

# Investigation of academicians' opinions on Bologna process in associate degree child development programs

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## ABSTRACT

Bologna process is a framework that commenced in 1999, aiming at making the higher education systems of countries more attractive. While many studies have been carried out on undergraduate and graduate levels, the studies on associate degree are scarce. This study is aimed at investigating the current state of associate degree child development programs within the context of Bologna process according to the opinions of academicians who are internal stakeholders. The research method is descriptive scanning. The academicians working at programs make up the environment of the research. The opinions of the academicians are obtained by the researcher by using "Scale of Child Development Programs in Bologna Process" formed by taking the suggestions of the specialists on the field. Approximately half of the academicians that participated in the research stated that they had not attended to any official informative catch-up work. It appears that the academicians that had not attended to any informing procedure had more negative or undecided opinions about Bologna process than the academicians that attended to the procedure. According to working life, gender and the type of vocational college, a significant difference existed especially in quality dimension. It is concluded that the weakest fields of Associate degree Child Development Programs related to Bologna Process are teaching staff and student mobility, quality and social dimensions.

**Keywords:** Bologna process, associate degree, child development, vocational college, frame work of Turkish higher education qualifications.

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## INTRODUCTION

This section includes the status of the research problem, significance of the study, purpose of the study, limitations and assumptions of the study, and the definitions.

### Status of the research problem

In the world today, the political boundaries are apparent only on the maps, and the economic, social and cultural elements are spreading beyond the boundaries. In this process, the spread of information is becoming rapid daily and is gaining importance (Ataklı, 2017: 266). Spreading rapidly and being accessible for everyone in the society, the information changes not only the social and individual awareness but also the role and service

demands (Ata, 2009: 30).

The Bologna Process, which is run by 48 member countries today, was launched in 1999 with six main objectives. Turkey joined the Bologna Process in 2001 with the Prague Declaration. As a result of the studies carried out over the years, the Bologna Process mainly focuses on the dimensions of creating common degree systems, European Credit Systems, international mobility, lifelong learning, quality assurance, social dimension, and employability (Durman et al., 2011). The Bologna Process also regularly operates the quality assurance system in a student-centered way based on the learning outcomes. The Trends V Report also shows that the higher education institutions are moving away from the teacher-centered education towards the student-

centered education (Elmas, 2012: 132).

In the harmonization with European Higher Education Area, the first step of the countries joining the process is to harmonize their national curriculum with the international one (Özkan and Kahraman, 2015: 48). The researches showed that, in the universities harmonized with the Bologna Process, the course credits and hours considerably decreased and the student-centered activities such as practice, presentation, and project came into prominence (Uçkun and Demir, 2013).

A study on the problems that arose during the implementation of the Bologna Process in the higher education institutions showed that the faculty members did not have sufficient information regarding the process. In this regard, the faculty members should be informed of the dimensions introduced with the Bologna Process, such as the qualification framework, international mobility, ECTS (European Credit Transfer System), quality assurance system, and employability conditions (Altinkaynak et al., 2016: 19).

The Bologna Process, which requires a comprehensive study, is being supported in Turkey by the development of various projects. Seven successful projects played an active role in the harmonization efforts that gained momentum in 2005. The last of these seven projects is the Turquas Project which was launched in 2017 to promote the implementation of the Bologna Process. The priority target of this project was the internalization of the European higher education reforms that Turkey strived to structure.

### **Significance and rationale of the study**

Examining the child development programs in the Associate Degree level in Turkey, this study aims to reach the course information packages regarding the Bologna Process practices on the websites of the universities and the views of the faculty members on the harmonization works for the Bologna Process. Since 1999, the member states have been bi-yearly organizing conferences at the level of ministries responsible for the higher education in order to assess the situation regarding the progress achieved (Kurtoğlu, 2008). In a study conducted by Yalı (2017), it was stated that the studies on the Bologna Process in Turkey was limited in number and topic. Considering the quantitative magnitude of the higher education, it is thought that the number of studies is not sufficient to assess the reforms and quality.

The purpose of this study is to examine the current situation of the child development programs at the level of associate degree within the context of the Bologna Process according to the views of the academicians who are characterized as the internal stakeholders. In addition to examining their general views on the Bologna Process and its practices, the following sub-purposes was

identified. According to the views of the academicians, it was categorized as follows:

- Quality dimension in the Child Development Programs;
- Social dimension in the Child Development Programs;
- International mobility dimension in the Child Development Programs;
- Technical practices (ECTS, course information packages, diploma supplement) dimension in the Child Development Programs;
- General view dimension regarding the Child Development Programs.

### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the Bologna Process in the Child Development Programs at the level of associate degree according to the views of the academicians in terms of various variables.

### **Limitations**

This study is limited to the data obtained from the data collection tool.

### **Assumptions**

The study is limited to the views of the academicians working in the Child Development Programs at the level of associate degree at the universities affiliated with the Turkish Council of Higher Education in the 2018-2019 academic year.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY SUBJECT**

### **The concept of university**

According to the Turkish Language Association, the university, which dates back to the 11th century, "is an institution that has a scientific autonomy and public entity; carries out education, training, scientific research and publication at the higher education level; and consists of institutions and units such as the faculties, institutes, colleges, etc." The university has its origin in the Academy of Plato (400 BC), Lyceum of Aristotle (387 BC), and the Alexandria Museum of Rome (330-200 BC) (Gürüz, 2001: 1). When it is analyzed in terms of etymology; it has an intellectual meaning as a place that is wondered and where the one and only universe is explored (uni + vers + cite = one and only + right + place) (Çiçek, 2016).

During their period of first emergence, the universities

undertook different missions; while some universities only focused on providing education for the students, the others focused more on research (Baysal and Ada, 2015). The university has changed and played a major role over the course of the change and transformation experienced by mankind. Over the course of the history of universities, the “education” aspect of the universities first outweighed the other aspects and, later on, their mission changed and they turned into the “research” universities required by the industrial society and the universities “directly contributing to the economic/social/technological development” in today’s conditions (Sakinç and Bursalıoğlu, 2012: 93).

In the 21st century, the universities are the autonomous institutions where academic freedom is at the forefront, the needs of the society are fulfilled, and the mass relationships are directed. In his book titled “A University for the 21st Century”, Duderstadt (2000) listed the features of the 21st Century University as follows:

- It has a student-oriented approach rather than a faculty member-oriented approach, focuses on the lifelong learning, and can offer various opportunities and activities for the adults;
- It is able to create the environments appropriate for the lifestyles and needs of the people;
- It is able to address not only the regional market but also the global market;
- It has a flexible structure and ability to adapt to the rapidly changing world;
- It is able to provide the learning opportunity by using technology without any limitation on place and time;
- The tuition fees can be covered by the beneficiaries of the service and the private sector.

### Higher education in Turkey

The concept of university originated from the Western culture; however, the *madrasahs*, which were prevalent in the Islamic countries during the periods that were characterized as the dark ages for Europe, were the center of the scientific knowledge. Although the *madrasahs* were different from the higher education institutions in today’s sense, they are considered as the pioneers of the higher education institutions in Turkey. *Al-Azhar*, established in the 10th century, and *Nizamiye Madrasahs*, established in the 11th century, are among the most important higher education institutions (Küçükcan & Gür, 2009). The main objective of Nizamiye Madrasahs was to educate the religious functionary, to make the skilled children beneficial to the society by means of education, and to educate the civil servants for the administrative positions in the state (Erdem, 2012, p. 113).

Even though its name and purpose changed from the 14<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the traditions of higher education

were reconstructed and continued in the Ottoman Empire. Table 1 shows the change from “*madrasah*” to “*darülfünun* (today’s İstanbul University)”.

With the establishment of the Republic, the investment in education increased and the primary steps focused on education. In general, the reforms regarding the higher education were as follows in a chronological order:

- İstanbul University Reform with the Law No. 2252 dated 1933;
- University Reform with the Law No. 4936 dated 1946;
- Regulation No. 1750 dated 1973;
- Higher Education Law No. 2547 dated 1981 (Baysal and Ada, 2015).

The 1933 reform has been considered a milestone for the higher education, because the initiatives until this reform just consisted of the attempts to transform the tradition inherited from the Ottomans and were not effective. The universities in the modern sense started to be established after the 1933 Reform (Akçetepe, 2013: 63).

In 1933, with the Law No. 2252, İstanbul *Darülfünun* was abolished and İstanbul University was established. With a 14-article law; it was stipulated that the appointments to the academic and administrative positions were to be restructured; the teaching staff was to be composed of the professors in ordinary, professors, and the associate professors; the faculty members were to be supervised by the dean or rectors; the full-time working principle was to be implemented; scientific research and publication were to be carried out; the people were to be educated in accordance with the requirements of their age; and the assistants were to be the resource for the faculty members (Baysal and Ada, 2015).

The Universities Law No. 1750 was enacted in 1973 and the Student Selection and Placement Center (ÖSYM) was established to organize the university entrance exams as a response to the increasing student demand. Various higher education institutions have been opened over the years to meet the people’s needs.

In 1981, the Higher Education Law was enacted and the faculties, academies, institutes, and colleges were united under the same roof (Küçükcan and Gür, 2009). With the Law No. 2547, the term “higher education” was used for the first time.

### Vocational and technical education

The vocational and technical education exist today with different approaches and practices in the education history of Turkey. The *Ahi* organization (guild system) created by the Seljuks laid the foundations of the today’s apprenticeship education (Bolat, 2017). In *Divan-ü Lügat-it Türk*, one of the oldest dictionaries known to be prepared by Kaşgarlı Mahmut, it is stated that the word

**Table 1.** Types and objectives of the higher education institutions in the Ottoman period.

Period	Type of the institution	Objectives
14th-20th century	<i>Madrasah</i>	Providing education and training Educating the qualified workforce
15th-20th century	<i>Enderun</i> (palace school)	Providing education and training Educating the managers and statesmen
18th-20th century	Polytechnic schools such as <i>Mühendishane</i> (engineer school)	Providing education Educating the military and technical personnel
19th-20th century	Vocational Colleges such as <i>Mülkiye</i> (faculty of political sciences)	Educating the high-level public officials
19th-20th century	<i>Darülmualimin</i> colleges (teacher training colleges)	Educating the teachers
19th-20th century	<i>Darülfünun</i> (today's İstanbul University)	Providing education Educating the qualified workforce Developing and spreading the science

Source: Akçetepe, 2013: 60.

"*ahi*" originates from the root "*aki*" which means valiant or generous. *Ahi*, a word with Arabic origin, means "my brother". The summary of vocational training for the Turkish society is the *ahi* system. It is the oldest and the most well-structured professional association known (Ekinci, 2011). The main purpose in *ahi* education was to support the society in terms of economy and art by means of educating the people as the qualified masters and technical personnel having values such as morals, virtue, and good manners (Demirpolat and Akca, 2004: 369).

The foundation of the secondary education institutions providing the vocational and technical education was laid by Mithat Pasha in 1863, with the *Islahhanes* (vocational schools) opened in Nis (Akdemir et al., 2015). In 1911, the first vocational and technical training school of Turkey was opened under the name of *KondüktörMekteb-i Alisi* (Conductor School of Science) in İstanbul. In the later years, its name and period of study were changed and its curriculum was then based on the curriculum of "Ecol De Conducteur" in Paris (Semiz and Kus, 2004). In 1927, with the Law No. 1052, the Ministry of National Education was given the responsibility of educating teachers, creating the curriculum of the art schools, and meeting the need for the tools and equipment. In 1931, Turkey was divided into nine education regions and the art schools were opened for each region (Şahin and Fındık, 2008: 67).

The formal Higher Education was started in the 1974-1975 academic year. In 1981, with the Higher Education Law No. 2547, the higher education was gathered under a single roof. The Vocational Schools were also affiliated

to the Council of Higher Education. With the Law enacted in 1984, it was allowed to establish the foundation universities. İhsanDoğramacıBilkent University, Turkey's first foundation university, has been the first private university providing the associate degree education (Ekşioğlu and Kurt, 2017: 296). In 1986, in order to establish a connection between the vocational and technical education schools and the labor market, the Vocational Education Law No. 3308 was enacted and the vocational education was restructured (Fındıkoğlu and İlhan, 2015: 101).

In 2001, the Law No. 4702, which allows the students graduating from the vocational high schools to transfer to the vocational schools without any examination, was published in the official gazette and became enforced (Nartgün and Yüksel, 2009: 191).

"Strengthening Vocational Education and Training (SVET) Project" was launched in Turkey in order to develop the vocational and technical education. With the introduction of this project, in secondary education, the vocational education shifted to a modular system (Karaca and Çakır, 2014: 214).

Within the scope of the Human Resources Development through Vocational Education and Training Project (HRD-VET), in order to ensure the harmony between the curriculum of the secondary education and the higher education, the modular curriculum based on the labor market analyses of 64 professions in 52 sections at the 5th level and the information forms of 3600 modules were prepared with the participation of the faculty members of Vocational Schools, MoNE subject matter experts, academic experts, and representatives from the sectors

and non-governmental organizations. Within the framework of pilot application of the project, the programs were implemented in 2009.

In 2012, in the Vocational Education, Industry and High Technology 2023 Strategic Report, a proposal was made to abolish the open admission (transfer without examination) in transition from the secondary education to the higher education (vocational colleges) in the vocational and technical education schools and to select the students based on the criteria such as the professional suitability, professional competency, and the subject matter exams. After these developments, the open admission (transfer without examination) practice was abolished in 2016 by the Council of Higher Education. And in placing the graduates of the high schools implementing a curriculum specific to a profession to an associate degree program in the same field, it was stipulated that their high school grade point averages were to be added to the scores they got in the centralized exam.

In the legislation of Council of Higher Education, the vocational schools are defined as “a higher education institution aiming to educate the qualified work power for certain professions, carrying out a two-year education for two or three semesters, and giving associate degree.”

The objective of the vocational schools is to educate the solution-oriented semi-qualified workers who are well-equipped with the qualification of a profession, able to adapt to the group work easily, and eager to learn the new developments in their field (Ulus et al., 2015: 177).

## Bologna process

Bologna University, known as the oldest university in the world, is the place where the reform and the transformation, which was brought about by the adaptation to the globalizing world, started. The Bologna process officially started on June 19th, 1999, with a declaration (EUR-lex, 2018).

The Bologna process is a reform process aimed at creating an European Higher Education Area by 2010. It is a process created by 48 member countries in cooperation with many international organizations. It is a structure that is not based on a compulsory interstate agreement and has no binding power on the member states, and even its members are free to adapt to the process (Çelik, 2012: 101).

The Bologna process is a major step forward for the European project in becoming the most competitive and developed information society in the world, in which the countries participate with free will and the common standards are identified for the management of the higher education institutions (Fejes, 2006).

The Bologna process became official in 1999 when the Bologna Declaration was signed by the ministers responsible for the higher education in 29 European

countries.

Six of the main objectives of the Bologna Process were announced in this declaration. These objectives are as follows:

1. Creating a system of easily readable and comparable higher education diploma and/or degrees (developing the implementation of the Diploma Supplement in line with this objective);
2. Adopting a two-stage system in the higher education, that is, undergraduate and graduate;
3. Implementing the European Credit Transfer System;
4. Ensuring and promoting the mobility of the students and faculty members;
5. Creating and promoting the network of quality assurance systems in higher education;
6. Promoting the European dimensions in higher education. (Table 2)

Turkey, Croatia, and Northern Cyprus joined the process in 2001. Three main objectives were added to the Bologna Process With the Prague Declaration (Ehea, 2001):

1. Promoting lifelong learning;
2. Ensuring active participation of the students and higher education institutions in the process;
3. Making the European Higher Education Area attractive.

By 2003, the number of the members of the Bologna Process increased and the post-2010 planning started as the next step. In the Berlin Summit, held with the participation of ministers from 33 European countries responsible for the higher education; the 10th objective, that is, “Creation of a synergy between the European Research Area and the European Higher Education Area and the Doctoral Studies” was added to the Bologna Process.

The Bologna process is carried out within the framework of governance principles with the active participation of internal and external stakeholders (Kurtoğlu, 2008: 175). The Bologna Process is carried out in three dimensions (international, national, and institutional) with the coordination of the Follow-Up Group, the ministries of the countries responsible for the higher education, and the relevant stakeholders, universities, and the representatives of the faculty members and students.

The Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG), established in the Prague Meeting in 2001, was composed of the representatives of the countries involved in the Bologna Process. In addition, the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the European University Association, the National Unions of Students in Europe, the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education, and the UNESCO Center for Higher Education joined the BFUG

**Table 2.** Member states of the Bologna process in order of membership date.

Period	Regions
On 19 June 1999 at the Bologna Conference	Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and Ireland
On 19 May 2001 at the Prague Ministerial Conference	Croatia, Cyprus, Liechtenstein, and Turkey
On 19 September 2001 at the Berlin Ministerial Conference	Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Vatican Republic, Russian Federation, Serbia-Montenegro, and Macedonia
On 18-19 May 2005 at the Bergen Ministerial Conference	Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine
After Montenegro declared its independence in 2006, as per the decision taken in the London Ministerial Conference held in 2007, Montenegro joined the process and the number of the member states increased to 46.	
On 11-12 March 2010 at the Budapest-Vienna Ministerial Meeting	Kazakhstan
On 14-15 May 2015 at the Yerevan Ministerial Meeting	Belarus

as the advisory members. The member countries preside over the Bologna Follow-Up Group in rotating order. Turkey and Finland co-chaired the BFUG between 1 July and 31 December 2019.

The main areas of activity of the Bologna process have been specified as follows:

1. Recognition of Diploma Supplement and Degrees;
2. European Credit Transfer System (ECTS);
3. Quality assurance;
4. Student participation and social dimension.

### Recognition of diploma supplement and degrees

The Diploma Supplement (DS) is a transparency tool developed by the Council of Europe, the European Commission, and UNESCO-CEPES between 1996 and 1998. As per the article no. IX.3 of "the Convention on the recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region", it is mandatory to use the Diploma Supplement developed by the Council of Europe, the European Commission, and UNESCO-CEPES by the higher education institutions of the Parties. The main purpose of the Diploma Supplement is to enhance the international transparency and help the relevant institutions and organizations in reliably recognizing the diplomas and degrees received abroad.

Since the 2005-2006 academic year, in addition to their diplomas, the graduates of the higher education institutions are given the diploma supplement approved by the Council of Higher Education upon request. The first copy of this diploma supplement is free of charge and is prepared in one of the widely spoken EU languages (English, French or German) chosen by the

student.

### European credit transfer system (ECTS)

The credit is actually the numerical value given to a learning program. This value can be calculated in various ways. In UK, the credit is based on the defined learning outcomes. While the credit is based on contact hours in North America, it is based on the student workload hours in Europe.

European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) is a student-centered system; ECTS credit is a unit referring to the workload that the student have to fulfill in order to successfully complete a course (ECTS Users' Guide, 2009). With the ECTS developed by the European Union, the creation of a European Higher Education Area will be facilitated, the international mobility will increase, and the clear criteria for employability will emerge.

The learning outcomes that ensure the degree qualifications are the preconditions for specifying the ECTS credit, then the workload on the student is specified in order to achieve the learning outcomes. The workload is defined as all the learning activities of the students inside or outside the class. 1 ECTS credit corresponds to 25-30 hours of workload once the workload is determined, this means that, ECTS credit is also determined. The total ECTS credits for one semester is 30. Considering that the associate degree programs consist of four semesters, 120 ECTS credits is required.

The current structure of the Turkish Higher Education System is compatible with the 3-level system (bachelor, master, and doctorate) envisaged in the Bologna Process. Furthermore, in the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education in Turkey (NQF-HETR),

the short cycle is given as an associate degree, which is envisaged within both European Qualifications Frameworks and characterized as intermediate qualifications. Therefore, it is considered appropriate to define the NQF-HETR comprising the following 4 (four) levels: the associate, bachelor, master, and doctorate levels.

### Quality assurance

With the quality assurance, the following objectives can be achieved: quality improvement, preservation of the national academic standards, recognition of programs and institutions, accountability, independent knowledge generation and provision. Furthermore, the employability is also a criterion in assessing the quality process of the higher education institutions (Öztunç et al., 2015: 265).

The term “quality”, which is referred to as one of the main factors in establishing the European Higher Education System, has led the ministers to develop a common criteria. The Berlin Communiqué, first put emphasis on increasing the national quality assurance and accountability.

In Turkey, the quality assurance system is balanced with the internal and external assessment criteria. In 2005, based on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education reported by ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education), the Council of Higher Education put the Regulation on Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement in the Higher Education Institutions into effect. YÖDEK (Commission for Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement in Higher Education), established as per this regulation, has guided the processes related to quality improvement (Işık and Beykoz, 2018: 15).

### Student participation and social dimension

Until the 2001 Prague meeting, there has been no work under the title of “Social Dimension” in the Bologna Process. With the participation of the European Students’ Union (ESU), the Bologna Process stepped up the works in the field of social dimension (Kurtoğlu, 2008). Creating equal opportunities in terms of access, participation and successful completion of studies at all levels of higher education are the main objectives of the social dimension. In reaching these objectives; the socio-economic differences, gender-based distinctions, returns of regional conditions, and physical barriers are of interest to the social dimension (Erdogan, 2010).

One of the main ideas of the Social Dimension is the participation of students in the higher education governance and the acceptance of the students as “equal stakeholders” in the decision-making processes.

Eliminating the barriers to student participation will ensure that the students will go beyond simply seeing the university as an institution providing employment, but will share the university problems, and carry out joint studies in finding solutions. The experience of the university youth in adopting the values such as the democratic election, rule of law, and transparency will contribute to the formation of a democratic society.

### Child development associate degree programs in Turkey

The emergence of the need for the Child Development associate degree programs dates back to the 1960s. Due to the increasing demand for the preschool education schools, primary school teachers were educated by having a short-term course. Then, the teacher education was left to the Departments of Child Development Education which was opened under the Girls' Vocational High Schools (Oktay, 1991).

Starting from the 1974-1975 academic year, the Department of Child Development and Education, in the Girls' Technical Teacher College, became the only institution that educated the teachers in the field of Preschool Education. In order to meet the need for the preschool teachers, a two-year associate degree program in preschool teaching was opened in 1979 (Sağlam, 2011).

The associate degree programs in child development are becoming more widespread in order to educate the well-equipped and qualified child development specialists who will ensure the development of the children with in the age group of 0-18, who are normal, with special needs, have a disease, in need of protection, and at risk.

Based on the 2018 data on higher education, there are 183 universities in Turkey. Of these universities, 112 are state universities, 65 are foundation universities, and 6 are foundation vocational college (Table 3).

In Turkey, the associate degree programs in child development is generally planned as both the formal education and evening education. 58 Vocational Colleges offer a double-shift schooling program. While there are 29 vocational colleges offering the associate degree program in child development only as a formal education, 4 vocational colleges offer only the evening education. In Turkey, Eskişehir Anadolu University, İstanbul University, and Erzurum Atatürk University offer the associate degree program in child development at their open faculties. On the other hand, the universities offering the distance education program are as follows; Amasya University, Bitlis Eren University, Manisa Celal Bayar University, Adana Çukurova University, İstanbul University, Private Cappadocia Vocational College, Kırıkkale University, and Ondokuz Mayıs University.

As seen in Table 4, there are about 351 academicians in the child development programs in Turkey. When the

**Table 3.** Number of universities having an associate degree program in child development.

Universities with associate degrees	Number
State University	69
Foundation University	28
Foundation Vocational College	6

**Table 4.** Number of faculty members in the child development associate degree programs.

Faculty member	State university	Foundation university
Professor/Assistant Professor	8	15
Instructor	210	118

course information packets of the child development programs in Turkey is examined, it is seen that there are 158 different courses in the programs. While 44 of these courses are offered only as elective courses, 114 are offered in different universities as compulsory or elective courses.

With the Bologna process, the number of elective courses has increased and more flexible and practicable programs have been offered in the universities. According to the course content determined based on the Bologna Process, the elective courses should account for at least 25% of the total ECTS credits of all courses. Considering the requirement of 120 ECTS credits for the graduation from the associate degree programs, a student must be enrolled to the elective courses having at least 30 ECTS credits. However, it was found that, in some cases, some of the compulsory courses were turned into the elective courses and were added to the program (Hacettepe University, Bologna Process Studies, 2017).

### Studies on the bologna process and its applications

In her study on the adaptation of Turkish Higher Education to the Bologna Process, Durdu (2011) discussed the fields of application of the Bologna Process. She explained the importance of the social dimension in achieving the objectives of the Bologna Process and asserted that the process was not well known.

Çelik (2012) developed a critical point of view on the works carried out within the scope of the Bologna Process and asserted that the process made the systems over-bureaucratized and uniform, and increased the volume of the superior-subordinate relationships. He also asserted that there were deficiencies as to how the Bologna process worked concretely and what functions were expected from the process. In their studies examining the adoption of Bologna reforms in terms of the organizational culture; Shaw et al. (2013) examined

the views of academic staff in a public university according to various variables. Semi-structured interviews were conducted by ensuring the representation of different academic levels on a sample comprising an equal number of females and males.

In their studies examining the effects of the Bologna Process on the European nursing education, Collins and Hewer (2014) revealed the functioning of the process by searching electronic databases. In searching these documents, the following keywords were used: "European nursing education," "nursing role," "nursing curriculum," "nursing education," "ECTS," "quality assurance," and "Bologna Process." In general, it was concluded that there were very few experimental studies. In his study conveying his observations about the practices of the Bologna Process at the Department of Social Services, Hacettepe University, Topçu (2015) characterized the process as structural violence due to having a tight calendar for implementing the process. The Bologna Process was perceived as a bureaucratic burden. Furthermore, it was emphasized that it was not appropriate to limit the number of elective courses.

In his study titled "The Evaluation of Learning Outcomes in Translator Training in Terms of the Bologna Process", Kumlu (2016) assessed to what extent the learning outcomes could be achievable and applicable in line with the learning objectives of the Bologna Process. In her study titled "Evaluation of the Student Success in Chemistry Education in Vocational Colleges in the Pre- and Post-Bologna Period"; Öner (2017) asserted that the students did not have knowledge about the process. However, she emphasized that the students started to benefit from the Erasmus program with the Bologna Process applications.

In their empirical study titled "The study of Bologna evaluation: Analysis of Attainments of Qualifications in Educational Administration Graduate Programme", Çinkır and Yıldız (2018) administered a questionnaire developed by the researchers, on postgraduate students. It was found that the students gained the dimension "learning competence", which was in the information



packages, at the lowest level.

## METHODOLOGY

In this section, information is given about the model, population, and sample of the research; data collection tools and data analysis.

### Research method/pattern/model

In this study, the descriptive survey model, one of the types of qualitative research, was used. The surveys in which the participants' views on a past or present case or situation are determined in large samples are known as the survey researches (Büyüköztürk et al., 2012). The descriptive research, which is defined as the description of what the existing situations and experiences are, is frequently used in solving the current problems (Sönmez and Alacapınar, 2015).

### Population and Sample

The population of the study consisted of 351 faculty members who worked in the associate degree child development programs (123 programs in total) at the state universities, foundation universities, and foundation vocational colleges affiliated to the Turkish Council of Higher Education (CoHE). In this study, efforts were made to reach the entire population. However, based on the data on the websites of the universities, e-mails of 281 faculty members working in the associate degree child development programs were available via internet. Therefore, the available population was determined as 281. However, only 128 faculty members filled out the questionnaire at the end of the study. Therefore, as the sample, 128 faculty members participated in the study.

### Data collection tools

The categorical data were collected by the "Personal Information Form" which was prepared by taking expert opinion. In the study, the "Child Development Programs in the Bologna Process" scale developed by the researcher was used as the other data source. In this study, the Bologna Process applications were examined in terms of the views of the faculty members working in the Child Development Programs and discussed within the context of the applications specific to the child development programs.

"The Child Development Programs in the Bologna Process" scale, which was used to collect the research data, included the perceptions of faculty members on this subject, their views on the practices, and their application behaviors. For this purpose, the related studies in the

literature were examined and the questionnaire developed by Görkem (2013) in her doctoral thesis titled "Evaluation of the Finance Departments of Turkish Universities in terms of the Bologna Process." She verified the validity and reliability of the questionnaire and administered it in her thesis. For this purpose, the necessary permissions were obtained from the researcher, the questions were examined and revised for the child development program, and new questions were added. Furthermore, it was used as basis for the NQF-HETR short cycle qualifications survey questions.

### Process/application

In developing the "Child Development Programs in the Bologna Process", the following steps were followed: After the literature review, the related literature and scales were examined. Then, taking into account the NQF-HETR short cycle qualifications, an item pool consisting of 90 items was prepared and thus, the overall framework was determined. The opinions of the related advisors (faculty members) and 3 subject matter experts about the items in the item pool were taken. Then, these items were examined by a Turkish language expert in terms of the compliance with the language rules. Furthermore, a group of faculty members from different fields read the items and expressed their opinions and in line with the opinions taken, the number of the items in the scale was reduced to 71. The 71-item scale was reorganized in a way to include 8 sub-dimensions, that is, Quality Dimensions, Social Dimension, Mobility Dimension, General Bologna Process Applications Dimension, Child Development Technical Applications Dimension, Child Development Social Dimension, Child Development Mobility Dimension, and Child Development General Dimension. Finally, as a result of the factor analysis conducted on the data by the advisor and an expert, the items 33, 37, 38, 48, 49, 59, and 63 were removed and after the reliability analysis, the number of items was reduced to 64.

The personal information form of the study included the following items; title of the faculty members, vocational colleges they work for, professional experience, gender, field of expertise, term of office, and whether they participated in the information meetings on the Bologna Process. In order to determine the views of the faculty members on the Bologna Process in the Associate Degree Child Development Programs, a 5-point Likert-type numerical rating scale was used. The rationale for using the Likert-type scale was to examine the judgments of the faculty members about the Bologna Process in Child Development Programs. The choices in the 64-item scale were as follows: Strongly agree (5), Agree (4), No opinion (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly disagree (1). The scale consisted of 8 dimensions. The dimensions and the number of the items they have in parenthesis are as follows: Quality Dimensions (6 items), Social Dimension

(5 items), Mobility Dimension (3 items), General View Dimension (9 items), Child Development Technical Applications Dimension (10 items), Child Development Social Dimension (7 items), Child Development Mobility Dimension (3 items), and Child Development General Dimension (16 items).

### Application process

The associate degree Child Development Programs, which were active in the Higher Education Program Atlas (YÖK-ATLAS), were listed and the contact information of the faculty members were taken from the websites of the universities. The "Associate Degree Child Development Programs in the Bologna Process" and the "Personal Information Form" were administered through the online questionnaires via internet (Google Documents). The questionnaires were resent several times to the e-mail addresses of the faculty members in order to receive a quick reply, and in case no reply was received, they were reminded of the questionnaire by phone call. The questionnaire was sent to 281 people severally in three months; however, 128 people responded. 123 of these questionnaires were found to be appropriate for the data analysis.

### Data analysis

In this study, five different statistical analyzes were used to analyze the data. SPSS 20.0 package program was used for these analyzes. The analyzes used in this study were as follows:

1. Arithmetic mean
2. Standard deviation
3. Kruskal-Wallis test
4. Post Hoc Dunnett's T3 test
5. t test

The questionnaires administered to the academicians were prepared as the Likert-type 5-point evaluation and the range limits were calculated as follows:

The calculation of the range limits of the questionnaires:

Number of choice = 5

Number of range = 5 - 1 = 4

Range coefficient = 4 : 5 = 0.80

The range limits and their meanings for the comparisons of the means are given in the Table 5.

### Validity and reliability of the study

There are three types of validity, that is; content,

**Table 5.** Arithmetic mean ranges and their meanings.

Range limit	Meaning
1.00 – 1.80	Strongly disagree
1.81 – 2.60	Disagree
2.61 – 3.40	Undecided
3.41 – 4.20	Agree
4.21 – 5.00	Strongly agree

application (experimental), and construct validity. The content validity involves taking the expert opinion and using it to determine whether the items in the measurement instrument are able to measure the desired features (Karasar, 2012). In order to ensure the validity while creating the test items of the scale used, the content validity was carried out. The expert opinions were taken while determining each item of the scale and, by doing so, it was aimed to ensure the validity of the measurement instrument.

The reliability of each test item and the reliability of the test were calculated using Cronbach's Alpha and the reliability level of the test was found to be 0.91. In determining the significance level of statistical analyses, 0.05 was accepted as the significance level, which is mostly valid for social science studies.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this study, based on the findings obtained from all sub-problems discussed, efforts were made find out the views of the academicians working in the child development associate degree programs, on the Bologna Process. The study was based on examining the views of the academicians on the Bologna process applications in terms of various variables.

In this study, according to the views of the academicians working in the Associate Degree Child Development Programs on the Bologna Process, there was no difference between the female and male academicians in terms of all dimensions except the "quality dimension." The female academicians gave more positive answers than the male academicians. While there were differences between the types of the vocational colleges in terms of the views on the "child development quality dimension", there was no statistically significant difference in terms of other dimensions. The academicians working in "Other Vocational Colleges" gave more positive answers than the academicians working in the "Social Sciences Vocational Colleges" in terms of the "child development quality dimension." In Turkey, there are 46 Health Services Vocational Colleges, "5 Social Sciences Vocational Colleges", "1 Technical Sciences Vocational College", and "68 Other Vocational Colleges", which offer the Child Development associate degree program. Here, "Other Vocational

Colleges" refer to the vocational colleges, which offer programs in many fields and are defined by the proper nouns. Most of the academicians participating in the study were working in the colleges falling under the category of "Other Vocational Colleges", which can be considered as the reason for receiving more positive answers.

When the answers given by the academicians were examined in terms of their term of office, it was found that there were significant differences in the "child development quality" and "child development technical" dimensions. It was observed that the academicians whose term of employment was 0-5 years gave more positive answers than the academicians whose term of employment was 10-15 years or 15-20 years. In the study titled "The opinions of faculty members on application for bologna process in Turkish higher education", Dalgıç (2008) concluded that the young academicians gave more positive answers to questions regarding the applications in the Bologna process. This result is similar to the views of the academicians working in Associate Degree Child Development Programs.

Their answers to the "quality", "mobility" and "general view" dimensions of the questionnaire differed depending on whether the academicians participated in the activities in which the formal information was given about the Bologna process. Especially in these dimensions; it was seen that the academicians who stated that they participated in the activities in which the formal information was given about the Bologna process gave more positive answers than those that did not participate in these activities. Süngü (2009) also arrived at similar results. In their study titled "The Views of the Faculty Members on the Bologna Process", Boydak and Karabatak (2015) stated that the faculty members did not have enough information about the process.

It was found that there were no significant differences in the views of the academicians in terms of their titles and field of expertise. This revealed that the differentiation in the titles and field of expertise did not affect the views of academicians for the Bologna Process applications. In her study, Dalgıç (2008) concluded that there were differences in terms of the titles of the academicians. She concluded that while the academicians with the title "professor" had negative views on the Bologna Process applications, the academicians with the title "research assistant" expressed more positive views. This point contradicted the Views of the Academicians on the Bologna Process in the Associate Degree Programs. However, it can be stated that since there was only one faculty member with the the title "professor" and most of the faculty members had the title "instructor", these differences occurred.

While the academicians participating in the study mostly stated that the Bologna Process applications increased the transparency in the universities; in other items of the quality dimension, the choice "undecided"

was prominent. Yöntem (2015), Çelik (2012), and Süngü (2009) arrived at similar results in their studies.

For the items about social dimension, the academicians mostly chose "undecided." It can be concluded that social dimension, which has been relegated to the background in the Bologna Process, was not sufficient in the foreground according to the academicians working in Associate Degree Child Development Programs. The academicians gave more positive answers about the social dimension in the Child Development programs. While the statement "The opinions of a sufficient number of graduates were taken in creating the program qualifications" was mostly answered as "agree", the statement "The opinions of a sufficient number of faculty members were taken in creating the program qualifications" was mostly answered as "disagree." It can be concluded that, in the Bologna Process planning for the Child Development Programs, the opinion of the internal stakeholders was sought more than the external stakeholders.

In the mobility dimension, it was found that the academicians expressed positive views as the international cooperation between the universities increased with the Bologna Process applications. However, the statements "The mobility of the faculty members increased" and "The mobility of the students increased" were answered as "undecided." The academicians have expressed negative views about the mobility dimension in terms of Child Development. They stated that the program-based international university cooperation and mobility agreements were not sufficient. They also stated that the mobility of the faculty members and students was not sufficient in the programs.

The academicians mostly gave the answer "agree" for the general view dimension about the Bologna Process. The academicians expressed a positive view for the following subjects: The number of elective courses accounts for 25% of the total ECTS credits in the curriculum, the diploma supplement provides a standardization for the qualifications of the graduates, the harmony between the higher education will increase with the common credit transfer system. In a general view of the dimension for the Bologna Process in the child development programs, the academicians mostly gave the answer "undecided" for the statement "The Bologna Process increases the bureaucratic procedures in our program." The academicians were asked whether they had enough information about National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education in Turkey and they answered as "undecided."

In the Associate Degree Child Development Technical Dimension, the academicians mostly expressed agreement. Especially, they stated that the web pages containing the course information packages were up-to-date. They supported that the higher education qualifications were taken into consideration when determining the field qualifications and gave the answer

“agree” for this statement. However, they stated that they were “undecided” in terms of whether they had sufficient information about NQF-HETR. This paradoxical situation revealed that there was a lack of information about the Higher Education Qualifications in Turkey. The academicians were asked about the statement “the graduates have a foreign language knowledge at least at A2 level” from NQF-HETR, and they gave the answer “disagree” for this statement. Finally, they supported the statement “the approaches based on the learning outcomes are taken into consideration in preparing the course curriculum” and gave the answer “agree” for this statement.

It was found that the weakest fields of Associate Degree Child Development Programs regarding the Bologna Process applications were the mobility of faculty members and students dimension, quality dimension, and social dimension.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations are as follows:

1. Department/Program-based studies can be expanded in different fields;
2. More detailed results can be obtained through using the interview method in taking the views of the academicians;
3. The faculty members can be informed more about the mobility and can be supported to prepare projects on this subject;
4. In most of the studies carried out in the dimension of mobility, it has been revealed that the knowledge of foreign language is an important step in mobility. The faculty members and the students can be encouraged to learn a foreign language;
5. Considering the fact that the views of the academicians participating in the activities in which the information was given about the Bologna process were more positive; in order to internalize the process, the activities should be planned to give information about the process;
6. In order for them to apply the process in an informed way, the faculty members can be informed about the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education in Turkey (NQF-HETR);
7. The concept of quality can be expressed using concrete qualifications so that the undecided views can be clearer.

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