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ISOMORPHIC AND DIVERSE FEATURES OF TURKISH PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

This study examines isomorphic and diversifying changes in Turkish private higher education institutions. Within and across the institutions isomorphic changes are common while diverse patterns appear among institutions with semi-elite characteristics. Within the limits of the national centralized system the semi-elite universities emerged as distinctive organizations and a few have grown into leading institutions competing with the top performing public universities. They have become the innovators in running different academic programs, curricula and administrative structures. But the largest group of private (“foundation”) universities bears the demand absorbing role showing isomorphic characteristics. Three critical elements of isomorphic change--coercive, mimetic and normative--are observed in these institutions. With the exception of the small number of distinctive organizations showing semi-elite characteristics, Turkey’s private (“foundation”) universities remain small and similar to one another.

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I. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

The aim of this paper is to investigate the isomorphic and distinctive features of foundation (this term is used for private universities by Law) universities in Turkey. The inquiry incorporates how and why these characteristics have emerged under which conditions. Further focus is given to how isomorphic and distinctive characteristics relate to types of private universities, notably non-elite demand absorbing institutions and semi-elite institutions. Variations across types of foundation higher education institutions are examined in terms of background, fields of study, faculty, curriculum and research. The analysis utilizes the principles of isomorphism in the new institutionalism (Meyer & Rowan 1977; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott & Meyer, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 2006) and works with and develops the small literature exploring the application of isomorphic versus diverse patterns in private higher education (Levy, 2004 and 2008a, 2008b). The analysis also works with and develops the broader literature on types of private institutions (Levy 2008b). The growth of private involvement in higher education is remarkable at the global level.

Presently the world rate of private higher education enrolment is 31.3 percent while it was 18 percent in 1985 (Levy, 2010). Yet, emergence and expansion of private institutions has its own pace and momentum and creates its own reality within the context and culture it emerges. Thus, in the region where Turkey is located, diverse patterns as well as uniform characteristics in private higher education are seen. In Turkey, over 26 years since the first surge in 1984 the share of private higher education has grown from 1 to 6 percent (Bologna National Report, 2009). Two milestones have marked the development of private higher education in Turkey: the beginning of liberal economy and global trends in the 1980s and in the late 1990s and 2000s the European intensification. Both these milestones involve an unequivocal orientation toward the West in the Turkish Republic. This orientation affects the private higher education growth.

II. DEVELOPMENT OF TURKISH PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION

With the foundation of the first modern university in 1933, the high-status *public* university model of Western Europe was acknowledged. Having taken the basic characteristics from German and French university models (later looking more to the U.S. model), Turkish higher education institutions are mainly state 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 1923 is considerable. The number of higher education institutions¹ rose from 1 to 163 (Table 1) in 87 years. Student enrolment increased from about 2000 to 3 million within the same period. The number of teaching staff increased from around 300 to 100 thousand (YÖK Yüksek Öğretim Raporu, 2004; Higher Education System in Turkey, YÖK 2010).

In the mid 1960s with more economically liberal education policies, the for-profit private sector entered higher education. 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 institutions rose to 50. However, in the course of time, many institutions faced serious financial as well as quality problems, including lack of investment in research and academic human resource development. In 1971 they were integrated into the public university system.

The history of prestigious, elite, strong public dominance then remained unchallenged 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 Turkey had a vast increase in the number of foundation universities, from 7 in 1999 to 51 in 2010 (Table 1). Currently there are 146 universities of which 95 are public and 51 foundation (additionally there are 9 post secondary vocational schools run by foundations). The private share of enrolment is 6 percent² (Vakıf Üniversiteleri Raporu, 2007).

Table 1. Number of higher education institutions (2010)

Public Universities	95
Foundation Universities	51
Foundation Post Secondary Vocational Schools	9
High Technology Institutes	2
Other Higher Education Institutions	6
Total	163

Source: *The Higher Education System in Turkey*, YÖK, 2010

Private higher education emerged with two prominent roles in Turkey: 1) as demand absorbing when public universities were no longer able to accommodate 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. These two major roles would translate into two basic foundation types, in the terms of the global literature on private higher education: demand-absorbing and semi-elite (Levy, 2008). However, the private sector's involvement in higher education was not welcomed at social level. This was similar to the criticisms echo those heard in other countries. Public subsidies to foundation universities were one target. However, financial support was part of the state policy to encourage the private sector to invest in higher education. The vast demand on higher education i.e. 600 places for 2 million candidates each year was to be shared. Yet, Karakütük (2006) in his analysis of finance of higher education in Turkey emphasized that the state financial support and tuition fee system in foundation universities should be under strict control to have a fair system. It was stressed that the state subsidies to foundation universities should have been invested to improve the public universities which were already in economic difficulty. There has always been skepticism that unfairness emerges as subsidized foundation universities are getting profit from tuition fees even though they are assumed to be non-profit by law. A second common criticism was around the principle of "education is a public

good for all and should be free of charge"; private involvement misbalanced the equal opportunities principle. It was the private sector which would start off social injustice unfavorable to public university students who were from middle and lower income groups. There was also big debate over pro-private government policies in renting state lands to private universities. A number of studies on foundation universities supported the criticism. Yaşar (2002) found that foundation universities did not answer the needs of quality education. They neither eased the demand for higher education from the large young population nor boosted employability and competitiveness (Yaşar, 2002). Private universities recruit 6.2 % of their teaching staff from abroad while 40.9 % are from public universities and 22.2 % are those who have a retirement from public universities; the rest were lured.

Because of high tuition fees they attracted only upper-middle income groups. They promoted injustice in the society where gross domestic product per capita was 2, 500 USD and the tuition fees were between 5, 000 and 14, 000 USD. In the beginning (late 1980s and early 1990s), they were expected to keep bright and well-off students in the country who were seeking better educational opportunities abroad. However, with exceptions, the majority of the foundation universities failed to offer the quality education and innovative programs and training they had promised (Dev, 1988). They remained ineffective in student social services, counseling and guidance. The education and services were poor, the tuition fees were high. Student satisfaction was low (Yaşar, 2002).

Such studies reflect a prominent view after the inauguration of foundation universities when there was strong opposition and when it was too early to see the developments and outputs i.e. impact of graduates in employment. Presently the majority of foundation universities are criticized on their financial dependence on tuition fees; limited performance in teaching and research functions; luring experienced academics from public without contributing to the education of academics; and little investment in infrastructure and tangible facilities. After over 20 years today some of the distinctive foundation universities perform higher than the majority of public universities while a majority of demand-absorbing foundations are stuck in their initial low reputation and perform much lower than the majority of public universities. With Turkey's total private higher education share at only 6 percent it is obvious that the sector does not perform the large access role in does in many other countries.

As for religious education, foundation universities have no significant role. Within the secular Turkish State not only higher education but also the whole education system is secular and managed by the state control as stated in the Constitution. Religious groups, foundations, organizations, NGOs etc. are not allowed to function in any form. Religious affairs are run by the Theological Affairs Institution, which is a state department function under the Prime Ministry. Mosques, the most prominent Islamic religious institutions, are run by the state i.e. opened, financed, managed (i.e. Imams are public servants appointed by the Theological Affairs Institution) and controlled, and they are not allowed to function in education i.e. opening schools; the one exception is that mosques can open summer Quran reading courses for children. Study of Islam and Islam related subjects in higher education is offered in the Faculties of Theology

(İlahiyat Fakültesi) that can be opened by public or foundation universities with the same regulations as other faculty branches. Presently there are 23 faculties of theology, all in the public universities. No foundation university has faculty of theology. Cinoğlu's (2006) identification of Islamic private schools can be true for foundation universities as well: "Some private schools have an Islamic character. Religious Islamic schools are not allowed and so religious schools do not say that they have an Islamic character. Customers know which schools are Islamic or secular".

III. ISOMORPHISM AND THE DIVERSITY QUESTION: PERTINENT LITERATURE

The assumption that organizations become increasingly similar through institutional forces is freshly elaborated in the theory of new institutionalism (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Meyer and Rowan, 1977). Generally, the theory focuses on institutional homogeneity in structures, practices, and procedures which emerges as institutional behavior over time. By incorporating institutional rules within their own structures, organizations become more homogeneous, more similar in structure. 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 pressures and/or expectations via state mandates, financial reliance or contract law. Mimetic process refers to an organization's emulative behavior 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.

According to Levy (in Altbach 2008:17), however, private higher education literature does not adequately explain and spell out the similarities in terms of why, when and how this isomorphism exists. But more striking in private higher education is that diverse patterns appear more widespread than isomorphic patterns. The new institutionalism may well apply better to public higher education, notably in regard to coercive isomorphism (Levy, 1999). In discussing isomorphism, DiMaggio and Powell (1983:266) seek to explain homogeneity whereas Levy (2004:6) finds that for private higher education diversity is especially prevalent and thus requires explanation. This diversity often results from or accompanies "technically rational competitive forces" (Levy, 2004; 25).

IV. ISOMORPHISM IN TURKEY'S DEMAND-ABSORBING PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS

Most of Turkey's foundation higher education institutions are demand-absorbing and display many isomorphic tendencies. Before distinguishing between "serious" and "dubious" demand-absorbing (Appendix 1), we can outline some basic isomorphic tendencies of the demand-absorbing sector in general.

It is possible to identify in Turkish private higher education the three principal mechanisms of institutional isomorphism from the new institutionalist literature: *Coercive isomorphism* is

underscored by the state's control and provisions determined by Law. Non-profit foundations are allowed--by a parliamentary decision--to open higher education institutions entitled "foundation" institution. All types of organization, except financial and administrative, of these institutions are determined by Law and subject to the endorsement of the Higher Education Council (YÖK= Yüksek Öğretim Kurulu³). According to the Higher Education Law (Law no 2547), foundation universities are subject to the same procedures as public universities in the organization of academic activities i.e. status, recruitment and qualifications of academic personnel; formation of education programs, organization of departments, faculties and academic units; duration of study programs, academic years, diploma and degree structure and students' rights. Foundation universities gain legitimacy as long as they keep these coercive isomorphic rules. Additionally, YÖK's governing and supervising role in licensing i.e. appraisal of programs, yearly control of academic and administrative activities; research records (i.e. Science Citation Index publication rankings) and rankings in the university entrance exams (Öğrenci Seçme Sınavı=ÖSS⁴) are also forceful drives of this type of isomorphism. State financial support to foundation universities is based on competitive criteria; therefore not many foundation universities are eligible to receive it⁵. As a result the universities in general tend to be more coercively isomorphic.

Mimetic processes occur through emulation of the activities of public universities. Neediness, inexperience, low status and ambiguity in administrative and academic processes 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 well-known names as faculty, and information technology in place at successful universities are examples of mimetic behavior. Two prominent public universities that have long been copied are the Middle East Technical University and Boğaziçi University, which were founded on North American HE system with program structure, academic organization and language of instruction as English. Their time-honored success leads many public and foundation universities to mimic their model. In mimetic processes English as a medium of instruction is viewed as a feature for better employment opportunities and internationality; and copied intensely. Foundation institutions also copy one another for the same reasons, and many times for competitive reasons. For example, a study program of a foundation university which attracts large number of students is copied in the same fashion by the other foundation universities. In the last decade, offering MBA (Master in Business and Administration) program is of this type mimesis. Offering popular programs with the same title, with the same courses, and promising the same job opportunities is a common practice. After a certain time it becomes harder to identify which university is copied, and who copies what. And not all the copying is of top places; in many cases the copies are merely reflections of weak originals⁶.

Normative pressures are connected to beliefs and practices created by national and international quality assurance systems and professional certification boards. Additionally, isomorphism can be observed in the practice of luring professors from public universities. The instructing and

method of teaching by the same professors should not be expected to change much in foundation universities.

The relation between isomorphic and demand absorbing characteristics is common. As found in Poland and Thailand, private universities likely respond to coercive standardized regulations in similar ways, making themselves alike according to common patterns and standards in order to pass the requirements. Non-eliteness is a common characteristic, along with academic weakness. Thus the Polish private sector is stigmatized by a strong perception based on the visibility of non-elite colleges (Demurat, 2010). In Thailand, similarly, institutional isomorphism is observed in all PHE types but especially in demand-absorbing ones (Praphamontripong, 2010).

Consistent with the dominating isomorphism, private universities tend to develop non-elite and demand- absorbing features. As is often the case globally, so in Turkey, this type of institution is by far the most common in the private sector. But we can divide into two subgroups: serious demand-absorbers and dubious demand-absorbers (Levy, 2008: 9). The first is usually responsibly job-oriented. The other is serious mostly in its pursuit of financial reward, dubiously profiting from the large demand-supply gap. Both subgroups bear isomorphic and non-elite characteristics while variations occur across institutions. Some serious demand-absorbers may show semi-elite characteristics in some areas, just as some dubious demand-absorbers may show some characteristics of serious demand-absorbers. These general observations prove applicable in analyzing the Turkish case.

V. WHERE TURKEY'S SERIOUS DEMAND-ABSORBERS FIT

As found in Thailand, so in Turkey serious demand-absorbers are far fewer than dubious demand-absorbers but account for a higher share of enrolment than of these institutions. Only five⁷ Turkish universities can be defined as serious demand-absorbers. They mainly function as training institutions, draw mid-performing students, and offer a large variety of study programs, at undergraduate and graduate levels, mostly answering the job market. They are owned by medium sized foundations. Even though they are known as training institutions, they may shine even in research in some particular field. Among these universities Başkent⁸ (founded in 1994) scores at the top and Yeditepe (founded in 1996) in the first four in the national ranking of international scientific publication (Table 2). These universities promote international scientific publications among their academic staff since this has been a prominent indicator of being a good university (i.e. by YÖK), and promoted as such by YÖK, which announces the publication rankings⁹ on its Website. For this reason, in contrast, in these universities research per faculty member might be as low as 0,28 (in Yetidepe) for example (YÖK Vakıf Üniversiteleri Raporu, 2007). They have 8,424 and 14,684 students respectively- getting about 25 percent of all foundation enrolment. They have the highest number of undergraduate programs. They are also the only two serious demand-absorbers that receive state subsidy --meeting the national criteria in research¹⁰ and enrolment. Even semi-elite universities hardly receive state financial support (YÖK Vakıf Üniversiteleri Raporu, 2007).

Table 2*. Ranking of foundation universities by the number of international scientific publications (2010)

University	Number of international scientific publications
Başkent	2, 543
Bilkent	2, 144
Koç	967
Yeditepe	816

Source: www.yok.gov.tr

* Table deals only with numbers of publications produced in a given university

The seriousness of such demand-absorbing institutions comes from a number of features: They show great concern with the job market and some even have follow-up studies of graduates; they have good reputations among employers. They show some curriculum innovation, earn accreditation, hire reputable professionals as part-time teachers, employ a core of full-time faculty, and use full-time public university professors. Salaries vary across the academic positions and universities in this serious demand-absorbing group. They are usually superior to the public university norm, i.e. averaging 7000-10,000 TRY (4,375-6,250 USD) monthly of a professor's let's restate to show clearly the salaries where. Yeditepe, Bilgi and Bahçeşehir pay high salaries to well-known professors who are lured away from transferred from top public universities (such as Boğaziçi¹¹, İstanbul, Middle East Technical). They display professionalism in management, with coherent administration and rules, and record-keeping. They have viable infrastructure administratively and academically. Faculty show up; students show up. In turn, the standing of serious demand-absorbers is reflected in student choice. Though they are not the first choice for the academically average¹² students, they are often preferred over public mediocre universities by the upper-middle class students. A good student from middle class who gets rejected at the public (it depends on the location and reputation of public university-- big city universities are more preferred) next chooses serious demand absorbing (it depends on the student's income level i.e. which layer of upper middle class and the score he/she achieved in the entrance exam). The semi elite foundation institutions are the first choice for many--those who can pay the fee--or for those who is good enough to be awarded scholarships. The income level of the family and being top achievers are important factors when making choices. In several fields, the serious demand-absorbers are the common second choice for those who can't get into the public top.

What makes these institutions fundamentally isomorphic, despite notable examples of innovation, is the type and organization within *most* of the following categories: study programs and curriculum; administrative organization; staff recruitment and most importantly their main *raison d'être*. The centralized structure of higher education through YÖK's regulations and control makes many universities inevitably somewhat isomorphic. The two serious demand absorbing universities particularly, in a time span, are copying and copied ones. In other words, it is not easy to copy at a rather high level. Başkent University and Yeditepe University have proven their

seriousness and recognition in time. Serious demand absorbers show diverse patterns in varied implementations such as research intensification (see Table 2 above), international alliances, and vertical program types i.e. doctorate programs. For example, Yeditepe enrolls the largest number of doctorate students of all foundation universities. Some of the reason to exist, and the way of existence (in terms of isomorphism) of dubious demand absorbers is valid for serious demand absorbers too, and their challenge is the fact that what makes them demand absorbers is also what makes them isomorphic.

VI. WHERE TURKEY'S DUBIOUS DEMAND-ABSORBERS ¹³ FIT

The dubious demand-absorbers epitomize the effects of the huge surge in aspiration to enter higher education among the growing young population in the country. The 18-21 age cohort puts pressure on the higher education system every year. This type of institution is owned by small-sized foundations and typically falls into the characteristics of "family style"¹⁴ institutions (Altbach, 2005: 11). The most common characteristics of these institutions are part time (hired from public universities) and under-qualified instructors, inadequate libraries, inadequate infrastructure, low student enrolment (many enroll under one thousand) and low admission standards (low score requirements). Also fitting the characteristics associated with dubious demand-absorbers worldwide (Levy 2004), they concentrate in inexpensive fields and job-oriented programs, have local rather than international orientations, and copy curriculum and programs of public universities. The Turkish institutions in question match the characterization of "proliferation of degree mills and sub-standard programs". They acquire more than 80 percent of their income from tuition fees (Table 4). Yet in Turkey they are not cheap. Their tuition fees vary from 5,000 USD to 10,000 USD-- whereas they spend only around 3200- 4000 USD per student (Table 4). Salaries of academic staff vary across the levels: A lecturer/instructor is paid as low as 1,000-2,000 (624-1,248 USD¹⁵) TRY monthly while a full professor is paid 3,000-4,000 (1,874-2,499 USD) TRY. This is around the average salaries at public universities where a full professor earns 3.660 TRY monthly.

In 2005, only three foundation universities were even partly state subsidized (meeting the criteria) and this subsidy accounted for less than 3.6 % of their total income (Table 4). Two of these institutions (Çankaya and Haliç) are dubious demand-absorbers. In 2005 sixteen foundation universities gained more than 80 percent of their total income from the tuition fees (Vakıf Üniversiteleri Raporu, 2007) and fourteen of them were dubious demand absorbers while two (Bahçeşehir and Yeditepe) were serious demand absorber. Yaşar, Ufuk, Çağ and Okan are the smallest universities, with enrolment under 1500 students and they do virtually no research (Table 4). Okan, İstanbul Bilim and Beykent are among those with no international publications listed in SCI+SSCI+AHCI in 2006 (Table 5).

VII. DISTINCTIVE SEMI-ELITE INSTITUTIONS

When Turkish foundation universities first appeared in the late 1980s and early 1990s they were dubiously perceived¹⁶. The high-status of public universities was unchallengeable. Against the backdrop of a highly isomorphic institutional culture in public higher education, and considerable isomorphism in its demand-absorbing institutions, Turkish diversity is introduced largely by a subset of the foundation universities--those owned by big family enterprises and operating with semi-elite characteristics. These time-honored big family enterprises such as Sabancı (1996) and Koç (1992) (Appendix 1) had already been known with their established philanthropy (in education) i.e. student dormitories, libraries, art and science schools, elementary and secondary schools, charity organizations, and NGOs functioning in informal education. They have enjoyed reputation and status in society; and have ranked at top in the wealthiest philanthropies of the country lists for a long time.

In the beginning the universities they founded performed below the academic level of the leading public universities but above that of the rest of universities- both private and public universities. Levy's analysis (2008; 9) applied to these Turkish privates: "... below the very top even in national rankings, semi-elite private universities may compete with a set of good but not towering public universities. Globally almost invisible, they may be quite visible and important nationally." However when we come to the 2000s the foundation universities which have proved diverse characteristics and invest in education in real terms became competitive and comparable to public universities. In terms of student status and selectivity, the best performers of the centralized university entrance exam and elite secondary school graduates have been choosing semi-elite foundation universities as well as leading public universities for a decade now. Presently it is difficult to make a simple generalization. But broadly speaking the top 500 achievers in the entrance exam¹⁷ tend to choose the public Boğaziçi (engineering and social sciences programs), Middle East Technical University (engineering and all other programs) and Hacettepe (especially Medicine, taught in English) first, and then the semi-elite private Bilkent, Sabancı and Koç. In the near future semi elite privates may be beating the top publics in student preferences but for the moment they tend to be second and third preferences of the top achiever students. For these foundation universities the greatest competing power is the full scholarship and incentives (i.e. pocket money, housing) for the top achievers, along with very attractive campuses, libraries, well-known professors, educational technology facilities, , laboratories, job prospects, graduate study opportunities, international links and studies abroad.

In important respect after important respect, these Turkish foundation institutions show characteristics postulated for semi-elite universities globally (Levy, 2006). These universities strongly invest in education, students and research. They are visible in their investment; they compete in the international arena, and they thus have gained social support over time. They function on a long term strategic plan unlike demand absorbers. For example, the three semi elite universities had not enrolled students during two years (after they were endorsed in the parliament) in order to establish their academic organization; they carefully selected academics and set up programs. And these activities were meant not merely to mimic public institutions. A

common characteristic is strong entrepreneurship as an essential attribute: they have strong financial support from large business associations and at least in those circles are often regarded as superior to leading public universities. Western and/or American orientation, prestige, competitiveness, and responsiveness are other characteristics. They do their best to get the best of everything i.e. professors, students, academic programs (Levy, 2006). They target the top students, offering scholarships and incentives. As a result semi-elite characteristics have brought distinctiveness to the otherwise large scale isomorphic profile of Turkish private higher education. And semi eliteness in Turkish context is related to being good and being different--and unrelated to being isomorphic and demand absorber. They obviously exist to attract the top achievers. This is understood from their strategic planning and investment type, not from high enrolment rates but high qualified students.

In fact, while Turkey's three semi- elite private universities basically fit Levy's (forthcoming) characterization of semi-elite private universities in teaching and research, fields of study, students, and political economic conservatism, in some respects they may ascend even higher. We have already noted the institutional preferences of top students on the national entrance exams. Additionally, we note that in the prominent ranking of world universities (Times Higher Education, 2010), semi elite Turkish universities score well. Bilkent University places number 112 in 2010 and within the top 300-500 for 2007-2009 of world-class universities (Table 3). This is consistently higher than any Turkish public university. The other two semi-elite universities rank behind just two public universities. In the national rankings done by YÖK, in 2010, Bilkent, Sabancı and Koç all rank in the first ten best performing universities (in research and publication) together with the best public universities (www.yok.gov.tr).

Table 3. Times Higher Education Supplement Rankings of Universities (Turkish Universities)

2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	HE (TR)	Type
112	360	374	401-500				Bilkent	Foundation
183							Middle East Technical	Public
	401-500	401-500	401-500		329		İstanbul	Public
	401-500	376	390		467		İstanbul Technical	Public
	401-500	401-500					Koç	Foundation
	501-600	401-500			447		Sabancı	Foundation
	601+						Gazi	Public
	601+						Çukurova	Public
	601+						Gebze Higher Technology Institute	Public

Sabancı University (founded in 1994) was established in a framework notably distinct from the public model. It is an institutional presence far from the academic framework and regulations defined by the higher education law. It was indeed a long process--more than two years--for the founders to overcome the defined regulations; however, by lobbying and convincing the Higher Education Council, the differently structured academic program was endorsed by adding a new code in the regulation. In this new structure, the standardized 4-year major program is offered as two-year basic studies and two-year concentration in the students' major. Koç University (founded in 1992), also against the mainstream, launched "colleges" instead of "faculties" as academic units and has become a research-oriented university; developed strategies for reverse brain drain i.e. inviting home Turkish academics abroad and; invested in vocational education. In comparison, Bilkent (the first foundation university, 1984) is state dominated and public university oriented in the sense of the structure of programs and academic organization. The super-wealthy founder (also the owner through the Foundation) of Bilkent University, Ihsan Doğramacı, was also the founder and first president of national agency YÖK, which promoted a centralized model of university with striking national authority over universities given by the Law. Doğramacı was himself from a traditional public university as a distinguished professor of medicine. This makes the university state-like in organization even while it is semi-elite in student selectivity and other respects. It invests heavily in campus facilities, educational technology and programs with highly qualified academic staff and impressive student achievements. It offers superior salary packages to its full time academic staff. Salaries can reach to 10 thousand or more TRY (7000 USD) monthly.

It is Sabancı and Koç that have the highest total income and highest expense per student (higher than top public universities) as well as the highest tuition fees anywhere in Turkish higher education. They spent between 13,000 and 24,000 USD per student in 2006. Tuition fees are the highest of all. For example, Koç University charges 25,000 USD for Medicine. Sabancı charges around 15,600 USD for a 4 year undergraduate program while it is 11,250 USD (lowest of all semi elites and lower than some demand absorbers) at Bilkent. Semi-elite foundation universities also have policies to recruit more foreign professors. At Koç University 85-90 percent of all academic staff are foreigners! The university recruited only 7-8 Turkish professors in 2000. Sabancı and Bilkent recruit Turkish professors from US universities. At Sabancı 46 percent of professors are of this kind. At these universities not only the salaries but also the incentives such as housing, conference support and performance awards are attractive.

As for the study programs in the semi-elite subsector, business is most prominent. The MBA is common in online and traditional ways. Applied sciences and job-oriented programs such as management, accounting, computer studies, and tourism attract more students. All this fits globally hypothesized characteristics of the semi-elite subsector. Turkey is a country where vacant position ads by big international companies designate restriction to only a handful of universities; this select group is now both public (e.g., METU and Boğaziçi) and private (semi-elite Bilkent). Quality of education, good reputation, and other laudable university features remain rare throughout both sectors of Turkish higher education but there are now private as well as public exceptions.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, Turkish foundation universities fall into demand-absorbing and semi-elite categories according to their performance in different areas. Obviously, the universities performing at the top tend to be semi-elite while at the bottom tend to be dubious demand absorbers (Table 4). Expenses for students, tuition fees and state subsidies are the indicators of such performance. Similarly, if a university performs at the top in terms of student and faculty numbers and ratios it tends to be semi-elite while a university performing lower can be categorized as a dubious demand-absorber (Table 5).

Table 4. Foundation universities at the top and bottom in financial terms (2005)

	Total income	Expenses per student	Tuition fee rate in total income	State subsidy rate in total income
Top 3	Bilkent* Sabancı* Yeditepe** (highest income)	Sabancı, TOBB** Koç* (highest)	Atılım*** Bahçeşehir** Çankaya*** Doğuş*** (more than 92%)	Çankaya Haliç*** Başkent**
Bottom 3	Okan*** Yaşar*** Ufuk***	Beykent*** Yaşar*** Çağ***	TOBB, Sabancı, Ufuk	15 universities did not receive state subsidy

Source: Vakıf Üniversiteleri Raporu, YÖK 2007

*=semi-elite, **=serious demand absorber, ***=dubious demand absorber

Table 5. Private universities at the top and bottom in size and research performance (2006)

	Student Enrolment	Teaching staff	Teaching staff-student ratio	Number of undergraduate programs	Research performance*
Top 3	Yeditepe** Bilkent* Başkent**	Yeditepe, Başkent, Bilkent	Ufuk, TOBB, Sabancı* (lowest)	Başkent, Yeditepe, Bilkent (highest)	Başkent, Bilkent, Koç* Yeditepe
Bottom 3	Yaşar*** TOBB** Ufuk***	Çağ*** Yaşar, Okan***	Beykent*** İstanbul Ticaret*** Bahçeşehir**	İstanbul Bilim*** Sabancı, Çağ***	Okan, İstanbul Bilim, Beykent

*number of international scientific publications in SCI+SSCI+AHCI, 2006

*=semi-elite, **=serious demand absorber, ***=dubious demand absorber

Turkish university changes over the past 26 years have contributed thriving and competitive elements parallel to the country's economic, social and political development. The expansion of foundation universities, at least in regard to the semi-elite and serious demand-absorbing ones, derives in part from the stagnation observed in public universities in modernizing their academic and organizational policies to answer 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 on a centrally governance mechanism. On the pure numbers side, most important was that public institutions no longer responded sufficiently to demand from the growing young population. As a result, to provide access without great increase in public expenditure, the state had to allow the opening of foundation universities, albeit with strict control. Moreover, demographic projections indicate a growing demand on higher education for the next 30 years.

Within a legal framework and under restrictions and simply with numbers being overwhelming compared to innovation, much of the expansion assumed isomorphic forms. Thus a new sector--private-- rather automatically became isomorphic. Institutional isomorphism became a resolution to fit into the system; it was under state control and support, and the model to mimic was state-formulated. As absorbing the demand (with a hidden for profit aim) was the main goal to exist, the growth in number of these institutions increased rapidly and patterns followed each other by mimicking the public institutions. There was a relation between isomorphic and demand absorbing characteristics. Some structures were overlapping such as low investment in education and research and high tuition fees. In short time, serious demand absorber isomorphic institutions reached upwards to a standardized profile so that they could compete with mediocre or low-profile public universities. It was anticipated that vast demand pressure on higher education could be resolved with legitimizing and supporting demand absorbing and isomorphic institutions. This usually meant sacrificing quality to expansion.

However, within this context, some foundation universities surged with superior characteristics. Only three semi-elites gained legitimacy over a struggle with the state dominated isomorphic university model tailored for public and then private institutions. In these three institutions we find a strong relationship between semi-elite and non-isomorphic/non-demand absorbing features. The competitive tool they have adopted is different from that of the demand absorbing universities. They compete with the leading public universities in attracting top talent and research activities. Two of the three charge the country's highest tuition fees and all three invest the highest of all student expenditure. They have superior research performance over the other foundation universities--and most public ones. Within two decades they have earned reputation, and performed well in national and international universities rankings.

Notwithstanding the notable additions private higher education has brought, the stated broad national promise has not been achieved: neither has access caught up with demand nor has high quality education been achieved to nearly the desired extent. Rather, at present there are 51 foundation universities, mostly similar to each other and holding only 6 percent of total national enrolment, still leaving about 1.5 million young people out of the higher education system. The

present system, in both sectors, is responding inadequately to national demands and needs both in quantity and quality. In short, the private sector has mostly contributed only limitedly to national higher education, although some private institutions have introduced dynamism and diverse models.

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- ¹ This number includes all types of higher education institutions: post secondary vocational schools, high technology institutes and military and police academies.
- ² Despite the vast increase in the number of foundation universities this magnitude of increase has not been reflected in the enrolment rates.
- ³ YÖK is the Council of Higher Education, a fully autonomous supreme corporate public body responsible for the planning, coordination, governance and supervision of higher education within the provisions set forth in the Constitution (Articles 130 and 131) and the Higher Education Law (Law No. 2547).
- ⁴ ÖSS (Öğrenci Seçme Sınavı) is the exam for entering universities in [Turkey](http://www.turkey.gov.tr). ÖSS is a test exam which has many questions from different subjects such as Math, Geography, and History.

⁵ Since most foundation universities do not get financial support, finance can be only partly consistent with coercive isomorphism while simultaneously partly consistent with anti-isomorphic tendencies.

⁶ The reason for being academically weak lies partly in the new institutionalism theory, i.e. as the mimetic procedures naturally lack planning, organization and originality.

⁷ When this analysis was done there were 30 foundation universities.

⁸ This university has been scoring at the top for 5 years in the same ranking.

⁹ This ranking is only for the international publication scores; does not necessarily cover overall research performance of a university

¹⁰ This is again the criterion of the number of international publications; does not cover other type of research performance indicators i.e. investment in research facilities, number of researchers, science and technology parks, patents.

¹¹ When foundation universities first opened, top public universities were under the threat of losing their top professors. However, recently this type of luring is accepted as mobility by the public university professors (quoted from an interview with the Rector of (public) Istanbul University)

¹² Refers to the students who perform neither at the top nor the bottom but in the medium range in the national university entrance exam.

¹³ Only those foundation universities functioning by 2008 are included in the categorization. After 2008 21 more foundation universities have been founded.

¹⁴ Family style is an obvious characteristic: Many dubious demand absorbers are named after the owner's daughter or son, or the owner's own name.

¹⁵ Currency rates at 2011. 03.04

¹⁶ Reasons were discussed in the Introduction section.

¹⁷ Gaining a university place, both in private and public institutions, is dependent solely on the results of a ranking system defined by the university entrance examination. The score determines not only which students will attend higher education, but also which universities students will attend and which subjects they will study. Programs at private universities have on average lower entrance score requirements than the public ones. However the top 100 or 200 highest scorers of the entrance exam are granted a scholarship and incentives. Thus, a program at a foundation university may enroll students from the top and the bottom.