

## A COMPARATIVE STUDY FOR APPOINTMENT PROCEDURES OF UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS

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### ABSTRACT

**T**he administration structure plays a central role in the development of a university, both academically and administratively, and both for attracting qualified academic staff and students. The role of presidents (chancellors/rectors) and their selection procedures are crucial in the organizational structure of a university. Considering that selection processes provide critical clues about the democratic culture of institutions in the name of representativeness, accountability, transparency, and participation; the issue demands more attention since these values should constitute the fundamental basis of all universities. This study deals with this important aspect of the administration structure and aims to explore the selection procedures of university presidents in the United States and the United Kingdom, and then compare these procedures with the ones in Turkey, underlying the similarities and differences.

**Keywords:** *University Presidents/Rectors; appointment process; university administration.*

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## 1. Introduction

The governance structure of higher education institutions has been getting more important every other day considering the evaluation of institutional performance. The increasing importance of governance in higher education may be explained by the challenges that the higher education institutions have been facing for the last few decades. The diversification of provisions, new modes of delivery, more heterogeneous student bodies, and growing pressure on internationalization, research and innovation have been sharply leveraging knowledge production. In addition to all these, decreasing public funding, pressure for university rankings, research and publication, increasing competition among institutions strongly pushed higher education institutions to constitute a more effective administration system to assure quality and survive in competition. The quality may be directly linked to the governance system ensuring accountability, wiser management, to tackle new challenges, to create productivity, and to protect participants in higher education institutions (OECD 2010, 18-21).

To achieve these goals, the so-called “New Public Management Reforms” have been initiated in various European countries (ESMU, 2009; Paradeise et. al 2009, 105; Sporn 2001, 121-122). These reforms symbolized the transition from a bureaucratic administration structure to a more entrepreneurial one (ibid, 89), moving higher education institutions to corporate enterprises. This transition mostly relies on three processes; pulling back the state funding from universities, basing steering on ex ante incentives and ex post performance assessment (ibid, 96). These reforms had an important effect on the selection procedures of university presidents in Europe. The traditional model of selection of university presidents has been the selection of the president by the academic community itself, with or without the state control. The traditional model has been leaving its place to a new one which is mostly based on the American model where the president is selected by a high level committee or by external agencies (Boer 2010; Karran2007, 303). Karran (2007, 304-305) sets forth that the selection of president in 16 European countries (Austria, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain) is still overly internal compounding the academic staff exercising the major voice. The system in five of these countries allows a limited input of the academic staff for the selection of president (Estonia, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, Sweden) while the president’s post in two of these countries (Denmark, UK) is open to all qualified external candidates and the academic staff have no impact on the process.

This study intends to fall apart the selection and appointment procedures of university presidents in the American, British and Turkish systems. The following part describes the appointment of university presidents in the American and the British systems. The next section explains the current system in Turkey and introduces the newly proposed higher education amendment. Then, the appointment processes in the underlying countries are compared. The last part covers the concluding remarks.

## 2. The Appointment Process of University Presidents in American and British Systems

Some best institutions from the United States (US) and United Kingdom (UK) are pinpointed for the review of the selection processes of university presidents since these countries have been continuously stated as the home-countries of the best universities of the world by various world-wide rankings, e.g. Times Higher Education World University Rankings, QS World University Rankings, etc. For example, 75 universities from the US and 32 universities from the UK are included in the top 200 universities of the world while no single university from Turkey appears in this list, according to the evaluation of Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2011-2012. Therefore, it may be inclined that the appointment process of high level administrators plays a critical role on the success of an institution.

In the US system, the Governing Boards (e.g. “Corporation” in Harvard University, “Board of Trustees” in Stanford University) are the key players of the university governance structure. The composition of the boards may be varied among institutions but the fundamental theme of the boards is to gather all stakeholders. The members of boards generally consist of people from out of academic world. Since the US private and foundation universities receive little or no state funding, they deeply need fundraising to sustain their ongoing activities, hence the representation of stakeholders is crucial. In the selection procedures of university presidents, these boards play a critical role. The board issues a mandate for the screening (or search) committee, which might consist of the representatives from the governing board, distinguished faculty members, alumni, students, and staff. The most US universities publicly announce the beginning of their presidential search. A new website is uploaded providing the details of the search process, listing the names of selection committee members, gathering the views, and presenting the most recent developments in the process.<sup>1</sup> Universities run advertisements for the presidential position with stated qualifications by all means of media, or the committee by itself can approach the individual candidates. The task of the screening committee is to evaluate all candidates for making a short-list. Some universities may prefer to use an exterior agency for the initial screening process. After the short-list is created either by the screening committee or the external agency, it is the governing board’s task to conduct interviews and choose the first runners. Some public universities conduct public meetings that the first runner candidates are interviewed by all constituents of the university. However, some interviews solely initiated by the governing boards. In some universities, university members are allowed to send their opinions about the candidates to the board. Then the board makes its final decision about the president.<sup>2</sup> This process can be very political because of the lobbying and the influence of some members of the board (Duderstadt 2007).

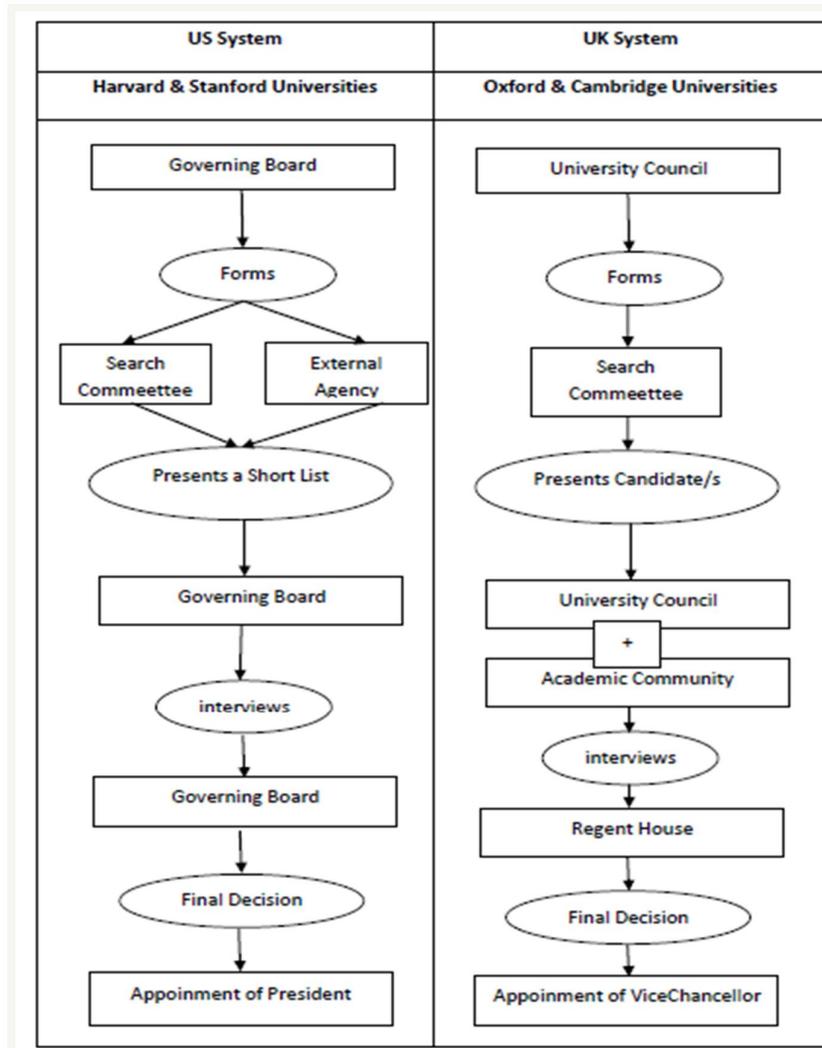
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<sup>1</sup>MIT Presidential Search website, <http://web.mit.edu/president/search/process.html>;

Princeton University Presidential Search website, <http://www.princeton.edu/presidentialsearch/index>

<sup>2</sup><http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/issues/governance/postart.htm>

**Illustration 1. Appointment Process of University Presidents in US and UK Systems**



In the UK system, university presidents are called chancellors and the chancellor position is symbolic in the university organizations. The chancellor is mostly elected by the university members among the prominent public figures, who had been nominated, to represent the university in public events. The senior official administrator of the university is called vice-chancellor. Similarly to the US system, an advisory committee is set up for the selection of vice-chancellor and the committee consists of representatives of congregation, university council and divisional boards. In the University of Oxford, the advisory committee suggests the name of first runner candidate to the congregation and then a voting for the appointment is held for the candidate. By the new reforms in the university system, the vice-chancellor is no longer has to be a member of the congregation, an external candidate may be selected.<sup>3</sup> In the University of Cambridge, the advisory board makes a short-list of best candidates and the University Council conducts all interviews. The Regent House approves and appoints the first runner.<sup>4</sup> Overall, the academic community of the universities in UK participates relatively more in the selection process of vice-chancellors.

<sup>3</sup><http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/regulations/308-072.shtml>

<sup>4</sup><http://www.statslab.cam.ac.uk/~frank/12493b.pdf>

### **3. The Appointment Process of University Presidents in Turkish System**

According to the Turkish Higher Education Law Article 13, the university president, called rector, of a state university is appointed by the President of Turkey among the candidates chosen by the university faculty members as a result of the call by the acting rector. The elections among the faculty members are held by a secret ballot. Each faculty member can write only one candidate's name on the ballot. At the first round, it is required that at least the half of the voting faculty members must be present. If it is not met, the next round of voting is postponed for 48 hours. The second round does not require the rule of meeting minimum number of voting faculty members. The first six runners who received the most votes are listed to be presented to the Higher Education Council of Turkey. The Council then lists only three candidates and presents to the President of Turkey. The President finally opts one and appoints as the rector.<sup>5</sup> In the foundation universities, the decision is solely made by the board of trustees. The board of trustee appoints its candidate after the approval of the Council. The academic members of foundation universities have no role in the selection process.

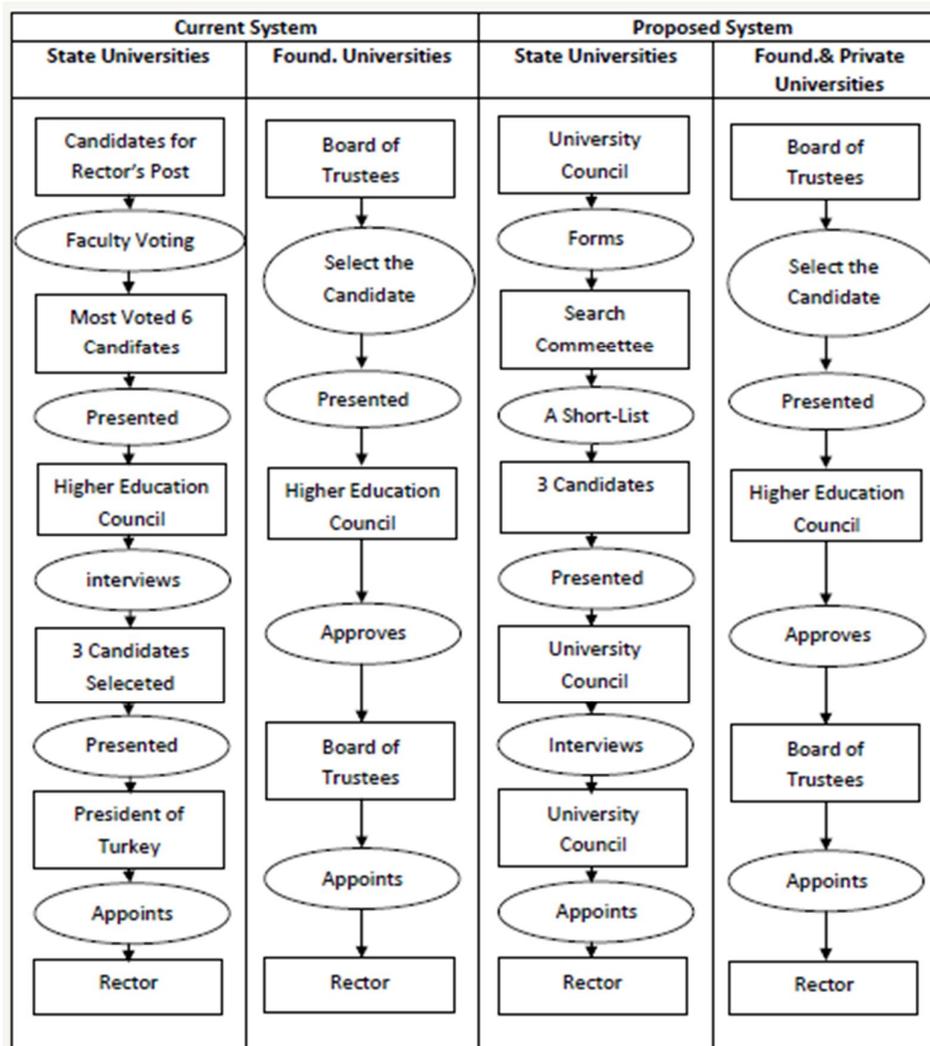
The Turkish government intends to make several reforms in its higher education system. These reforms also contain the selection processes of university rectors among other issues. A draft of the intended reforms was recently released by the Council.<sup>6</sup> It is observed that the board system is suggested for the selection process of university rectors. It is intended to establish a board (named as university council), which includes internal and external representations. The university council sets a search committee for making a short list of candidates. The search committee underlies the qualifications of the candidates and then the university council approves it. This must be advertised by all means of media. The search committee lists three best candidates among all applicants, and the final decision is made by the university council. For the foundation universities and private universities (which is allowed to be established with the newly proposed law) the board of trustees selects its single candidate and present for the approval of the Higher Education Council of Turkey. After the approval, the candidate is appointed by the board of trustees as the rector. This system does not take into account the considerations of university community.

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<sup>5</sup><http://www.yok.gov.tr/content/view/544/230/>

<sup>6</sup><http://yeniayasa.yok.gov.tr/files/bec97d37c45fe5c707859497fac0bad8..pdf>

**Illustration 2. Current and Proposed Appointment Process of University Presidents in Turkey**



#### 4. Comparison of Appointment Processes of University Presidents

Although there seems to be a trend for a transition to a board system in all over the world, this system is not also without critics (Bolden et. al. 2009). First of all, the boards hold a serious power in the university governance including the selection of university presidents. However, the members of the boards are not entirely from the academic community but also from the business world. This may raise some concerns for a type of enterprise university, which is described by Marginson and Considine, as “The university’s mission and relations with the outside world are now defined by a strong corporate executive control imposing economic performance targets on internal structures. The actors within universities have shifted from councils and senates to governing boards, -shadow university structures and vice-chancellor advisory committees.”

**Illustration 3. Comparison of Selection Processes of University Presidents**

Corner Stones	US System	UK System	Turkish System (current)	Turkish System (proposed)
Top Administrator	President	Vice-Chancellor	Rector	Rector
Serving Time	7 years	7 years	4 years	5 years
Boards	Governing Board	University Council	No board in State Universities Board of Trustees in Foundation Universities	University Council in State Universities. Board of Trustees in Foundation and Private Universities.
Search Committee	Yes	Yes	No	Yes for State Universities. Not required for Foundation and Private Universities.
Role of Faculty in the selection process	Limited	Yes, but only on the short-list candidates.	Academic members vote for the candidates in State Universities. No academic participation in Foundation Universities.	Participation of academic members in search committee in State Universities. No participation in Foundation and Private Universities.
Role of Government	No	No	Yes for State Universities No for Found. Universities	No
Candidates	Any suitably qualified person is eligible for appointment.	Any suitably qualified person is eligible for appointment as long as he or she can serve the full period before reaching retirement age (65 for men, 60 for women).	Full professors serving at least 5 years and being less than 65 years old for State Universities. Full professors less than 65 years old in Foundation Universities.	Not identified.
Appointment of Rector	Governing Board	Regent House	President of Turkey for State Universities. Board of Trustees in Foundation Universities.	University Council in State Universities. Board of Trustees in Foundation and Private Universities

On the institute level, co-operative research centres and a variety of soft money funded entities have been founded. Funding is characterised by a need to diversify towards soft budget allocations, tuition fees and competitive earning via new enrolments and research funding, making market forces in some areas the main driver. “The inner culture of historical institutions gives way to an increasingly restricted menu of commercial options and strategies” (Marginson and Considine, 2000, p. 4). When the selection of the president is concerned, the board decides about the composition of the selection committee. The Selection Committee is also consisted some of board members (who are mostly businessmen). Duderstadt (2007) argues that the interests of members and lobbying are the normal parts of the selection procedure since the selection committee does not entirely act with academic drives. When the short-list is created, a certain degree of output is taken from the university community in the US system but it is not binding. In the UK system, university community has an acting role by voting among the candidate/s who were chosen by the selection committee previously. They do not have any chance to examine all candidates. Comparatively, the self-nomination of the candidates and voting for candidates by the faculty members in the current Turkish system look more democratic. Nevertheless, the most voted candidate by the faculty members may not be appointed as rector since the Higher Education Council and the President of Turkey have power to change the first runner list. By the newly proposed higher education law of Turkey, the power of appointment of rector is transferred to university councils in state universities. However, any participation of university community is largely ignored.

## **5. Concluding Remarks**

Turkey needs to catch up with the rapidly changing world and consistently improve its higher education system. However, there is no single recipe for a perfect educational system. Most European countries have been undergoing a serious reform process. Nevertheless, all these managerial reforms are the subjects of harsh criticisms. These reforms mainly concentrate on transferring the traditional power of academics to boards. The transfer of governing power raises the questions of academic freedom and participatory democracy in higher education institutions. A balance between academics and external participants in the selection processes need to be incorporated if the use of board system is assumed to be a rule. The external representation should not transcend the academic representation. Not only academics but also administrative personnel and students may be included in the process as fundamental stakeholders. Specifically, the new proposal for Turkey should consider the autonomy of universities. The universities should be more autonomous for the selection process of their rectors. Also, this reform process should not be a top-down process. The opinions of all stakeholders should be taken into consideration before taking further steps.

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