The study of e-government is becoming increasingly important around the world in the field of public administration. This article examines the historical development, current status, and future prospects of graduate e-government courses in Turkish public administration programs. To that end, we performed content analysis of e-government course syllabi and evaluated relevant archival documents. We then conducted semistructured surveys of past and current instructors of graduate e-government courses. The article concludes by discussing the future prospects of e-government education in Turkey, including the problems that instructors need to solve in order to improve instruction and the relevance and impact of such courses on students and faculty of public administration programs in Turkey and elsewhere.

KEYWORDS
E-government education, Turkey, graduate schools

Although e-government is a relatively young subfield of the public administration discipline, it has gained significant academic and practical popularity during the last three decades. This popularity is particularly due to the increasing and ubiquitous use of various information and communication technologies (ICTs). These are mainly but not limited to the Internet and used by people from different walks of life and by all types of organizations, both public and private (Mao, 2004; Yazici, 2010; Yildiz, 2007). Thanks to the practical and academic interest in e-government, its teaching as an academic subject has also attracted some scholarly attention (Biasiotti & Nannucci, 2004; Parycek & Pircher, 2003). Nevertheless, there are still relatively fewer studies on e-government teaching compared to other kinds of e-government research.

The contribution of this article is threefold: First, despite many publications on e-government theory and practice, few exclusively exam-
ine e-government education. Second, while the state of e-government education in developed countries is relatively well documented (Biasiotti & Nannucci, 2004; Jaeger & Bertot, 2009; Parycek & Pircher, 2003), the relevant English-language literature is limited. Third, according to our extensive review of e-government education in Turkey, only three articles have analyzed e-government education in Turkish universities (Akilli, Babaoglu, & Demircioglu, 2013; Babaoglu, Akilli, & Demircioglu, 2012; Babaoglu & Demircioglu, 2012), and they focused on only undergraduate education. This article aims to help fill these gaps.

In Turkey, undergraduate and graduate education in general, and e-government education in particular, vary significantly and deserve separate academic attention. First, on the one hand, an overwhelming majority of undergraduate students in Turkey, both in public administration and other disciplines, are full-time students. They typically start their undergraduate programs immediately after graduating from high school, without any significant work experience. On the other hand, a sizable portion of graduate students in public administration programs are professionals. Many of them, particularly those who study in Ankara (the capital of Turkey), where the percentage of bureaucrats among the general population is very high, are part-time students and work in public sector agencies at various levels. Thus, the contents and the audiences of undergraduate and graduate e-government courses, as well as the expectations of both the students and instructors, are quite different.

Second, the motivation of students in undergraduate and graduate e-government courses differs. The selection system for undergraduates is very centralized through one university entrance exam (in which about two million people competed for university enrollment in 2015), whereas the selection process for graduate students is decentralized, carried out through exams conducted by each program. Further, graduate students are selected based on their grades from written-language exams, aptitude tests, and oral evaluations conducted by departmental faculty. This means that while graduate students are generally interested and sometimes knowledgeable about public administration in general and e-government in particular, many undergraduates are neither knowledgeable nor necessarily interested in these topics. This can especially be the case when undergraduates are assigned to a program not among their top choices, because of their central exam score. Such undergraduates who take e-government courses may not even be interested in these classes in the first place. On the other hand, departmental committees select graduate students from among the most successful and promising candidates. Such students are more likely to choose elective e-government classes due to their interest in the topic.

Third, and finally, in the fast-changing technological world, public administration graduate students, as future public managers, will need to adapt to changing circumstances by learning about new and emerging technologies and their impacts on government. Even if these students will never need to develop e-government policy models or personally deal with e-government applications, they should still become familiar with topics such as social media and e-governance (Koliba & Zia, 2015, pp. 15–17). For these three reasons, examining graduate e-government courses in Turkey may provide unique value in addition to similar studies focused on the undergraduate level.

LITERATURE REVIEW: E-GOVERNMENT AND E-GOVERNMENT EDUCATION

There is no one accepted definition of e-government, and many scholars define e-government differently depending on the context, objective(s), and/or application (Yildiz, 2007). Jaeger and Bertot (2009) define e-government narrowly as “the provision of government information and services through the online environment” (p. 39). Tat-Kei Ho (2002) argues that “explosive growth in Internet usage and rapid development of e-commerce in the private sector have put growing pressure on the public sector to serve citizens electronically, which is often known as the ‘e-government’ initiative” (p. 434). A report by the United Nations and
American Society of Public Administration says that “e-government can include virtually all information and communication technology (ICT) platforms and applications in use by the public sector...[specifically, e-government involves] utilizing the internet and the worldwide-web for delivering government information and services to citizens (Ronaghan, 2002, p. 1). We prefer to use the definition of Richard Heeks, a leading e-government researcher: e-government is “an application of digital ICTs in the public sector” (Yildiz, 2007, p. 655).

Although the emergence of ICTs goes back to World War II, early applications of e-government and government computer usage for automation projects started to take root in the late 1980s and early 1990s as more and more public managers began using personal computers. It was also during these years that increasing numbers of e-government projects emerged in all sectors of public activity, from education to finance (Yildiz, 2007). The U.S. government has pioneered the use of e-government projects since the early 1990s (Lee & Reed, 2015); and studies on e-government—which began appearing in the 1990s mainly in the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada—spread to other developed and developing countries (Terzi, 2006).

This fast growth in the popularity of e-government theory and practice had many reasons. Many countries responded to budgetary pressures by employing ICTs to reduce government expenditures (Parycek & Pircher, 2003) and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of their bureaucracies (Cordella & Tempini, 2015). In addition, e-government was considered not only as a tool for “modernization and digitalization of public administrations” but also as significant for “the enhancement of citizen participation” (Biasiotti & Nannucci, 2004, p. 460). Research suggests that information technology (IT) in general and e-government in particular have increased democratic access for citizens around the world (Lee & Reed, 2015; Mao, 2004). Moreover, e-government applications have provided opportunities to increase accountability and transparency in public services (Jreisat, 2005), and they can empower citizens and communities (Tat-Kei Ho, 2002). In this regard, e-government serves both administrative purposes, such as effectiveness and efficiency, and political ones, such as participation, transparency, and accountability. Sobaci and Karkin (2013) state that, due to e-government and ICTs, citizens, on the one hand, can electronically access government information in relation to decisions and services, take part in the process of decision making that directly affects them, and communicate their opinions and views about the services delivered by the public institutions to the relevant officials. Governments, on the other hand, by collecting the preferences, opinions and views of the citizens about policies and services, are likely to use them as an input in the process of improving policies and services. Therefore, governments strengthen their legitimacy by generating more acceptable policies and satisfactory services. Finally, this process characterizes ICT-based transparent, participatory and citizen-oriented public services. (p. 418)

Hence, e-government research can help governments discover how to be more accountable and transparent as well as how to provide a better quality of life for their citizens. Whatever the potential gains from e-government may be, education in e-government, either for creating public awareness or for better implementing its applications, is critically important (Seddiky & Ara, 2015, p. 387). High-quality e-government education increases e-government readiness, which is one indicator of a society's ICT use capability; and in order to assess such e-government readiness, the human resources capacity of governments should be examined (Basu, 2004, p. 114). Teaching e-government is also important because teaching and research are two sides of the same coin, with certain synergies (Akilli et al., 2012). All of these factors have facilitated the creation of e-government education programs and courses throughout the world (Hunnius, Paulowitz, & Schuppan, 2015, p. 2116). For example, the Bangladeshi
government gave extensive ICT training to its staff to overcome the lack of e-government skills (Hamiduzzaman, 2012, p. 196).

In short, in both developed and developing countries, educational institutions have strived to respond to the increasing importance of e-government research, practice, and education within the public administration discipline. Bonser (2015) makes the same point when he argues that “many of the newer public administration/public policy programs were a direct response to the concern for the societal disarray of that time [late 1960s and early 1970s], and the criticism that universities needed to be more relevant to society” (p. 7). However, it is not just the academic world that has a heightened awareness and needs increased education about e-government. E-government is a major transformation that all affected parties need to be aware of. Consequently, Janowski (2012, p. 2270) argues that all the actors in the e-government system—political and bureaucratic leaders, project managers, management staff, technical staff, service staff, businesses, and citizens—should have at least some training in e-government.

The need to teach e-government is increasing not only because of its growing impact but also because of its multidisciplinary nature. Multi-disciplinary studies of technology adoption are increasingly popular worldwide and the public administration discipline should try not to be left behind. For example, in their analysis of Korean public administration programs, Park and Park (2006) found that, for teaching purposes, public administration departments collaborate neither with information and computer sciences nor with telecommunication studies. On the contrary, business schools have strong collaborative ties with those same disciplines in order to offer management information system (MIS) degrees or concentrations. According to the authors, this is a significant problem; due to the multidisciplinary nature of e-government courses, public administration departments have a lot to gain by collaborating with other departments and areas of expertise. Such joint offerings may also have benefits beyond the courses themselves, such as the creation of collaborative research projects.

Still, the main reason that public administration programs should develop and offer ICT and e-government courses (Chiu, 2007; Dawes, 2004; Jennings, 2002; Kim & Layne, 2001; Pavlichev, 2004) is that organizations and institutional environments are very dynamic and constantly changing, and the public administration curriculum should reflect that (National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration [NASPAA], 1986; Park & Park, 2006; Perry, 2001). Indeed, many public administration programs worldwide have added e-government courses (Akilli et al., 2012; Babaoglu & Demircioğlu, 2012; Babaoglu et al., 2012; Park & Park, 2006). However, only a few studies have tried to explain why graduate programs have adopted e-government courses and how these adoption processes have worked. This article aims to address these questions for public administration departments of Turkish universities.

Research on e-government in Turkey started in the late 1990s. Computer engineers pioneered this research, supported by informatics nongovernmental organization. Centers on e-government then formed within leading academic institutions, such as the Middle East Technical University and the Public Administration Institute for Turkey and the Middle East; and such institutions have researched e-government and its instruction (Medeni, Mustafa, Medeni, Balci, & Merih, 2009; Yazici, 2010). Additionally, partly thanks to the need to confirm to European Union (EU) governance standards, Turkey has invested a lot of money in e-government projects since the 1990s (Babaoglu et al., 2012).

E-government instruction has grown in the wake of e-government projects. Babaoglu and Demircioğlu (2012) found that of 166 universities in Turkey in 2012, 68 of them had departments titled either “public administration” or “political science and public administration.” All of these departments offered a basic-level ICT-use class (65 mandatory, 3 elective), but those classes mostly taught use of
Web browsers and word processors. Only 14 universities offered undergraduate e-government courses as of 2012. The first such course was offered in 2006 by Hacettepe University and the number had dramatically increased by 2012 (2006: 1 university, 2007: 2 universities, 2008: 4 universities, 2009: 7 universities, 2010: 12 universities, 2012: 13 universities). The authors identified three reasons for the increase of undergraduate e-government courses in Turkey: (1) faculty academic interest in the topic (42%); (2) transfer of such a course from other universities where it had been successful (i.e., mimetic isomorphism, 33%); and (3), instructors having studied abroad for their graduate degrees, where they were exposed to the topic of e-government (25%).

METHODOLOGY

We opted to study e-government instruction in Turkey for several reasons. Although it is a developing country, Turkey is a member of the G20 and has an upper-middle income level (World Bank, 2016). We also considered the country’s historical importance, geographic location, high population (close to 80 million), and particularly its increasing number of universities in the last decade (Yildiz, Demircioglu, & Babaoğlu, 2011).

To find and evaluate the content of e-government courses taught in public administration departments in Turkey, we first identified graduate e-government courses, their instructors, and syllabi using departmental websites. We also examined each university’s Bologna Process information page.

Reviewing the websites of Turkish universities, we found that 96 of 190 universities had a public administration department in 2015. This was a big change from the 68 such departments identified by Babaoglu and Demircioğlu in 2012. One important reason for this increase was the opening of new universities. The number of universities in Turkey increased from 166 to 190 in the last three years (YOK [Turkish Higher Education Council], 2015). Additionally, some relatively newly established universities have opened public administration departments.

Of the 96 public administration departments we identified, 18 (19%) offered graduate e-government courses. These 18 departments had 24 graduate programs in total, 17 of which were master’s programs that require a thesis, 3 of which were executive master’s programs that do not require a thesis, and 4 of which were doctoral programs.

We then performed content analysis of e-government course syllabi and evaluated relevant archival documents. These archival documents are the official and unofficial records of departmental discussions and formal decisions regarding the creation of e-government classes.

The 24 graduate programs offered a total of 25 e-government courses (see Table 1). Among these 25 courses, 3 were inactive due to the program’s recent establishment or lack of qualified teachers; another 3 courses had no available information, and so we labeled them “inaccessible.” The remaining 19 courses seemed to be active as of September 1, 2015. Therefore, we examined a total of 19 active and accessible graduate e-government courses in this study.

Finally, we sent e-mail surveys that contained structured questions, both open- and closed-ended, to the instructors of the graduate e-government courses in the 24 graduate programs (the Appendix lists the questions). Because some instructors teach more than one course in a graduate program, or teach one course each in more than one program, we identified a total of 14 instructors who actively taught the 19 active and accessible graduate e-government courses; we e-mailed surveys to those 14 instructors. Only 10 instructors responded, providing information about 14 of the 19 different graduate e-government courses that these 10 instructors taught.

FINDINGS

Our initial findings about university location, the degree that the e-government course is a part of, course titles, whether the course is actively being taught or not, and the year that these graduate e-government courses were first taught are presented in Table 1.
We further found an increase in both the existence and complexity of graduate e-government courses (Figure 1) as well as an increasing number of expert academicians and instructors who teach them.

The first e-government course at the graduate level was taught at the Public Administration Institute for Turkey and the Middle East in 2002. This was closely followed by Hacettepe and Cumhuriyet Universities in 2005. It is interesting that at the undergraduate level, the first e-government course was taught in 2006, slightly later than these first graduate courses. Thus, whereas the number of undergraduate public administration programs was higher than such graduate programs, graduate schools pioneered the offering of e-government courses in Turkey.

Analysis of the syllabi of graduate e-government courses revealed that, in general, the practical aspect overshadows the theoretical; that is, the

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### TABLE 1.
Graduate E-Government Courses in Turkish Public Administration Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Course title</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Mandatory (M) or elective (E)</th>
<th>Year of origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abant Izzet Baysal University</td>
<td>Bolu</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>E-Government</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aksaray University</td>
<td>Aksaray</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>E-Government in Public Administration</td>
<td>Inactive</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attilim University</td>
<td>Ankara</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>E-Government Theory and Practices</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilecik Şeyh Edebalı University</td>
<td>Bilecik</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>Governance and E-Government</td>
<td>Inactive</td>
<td>Inaccessible</td>
<td>No response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumhuriyet University</td>
<td>Sivas</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>E-Government and Public Administration</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PhD E-Government and Public Administration</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dicle University</td>
<td>Diyarbakır</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>E-Government and Administration</td>
<td>Inaccessible</td>
<td>Inaccessible</td>
<td>No response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hacettepe University</td>
<td>Ankara</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>Information Technologies and Public Administration</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MBA</td>
<td>Information Society and Public Administration</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Information Technologies and Public Administration</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hitit University</td>
<td>Çorum</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>Information Society and Administration</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karamanoğlu Mehmet Bey University</td>
<td>Karaman</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>Information Society and Public Administration</td>
<td>Inactive</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
critical evaluation of ongoing e-government projects takes precedence over analyses of technological change in the public sector. Applications of various technologies to different sectors of government (such as education, health, transportation, and justice) usually merit individual weekly attention. The syllabi also show increasing attention to innovative methods of service provision and new technologies (such as mobile applications, public agencies’ social media presence, smart cities, open government/data, and big data). Last, but not least, the syllabi reflect the political facets of technological change in the public sector, including modules on e-voting, e-participation, and applications that aim to promote greater participation, transparency, and accountability.

Syllabi topic selection seems to be affected by e-government trends, as the topics listed above are popular worldwide. Use of social media, big data, e-participation, and smart cities is not

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Course title</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Mandatory (M) or elective (E)</th>
<th>Year of origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Karadeniz Teknik University</td>
<td>Trabzon</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Information Society &amp; Public Administration</td>
<td>Inaccessible</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>No response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muş Alparslan University</td>
<td>Muş</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>E-Government</td>
<td>Inaccessible</td>
<td>Inaccessible</td>
<td>No response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş University</td>
<td>Nevşehir</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>Technological Change in Public Administration</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pamukkale University</td>
<td>Denizli</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>E-Government and Its Practices</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Administration Institute for Turkey and the Middle East</td>
<td>Ankara</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>E-Government</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selçuk University</td>
<td>Konya</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>E-Government</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Süleyman Demirel University</td>
<td>Isparta</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>E-Government</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>No response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uludağ University</td>
<td>Bursa</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>Information and Communication Technologies in Public Administration</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yeditepe University</td>
<td>İstanbul</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>Information Technologies and Public Sector</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Studies have found that almost all national and larger local governments, public agencies (e.g., the UK Food Standards Agency and the Canadian Treasury), and police departments actively use social media (e.g., Twitter and Facebook) for internal and external communication, discussing public policies, and increasing transparency and accountability (Grimmelikhuijsen & Meijer, 2015; Lee & Reed, 2015; Mergel, 2012; Mickoleit, 2014; Picazo-Vela, Gutierrez-Martinez, & Luna-Reyes, 2012). It seems as if the similarity of e-government applications worldwide affects how similar e-government course syllabi are in different countries as well. Analysis of the syllabi also showed that almost all graduate e-government courses in Turkey are elective courses, as shown in Table 1.

Analysis of the syllabi also revealed that a few graduate e-government courses exist only nominally in departmental program listings or that information about them is not publicly available. Although we sent several instructors our survey questions about the courses listed on departmental websites, we could not reach instructors from Dicle, Karadeniz Teknik, and Muş Alparslan Universities. Similarly, although the departmental websites of Aksaray, Bilecik Şeyh Edebali, and Karamanoğlu Mehmet Bey Universities show the existence of graduate e-government courses, we could not identify the instructors for these courses. These three universities were recently established, so it may be that these departments appreciate the importance of e-government and want to include the class in their programs but have not yet been able to find qualified instructors.

As a final note about the syllabi, although course titles differ among institutions (e.g., E-Government, E-Government in Public Administration, Governance and E-Government, Information Technologies and Public Administration, Technological Change in Public Administration, etc.), course content is quite similar. Different
course titles for similar content support findings of previous studies (Babaoglu & Demircioğlu, 2012; Babaoglu, et al., 2012) that e-government courses have not been standardized in Turkey.

In the survey responses, we found that instructors face specific problems in designing and teaching e-government classes. First, there is a lack of Turkish-language teaching materials about e-government that treat both the theoretical and practical aspects of the subject. And the use of English-language teaching materials is limited by graduate students’ low level of English-language competency, especially among those who are professional public administrators.

The second problem is access to reliable and timely data about e-government applications so as to effectively use case studies in e-government courses. One solution is to ask practitioner students to prepare reports about e-government projects they are a part of or knowledgeable about. But this solution has limits: finding practitioner students with such knowledge and access is much easier in Ankara, the capital, than elsewhere. A related issue concerns the distribution of roles and responsibilities in the courses under investigation: the instructors are mostly responsible for the theoretical explanations and for organizing discussions; the students are usually responsible for the presentation of cases and e-government projects as well as for participation in discussions.

The third problem identified in the instructor surveys is the (increasing but still) limited number of expert academicians who are able to teach e-government courses effectively. This weakens the sustainability of e-government courses in the long run. In addition, especially in small universities in the periphery, where the instructor to student ratio is much lower, instructors are already struggling under heavy teaching loads.

The fourth problem instructors face is the ever-changing nature of information and communication technologies and their applications in government. The fast pace of change in technology in general and in e-government projects in particular, together with the emergence of buzzwords and trends every few years, necessitates constant vigilance on the part of instructors to keep course content fresh and up-to-date. This is a heavy and sometimes unwelcome burden on the instructors, especially when they are not enthusiastic experts on the subject.

In addition to the problems of teaching, we found at least three emerging trends in graduate e-government courses taught in public administration departments in Turkey. First, there is an emerging comparative analysis of e-government applications and policies across nations, which enables both instructors and students to compare and contrast relative successes and failures under different political, social, and economic systems and conditions. The outcomes of such analyses, which represent the interaction of e-government and public policy topics, have the potential to affect e-government policy making, change, and policy termination.

A second trend, closely related to the first, is the adoption of a policy-oriented approach to analyzing e-government developments, in which the impacts of policy cycles, policy networks, relations among different policy actors, and so on are taken into account in evaluating the processes and outcomes of e-government policies and projects.

A related third trend is that graduate students with civil service careers have an increasing interest in and appreciation of e-government topics that include a policy perspective. Such students witness not only the increasing presence of various technologies in their daily tasks but also the critical role these technologies play in their organizations. Thus, these practitioner students perceive e-government-related skills and competencies as useful for not only their daily tasks but also their long-term careers as tech-savvy middle (and hopefully high-level) managers.

Partly due to these trends, the importance of e-government courses seems to be appreciated even in departments that do not possess an ex-
pert academician to teach them. This is evident from the inclusion of e-government courses in the curricula of universities such as Aksaray, Dicle, and Karamanoğlu Mehmet Bey, where such courses are listed but remain inactive.

Table 2 shows the reasons for the emergence of e-government courses in Turkish universities. The main factors affecting inclusion of such courses in a program’s curriculum were (1) whether the instructor had early exposure to the subject (whether he/she took an e-government class as a graduate student), (2) the academic interest of the instructor and his/her resulting efforts to add these courses to the curriculum (which is related to the first factor), and (3) the effects of postdoctoral research trips to other countries that enabled the instructor to be immersed in and/or focus on e-government studies. Contrary to our expectations, the curriculum standardization efforts of the European Union through the Bologna Process had no effect whatsoever in the creation of graduate e-government classes, though the Bologna Process had some effect in the standardization of content long after the courses were established.

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This article examines and explains the historical development and current status of graduate e-government courses in Turkish public administration programs by analyzing the content of e-government course syllabi and archival documents and by asking in-depth, structured survey questions of the instructors of these courses. This is one of the few studies that evaluates and analyzes e-government courses in Turkey in detail.

In a similar study with a different focus on undergraduate public policy courses, Yildiz, Demircioğlu, and Babaoglu (2011) found that the increasing academic popularity of public policy research has resulted in an increasing number of public policy courses in Turkey. Likewise, the present study shows that the expansion of academic e-government research has increased e-government teaching in Turkey, but not the other way around. Our survey findings indicate that instructors who have already been researching e-government topics are the ones who offer e-government courses, mainly because they are prepared for and

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**TABLE 2.**
Factors that Affect the Emergence of Graduate E-Government Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Instructors’ early academic or professional exposure</th>
<th>Academic interest of the instructor</th>
<th>Postdoctoral research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atilim University</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumhuriyet University</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hacettepe University</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hitit University</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş University</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pamukkale University</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Administration Institute for Turkey and the Middle East</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
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Note: Includes only the instructors that answered the survey questions (N = 10).
interested in the topics. This considerable effect of instructors’ personal academic interest on the existence and spread of e-government courses raises questions about the long-term sustainability of such courses in the event that these expert instructors change jobs, take sabbatical leaves, retire from academia, or pass away.

However, we also found different factors at work in the transfer of public policy and e-government courses to Turkey than Yildiz et al. (2011) found concerning the spread of public policy courses. Yildiz et al. identified external actors and forces as an influence, such as the Erasmus Process (student and faculty exchange among EU higher education institutions); but we found little evidence of a standardization influence from EU programs, whether aimed at student and faculty exchange (Erasmus) or curriculum standardization (Bologna).

Another difference is that both Yildiz et al. (2011) and Babaoglu and Demircioğlu (2012) found that “policy transfer” (e.g., mimetic isomorphism, such as adoption of a course from well-established universities’ curricula) and/or instructors bringing a course with them to a new department influenced the spread of certain courses; but our study shows little evidence of such channels of transfer. Instead, we found the main reasons for the diffusion of graduate e-government courses to be an instructor’s academic interest in ICTs and his/her early exposure to the subject matter in graduate studies, which also affect each other.

These differences may be explained as follows. While undergraduate e-government education in Turkey is standardized by the Higher Education Council of Turkey (YOK) and influenced by the Bologna Process, graduate education is unstandardized and has not been affected by the Bologna Process. Graduate departments and instructors have relatively higher levels of power and autonomy in determining the courses and curricula. Additionally, undergraduate e-government courses are typically introductory, while graduate e-government courses are more advanced and more practice-oriented. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, graduate education in Turkey is very different than undergraduate education. Universities, schools, departments, and instructors have very limited power and incentives for choosing their own students at the undergraduate level. Graduate education, however, is decentralized and each department can educate its own students based on different standards. At the graduate level, YOK also delegates the power to make most of the decisions to the departments, so policy transfer is relatively limited.

While the instructors we surveyed did not mention policy transfer (mimetic isomorphism) as a factor affecting e-government instruction, all of the instructors did mention their academic interest as the main reason they offer e-government courses at the graduate level. Thus, owing to structural differences and a combination of external factors, the current states of e-government courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels in Turkey are very different.

Based on our findings, we can make a few points about the state of e-government education in Turkey and elsewhere as well as future prospects for such instruction.

First, e-government projects are typically popular application platforms that involve new public management ideas, such as being or becoming more customer- or citizen-oriented, more effective, and more efficient. Analyzing such projects in e-government classes provides graduate students of public administration—a considerable number of whom are practitioners in Turkey and elsewhere—valuable opportunities to observe and evaluate public management ideas in action.

Second, public administration classes with both theoretical and practical dimensions, such as e-government, increase the awareness of not only public administration students but also practitioners and the general public about the technological transformation that society in general and government in particular are experiencing. For example, the question of what the policy for social media use should be for public managers is part of a much bigger
discussion about regulating citizen social media use, in general, and that of managers in both public and private sectors, in particular. Analysis of such issues by current and future public managers, in public administration programs, has the potential to increase public awareness and discussion about e-government-related topics.

When the first (application of public management ideas) and second (awareness) points are taken together, one can argue that better exposure of current and future public managers to the theory and practice of e-government may improve the analysis and management of future government IT expenditures, in general, and e-government projects, in particular. In other words, the public value of such projects may be maximized while the associated political, economic, and social risks may be minimized.

Third, an important finding of this study is the lack of qualified e-government instructors in Turkish universities. This problem can be partly solved by sending Turkish instructors to both European and U.S. universities as visiting professors or postdoctoral researchers; this would enable the professors to increase their competency in e-government-related subjects. Likewise, Turkish universities could invite visiting professors to facilitate an exchange of e-government scholarship and instruction. Another solution would be to increase the number of distance education opportunities on this subject. Still another option would be to hire qualified domestic and foreign practitioners to fill the gap, such as current or retired city IT managers with reasonable levels of theoretical knowledge.

A challenge related to the lack of qualified e-government instructors concerns the stability and institutionalization of e-government courses. When qualified instructors are in short supply, if an instructor leaves a university for another one or cannot teach the e-government course due to health problems or other reasons, the university is unable to find a replacement. This is not the situation with more traditional public administration courses, such as bureaucracy and organization theory, and thus e-government courses are less stable.

Our fourth point is that Turkey’s experience in graduate e-government education may benefit countries in the Middle East, the Caucasus, and central and southern (or southeastern) Europe, some of which have cultural and historical traditions and conditions similar to Turkey; some experience similar limitations, such as lack of qualified teaching personnel and native-language textbooks. While the EU Bologna Process of educational harmonization does not seem to be very influential in the Turkish case, the cause-and-effect relationships regarding the development of e-government education may be similar enough in these countries to learn from the Turkish case. One important such similarity may be the impact of U.S.- or western European–educated instructors on the creation of e-government courses. Specifically, we believe that developing countries that lack qualified instructors and experts in e-government as well as high-quality native-language textbooks about the topic can learn and benefit from the Turkish case.

Instructors with master’s and doctoral degrees from universities in the United States and other developed countries (stated as “early academic exposure” in surveys) seem to be a driving force behind the emergence and spread of graduate e-government teaching in Turkey. As a result, this study may increase the awareness of foreign-national graduate students and their advisors in these universities about the potential far-reaching impact of their choice of dissertation topic. These findings may also help the governments of developing countries, which sponsor these foreign graduate students, to ask these students to strategically choose dissertation topics, because these decisions seem to be affecting future teaching and research agendas in the students’ home countries.

Our findings also point toward areas for further study. For example, future research may further analyze the differences between graduate and undergraduate e-government courses and the reasons for (and implications of) such differences. Future studies may also conduct surveys of both undergraduate and graduate students.
who have taken e-government courses, seeking to evaluate outcomes and impacts (i.e., the effectiveness of e-government courses) from a student perspective. Although students, particularly graduate students, who are government employees may be eager to take e-government courses because of the potential practical applications, no study has been done in Turkey to assess whether taking e-government courses actually proved helpful for practitioners’ careers.

As explained earlier, several universities seem in the process of offering e-government courses but, probably due to the lack of qualified instructors, are unable to offer them in practice. Turkish universities need more qualified instructors who can effectively teach e-government courses. One solution would be to hire expert public servants who are already knowledgeable about e-government projects. This would bring qualified instructors and enrich e-government course content with discussions of real-world applications. Future studies may want to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of employing expert public servants as instructors of e-government courses.

Last but not least, because there are only a few Turkish-language textbooks on e-government, instructors need more textbooks or academic texts on e-government in their native tongue. This problem can be solved either by publishing more Turkish-language books that cover both the theory and practice of e-government, as well as its multidisciplinary and multisectoral aspects; or by translating well-rounded international textbooks on e-government into Turkish (e.g., Heeks, 2006).

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NOTES

1 For example, the University of Maryland master’s program began offering a concentration in e-government in 2006 (Jaeger, Bertot, Shuler, & McGilvray, 2011, p. 227).
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APPENDIX

Survey Questions for Instructors

1. How long has this course been taught?
2. Are you the first instructor of this course?
3. Have you taken a course on e-government as a student during your graduate studies?
4. What is the reason for your interest in this subject matter?
5. How was this course added to the curriculum? Did you have any role in it? Did the Bologna process have any effect?
6. Is e-government a mandatory or an elective course?
7. What is the level of interest in this course? Has it changed over the years?
8. How would you rate the content of the course regarding the use of theory and practice of e-government?
9. What are the main topics included in the syllabus?
10. Are you using case studies in the class? If yes, which ones?
11. What does the reading list of the course contain? Do you prefer Turkish-language or foreign-language readings? If applicable, which languages? What are the shortcomings regarding readings?
12. What are the roles and responsibilities of the teacher and the students (attendance, exams, assignments, etc.)?
13. Is the effect of the course different on students who are and are not public administrators? Do the practitioner students have any effect on the course?
14. How can the e-government courses be better? What can be done to increase the level of student interest in these courses?
15. Do you have any suggestions regarding the future of e-government in general and e-government courses in particular in Turkey?