in the applied sciences and medical school, in particular, pointed out that they did not face any restrictions or threats (P1, P3, P4, P5, Y2, Y3, Y4, Y5, and A6).

Some of the participants mentioned applications resulting in the restriction of academic freedoms at universities. Research assistants notably pointed out that it was

stressful to be forced to conduct their studies in line with the demands of the institution that was providing financial support to the project they were working on (A3, A2) or when they are urged to study the subjects outlined by their advisors (A1, A4, A5, A6). One assistant professor participant said:

In general I did not feel restricted at my university; however, by the requirement to have my works published in international publications, I have been exposed to the “influence of the lords of the knowledge monopoly. (Y2)

An assistant professor of social science explained the restrictions imposed on research subjects by the permission procedure of the institute where the research would be conducted, by social values or by the official ideology of the state:

... Before starting research at a school, if you start to think which research subject would be denied by the permit issuing body, you either postpone or abandon your project. I think content of a study that takes different cultures and values into consideration and rebuts official ideology(ies) would not be assented to and would be pressured. In my latest study, I replaced many words with more appropriate ones or deleted some of the words I chose because my colleague and I agreed that “neither society, state nor university are ready for those remarks. (Y1)

One of the participants said that academic freedom was enacted differently at every university in Turkey claiming that “academic staffs do not feel comfortable when it comes to ethnic studies. Discipline by laws also restrict freedoms of students and academic staff”. (P6)

A senior social scientist (P2) specializing on academic freedoms strongly argued for professional autonomy, saying that “there should not be any limit to research and education at the universities; academic staff

should be able to conduct their studies and training based on varying philosophies”

Participation in the Decision Making Process

Several of the participants in the study argued that a main characteristic of university autonomy was that all decisions concerning research, training programs, academic promotions, administrative and financial issues should be made within the university. They noted, however, that unfortunately since the 1980’s, however, the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) to great extent had restricted scholarly, administrative and financial decision making at universities in Turkey or, according to some academic staff eliminated decision making all together.

Within this context, participants were asked how actively they participated in the decision making process in their department, faculty or university. In response to this question, four of the participants (P5, Y5, Y3, and A5) said that they “feel like they are an active participant (subject) at every level”. Most of the academicians interviewed, however, stated that it was impossible to be an active participant of decision making process at universities today (P2, P6, Y1, Y2, Y3, A4, A3, A2, A1, A6). That research assistants do not perceive themselves as part of the decision making process is not surprising. Research assistants generally do not have a say at the councils where decisions are made. This detachment may also related to the way research assistants are employed on temporary contracts. However, associate professors and full professors also indicated that they thought that they were not part of the decision making process, either.

If this view is accurate, it suggests important obstacles to democratization of the university, as the relationship between the state and the market is changing. A likely explanation for this finding is that YÖK has assumed almost all of the decision-making authority, with the remainder resting with the rectors. The comments of a senior professor express this view clearly:

I do not think that I actively participate in the decision making process. The decision making process is artificial and nonfunctional. Current law on universities does not allow participation in the decision making process. For example, YÖK has the power to open a new department and determine the curriculum. A culture of obedience has become dominant at universities. In such a culture, people who want to be active are usually declared marginal academicians. (P6)

Another assistant professors (Y1) stated his criticism more broadly, stressing the need for a more democratic environment by saying “the ruling class should get into dialogue with its subjects”.

Changes in the Personnel Policies at the University

Another important theme that emerged from the study was the changes in personnel policies for academic staff. Some of the academic staff said that in line with the changes in general rules governing public employees, the rules of employment of academic staff had also changed. Nearly all participants commented on the emerging practice of employing academic staff for specific periods of time on a set contract, often to work on specific projects funded from within or from outside the university. A few individuals (P5, P3, Y3) claimed that contract based employment could be applied to all levels of academic staff, believing that such a system would encourage work and increase the income of the academic staff.

However, a majority of the participants (P1, P2, P5, P6, Y1, Y3, Y4, A1, A2, A3) said that contract based employment created immense pressure on the academic staff and caused them to worry about their future. A senior professor stated that “temporary employment based on contracts harms job security and the social state perception (P5).

A research assistant suggested that “termination of the contracts of the research assistants after they receive their Ph.D. leaves them at the mercy of their luck in

their search for a job at a certain age (A2). This view was also supported by another assistant professor who noted that “termination of the contract not only results in financial losses but also in a loss of social stature increased stress.” (Y4). Two other interviewees suggested that because of this policy research assistants did not identify or feel any responsibility for the university or faculty (P6, A1). Another participant summed up by saying that the temporary and insecure employment approach reduced trust among academic staff in the university and unemployment appeared to be a threat to used by the manager (Y1).

Several academics interviewed also identified other results of this system of temporary employment. One assistant professor commented that “deep, social and long term projects are replaced by short term studies” (Y1). A full professor believed that the contract employment had negatively affected the behavior of faculty. He noted that because of the contract based employment approach, employees often created strategies “to win the interest of others, and play tricks on their rivals” (P2). An another assistant professor concurred, saying that he felt the pressures of being a contract based employee, by young academic staff caused them to distance “themselves from educator, advisor and scientist qualities and turn themselves into article writing machines” (A3). In a similar vein, an associate professor suggested that the increasingly prevalent practice of contract based employment had meant that academic staff were forced to make job security their top priority and were postpone their professional aspirations. (A3). An academic staff member elaborated further, explaining the “heavy psychological pressure” of being a contract worker:

Contract people feel the heavy pressure of it and worry about their future. Research assistants deeply feel the problems stemming from flexible employment. Without job security, research assistants are uncomfortable and worry for their future. So, research assistants do not feel loyal to the universities they work at. As a

result. the professor-assistant relationship lacks principles. On two occasions the dean and the head of the department threatened to fire me. (A1)

Salaries

In an earlier section of this article, it was pointed out that the salaries of Turkish academic staff are lower than their counterparts in foreign countries. In a subsequent section, complaints about low salaries were analyzed. Numerous participants, especially research assistants who get the lowest salary among the academic staff, pointed out that they live on the edge of poverty (P1, P2, P6, P3, Y3, Y5, A2, A1, and A6). Reducing salaries of the academic staff as a result of cuts in the subsidies for universities has caused three main problems: First, academic staff have been forced to pay for research activities, such as publishing their articles and attending international meetings. (Y3, Y5). This can affect the scope and quality of the research. Second, lower salaries have forced academic staff to teach more hours of classes to supplement their wages. As a result, quality of classroom teaching most likely declines. Academic staffs also begin to carry out commercial research and taking part in income-generating seminars becomes a higher priority (P6). Third, academic staff are urged to pick research subjects that outside forces “expect them or want them to chose, or, at a minimum, they feel pressured to do so in order to secure financial support for their research.” (A2, A3). As a result of this, academic staff cannot freely choose their research topics, which in turn threatens academic freedom.

Academic Promotions

The participants held a wide-ranging set of views on the issue of academic promotion. A small group of academic staff at Ankara University thought that although the principles of academic promotion created psychological pressure on academic staff, they were necessary (P1, Y4, A5). However, one senior professor noted that to help

young academic staff cope with the criteria for promotion, to enhance their foreign language skills, and to provide opportunities to study abroad financial support should be provided (P1). These academic staff also supported the idea that the same criteria should be applied to all levels of academic promotions (Y4, Y2). Several assistant professors endorsed the idea that professors who may evaluate them should also be evaluated using the criteria. This stance can be regarded as an outcome of the culture of individualism and competition, although most interviewees made clear that they do not believe in these values. An assistant professor explained the pressure created on him as a result of the requirement to publish articles in an international publication:

The effects of the requirement to publish articles in a foreign language you have not been taught are: 1) Work load spreads to encompass your whole life, including the weekends, national holidays, and summer holidays. 2) Spending a good portion of my salary on translation. 3) Effects of article 1 and 2 on physical and mental health, loss of respect in the system as a result of internal injustices. Professors should also be subject to the requirement foreign language publication requirement that is applied to assistant professors. (Y2)

Some participants claimed that academic promotion requirements, especially the requirement to publish in unspecified international publications, created immense pressure on assistant professors and associate professors (P2, Y6, Y1, and A3). A professor pointing out that academic promotion criteria had been determined by professors on the executive boards of universities said that “those who reach to the top of the tree pull up the ladder” (P2). The same professor also claimed that the requirement to publish articles in an international publication was a threat to academic freedoms. He also noted that the education level of an academic staff should not be determined according to a formula, and that it was important to keep valuable academic staff even if they had not published.

Academic staff interviewed also emphasized that the requirement to publish articles in a well known international publication created unexpected and unwanted results. “Promotion criteria forces people towards forgery; additional names are inserted in articles as a result of a request from higher ups” (P2). Academic staff who are anxious to get a promotion “can insert their own names into the documents although all the research is conducted by research assistants” (A3). Ethical problems can easily stem from research groups composed of an academic staff member anxious to get a promotion and a research assistant who knows that his contract may not be extended” (A3).

Additionally, a research assistant commented that the requirements to publish articles in an international publication create pressure on research assistants when they were in the process of choosing their research topic (A3). Such promotion criteria encourage academic staff to substitute quantity over quality. The need to publish articles made other activities, such as advising and mentoring research assistants a lower priority. When academic promotions were difficult to attain, those seeking promotion were forced to choose activities that reinforced the relationship between international integration and the markets. One assistant professor observed that criteria governing the articles and the requirement to publish articles in an international publication weakened the power of criticism by academic staff (Y1). A full professor noted that making academic promotions dependent on research subjects dictated by foreign countries, could be an obstacle for any study that would analyze and solve national problems” (P6).

Conclusion

Market-oriented global policies during the last two and a half decades have significantly affected the structure of the state and how the public operates. Naturally it has had a deep impact on universities in Turkey.

In this paper, the writer tried to determine how the academic staff perceive and construe the changes in universities and in academic life. Unfortunately, this paper does not include the views of students and administrative staff.

A reduction in the subsidies for social programs resulting from the new economic policies and effects of the new public administrative paradigm on the universities, have encouraged the emergence of the entrepreneurial university which acts according to the forces of the market economy. Now the door has opened for universities to create their own resources based on market conditions, increase tuition fees, and to increase the income of academic staff through instruction and publications consistent with market demands.

The globalization process affects academic life in addition to the development, administration and financing of universities. Some of the academic staff interviewed explained the transformation of universities from an economic globalization perspective. Although some of the participants seem to acknowledge the developments are consistent with the newly dominant market-based policies, they also voiced their concerns stemming from decreasing salaries, problems emerging from contract based employment, loss of autonomy and academic freedoms, and intervention from the government. The culture of criticism created by autonomy and academic freedom is gradually turning into a culture of submission. Internal self-administration and self-regulation mechanism are being replaced by external powers such as the market, state and non-governmental organizations. As universities became more prone to the control of political and economic powers, academic staffs feel more pressure and are forced into silence.

Applications consistent with “academic capitalism” are becoming more and more popular at universities in Turkey. The lack of confidence created by the market or market like activities and increasing competition results in conflict among academic staff rather than cooperation. The need to secure

resources to conduct research encourages individual endeavors rather than long term collective contributions. Academic promotion criteria keep the academic staff from dealing with the real problems of society and humanity by forcing academic staff to conform with the international “knowledge market”. Pressures created by the academic promotion criteria have had a very adverse effect on academic staff and forces them to concentrate on small scale studies that would require less effort.

The most common problems with these changes in academic life are the loss of freedom to investigate professionally and personally relevant topics, less involvement in the decision making process, reduction in salaries, more difficult working conditions, restrictions on opportunities to become more intellectually free and mature, and an increased use of contract based employment practices. That the problems of the lower

ranks of the academic hierarchy, namely assistant professors and research assistants, have been voiced by professors shows that there are still efforts to nourish solidarity at universities. Academic staff that value the academic profession because of its intellectual curiosity and unrestricted research and social responsibility also have the potential power to find answers to resist the transformation.

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