

Isomorphic and Diverse Institutions among Turkish Foundation Universities

Türkiye'deki Vakıf Üniversitelerinde Kurumsal Benzeşme ve Farklılaşma

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Abstract

This study explores isomorphic changes in the private higher education institutions in Turkey. Within and across the institutions, isomorphic changes are common while diverse patterns are subject to having semi-élite characteristics. Within the limits of the national centralized system, these universities have emerged as distinctive organizations and few have grown into leading institutions competing with public universities. They became initiators in running different academic programs, curricula and administrative structures. The largest group of foundation universities bears the demand absorbing role showing isomorphic characteristics. Three critical elements of isomorphic change, coercive, mimetic and normative, were observed in these institutions. With the exception of small number of distinctive organizations showing semi-élite characteristics, foundation universities remain small and akin.

Keywords: Turkish foundation universities, institutional isomorphism, elite, semi-élite, distinctive

Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı, Türkiye'deki vakıf üniversitelerinin birbirine benzeşme sürecini incelemektir. Bu üniversitelerde, kurumlar arası ve kurum içi benzeşme süreci genel bir karakter olmakla birlikte, farklılaşma gösteren kurum örnekleri de vardır ve bu farklılık, kısmen seçkin olma özelliđi ile ilişkilidir. Türkiye'de yalnızca birkaç vakıf üniversitesinin idari yapısı ve eğitim programı kısmen seçkin kategorisinde yer almaktadır. Bu özellikleriyle, yükseköğretim sistemi içinde, ayrıcalıklı kurumlar olarak devlet üniversiteleriyle yarışabilecek kadar ön plana çıkmışlardır. Bunların dışında kalan vakıf üniversitelerinin büyük bir çođunluğu birbirine benzer şekilde talep karşılama görevini üstlenmiştir. Bu kurumlar, benzeşim sürecinin üç karakteristik özelliđi olan; dayatmaya dayalı benzeşim, taklitçi benzeşim ve normatif benzeşim süreçlerini geçirmektedir. Bu yüzden, birkaç kısmen seçkin üniversite dışında, vakıf üniversitelerinin birbirine benzer özellikleriyle yükseköğretim içindeki payları küçüktür.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Türkiye'de vakıf üniversiteleri, kurumsal benzeşme, kurumsal farklılaşma, kurumsal seçkinlik.

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Introduction

The expansion of private higher education has a deserved attention from the scholarly world, academics and researchers as well as governments and policy makers. Governments in different regions and countries have adopted different policies and strategies towards the emergence of private sector in higher education. Yet, emergence and expansion of private institutions as *de facto* of the era has its own pace and momentum, creating its own reality within the context and culture it emerges. The growth of private involvement in higher education is remarkable at the global level. Presently, the world rate of private higher education enrolment is about 30 percent while it was 18 percent in 1985 (OECD, 2005). Similarly, in the region where Turkey located, diverse patterns as well as uniform characteristics in the private higher education are witnessed. Although the mere institutional models for privates have been public in some countries, a great deal of diversification is observed in other places. In Turkey the private sector's involvement in higher education has been as notable as in its counterparts. Over 26 years time since the first surge in 1984 the share of private higher education raised from 1% to 6% (Bologna Türkiye Ulusal Raporu, 2009). Two main milestones marked the development of private higher education in Turkey: the beginning of liberal economy and global trends in 1980s; and later in late 1990s and 2000s the European intensification. These two undoubtedly have roots in the founding element concerned an unequivocal orientation toward the West in the foundation of Turkish Republic.

The aim of this paper is to investigate the isomorphic and distinctive features of foundation universities in Turkey. The inquiry incorporated how and why these two emerged under which conditions. It was also questioned whether isomorphic foundation universities necessarily tend to be non-élite demand absorbing while distinctiveness relates to semi-élite characteristics. Further focus was given on how Turkish foundation universities showed isomorphic and distinctive characteristics; and how these patterns related to being semi-élite and/or non-élite demand absorbing institutions. Variations across types of foundation higher education institutions were examined in terms of background, fields, faculty, curriculum and research. The analyses compromised the principles of isomorphism in the new institutionalism (Meyer and Rowan 1977; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Scott and Meyer, 1983; Meyer and Rowan, 2006) and discussed how isomorphic and diverse patterns may relate to semi-élite and demand absorbing characteristics (Levy, 2004 and 2008a, 2008b).

Turkish Higher Education

With the foundation of the first modern university in 1933¹, the high-status *public* university model of Western Europe was acknowledged. Having taken the basic characteristics from the German and French, later the north-American model, Turkish higher education institutions are mainly state² institutions under state control, and focus on teaching, research and societal responsibility as a general mission and represent national goals in their curricula. Enlargement since the foundation of Turkish Republic in 1923³ is considerable. The number of higher education institutions rose from 1 to 139 in 87 years' time. Student enrolment increased from about 2000 to 2,900 000 within the same period. The number of teaching staff increased from around 300 to 1,000 000 (YÖK Yüksek Öğretim Raporu, 2004; ÖSYM 2008-2009 Yüksek Öğretim İstatistikleri, 2009).

Private sector in higher education: First appearance: 1960s

In the mid 1960s with more liberal education policies, for-profit private sector entered the education sector. As described in Gürüz (2007) "with the development of a vibrant free-market economy and a growing population of higher education failed to meet the rapidly increasing demand..." As a consequence in 1963 the first fee-paying private academies and four-year vocational schools were established. During the nine year period from 1963 to 1972 the number of private vocational higher education institutions climbed to 41 with the enrolment of more than 50,000 students. However, in the course of time, many faced serious financial and quality problems (i.e. lack of

investment in research and academic human resource development). In 1971 they were integrated into public university system.

Second wave: 1980s and expansion of foundation universities

The long history of prestigious, elite, strong public dominance has lasted until the inauguration of the first foundation university in 1982. The main quantitative development in the private education sector came after 1995 with the introduction of privatization in the market economy. After 1999, there was a vast increase in the number of private universities rising from 7 in 1999 to 45 in 2010. Currently there are 139 universities of which 94 are public and 45 private. The share of private sector is 6% in student enrolment and 9.4% in teaching staff (Bologna Türkiye Ulusal Raporu, 2009). In twenty years, from 1990 to 2009 the number of foundation universities grew 45 times.

Foundation universities in Turkey have been focus of critics. Especially state financial support to these universities is not supported by many politicians and academics. Karakütük (2006) in his large analysis of finance of higher education in Turkey, emphasizes that the state financial support and tuition fee system in foundation universities should be under strict control; a fair system should be set up otherwise they tend to cause an unfair situation i.e. profit from tuition fees. Another critical problem regarding foundation universities is their contribution to regional development. In his analysis of the university and regional development in Turkey, Kavak (1997) gives a short history of the university and their contribution to regional development. He found little contribution of the universities to regional development.

New institutionalism and isomorphism

The assumption that organizations become increasingly similar through institutional forces is introduced as isomorphism in the theory of new institutionalism (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Meyer and Rowan, 1977). More generally, the theory focuses on institutional homogeneity in structures, practices, and procedures which emerges as institutional behaviour over time. The emulation occurs within a movement towards, and the maintenance of, institutional norms through coercive, mimetic, and normative processes (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). Coercive isomorphism refers to organizations' homogenous characterization over time with the pressures and/or expectations via culturally accepted social norms, state mandates, financial reliance or contract law. This likening process is crucially externally oriented and ends in conformity to wider institutions. Mimetic process refers to an organization's emulative behaviour if there is uncertainty and ambiguity in organization's goal setting, processes and regulative activities etc. Normative isomorphism is caused by professional pressures such as accreditation agencies and professional certification boards. Among reasons for being isomorphic institutions there is to gain legitimacy and support: "elaboration of rules and requirements to which individual organizations must conform if they are to receive support and legitimacy..." (Scott and Meyer, 1983: 149). Legitimacy, the acceptance of an organization by its external environment is a fundamental consequence of institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Meyer and Rowan 1977; Meyer and Scott, 1983).

As a consequence isomorphism has three outcomes: organizations incorporate elements which are legitimate, not necessarily efficient; they employ ceremonial evaluation criteria; and the dependence on externally fixed and legitimate institutions reduces uncertainty and maintains stability (Meyer and Rowan, 1977).

Isomorphism and private higher education

One can assume that isomorphism is likely to occur in higher education sector⁴ because of the generic characteristics of the field. Reisman's (in Smart, 2007: 121-129) study on U.S. higher education institutions showed that more prestige higher education institutions (e.g. research universities) are copied by lower status institutions (e.g. colleges) so to gain status in a reptile-like

pattern: the body and the tail follow the head. Birnbaum's⁵ (1983) and Aldersley's⁶ (in Morphew, 2002) studies confirm the findings of Reisman's in a way that American higher education institutions, having a diverse structure to some extent, tend to keep emulative characteristics in institutional behaviour. Similarly, in Küçükcan and Gür's (2009) discussion one singly type of university form caused no variety of management styles and study programs. Thus this single type university model cannot meet the need of the society.

Little attention has been given to the discussion on private higher education from the perspective of new institutionalism so far. Having different features of growth in private higher education isomorphic patterns are less likely to occur. Levy (2004) argues that the rapid growth of privatization and global trends necessarily allow for and promote a departure from traditional models while arguing that the theories of new institutionalism, mainly on isomorphism, and literature of private higher education fall apart as the latter requires and exists in organizational diversity. Indeed, the environment of higher education is no longer static and homogeneous so is the institutional patterns. The environment presents competing demands from various and changing backgrounds. Globalization, market demands, variety and change in jobs and competitiveness⁷ entice private higher education institutions for more variation than isomorphic patterns. At the organizational level technical rationality rather than organizational rationality, which is deemed to be public, portrays private higher education. While the new institutionalism theory may well apply to public higher education, coercive isomorphism, for example, hinders diversity and distinctiveness in private higher education. Diversity is an inevitable end in private higher education brought by "technically rational competitive forces" (Levy 2004: 25). Thus, diversity rather than homogeneity provides us with substantial information on the feature of the private higher education institutions globally.

A concise analysis proposes types of isomorphic existence and non-existence. In the analysis of isomorphic trends in private higher education of three countries (China, Hungary and Argentina) fit into *essentially coercive* and *more non-coercive* which is reflected in mimetic and normative isomorphism and non-coercive (Levy 2008a: 19). Similarly, in the Dutch higher education a common practice is to copy the study program changing the name of the program (sometimes the content). This happened when the government encouraged differentiation within and between study programs (Huisman 2000: 75). In a program level search at Dutch universities Huisman found out that there is program emulation at first sight, however empirical findings considerably contradict some aspects of institutional theory e.g. maintenance of the emulated programs (2000: 86). Here another aspect of isomorphism, maintenance of changes is to be considered. About isomorphism, present private higher education literature does not adequately explain the similarities in terms of why, when and how likening exists (Levy 2008a: 17). However, it is obvious that diverse patterns rather than isomorphic characteristics become more widespread over time.

Analysis of isomorphism and diversification in Turkish foundation universities

Within relatively short tradition of higher education⁸ in Turkey, foundation universities have 26 years behind. Coercive isomorphism is widely observed within the state organizations in general. Turkish higher education institutions fall into two separate periods as such 1) 1933-1982 period: between the years when *Darülfünun* was transformed into Istanbul University re-established by Law and the present Higher Education Law was enacted; 2) 1982-present: the period after the Higher Education Law was introduced. The first period was less isomorphic, more distinctive in two main features; by being institutionally autonomous and inter-organizationally diverse. The second period was introduced by a highly centralized system of higher education. The above mentioned diverse patterns were clung into a uniform structure. The diversity was diminished into the "university" as the main higher education institution⁹. Institutional autonomy and diversity were defined by law. "The highly hierarchical and very monist system puts diversified higher education institutions in a straightjacket" writes Ergüder (2008: 155). In its present structure at the system level, isomorphic organizations are widely supported and promoted. Thus the universities

in general tend to be more coercively isomorphic. Similarly, Küçükcan and Gür (2009) state that all public and majority of foundation universities are ran with one single model. Since there is no diversification among institutions, practicing different models and goals is not allowed in the system. "YÖK bureaucracy is granted with extreme rights thus the practitioners of higher education are not given right and opportunity to make decisions on their own issues" (2009: 166). They propose a model with YÖK more coordinating and less authoritarian, and universities more autonomous. Mutluer also emphasizes that the legal formation of YÖK should be revised and the representatives of the foundation universities should have more chairs (2008: 28). In fact, YÖK is the most criticised element of Turkish higher education system. Its legal identity as a higher authority over universities in all aspects imposes limitations to university autonomy. The strong centralized approach (Küçükcan and Gür, 2009) is reflected in all provisions and YÖK as being a constitutional institution holds rights overly used. Korkut however recommends a protected autonomy in scientific activities and effective internal and external controlling system together with large participation (2001: 154). A general understanding comprises autonomy in scientific and academic issues and partial bound in management as the state controls over the political philosophy, social responsibilities and financial activities of the university. On the other hand, the way this model works highly depends on the academic culture, academic tradition and the development level of the country. Turkey's participation in Bologna Process for example is to emulate "what Europeans do" says Gür (2009). Repetition of the declarations and some minor structural changes cannot answer the problems of today's social needs. Primary importance should be to focus internal problems of higher education such as strategies for higher education and society's needs (Gür, 2009: 42).

New institutionalism is reflected in the structure of higher education organizations with two emerging milestones: the 1982 higher education law and joining Bologna Process: the former brought tight state regulations in organizational structures and goals defined by the law. Limiting plurality in the goals and policies the higher education institutions are unified under a centralized system. University became the central and almost only higher education institution sheltering faculties, institutions, vocational schools and graduate schools in itself. The latter brought the second wave of converge implementations in educational and academic matters. With the implementation of ECTS and two-tier system a uniform, single structure is imposed.

Critical features of isomorphic and diverse patterns

It is possible to identify the three mechanisms of institutional isomorphism in Turkish foundation higher education institutions: *Coercive isomorphism*¹⁰ is brought by the state's financial support to foundation universities on the base of a set of criteria, YÖK's governing and supervising role and influence i.e. regulations in setting up programs, yearly evaluations, research records (i.e. SCI publication rankings) and ÖSS rankings. *Mimetic processes* occur through emulation of the activities of the previously existing public universities. Uncertainty, inexperience and ambiguity lead foundation universities to replicate public university models in certain organization activities. Patterns of academic and administrative practices such as program structures, course designs, academic conferences, exchange programs, scholarships, hiring popular names as faculty and information technology experienced by successful universities are examples of mimetic behaviours. *Normative pressures* brought by the norms created by national and international quality assurance systems professional certification boards (ABET), Bologna process and achievements in Erasmus and other mobility programs. The similarities caused by these three processes allow foundation universities to be in close contact with YÖK and to build legitimacy among organizations.

Centralization in the governance and regulations is an important factor to produce isomorphic institutions at the system level. The greater centralization in the goals, academic and administrative processes, curriculum, and structure of study programs the more universities become alike to each other. For the newly established foundation universities (i.e. since 1990) it is a common behaviour to mimic the previously established foundation and public universities. One reason

for this majority of the private initiative has been run by those who have no previous experience in higher education. In setting the academic and administrative processes, study programs, curricula, recruiting staff, promotional activities and strategic plans private universities follow emulative processes as well as coercive processes and resemble to public universities. Centralized forces at the same time bring more interaction with the state (regulative YÖK and state financial support) supporting isomorphism (Scott and Meyer 1983). There are cases when the central authority imposes a standardized content and curriculum of certain study programs. In 2007, for example, YÖK set forth a standard national list of courses including course objectives and content for the faculties of education¹¹. Centrally established professional standards in academic jobs i.e. academic career path, tenure process, and regulations of recruitment are another encouraging factor to the field level normative isomorphism.

Sources of isomorphism in Turkish foundation universities can be summarized as *social coercion* (puts expectations and conditions i.e. non-profit surge, permitted and controlled by the state, programs and structure parallel to public), *state-domination* (permits foundations with coercive restrictions), and *public models and auspices* (provides successful models and cooperation).

Limited number of diverse organizational models in higher education brings further isomorphic processes. Yet, *diversity* is introduced only by foundation universities. Universities owned by big family enterprisers, being semi-élite, show anti-isomorphic¹², partially non-coercive and less “competitive isomorphic behaviour” (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983: 269). Sabancı University founded in 1994 was established in a different framework being an example of diverse institutional model far from the common legal academic framework and management principles imposed by the law. Having announced itself as a “world university” with a “challenging aim” i.e. excellence in education¹³, Sabancı University introduced a new model to the structure of academic degree programs¹⁴. Others share common in general. Koç University, as different from the mainstream, launched colleges instead of faculties as academic units and introduces research-oriented activities i.e. in performance evaluation of the faculty even though the system does not separate such orientation in activities.

Another drive for distinctiveness is that the philanthropy the university belongs to, the leading time-honoured enterprisers in the country’s economy may create trust in society and ease in legal aspects. Thus they tend to be less isomorphic (mimetic) intra-organizationally creating their own technical rationality (Levy, 2004).

Semi-élite¹⁵ surge within an isomorphic environment

Private higher education emerged with two prominent roles in Turkey: 1) as demand absorbing when public universities were no longer able to absorb the increasing demand for higher education and 2) as providers of quality status, job prospects, and political order (Levy, 2006) when again public universities started lagging behind national and international demands of the higher education market and the society. Given the fact that none of the foundation universities are world-class/élite¹⁶ in Turkey, the latter created two or three foundation universities with semi-élite characteristics. Some of the characteristics of a number of foundation universities may indicate “semi-élite” being among the leading higher education institutions in the country. More generally semi-élite universities position themselves in the medium that is performing lower than the leading public universities and superior to the rest of foundation and public universities (Levy, 2006: 8). However none of the foundations have been ranked in world-class universities¹⁷. Besides, as a semi-élite characteristic student status and selectivity applies here: the best performers of the centralized university entrance exam (ÖSS) and elite secondary school graduates choose semi-élite foundation universities.

On the base of the above analysis, Turkish foundation universities fall into two main groups. Universities in *Group 1* comprises isomorphic, non-élite and demand absorbing characteristics while those fall into *Group 2* tend to be distinctive, semi-élite and serious. The criteria used in

this categorization are taken from different sources of private higher education literature. The analysis of new institutionalism and isomorphism in Turkish foundation universities; and semi-élite, non-élite and demand-absorbing characteristics was adopted from Levy's categorization (2004, 2006, 2008a, 2008b).

Isomorphic, non-élite and demand absorbing institutions

This type of universities falls into two subgroups: serious demand-absorbers and dubious demand-absorbers. Levy mentions about two types of non-élite institutions (Levy, 2008: 9). One is serious and usually responsibly job-oriented, which we call serious demand-absorbers in the following section. The other is serious mostly in its pursuit of financial reward, dubiously profiting from the large demand-supply gap which is referred as dubious demand-absorbers consequently. Both subgroups bear isomorphic and non-élite characteristics while variations may occur across institutions. Some serious demand-absorbers may show semi-élite characteristics in some areas as dubious demand-absorbers may take place in serious demand observers. Eventually, the norm for being isomorphic i.e. to emulate the existing organizational patterns and the characteristics of being demand absorbing i.e. non-élite profile by and large overlaps.

Serious demand-absorbers

Six universities in this subgroup can be defined as typically non-élite demand-absorbers on the base of the characteristics they bear. They mainly function as training institutions, draw mid-performing students, and offer a large variety of study programs of undergraduate and graduate mostly answering the job market. They are owned by medium sized foundations. Even though they are known as providers of training they may function superior in some other areas such as research performance of Yeditepe and Başkent Universities as scoring top in the national ranking¹⁸. Main demand absorbers in terms of enrolment rate and program types are again these two universities holding 14.684 and 8.424 students respectively (about 25% of all foundation enrolment). Başkent and Yeditepe universities have the highest number of undergraduate programs. Among this group again only Başkent University received state subsidy -meeting the criteria and performs successfully in research¹⁹ and enrolment. Other semi-élités hardly received state financial support in 2006 (YÖK Vakıf Üniversiteleri Raporu, 2007).

Their seriousness comes from a number of features. For example, they have concern with job market, some even have follow-up studies of graduates, and they have good reputation among employers. Others are curriculum innovation, accreditation, hiring of reputable professionals as part-time teachers, a core of full-time faculty, use of full-time public (or elite foundation) university professors, coherent administration and rules, record-keeping, and infrastructure administratively and academically, faculty show up; students show up, acknowledgement of true standing, student choice, though not as first choice for academically best students; if can't make public elite, prefer these over public mediocre, competition among these institutions.

Dubious demand-absorbers

Fifteen foundation universities fall into this group. They essentially emerged from the huge demand of growing young population in the country. The 18-21 age cohorts put pressure on higher education system every year. This type of universities is owned by small-sized foundations and typically falls into the characteristics of "family style" institutions defined by Altbach (2005: 11):

Family universities have structures that will permit centralized overall control of the institution. Family members often occupy senior administrative and leadership positions, especially those that relate to financial management. Powerful boards of trustees or directors, dominated by family members, that have responsibility for financial and often academic decision making are also common ...

Most common characteristics of these institutions are part time (hired from public universities) and under-qualified instructors, inadequate libraries, inadequate infrastructure, low admission

standards (low score requirements in admission). They concentrate in inexpensive fields and job-oriented programs- local rather than international orientation copying the curriculum and programs of public universities. They are viewed as “proliferation of degree mills and sub-standard programs”. For example majority of them invested around 3200- 4000 US\$²⁰ per student in 2006 while acquiring more than 80% of their income from tuition fees. Tuition fees vary from 4000 US\$ to 10 000 US\$. Six of these universities received state subsidy in 2006. Yaşar, Ufuk, Çağ and Okan are the smallest universities enrolling less than 1500 students in 2006. They perform hardly in research. Okan, İstanbul Bilim and Beykent have no international publication published in SCI+SSCI+AHCI in 2006 (YÖK Vakıf Üniversiteleri Raporu, 2007).

Distinctive, semi-élite, serious institutions

A number of characteristics have been pointed out by Levy on semi-élite features of private higher education institution (Levy, 2008b): student status and selectivity, entrepreneurship, professional management and reformers of trendy and respectable initiatives. The number of universities which can be grouped as semi-élite is only three namely Bilkent, Sabancı and Koç. Here strong entrepreneurship is an essential attribute: they have strong financial back up from large business associations and founded claiming to be superior to leading public universities. Western and/or American orientation, prestige, competitiveness, and responsiveness are other characteristics. They do the best to get the best of everything i.e. professors, students, academic programs (Levy, 2006). They target the top cream students offering scholarships and incentives. They invest in campus facilities, educational technology and programs with highly qualified academic staff and impressive student achievements. They offer superior salary packages to full time academic staff. Sabancı and Koç have the highest total income and highest expense per student as well as the highest tuition fee. They spent between 13.000 and 24.000 US\$²¹ per student in 2006. The academic model Sabancı University established was a reformist action. The basic academic program is based on college-like structure, a two-year foundation courses proceeding two-year specialization courses. This became the most reformative surge in higher education in Turkey where program specialization is the basic structure throughout four-year bachelors' study. Koç concentrates in research i.e. in performance evaluation of the teaching staff. Bilkent is the renowned international corporate with its alliances in the US. As for student status and selectivity, the real competition for student enrolment takes place between the top two or three public and semi-élite foundation universities (also intra-private competition), which is a competition for the 1000 top-scoring students given the fact that main bulk of the students wants to go to public universities charging no fees²². Bilkent University for example was ranked at the top three most preferred universities by the exam takers in the recent ÖSS exam²³.

Conclusions

Developments emerging in Turkish university reform over the past 25 years have created a thriving and competitive higher education system parallel to the country's economic, social and political development. The expansion of foundation universities is primarily owed to the stagnation observed in public universities in renewing their academic and organizational policies to answer the emerging global demands and market pressures. In addition, public universities have long been under the pressure of legislative restrictions and funding constraints partially due to dependence to a centrally governed mechanism. Most important of all was public institutions had no longer answered growing demand coming from growing young population. As a result the system encouraged foundation universities within a legal framework and under certain restrictions. Then, a great expansion was observed in not only the number but also the scope of institutions and programs. This rapid process created isomorphic structures at the system level.

Institutional and academic patterns for foundation universities are imposed by legislation which brought coercive isomorphic patterns. This change process is supported by the centralized

system and the concerns for legitimacy. Mimetic isomorphic features are implemented by the universities which have relatively weaker institutional effectiveness and limited vision and mission. Normative procedures are again the result of centralized regulations and control. Annual evaluations done by YÖK, implementations of Bologna process, other independent quality systems as well as international association memberships are among the normative procedures. Overall this process results in a certain type of organization of foundation universities: isomorphic, non-élite, demand absorbing, serious and/or dubious institutions.

At the same time it is also the private surge which challenged diverse academic programs and institutional structures. The differentiation from the public model is found in the universities owned by relatively more powerful, bigger and élite business partners. In this case the degree of deviation from the norms is no longer limited to the evaluations of government regulators and the general public regulatory. The concept of diversification within the generic isomorphic structure of Turkish higher education refers to two main features: 1) Diversification introduced by distinctiveness: élite ownership lead distinctive and semi-élite university models: the vendor has the power to break the rule (legislation) of the imposed (centralized) structure. 2) Diversification introduced with diverse models: with a focus on for example, applied research, citizenship to the university, and college opinion which are quite unfamiliar to the present academic culture of the Turkish university. The latter can be explained by several interests of entrepreneurship in higher education. First of all, the young and dynamic population of the country is an opportunity window. Population projections indicate a growing demand on higher education in the next 30 years. Second, profit is veiled but reasonable driving force. Last but not the least prestige, social responsibility and patriotism are the values culturally very strong and well can be powerful reasons for investment in higher education. For non-élite activity, besides veiled for-profit incentive, patriotism interwoven with cultural values of nationalism may indicate a drive. Prestige is close to elitism which emerges semi-élite type of universities. Big enterprisers mature as much as necessary to invest in higher education. Here profit may be hardly or secondary reason.

Present institutional structure of foundation universities in Turkey makes us think that stronger background of business i.e. entrepreneurship may be the indicator of diverse institutional structures while traditional and limited surge tends to emerge isomorphic patterns. Pluralism is introduced by the private surge with its limitation to semi-élite types of institutions whereas averagely performing majority keep homogeneity in the types of private higher education institutions. The monist approach in the system limits diverse patterns of institutions in higher education. Diversity is a way to create different models and better performing institutions. The performance of higher education institutions in the international arena heavily depends on how they act independently. Research shows that best performing institutions are the ones which are able to create their own models and strategies of institutionalism.

With this short history of academic tradition, Turkish higher education will continue isomorphic structures in institutionalism; mainly normative isomorphism will lead the new institutions of higher education in the future. However, foundation universities can easily adopt autonomy and non-coercive models due to their entrepreneur approach in nature. Entrepreneurship is an important but not the only factor for institutional diversification as it is observed in the examples of Koç and Sabancı.

The analysis presented in this study suggests three basic approaches for further study. First, the theoretical background on isomorphic processes in higher education offers a new dimension of analysis. Second the methodology used in the analysis sets for a methodological approach specific for higher education institutions. The method and criteria set for the analysis can be adapted for the analysis of public universities too. The approach used in the categorization offers a standard technique which can also be used for the internal institutional processes such as program, management and instructional processes. Third, the terminology and concepts of isomorphism used in this analysis are anticipated to be used largely in Turkish higher education literature in further research.

With the existence of foundation universities the state monopoly on higher education is no longer “unquestionable”. A debate over the “state imposed institutional model” has found its place in the field of higher education. However this type of debate should be supported with research and system analysis studies.

Another conclusion can be inferred from the analysis is the scarce number of research on Turkish higher education system especially on foundation universities. The subject is the medium of political discussions and policy makers. This causes little interest from the researchers to study university systems. Especially foundation universities are considered as in the periphery of the system. Information about the universities in general are usually found in national reports such as YÖK Reports and Bologna National Reports, and in some other cases in the reports of funded projects by international and national organizations such as Eurodyce, EUA, TÜSİAD and MEB. Independent researchers should be encouraged to work on Turkish higher education system in order to create scholarly discussion and scientific approach rather than political ones. Empirical studies and system analysis would enrich the university not only for its development but also research in Turkey.

Decision makers and practitioners of higher education needs to rely their decisions on results of research work and deeper institutional analyses as well as statistics and raw figures gathered by the state institutions. Thus, with this study it is shown that the institutions of higher education in a cultural environment have their own processes of development and imply particular thinking about the institutionalism in higher education.

As a result, the rise of foundation universities not only creates education opportunity for the hundreds of thousands of students who cannot be placed in public universities, but allows many of these universities to create their own academic identities and bring new competition and dynamism to higher education. Theory based analyses and research on foundation universities are needed for the development of the debates and discussions beyond politics. As the role and function of these universities increases new models of management and diversified programs will be introduced. The expansion of foundation universities will ensure their role and function in the higher education system.

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(Endnotes)

- 1 *Darulfunun (the House of Sciences: the first modern higher education institution in the Ottoman State) was closed down and a European university model compatible with the objectives of the new Turkish Republic was adopted.*
- 2 *State is the widely used term rather than public for the labeling this group of universities in Turkish literature*
- 3 *At the end of the war of independence, having abolished the Ottoman State, in 1923 the official foundation of the Turkish Republic was declared in the Turkish National Assembly.*
- 4 *See DiMaggio and Powell (1983:267) for the discussion on the term "field" used in institutional theory and Levy (2004:5) for "sector" viewed more relevant to use in higher education literature.*
- 5 *Compared the level of institutional diversity and findings showed not so much diversity was observed in the types of institutions in the period of growth (1960-1980).*
- 6 *The institutional category change occurred in an "upward" manner: the doctorate level education is the most attracted to be emulated.*
- 7 *Also exists in institutional isomorphism: Scott and Meyer (1983) viewed organisational adaptation as a result of competitive pressures.*
- 8 *Regarding national dimension of isomorphism, countries lacking in long academic traditions tend to adopt particular world model of universities due to global pressures (Ramirez in Meyer and Rowan, 2006: 123).*
- 9 *There are also two institutes of higher technology and one vocational school of higher education different from the "university" institutions.*
- 10 *Also common in the countries where private surge is emerging such as Hungary, China and Argentina (Levy, 2004)*
- 11 *www.yok.gov.tr/egitim/ogretmen/yeni_programlar_ve_icerik.htm*
- 12 *Three types of anti-isomorphic tendencies in tenure process are stated by William T. Mallon (in Richard P. Chait, 2005: 259-260) 1) financial distraction: we can't afford to be like them; 2) mission socialization: we don't want to be like them and 3) Faculty zones of indifference: we don't care if we are like them. In this paper it applies to institutional behavior, especially #2 for the mentioned institutions.*
- 13 *In the webpage of Sabancı University (www.sabanciuniv.edu) diverse model is defined as follows: "The aim was to create a definition of the "ideal university" free of prejudices, without a set menu of ready made standards or educational practices which do not reflect the demands of the modern world. Nor were the conference participants eager to construct imitative models of the research, development, and administrative systems of other successful world universities".*
- 14 *Specialization after a two year basic academic knowledge and skills development program as opposed to widely accepted and centrally defined four year specialized program structure.*
- 15 *The term élité is eschewed in general as it is perceived something controversial to the principles of "equity in education" and "education is a public good".*
- 16 *The criterion of being ranked in world universities rankings of Shanghai Jiao Tong University, THES-QS and World Universities Webometrics is used here. Bilkent University (475) as the only private from Turkey is in the first one thousand in Webometrics ranking in 2007.*
- 17 *Any private university outside the U.S. is among the world-ranked elite or "world class" universities (Levy, 2008).*
- 18 *number of international scientific publications in SCI+SSCI+AHCI, 2006*
- 19 *The success, may be interpreted, because of the medical studies indicate higher performance on international research and publication*
- 20 *15 July 2008 Turkish Central Bank currency rate*
- 21 *15 July 2008 Turkish Central Bank currency rate*
- 22 *There is a small amount of fee introduced as "contribution fee" can be paid as loan.*
- 23 *Among the two public universities METU and Boğaziçi. www.osym.gov.tr*