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### **ABSTRACT**

Over the last two decades, Bologna process had spread from Europe to countries on other continents, including Africa, South America, and Asia. The process has recently attracted the attention of the Kurdistan Regional Government; and has already been applied at a few universities in Kurdistan to replace the previous Iraqi education system, which is based on an annual calendar and is out of date to more formative system including (homework, classwork, assignment, projects, and reports). The new vision of the world is built on this foundation. Recently, and by applying the worldwide standards, Duhok Polytechnic University (DPU) has been able to strengthen the level of professionalism shown in higher education.

The researcher wanted to see if the process had a chance of succeeding and what was needed to make it happen. Preparations were necessitated by assessing the perceptions of academicians in Duhok Polytechnic University toward the Bologna process. The study made use of a questionnaire with academicians who were subjected to implement the Bologna process.

Due to a variety of factors, like the university's decent infrastructure and a large number of academicians both of which are valuable helps. The research findings implied that the process might be implemented.

To summarize, and according to university's academics, various initiatives had made toward the adoption of the Bologna process, but further preparations and efforts are necessary to be taken in consideration.

**Keywords:** Bologna process, Duhok Polytechnic University, and Higher Education.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Duhok Polytechnic University (DPU) is a public university in the Kurdistan Region that has started implementing the Bologna Process in 2019. On June 19, 1999, educational ministers from 29 different European nations signed an agreement in the Italian city of Bologna that would become known as the Bologna process. (EACEA, 2015). The process seeks to promote a higher education system in Europe that is both internationally competitive and globally appealing (Bologna Process, 2009).

The collaboration of the governments of European countries resulted in the establishment of the higher education sector. 1999 was the year that brought clarity to both the concept and the implementation of the Bologna process, which should have an impact on nations located outside of Europe (Bologna Process, 1999). The Declaration calls for the international competitiveness of European higher education systems to be acknowledged as a result of the Bologna Process.

Many nations signed the Bologna Declaration each year in an effort to align their higher education policies with its fundamental decisions. As a result, they adapted their curricula, methods of instruction, and foci to include topics of more general interest, such as quality assurance, accreditation, and acknowledgment of qualification and competence. It is arguable that it has become the most significant transformational higher education reform process in the history of the world. It provides a venue for discussion as well as an essential tool to concentrate higher education changes in European countries. The higher education systems in each of the 47 nations that are now participating formally in the Bologna process have all undergone major changes as a result of the countries' participation in the process. (ENQA, 2011).

Moreover, the Bologna process underpins many ideas including the development of results, skills among European students, a focus on the awareness that students can study anywhere, quality assurance, the improvement of general and excellent curricular standards, strengthening educational and socioeconomic partnerships, such as knowledge, technology, and resources sharing (Huisman & Mngo, 2019).

With the help of American and European governments and institutions, the Iraqi Kurdistan Region has welcomed modern education and profited from the advantages of academic exchanges, curricular materials,

information services, teacher-training courses, and other programs. As an interconnected area, assisting Kurdish colleges plays a critical role in educating Kurdish society and maintaining the social harmony, which benefits not just Iraq but also other countries experiencing similar issues (United States Institute of Peace. Special Reports: 2008).

### **The Importance of the Study**

Most developed countries have adopted the Bologna Process. It is set up in a semester format with credit collection (ECTS). The academic year is divided into two semesters (Fall and Spring). Academicians as lecturers were obligated to assign students to assignments and additional readings at the beginning of each semester. The process assesses the students' learning on two semesters. Students studied many modules during each semester, which means they were exposed to a variety of courses and learning styles.

Since there was no research or investigations before towards the views and perceptions of academicians about the implementation of Bologna process at Duhok polytechnic university, at a time the success of the Bologna process depended on the desire of the academic staff, therefore, the present study is necessary to be taken in order to examine and point out to what extent the process is successfully implemented in Duhok Polytechnic University.

### **The Study's Objectives**

This study set out to examine and find out the perceptions of academics towards implementing the Bologna process in Iraqi Kurdistan, namely at Duhok Polytechnic University.

### **METHODOLOGY**

In this study, an online questionnaire was used. It was aimed to find out how the university's academic staff felt about the Bologna process which is implemented in Kurdistan region recently. Ten questions were designed; each question was constructed according to the academic's wants, needs, and interests. For validation, two experts as reviewers, were given a first draft version to help, improve the style, and explored the content of the topic. After the necessary adjustments were completed, the final version of the questionnaire was generated. Finally, the survey was conducted exclusively by emails, providing links, and through other social media applications such as WhatsApp, Telegram, Viber, and Messenger.

### **Participants of the Study**

Fifty academics of both genders (male and female) in Duhok polytechnic university involved in the study during the academic year 2021- 2022. All the participants were engaged in Bologna process; and consented to respond the questions in the study.

### **Data Collection and Data Analysis**

An online survey was used to gather the necessary information. Data were examined using a 5-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, unsure, disagree, and strongly disagree) that was derived from the researcher-created scale. The questions were selected in accordance with what the Ministry of Higher Education in Iraqi Kurdistan was interested in, and their selection also depended on the Bologna process, which is currently underway to transform the old education system in Iraq (the traditional system), which was based on an annual system and was becoming obsolete, into a module leader system that focuses more on the formative assessment.

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

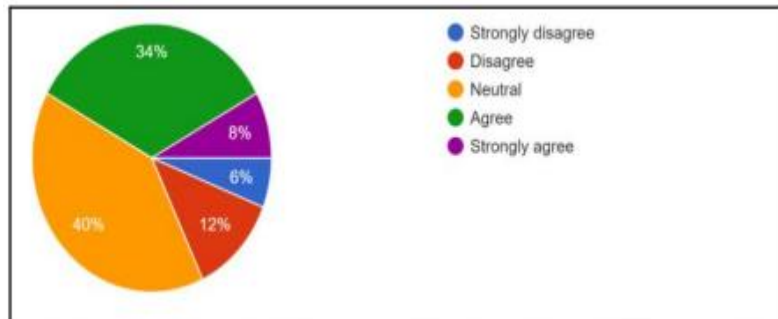
According to the findings of the study academics had a positive perception of the Bologna Process, thought that the process would have a good impact on Kurdistan's higher education system; this process needed to be implemented at Kurdistan higher education institutions; technical arrangements, such as common degree structures must be made in the process for developing educational programs according to common standards.

The European Community Trade Standards (ECTS) would be beneficial if the facilities provided within the framework of the movement would improve international cooperation; defining common standards for quality assurance would help to develop institutional quality; and the social dimension of the process would have a positive impact on society.

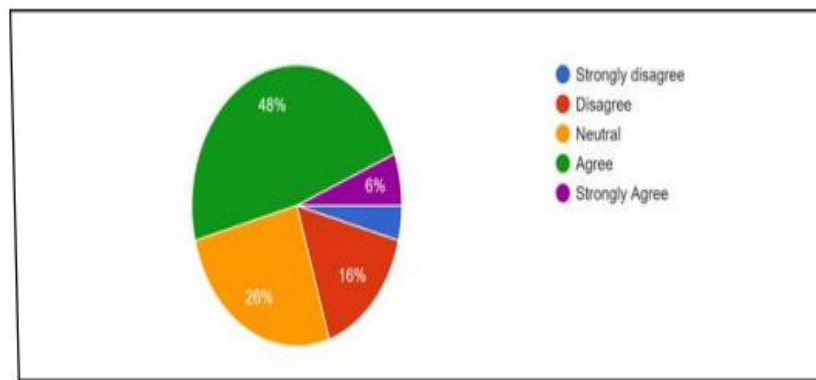
In conclusion, the study's academic participants were generally supportive of the initiative to establish EHEA. The study's findings imply that the Bologna process has the backing of the academic community. There have been other research done recently that corroborate these results.

Attitudes of Academics towards the Bologna Process, by Gornitzka and Langfelt (2005), found that the Bologna Process brought attention to important issues in higher education and would have a positive impact on higher education institutions, but that it would require significant time and effort to implement. Similarly, Egorov and Sokhova (2006) discovered that academics in Slomensk, Russia, saw technical process implementations as good, despite the fact that they had negative feelings regarding degree frameworks. The academic community

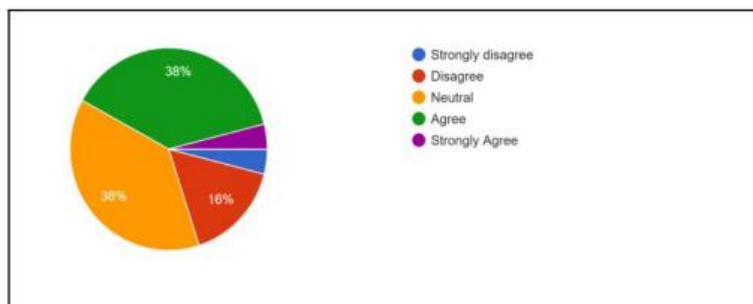
was less enthusiastic about the deployment of a two-tier degree system, consisting of undergraduate and graduate degrees, than they were about the implementation of other technologies. Furthermore, in a study by Teichler (2004), the results showed the students thought that the time they spent studying abroad was beneficial to them, mobility programs were benefited them both academically and culturally; as well as improved their language skills.



**Figure 1: The implementation of the Bologna Process facilitates student mobility between institutions located within European nations in an easy and seamless manner.**



**Figure 2: Bologna process strengthens the teaching quality assurance. It also ensures that students are fully involved in all quality assurance processes as equal partners.**



**Figure 3: The grading in bologna process relies on the individual competition within the group.**

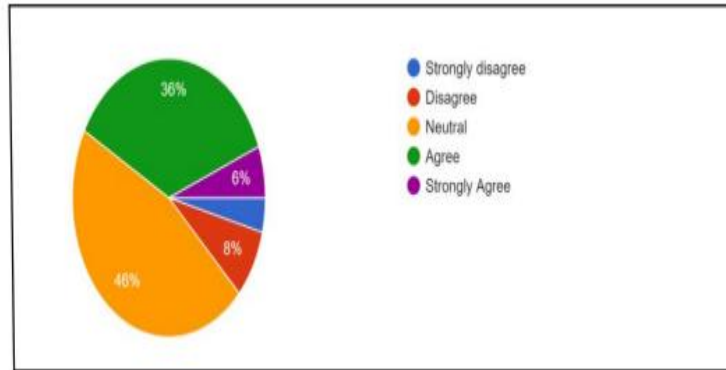


Figure 4: Bologna process facilitates the institutional and the program accreditations.

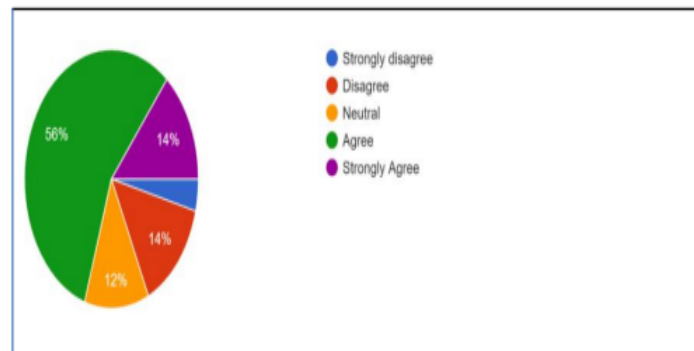


Figure 5: Bologna process makes the module leader focusing more on the formative assessment (homework, classwork, assignment, projects, reports, etc.) and gives it more weight.

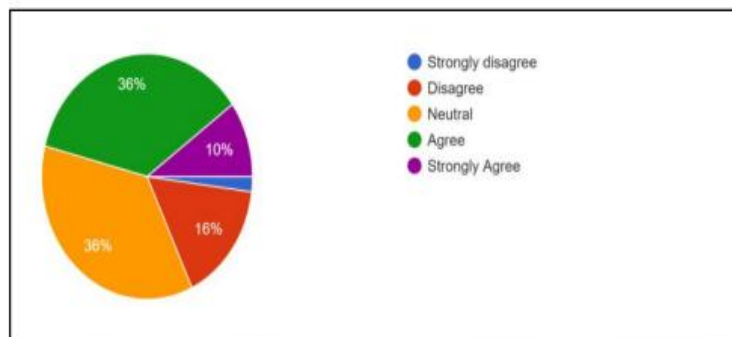


Figure 6: Bologna process brings new instruments to HE systems which require the shift from a teacher centered to a student-centered approach.

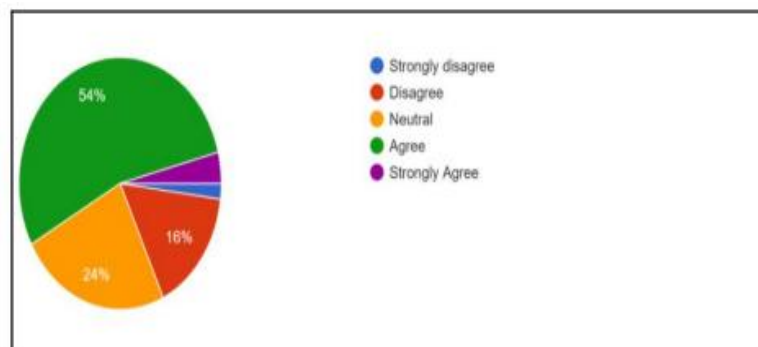
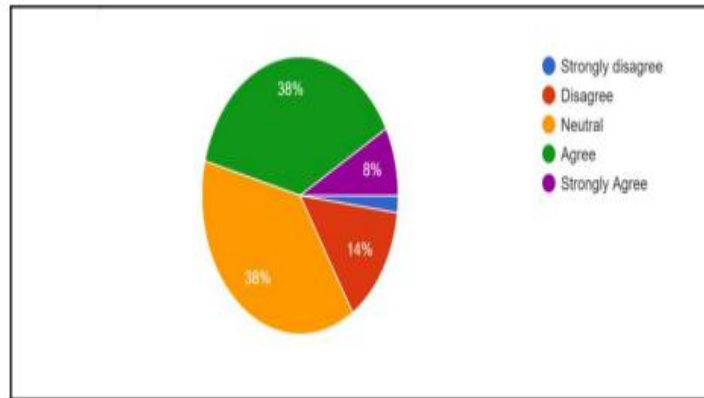
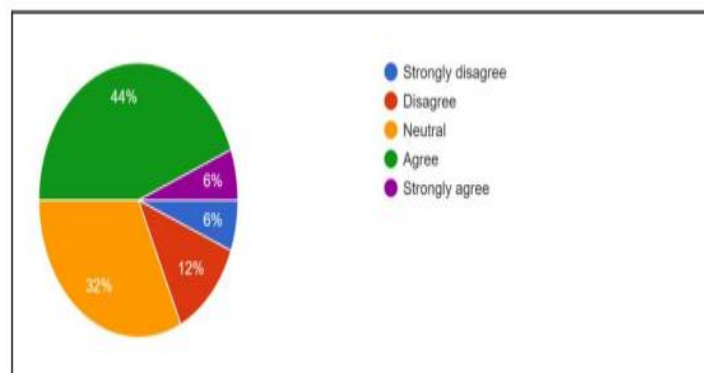


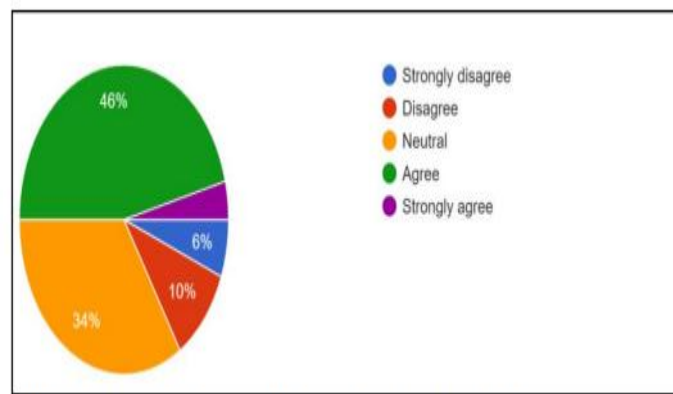
Figure 7: Bologna process helps revising program outcomes, learning outcomes and credits based on student workload.



**Figure 8: Bologna process expects employability, intellectual skills, interpersonal skills, computer literacy; and foreign language skills.**



**Figure 9: Bologna process promotes coherence in higher education, modernize and advance the higher education system.**



**Figure 10: Bologna Process will make it easier for our higher education institutions to cooperate with their counterparts in Europe, and vice versa.**

## CONCLUSION

In comparison to the traditional system, bologna process is critical for improving the quality of higher education; it develops students with real-world skills and competencies such as class attendance, presentations, assignments, and quizzes are all graded as part of the Bologna process. The focus of learning is not only on the final examination, but on the time leading up to it. Before final examinations, students might rack up a lot of grades.

In Kurdistan region, certain universities have just begun to apply the Bologna process. Duhok Polytechnic University is one among those universities. It may be stated that the Bologna process will take more planning and effort to accomplish, but according to the findings the academics in Duhok Polytechnic University seem to have a good understanding of ECTS policy.

Finally, offering regular training courses for academics and enhancing the university's infrastructure must be the university's primary priorities. In the meanwhile, other countries with Bologna experience should provide their support to the process in order for it to succeed.

#### **About the author**

Farhad Mohammad Rajab a lecturer and researcher, holds a PhD degree in English language teaching. He has about 15 years of teaching experience with many published articles. He has taught different English subjects, such as Academic Writing, Reading Comprehension, Grammar, Semantics, Methods of Teaching, and Linguistics. Currently, he is teaching at Duhok University, and Duhok Polytechnic University.  
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