Roles and functions of university senates in Turkish universities

Türkiye'deki üniversite senatolarının rolleri ve işlevleri

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Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı, üniversitelerdeki en üst karar alma organı olan üniversite senatolarının işlevlerinin ve senatoların işlevleri açısından yükseköğretimde karar alma süreçlerinin incelenmesidir. Karma desen kullanılan araştırmanın örneklemini İstanbul İli'nde kurulmuş 9 üniversite oluşturmaktadır. Doküman analizi yoluyla araştırmanın nitel verisini toplamak için üniversite rektörlerinden 2010-2011 akademik yılına ait tüm senato gündem maddelerini göndermeleri istenmiştir. Nicel veriyi toplamak için rektörlere 2 kısımdan oluşan bir anket gönderilmiştir ve rektörlerin, üniversite senatolarının işlevlerine yönelik gözlemlerine dayanarak, açık uçlu 2 soruya yanıt vermeleri istenmiştir. Üniversite senatolarının yasal tanımı, sadece akademik personelden oluşmuş bir karar alma organı olsa da üstlendikleri görevler ve yerine getirdikleri işlevler, diğer bazı Avrupa ülkelerindeki akademik yönetim modellerinden beklenen işlevlere kıyasla çok daha kısıtlıdır. Araştırmanın sonuçlarına göre, üniversite senatoları çoğunlukla akademik roller ve işlevler üstlenmektedir; ancak bu kararların işlevlerle ilgili kararların çoğu finansal sorumluluk ve hesap verebilirlik gerektirmesine rağmen senatoların finansal kararlarla ilgili bir yetkisi yoktur. Öğrenci işleri, kurumsallaşma ve stratejik yönelimle ilgili kararlar, senato toplantılarında oldukça az yer almaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Yükseköğretim yönetimi, üniversite senatoları, akademik senatoların rolleri ve işlevleri.

Abstract

The aim of this study is to understand the decision-making processes in higher education institutions by examining the functions of university senates which is the highest decision making organ in universities. In this study, a mixed design is used. Nine universities located in Istanbul constitute the sample of the study. To collect the qualitative data, document analysis was conducted and the presidents of these universities were asked to send all of the agenda items of the university senate meetings they had held in the 2010-2011 academic year. To collect the quantitative data, the presidents were asked to reply to the open-ended survey that had 2 open-ended questions on the observed functions of the universities. Although university senates are comprised of only academic faculty and described as the academic decision making body by law, the tasks they perform are less limited than it would be expected of the governance models of academic staff observed in some European countries. The results show that university senates mainly assume academic roles and functions; however, many of the decisions they take financial responsibility and accountability, which they do not have. Decisions related with student affairs and institutionalization and strategic direction constitute a very small portion of the discussions held at the university senate meetings.

Keywords: Higher education governance, university senates, roles and functions of academic senates

Introduction

Within the not-for-profit sector and in the associated scholarly literature, there are different definitions of governance, including Gill's (2005): "governance is the establishment

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and safeguarding of the organization's mission and the general oversight of its direction" (cited in Bradsaw & Fredette, 2009: p. 124). The MODERN project (2009) defines governance as a highly contested concept that concerns the exercise of collective control towards common goals. Birnbaum (2004) defines it via mentioning the fact that academic institutions invent to achieve an effective balance between the claims of two different, but equally valid, systems for organizational control and influence. In this definition, one system is the basis for the role of trustees and administration and based on legal authority; the other system justifies the role of the faculty and based on professional authority. Eurydice (2008: p. 12) uses the following useful definition for governance: 'the formal and informal exercise of authority under laws, policies and rules that articulate the rights and responsibilities of various actors, including the rules by which they interact.'

The OECD report (2008) on tertiary education identified the major policy challenges facing higher education (which will be mentioned as HE in this article) in the twenty-first century as: expansion, diversification, more heterogeneous student bodies, new funding arrangements (both privatization of sources and performance-based funding), increased accountability, and more globalized and internationalized networking. Besides these, Şimşek and Adıgüzel (2012) posited a fourth phase of paradigm for university models; a "cooperative, collaborative, and participatory" paradigm that requires an interdisciplinary approach to education that requires much more flexibility in terms of organizational design and process. All of these challenges have brought issues of governance of universities into sharp focus. The last two decades have seen a whole range of reforms in HE systems across Europe (Eurydice, 2000, 2005). Similarly, many countries have recently started to seek for new concepts and new missions for HE, thus new governance models (Baskan, 2001). In several countries, there has been an extensive redistribution of functions and authorities among different actors at different policy levels within HE systems (Aarrevaara, Dobson & Elander, 2009; Dobbins, Knill & Vögtle, 2011; Kauko & Diogo, 2011; Morrow, 1998; NCIHE, 1997; Neave, 1988 cited in de Boer, Huisman & Meister-Scheytt, 2010; Ricci, 2001; Vidovich & Currie, 2011).

In a way, governance models try to shape the borders of authority and responsibility for various stakeholders on the type of decisions they can take. These models include both the internal (institutional) and external (system) governance of higher education institutions (which will be mentioned as HEI in this article). Internal governance refers to the institutional arrangements within universities (e.g., lines of authority, decision-making processes, financing and staffing) whereas external governance refers to the institutional arrangements on the macro- or system-level (e.g., laws and decrees, funding arrangements, evaluations) (MODERN, 2009). In many countries national laws of HE have become 'framework laws', i.e. providing general instructions or guidelines for HEIs that leave significant leeway for HEIs to make their own choices within this framework (MODERN, 2009).

Trakman (2008) investigates competing trends in models of university governance in the United Kingdom, the British Commonwealth and the United States and offers five models of university governance that exist in the HE systems in these countries: university governance by academic staff, corporate governance, trustee governance, stakeholder governance, amalgam models of governance. Considerable attention has been given to the adoption of more market-type mechanisms, especially influenced by for-profit business environment. The recent debates offer a perceived gradual shift from the traditional collegial or shared-governance modes of decision-making to more managerial models, with stronger executive control (Coaldrake, Stedman & Little, 2003).

Similarly, three historically entrenched and still highly relevant European models of HE are postulated as academic self-governance, the state-centered model and the market-oriented model (Dobbins, Knill, & Vogtle, 2011). State-centered model focuses on the direct coordination of all or most aspects of HE, such as admission requirements, curricula, exams, nomination of academic personnel, etc. (Turkey, Russia, Romania, France); academic self-governance model focuses on

collegial control by the professoriate, in particular as regards study and research profiles, thus lack of institutional coordination between university strategies and industrial and/or political goals (Germany, Austria, much of pre and post communist Central Europe); market-oriented model focuses on operating as economic enterprises within and for regional or global markets, while entrepreneurial tactics are regarded as legitimate organizational principles.

Functions of Senates

The various models on governance impose different functions, roles, and responsibilities for academic senates. There are differing views that put different emphasis on the size of it considering a balance between external and internal members as well as a gender balance, on what their main roles should be, and on what kind of relationships exist between the board and the organization's top management (de Boer, Huisman & Meister-Scheytt, 2010, Kelleher, 2006). Cornforth (2003) explicates some of the visible tensions with respect to these issues. The most common tension is the selection criteria for the board members. The traditional structures of governance assert that faculty participation is key to sustaining effective institutions. Some scholars warn that failing to involve faculty in decision-making leads to organizational discord and impairs the fundamental function of higher education (Birnbaum, 1989; Gerber, 2001 cited in Minor, 2003). The second tension exists between conformance and performance roles. A conformance role requires attention to detail, the exercise of care, and skills in monitoring, evaluation and reporting, whereas a performance role involves forward vision, strategic thinking and risk-taking, and requires boards to be more pro-active (Cornforth, 2003).

The agency theory, posed by Fama and Jensen (1983) similarly argue that boards have diverse and sometimes contradicting tasks, such as output control, behavioral control and decision-making control tasks. Each of these tasks has a different focus: the output control is related to an external focus, the behavioral control task to an internal focus, and the decision-making control task to a strategy-related focus. Scott (1984), in his study on structure and function of governance organizations in 19 Texas universities, identified 4 major categories of functions after conducting a document analysis of the official regulations as Institutional Policy (e.g., general policy formulation), Information Processes (e.g., express views), Institutional Resource (e.g., conduct studies), and Generic Function (e.g., represent the faculty).

Governance and Academic Senates in Turkey

In Turkey, Council of Higher Education (CoHE), a fully autonomous corporate public body, composed of 21 members, was established in 1981 to plan, coordinate, govern, and supervise higher education within the provisions set forth in the Constitution (Articles 130 and 131) of the Turkish Republic and the Higher Education Law No. 2547 (YÖK, 2012). Universities are established by law enacted by the Parliament upon the recommendation of the CoHE to the Ministry of Education and the approval of the cabinet. As of March 2012, there are 103 state universities and 66 foundation universities in Turkey, 75 of which were established between the years 2007 and 2012.

According to Özcan (2011), who is the former president of CoHE, Turkish HE system is highly centralized and all HEIs (public and foundation) are governed by the same law with strict rules. This does not give HEIs flexibility to create their institutional landscape and diversity in order to be effective and creative in today's globalized world. In private universities, the Boards of Trustees have developed a stronger role in financial and human resources issues whereas state universities' financial autonomy is limited or even declined: expenditures became subject to ministry of finance approval, own revenues might be withheld by the state (in fact more than 50%) (MODERN, 2009).

There is a large consensus on the need that Turkish HE system should be decentralized and HEIs should have more autonomy. The new administration of CoHE started to rewrite the Higher Education Law and opened the draft to the public to gather ideas from various stakeholders

in November 2012. The current law describes the roles and responsibilities of the Senates in Item 14. According to this law, the senate is comprised of the Rector, vice rectors, deans, one faculty member from each Faculty, and the directors of the graduate programs, institutions, and vocational schools. The law identifies the Senate as the academic decision making body of the university and entitles it to carry out the following tasks:

1. Preparing the rudiments of the teaching, scientific research, and publishing activities,

2. Preparing draft laws and regulations related with the university or delivers an opinion on them,

3. Preparing regulations for the entire university or university's single units that would be enacted only after the approval of the Rector and the publication in the official state journal,

4. Preparing the academic calendar,

5. Offering non-academic, honorary degrees upon the suggestions of the Faculties

6. Examining the objections to decisions taken at the boards of the faculties, institutes, and vocational schools and reaching a verdict,

7. Selecting members to the administrative board of the university (YÖK, 1981).

The draft law suggests the same governance structure adding only a few more functions to the existing roles of the university senates. In terms of the members, the draft law suggests the inclusion of the secretary general to write the minutes but with no right to vote. The representative of the student council is allowed to join, too, except for the sessions that discuss the academic promotions and appointments, again with no right to vote. As different from the current law, the draft law also offers university senates to work on the university's strategic plan and identify criteria to be used for academic promotions. However, functions entitled to the university senates in the draft law are still highly limited.

Aim of the Study

Research on HE and governance structures of universities in the Turkish context are quite limited. Especially the roles and functions of the academic senates is a barely touched area. The aim of this study is to understand the decision-making processes in higher education institutions by examining the functions of the university senates, which is the highest decision making organ in universities. The study aims at answering the following questions:

1. What decision-making functions do the university senates perform?

2. To what extent do the university senates act in line with the functions framed by law?

3. How do the university presidents describe the decision-making functions of the university senates?

4. Are there any differences between the universities in carrying out the functions of the senates according to their type (foundation and state), size, and age?

Method

In this study, mixed method is used. A mixed method research design is a procedure for collecting, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative research methods in a single study to understand a research problem (Cresswell, 2009). Mixed method approach combines the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative research; thus providing more insight about the problem. Researchers may choose to combine both methods in various models. In this study, the embedded design is used. The purpose of the embedded model is to collect both qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously but to have one form of data play a supportive role to the other form of data (Cresswell, 2008). The reason for collecting the second form of data is that it will

augment or support the primary form of data. In this study, the qualitative data that is explained in the Data Collection section is the primary form of data.

Population and Sample

The population of this study is all public and foundation universities in Istanbul. There are 46 universities established in Istanbul; this number makes Istanbul the city with the most number of universities in Turkey. In this study, the whole population was aimed to be included with 6 exclusions. Out of 46 universities, 1 state university was excluded because it is a military-type university and 5 foundation universities were excluded because they were established in the years of 2011 and 2012. As the document analysis would require university senates' agenda items for one whole year, these 5 foundation universities were excluded because they would not be able to present this data. As a result, 40 universities (9 state and 31 foundation type) constitute the population of the study and they were all included into the study. Therefore, the sample of the study is the population. However, the response rate of universities was low and only 9 universities responded during the data collection process, which is explained in detail in the following section.

Data Collection

A letter explaining the purpose of the research was sent to the presidents of these universities. To collect the qualitative data and to investigate research problems 1, 2, and 4, the presidents were asked to send all of the agenda items of the university senate meetings they had held in the 2010-2011 academic year. To collect the quantitative data and investigate research problem 3, the presidents were asked to reply to the open-ended survey that had two parts. The first part asked for descriptive information about the universities (year of establishment, number of Faculties, faculty members, and students) and in the second part, 2 open-ended questions were asked to investigate the third research problem. The questions were:

1. What are the most important contributions of University Senate meetings to the university? List as many as you prefer.

2. If you wanted to make any changes to the functions, content, and authority of the university senate meetings, what would they be? List as many as you prefer.

Letters were sent in February 2012 and the information was required back until mid-April 2012. A total of 5 foundation and 4 state universities responded positively. 3 of these foundation universities and 2 state universities sent back both the qualitative (agenda items) and the quantitative data (open-ended survey). The rest (2 foundation and 2 state universities) sent back only the open-ended surveys.

To be able to increase the response rate of the universities, all of these universities were contacted through direct calls in the months of May and June 2012. Despite several calls, the researcher was not able to reach neither the presidents nor the secretary-generals of 14 foundation and 4 state universities. The secretary-generals and the secretaries of the presidents of 9 foundation universities replied positively to send the required information, but did not do so despite several confirming phone calls. The secretary-generals of 3 foundation universities gave an explanation that their Chairman of the Board of Trustees did not approve of sending the required data. Similarly, the secretary-general of one state university explained that the president of the university did not approve of sending the survey and the senate agenda items. As a result, the findings of this study are based on the data collected from 5 foundation and 4 state universities.

The response rate may appear to be a limitation of this study at first; however, it may be interpreted as the low level of willingness of universities to support a research study related with higher education, as well. As research constitutes one of the major missions of universities, it would fairly be expected that universities and their administrators would be more willing to contribute to scientific research studies. It is disappointing to see that this was not the case for this study.

Data Analysis

The names of the universities are not used in the results; instead each university was given a code. The codes F and S were used respectively for foundation and state universities. The descriptive data gathered from the open-ended survey was presented as a table. The data collected from the open-ended items were collated under categories by conducting content analysis. Finally, the agenda items of the senate meetings were analyzed by conducting content analysis. Further comparative interpretation was made amongst these results and the functions determined by the current HE law.

Results

Results of the open-ended survey

The first part of the survey asked for descriptive information about the universities. These data are shown in Table 1. F5 was established in 2008 but it started enrolling students in 2011. That is the reason of the small size of faculty and students. Amongst state universities in Istanbul, although lately established, S3 has the largest student and faculty member population. F4 is the largest foundation university with its student and faculty member population. As can be seen, there are a variety of universities from the old to the newly established ones and from small size of faculty and student population to the large size.

Table 1

General Information About Universities

	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	S1	S2	S3	S4
Year of establishment	1997	2010	2008	1998	2008	1944	1911	1982	2010
Number of Faculties	7	4	4	9	6	13	10	14	11
Number of Faculty Members	543	67	166	306	192	3199	1504	4337	338
Number of Students	6643	310	349	11300	700	24830	24990	61711	48

The presidents were asked to answer two questions on the second part of the survey. The first one was what they thought that the most important contributions of university senate meetings were to the university. The answers were not as comprehensive as expected; on average, two contributions were provided by the presidents. With the content analysis, three main categories were formed as Academic Affairs, Administrative Affairs and Institutionalization and Strategic Direction. Academic Affairs refers to the functions related with the teaching and learning issues of the university. Administrative Affairs refers to functions related with the organizational structure and internal communication of the university. Institutionalization and Strategic Direction refers to functions related with the creation of organizational culture, external relations, and strategic planning of the university. The results are shown in Table 2.

As can be seen, the university presidents listed more functions related with the Academic Affairs, followed by Administrative Affairs, and lastly the Institutionalization and Strategic Direction. The results show that presidents do not put a heavy weight on the functions related with the last category (Institutionalization and Strategic Direction), which is also supported by the functions defined in the HE law. The HE law defines functions mostly related with the Academic and Administrative Affairs.

Table 2

Contributions of the University Senates Expressed by the University Presidents

	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	S1	S2	S3	S4
Academic Affairs									
Change and renewal in the programs and curricula						x		x	
Developing and approval of new programs that would benefit the university and the country			x			x			
Planning the teaching and learning			x			x			
Contributing to the academic development							x	x	x
Discussing academic issues with high level administrators	x			x					
Taking decisions related with the improvement of the university, quality of education, and scientific work			x						
Administrative Affairs									
Organizational structure of educational issues to enable coordination between the programs				x		x			
Enabling units to get to know each other more closely					x				x
Voicing the needs of the units	x								x
Preventing clashes in the programs				x					x
Taking decisions on regulations and rules		x							
Institutionalization and Strategic Direction									
Contributing to the university's unity					x				
Expressing opinions freely					x				
Awarding people contributing to society with honorary degrees									x
Planning the future of the university				x					
Discussing issues before delivering to the Board of Trustees		x							

  The second question asked to the presidents was what changes they would like to have in the functions of the university senates. Similar categories with the previous item were formed (Table 3). The presidents of F3, F4 and S1 stated that the existing structure of the university senates was satisfactory and that no changes were required. The president of F4 explained this with the following comment: "The senate does planning about academic issues and takes decisions about putting this planning into practice; it seems adequate for the senate to use its authority described in Law 2547." On the other hand, the other presidents expressed their views as having more diversified functions and authority in the categories of Administrative Affairs, followed by Institutionalization and Strategic Direction and lastly in Academic Affairs.

Table 3

Suggested Changes for the Functions of University Senates Expressed by the Presidents

	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	S1	S2	S3	S4
Academic Affairs									
Taking decisions on the educational, scientific publishing, and research activities		x							
Contributing to the system of academic performance and evaluation					x				
Administrative Affairs									
Giving secretary-general the right to speak	x								
Settling out the objections that are raised in the Faculty meetings		x							
Combining the senate and the administrative board as one board		x							
Gathering at the beginning and end of each academic semester.							x		
Giving more authority to the president								x	
Discussing the academic curricula (programs) in the faculty boards									x
Giving more authority to commissions and committees								x	
For transparency, live-streaming the senate meetings									x
Decreasing the number of members									x
Institutionalization and Strategic Direction									
Developing plans like the strategic plan and the quality assurance plans					x				
Guiding the cultural and social activities of the university					x				
Including members from outside the university									x

Results of the Document Analysis

   To investigate the functions of the university senates, the universities were asked to send agenda items for all of the university senate meetings held in 2010-2011 academic year. The results of the content analysis for the agenda items were shown in frequencies in Table 4.The frequencies represent the number of times that a specific item was put into the agendas of the university senate meetings.

   F1, which is the oldest foundation university in the study group, held the most number of university senate meetings. They had meetings almost every week or every 2 weeks. As a newly established university, F5 held only 3 senate meetings in 2010-2011 academic year. The two state universities (S2 and S3), with large faculty and student population, had 7 and 8 meetings respectively in one academic year.

   With the content analysis, 4 categories were formed as Student Affairs, Academic Affairs, Administrative Affairs, and Institutionalization and Strategic Direction. The functions were shown in frequencies of their presence in the agendas. According to this, the majority of the discussions in the senate meetings were related with functions in the Academic Affairs (f=195).

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This is followed by Administrative Affairs (f=148). The frequency of discussions related with Student Affairs and Institutionalization and Strategic Direction were low, 39 and 35 respectively, compared to the first two categories. In each category, the most frequently discussed agenda items were preparing, discussing, changing, and annulling regulations (f=96), adding courses (elective or compulsory) to academic programs (f=60), the graduation issues of certain students (f=25), and partnership protocols with external institutions (f=12). The last one was mentioned in only one university's agenda items (S3).

Table 4

Content Analysis of the Agenda Items of the Senate Meetings

	F1	F4	F5	S2	S3	Total
Number of Senate Meetings in 2010-2011	39	9	3	7	8	
Student Affairs						
The graduation issues of certain students	12	1		6	6	25
An undergraduate student's inquiry about taking a graduate course	3				1	4
Transferring a student's credit	1					1
Registration of students as guest students	1			1	7	9
Total	17	1	0	7	14	39
Academic Affairs						
Forming committees on academic issues and appointment of committee members	3		2	5	4	14
Offering changes in certain academic programs	10		1	4	24	39
Adding courses (elective or compulsory) to programs	10	3		24	23	60
Evaluating the offers of new academic programs	3	10	1	9	21	44
Changing the name of a department and the codes of courses	3	1			5	9
Foreign students' exams	1					1
Evaluation of academic program restructurings in accordance with Bologna process	5	1				6
Identifying other institutions' language test scores that would be accepted and transferred		2		1	2	5
Offering classes and exams at the weekends					2	2
Preparation of academic calendar	3	1	1	2	8	15
Total	38	18	5	45	89	195
Administrative Affairs						
Preparing, discussing, changing, and annulling regulations (e.g., Personnel Leave, Exams, Summer School, Transfer Students, Double Major)	41	12	5	19	19	96
Administrative restructuring of Faculties and their departments		1			4	5
Hearing the reports prepared by the commissions	5	3			2	10
Specifying student enrollment quotas for programs	7	4		6	13	30
Specifying the tuition and fees to be charged from students					7	7
Total	53	20	5	25	45	148
Institutionalization and Strategic Direction						

Tablo 4'ün devamı

Offering an honorary, non-academic degree	2	1			1	4
Finalizing and endorsing the strategic plan	3					3
Diplomas and certificates (e.g. sample design, appendix, 2nd copy)	4			2	1	7
Discussing the new Law 6111	1			1		2
Partnership protocols with external institutions					12	12
Establishing a new Center for research purposes	2			3	2	7
Total	12	1	0	6	16	35

Discussion and Conclusion

The results of the research indicate that as established by the HE law, the university senates mainly assume the academic roles and functions. The document analysis shows that the majority of the decisions taken at the university senate meetings are decisions related with the Academic Affairs. Adding courses (elective or compulsory) to programs, making changes in certain programs, and opening new programs constitute the major part of the academic discussions and decisions. Having said that, these discussions are mostly held in the senate meetings of F1, S2 and S3. As the largest state university in the group, with 14 Faculties and the largest student and faculty member population, it is interesting to see that the majority of these types of academic discussions are held at this university. On the contrary, even though F5 has been recently established and has a small student and faculty member population, it has the lowest frequency of discussions on such academic affairs. It would be a more common expectation to see more discussions on academic programs at a newly established university. However, it could also be interpreted in a different way that a new university would first want to start the programs, see how they would be evaluated, and then would make changes.

Amongst the Administrative Affairs, the preparation of or changing the regulations rank the highest frequency in the university senate meetings. HE law frames this as the most important function of university senates, as well. This time, a foundation university, F1, ranks the first in having the most number of discussions on university regulations with a frequency of 41 out of 96 in total. F1 is the oldest foundation university in the study group. It would be expected that an older university would be more settled and would need less discussions on regulations. As a newly established university, which is starting every procedure from scratch, F5 would be expected to have more discussions on this type of decisions. However, F5 ranked the last in this item with a frequency of 5.

Except for the function of offering honorary degrees, the HE law does not require any functions related with the Institutionalization and Strategic Direction. However, the universities have discussions, though with a small frequency, under this category. F1 discusses the strategic plan of the university, F1, S2 and S3 have discussions on opening new centers and the designs of the diplomas and certificates, and S3 has discussions on collaboration protocols with external discussions. Despite few in number, this shows that university senates do not act in line with the HE law in this respect and as supported by the university presidents' opinions, they would like to have more roles and say in this category of functions.

The document analysis results show that the university senates act in line with the HE law, except for limited number of decisions under the Institutionalization and Strategic Direction category and they assume the academic governance role and function of the university as a whole. However, the presidents offer some changes, as well, in the category Administrative Affairs. As expressed by the presidents of large state universities, S3 and S4, many of the academic affairs could be restructured and some of the decisions under this category could be delegated to the faculty academic boards (e.g., faculty curricula and programs). As this suggestion comes from

2 large state universities, it could be interpreted that it becomes more difficult to manage such tasks as the university becomes large at size. Naturally, they suggest delegating more authority to faculty academic boards. As a governance model, F2 suggested that the university senates and administrative boards could be combined as one board. Under the category of Institutionalization and Strategic Direction, developing strategic plans, including external shareholders and having discussions on cultural and social activities of the university are functions that are suggested by the university presidents to be undertaken by the university senates.

Another interesting result is related with the financial decisions. As described by law, the university senates do not have any functions related with the finances of the university. However, many of the academic discussions the university senates hold are eventually related with the budget of the university. Opening new programs require new recruitment and establishing new laboratories and facilities. It was only S3 that discussed what the tuition and fees should be for certain programs like summer school and evening classes. However, this financial role is expected of academic governance models in most European countries (Dobbins, Knill, & Vögtle, 2011).

The university senates in Turkey are mostly preoccupied with academic and administrative affairs. Decisions related with student affairs and institutionalization and strategic direction constitute a very small portion of the discussions held at the university senate meetings. This result is consistent with the existing HE law. However, the university presidents offer some changes in the functions of the university senates. These suggestions could be helpful in the time of change attempts in the HE law. University senates could be offered more roles in the institutionalization and strategic direction of the universities. In a fast changing world, universities should be more responsible in defining what they are and what they would like to become. As supported by Blackmore & Sachs (2007, cited in Rowlands, 2012), in order to expedite strategic planning and decision-making and respond to a rapidly changing environment, the universal trend is now towards a strengthening of the role and authority of the vice-chancellor (university president) and his or her executive management team supported by a smaller and more financially focused university governing body or council (Shattock, 2006, cited in Rowlands, 2012).

Even though the university senates are described as the academic decision making organs, the tasks they perform are less limited than it would be expected of governance models of academic staff observed in some European countries, as described by Trakman (2008). Turkey has recently started to rethink the governance structure of higher education institutions by offering changes in the existing HE law. The results of this study can contribute to these efforts, but more research is needed in this area.

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