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The Quality Issues in Higher Education of Türkiye: Insights from the Experiences of Faculty Members and Students at State Universities

Türkiye'nin Yükseköğretiminde Nitelik Sorunsalı: Devlet Üniversitelerinin Öğretim Elemanları ve Öğrencilerinin Deneyimlerinden İçgörüler

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Özet

Bu araştırmada, Türkiye yükseköğretiminin nitelik göstergelerini öğretim elemanı ve öğrencilerin görüşleri ile belirlemek ve nitelik durumuna ilişkin devlet üniversitelerinde görev yapan öğretim elemanları ve öğrencilerin görüşlerinin çözümlenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Yükseköğretimde kalite konusunda yapılmış çalışmalar olmasına rağmen öğretim elemanları ve öğrencilerin görüşlerinin birlikte yer aldığı karma yöntemde gerçekleştirilen bir çalışmaya rastlanmamıştır. Bu çalışmayla literatüre katkı sağlamak amaçlanmaktadır. Araştırma, nicel ve nitel araştırma yöntemlerinin birlikte kullanıldığı karma araştırma deseni ve karma yöntemin bir deseni olan açıklayıcı sıralı paralel desen ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Tabakalı ve seçkisiz örneklem alma yöntemi kullanılarak elde edilen örneklemde, 390 öğretim elemanı ve 450 üniversite öğrencisi yer almıştır. Veriler SPSS 25 programı kullanılarak çözümlenmiştir. Araştırmanın nitel boyutunda ise araştırmaya, amaçlı örnekleme yöntemlerinden maksimum çeşitlilik örneklemesi ile belirlenen çalışma grubuna 30 öğretim elemanı katılmıştır. Araştırmanın nitel boyutunda ise Ankara, İstanbul, Kayseri, Kırıkkale, Kırşehir ve Yozgat illerinde bulunan devlet üniversitelerinde görev yapan otuz öğretim elemanı ile görüşme yapılmıştır. Araştırmanın nitel verileri MAXQDA programı kullanılarak "betimsel analiz" tekniği ile çözümlenmiştir. Araştırmanın nicel bölümü sonucunda, öğretim elemanları ve öğrencilerin yükseköğretim sisteminden beklentilerinin ve yükseköğretimin niteliğine ilişkin algılarının farklı olduğu saptanmıştır. Araştırmanın nitel bölümünde yükseköğretimin nitelik göstergeleri olarak; üniversitenin kapasitesi, üniversitenin işlevi, uluslararasılaşma, akademik personel, öğrenci; üniversiteler ve disiplinler arası nitelik farklıkları, yükseköğretimin niteliğine yöre/şehir/bölge etkisi, misyon farklılaşması, üniversitelerin bölünmesi, ideal üniversite, aidiyet, dönüşüm, piyasalaşma ve rekabet kategorileri saptanmıştır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Kalite, Yükseköğretimde Kalite, Yükseköğretimin Kalite Göstergeleri, Yükseköğrenimin Kalite Düzey

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine the quality indicators of higher education in Türkiye, with the focus on the perspectives of faculty members and students, and to analyze their views regarding the quality status of state universities. Despite numerous studies addressing quality in higher education, there appears to be a paucity of research employing a mixed methodology that integrates the perspectives of both faculty and students. The aim of the present study is to fill this gap in the literature. This research employs a mixed-methods design, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative approaches, in an explanatory sequential parallel pattern. Utilizing a stratified random sampling method, our sample comprises 390 faculty members and 450 university students. The data were analyzed using the SPSS 25 program. For the qualitative aspect of the study, interviews were conducted with thirty faculty members employed at state universities in the provinces of Ankara, Istanbul, Kayseri, Kırıkkale, Kırşehir, and Yozgat. This qualitative data was then analyzed using a "descriptive analysis" technique via MAXQDA software. The quantitative results revealed diverging expectations and perceptions related to the quality of higher education among faculty members and students. Meanwhile, the qualitative section of the study identified several indicators of higher education quality, including: university capacity, university function, internationalization, academic staff, student experience, differences in quality between universities and disciplines, the impact of region/city/district on higher education, mission differentiation, university division, ideal university concept, sense of belonging, transformation, marketization, and competition categories.

Keywords: Quality, Quality in Higher Education, Indicators of Quality in Higher Education, Quality Level of Higher Education

Generally, human capital is characterized by the positive qualities possessed by the workforce, including knowledge, skills, and abilities (Kazancigil, 2022). The idea that there exists a direct correlation between education and the economy has become widely accepted, influenced significantly by the theory of human capital and this acceptance has led to a corresponding rise in the allocation of resources for education by welfare states (Çömlekçi, 1971). Despite substantial investments in education during the late 1970s aimed at attaining targeted economic growth, the anticipated level of growth was not realized. Simply put, significant educational expansion was driven by economic investments, yet the resultant growth did not proportionally impact the economy, labor markets, and student performance (Serin, 1972). This discrepancy indicates that a quantitative increase in education does not necessarily precipitate an improvement in quality (Bowles & Gintis, 1976).

Considering the relative nature of the concept of quality, there is an inherent interconnectedness in defining the constituents of the educational process. Higher education institutions, under the mounting pressure of societal expectations, have embarked on a ceaseless quest to enhance and amplify the quality of the education they provide, striving to conform to specific benchmarks or standards. The process by which higher education institutions demonstrate compliance with standards forms the foundation for improvement initiatives (Yıldırım & Yenipınar, 2022). The construct of quality in higher education involves accreditation procedures, assessments, internal surveys, reporting, consultations, and further activities related to the internal progression of regulations or programmatic work within the institution (Şenol et al., 2022). Concurrently, quality assurance agencies conduct regular assessments of these institutions, using institutional quality procedures as their yardstick, and relay the findings to the broader society (Cheng, 2011). The indicators employed in delineating the quality of education fluctuate across different societies and ideologies, resulting in variable connotations (Aksoy, 2004; Aksoy et al., 2011). For this process to function optimally, the initial requirement is to define quality and to identify the measures or variables inherent to this system.

Quality

Quality is characterized as the degree to which a product or service meets the expectations of the beneficiaries, the satisfaction they derive, and the fulfilment of their desires (Büyükşahin & Şahin, 2017; Fidan et al., 2022). Balcı (1998) defines quality as adherence to the highest standards, while asserting that quality's relative definition has two aspects: measurement and transformation. Garvin's research identifies eight dimensions of quality, though they lack empirical validation: performance, features, reliability, conformity, durability, serviceability, aesthetics, and perceived quality (appearance) (Brucks et al., 2000; Karakaya et al., 2016; Syarhrial et al., 2018). Performance, the first dimension of product quality, entails the uncomplicated and trouble-free use of the product's features by customers. Features, the primary components of a product, are often the most significant dimension for some products due to their function in augmenting quality, enabling product personalization based on customer expectations. For instance, extra features such as safety, air conditioning, multimedia systems, supplementing a car's basic features, can enhance customer satisfaction. Conformity refers to a product's alignment with its design features; products or operations meeting the specified design are deemed to satisfy the desired specification. The product's conformity to customers' desires underscores its adherence to the specified measure. Aesthetics encompass features perceived by the customer's five senses during the product's appearance and use. Perceived quality indicates the influence of visuals, advertising, or the product's brand name on customers and can affect the purchase decision due to its subjective nature. Reliability is the product's likelihood of failure within a specific period, assessed through average time between failures, time to the first failure, and rate of failure per unit time. Durability represents the lifespan of product usage before it becomes irreparable, signifying the product's ability to be used until it deteriorates or requires replacement. Serviceability, described as "speed, courtesy, and repair competence," suggests that a product can be conveniently serviced or repaired during post-sales services throughout its lifespan (Syahrial et al., 2018; Kara & Kırkbir, 2023).

Unal (1995) describes quality as possessing at least minimum adequacy, or exceeding this level, for a specific feature. Harvey and Green (1993) elaborate on the concept of quality, viewing it through five interconnected ideas: exceptionalism/excellence, fitness for purpose, value for money, and transformation. Exceptionalism implies the fulfilment of quality criteria to the best or perfect degree. Excellence also implies zero errors and timely intervention. Fitness for purpose assesses the extent to which the outcome meets its objectives. Value for money pertains to accountability, and transformation views education as a student-centered process, evaluating the degree to which it impacts the student's gains (added value) (Harvey & Green, 1993). Kırali Tüfekçi and Ceylan (2022) conceptualize ‹quality› as a representation of efficiency, flexibility, effectiveness, process management, and the orderly and punctual completion of tasks. Meraler and Adıgüzel (2012) define quality as a construct evaluating the extent to which a service or product meets the user's needs.

Quality in Education

The definition of quality, or specifically quality in education, is a complex and value-laden concept, rendering it difficult to precisely describe and discuss (Aksoy, 2001). The discourse on defining the quality in education and identifying what enhances it is contentious, and providing an unambiguous definition proves elusive. Scholars posit that quality in education is a multi-faceted concept, influenced by historical context and often associated with striving for improvement and perfection in educational activities. The relativity of the quality concept underscores a similar relativity in ideological interpretation and the definition of education process elements. The indicators

determining education quality vary across societies and ideologies, leading to differing interpretations of this concept (Aksoy et al., 2011). The concept of quality in education embraces all fundamental functions and operational areas, inclusive of staff quality, educational programs, student learning, and infrastructure (Jamoliddinovich, 2022).

The quality of education signifies the degree to which explicit and implicit expectations of both internal and external stakeholders who benefit from this service are met, encompassing inputs, processes, and outputs. This multi-dimensional concept cannot be evaluated by a single indicator. It often poses challenges for an educational institution to meet all stakeholder expectations and needs concurrently. As a result, according to certain stakeholders, the quality of education may be perceived as low in some aspects, and high in others (Cheng & Tam, 1997).

Quality in Higher Education

The social, political, and economic developments on a global scale and within Türkiye in the 21st century have amplified the demand for higher education. In response to this demand, Türkiye's national education policies have aimed at expanding access to higher education, both by increasing the number and quotas of higher education institutions and by striving to establish a university in every city (Özdemir et al., 2013; Çetinsaya, 2014; Aytar et al., 2018). The surge in higher education quotas has introduced challenges in delivering, comprehending, and managing the services required for students' academic, social support, economic service, and daily life (Audin et al., 2003). These developments have intensified national and international competition, prompting institutions to seek quality. Consequently, quality in higher education is a subject of intense debate at both international and national levels, leading to substantial transformations and changes in this field.

Özer et al. (2010) contend that due to the complex structure of education, especially higher education, there lacks a consensus on the meaning of quality in these fields and its measurement criteria. They argue that finding a universally accepted definition of quality in higher education is an arduous task. In their research, Topçu and Özdem (2022) observed that the interpretation of quality in higher education continues to be a subject of debate. The multidimensional and relative nature of quality in higher education results in varying perceptions by service providers, service end-users (for instance, students), users of higher education outputs (like employers), and higher education employees (Dicker et al., 2019). When assessing quality from a service quality standpoint, key criteria involve the socio-cultural facilities of the higher education organization (such as dining facilities, sports activities), medical-social services, library facilities, housing, and the satisfaction levels of the beneficiaries of these services (Çimen, 2012).

The manifestation of quality is contingent on specific benchmarks. It is unveiled to the extent that it adheres to predetermined measures. In the context of higher education, quality is tied to the capacity of an organization to achieve its set objectives and mission, embodying a sustained effort towards enhancement within the ambit of institutional autonomy (Özer et al., 2010).

Universities must consider the quality of programs, education management, instruction, and research to address quality policies effectively (Doğan et al., 2004). Other contributing factors to quality in higher education could include the physical infrastructure of the university (such as student spaces, buildings, social facilities, sports fields, etc.), examination and evaluation systems, the quality of faculty and administrative staff, selection and development criteria, strategic planning and implementation, instructional programs, and relationships between the university, industry, and community (Hacıfazlıoğlu & Bakioğlu, 2016).

In quality-related studies, the distinct structure of universities should be evaluated holistically. It is essential to ensure that quality improvement initiatives in higher education institutions do not impose additional burdens on all stakeholders. All reports generated in higher education institutions should be consolidated into a single annual report (Öztürk, 2012). The evolving expectations of today's society towards public institutions are driving a surge in the demand for transparency and accountability (Özakıncı & Sadioğlu, 2022). Strategic plans are crafted to outline universities' mid and long-term objectives, fundamental principles and policies, goals and priorities, performance criteria, methods of achievement, and resource allocations. The essence of strategic planning is to address the questions: where are we currently, where do we aspire to be, how can we reach our destination, and how can we monitor and evaluate our progress? The stages of strategic planning preparation encompass: situation identification, future projection, mission, vision, core values, goals, objectives, implementation strategy, budgeting, monitoring, evaluation, and planning reporting processes. The strategic plans put into action should incorporate attainable targets. Instead of listing hundreds, strategic plans should feature a limited number of measurable goals and performance indicators (Karakütük, 2016).

Embracing a management perspective in higher education institutions, with an emphasis on quality, proves pivotal in enhancing service delivery and operational efficiency (Seçmenoğlu & Erkasap, 2023). In Türkiye, there is a pressing need to establish quality standards applicable to every discipline and level within higher education. These standards should encompass aspects of infrastructure, technological resources, and human capital. Procedures for defining these standards, overseeing their implementation, and maintaining a focus on quality should be clearly established and continuously enacted. Moreover, the progress observed in the quantity of higher education offerings in recent years should be paralleled in terms of quality.

The fundamental principle for quality enhancement is the adoption of minimum standards. The necessity for high quality is paramount at all stages of education, with a particular emphasis on higher education. The generation of high-quality scientific research, capable of adding significant value to our country, can only be realized through the existence of equally high-quality higher education institutions (Öztürk, 2012).

The varying definitions of quality in higher education, along with different approaches to its measurement, have become a hindrance to the anticipated development and change, necessitating a shift in existing methodologies. Merely identifying the factors that cause and hinder the degradation of quality in higher education is inadequate for addressing the issues in this field. Equally important to pinpointing the deficiencies in attaining quality improvement goals is finding solutions to the problems resulting from these shortcomings (Hacıfazlıoğlu & Bakioğlu, 2016).

Method

This section elucidates the research model, the population and sample of the study, the study group, data collection instruments, development of data collection instruments, data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

Research Model

This study, aimed at identifying the dimensions and level of quality required in higher education institutions, utilized both quantitative and qualitative research methods, adhering to a mixed-methods approach. A mixed-methods approach is applied when the research question can best be answered by employing quantitative and qualitative methods in a complementary and integrated manner, advocating a pragmatic approach (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011).

In the first phase of the study, a cross sectional survey model, a subtype of quantitative research, was chosen to discern the quality indicators and the quality level required in higher education institutions. This method aims to depict a previous or existing scenario as it stands. The goal is to describe the subject, individual, or object under study in its native conditions, identifying certain characteristics of the group being studied. The key aspect is to observe and describe the subject matter in a manner fitting to its natural state (Büyüköztürk et al., 2012; Karasar, 2015). In the second phase of the study, the phenomenological model, a qualitative research method, was employed. This model intends to focus on lived, influential, emotional, and often intense human experiences, and phenomena that are observed but not comprehensively understood (Merriam, 2013; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011).

The "Explanatory Sequential Design," a framework of the mixed-method, was implemented in this research. In this design, quantitative data are collected initially, succeeded by the collection and analysis of qualitative data to elucidate and augment the quantitative results. In this design, quantitative data and results offer a comprehensive overview concerning the research problem, while the qualitative data collection further examines, enriches, extends, and explicates this overview (Creswell, 2017).

Population, Sample, and Study Group

This study utilized both quantitative and qualitative research approaches to discern the perceptions of faculty members and students in public universities concerning quality in higher education. In the quantitative phase of the research, the population and sample were identified, while in the qualitative phase, the study group was specified. The "stratified sampling" technique, a random sampling method, was employed in identifying the sample for the quantitative portion of the study. Stratified sampling ensures proportional representation of subgroups in the sample corresponding to their representation in the population (Büyüköztürk et al., 2012). Faculty members and students at public universities in Türkiye were stratified based on their universities' establishment years. Accordingly, the sample for this study comprised 190 faculty members and 172 students from universities established in 1982 and earlier; 92 faculty members and 105 students from universities established between 1982-2000; and 108 faculty members and 173 students from universities established in 2006 and later. Details regarding the sample are provided in ▉ Table 1 and ▉ Table 2.

▉ **Figure 1.**
Explanatory Sequential Design (Creswell, 2017).

█ Table 1.
Frequency and Percentage Distributions Related to the Characteristics
of Participants Responding to the Higher Education Quality Indicators Faculty Scale.

Characteristics		n	%
Gender	Female	197	50.51
	Male	193	49.49
Academic Rank	Professor	58	14.88
	Associate Professor	113	28.97
	Assistant Professor	41	10.51
	Lecturer	19	4.87
	Research Assistant	102	26.15
	Other	57	14.62
Age	20 - 30 years	69	17.69
	31 - 40 years	186	47.69
	41 - 50 years	67	17.17
	51 - 60 years	55	14.10
	61 years and above	13	3.35
Level of Education	Bachelor's Degree	7	1.79
	Master's Degree	78	20.00
	Doctoral Degree	304	77.94
	Not specified	1	0.27
Field of Study	Natural Sciences	110	28.20
	Social Sciences	134	34.35
	Health Sciences	49	12.56
	Education Sciences	97	24.89
Years of Experience	1 - 5 years	84	21.53
	6 - 10 years	107	27.43
	11 - 15 years	47	12.05
	16 - 20 years	50	12.82
	21 - 25 years	41	10.51
	26 years and above	61	15.66
Year of Establishment of the Institution where Faculty Members are Employed	Established before 1982	190	48.61
	Established between 1982 - 2000	92	23.83
	Established after 2000	108	27.57
Administrative Role	Yes	105	26.92
	No	283	72.56
	Not specified	2	0.52

Faculty/School where Faculty Members Serve	Faculty of Education	109	27.94
	Faculty of Arts and Sciences	70	17.94
	Faculty of Engineering and Architecture	49	12.56
	Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences	20	5.12
	Faculty/School of Health Sciences	17	4.35
	Faculty of Medicine	12	3.07
	Faculty of Communication	8	2.05
	Faculty of Law	9	2.30
	Faculty of Fine Arts	19	4.87
	School of Physical Education and Sports	3	0.76
	Faculty of Agriculture	8	2.05
	Vocational School	12	3.07
	Faculty of Dentistry	12	3.07
	Faculty of Theology	9	2.30
	School/College	14	3.58
	Other	19	4.87

Participants for the qualitative portion of the research were identified through maximum variation sampling, a type of purposive sampling. As stated by Patton (2014), this sampling method necessitates delineation of dimensions necessitating diversity, which should be mirrored in the study group. The objective of maximum variation sampling is to form a relatively small sample that optimally reflects the diversity of individuals possibly involved in the studied problem. Another goal is to uncover any shared or common phenomena amidst the diverse situations presented by the participants, and to unearth different facets of the problem based on this diversity (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011).

Table 2.
Demographic Characteristics and Response Rates of Participants in the Higher Education Quality Indicators Student Scale.

Characteristics		n	%
Gender	Female	262	58.22
	Male	188	41.78
Age	18 – 19 Years	77	17.12
	20 - 21 Years	199	44.23
	22 – 23 Years	73	16.22
	24 – 25 Years	25	5.56
	26 – 27 Years	5	1.11
	Other	22	4.88
	Not Specified	49	10.88
Level of Education	Associate Degree	18	4.0
	Bachelor's Degree	407	90.44
	Master's Degree	14	3.11
	Doctoral Degree	11	2.45

Field of Study	Natural Sciences	218	48.44
	Social Sciences	106	23.55
	Health Sciences	50	11.11
	Education Sciences	67	14.88
	Other	9	2.02
Academic Year	1st Year	89	19.77
	2nd Year	131	29.11
	3rd Year	106	23.55
	4th Year	85	18.88
	5th Year	25	5.55
	6th Year	5	1.11
	Preparatory Year	9	2.03
Foundation Year of the University where Students Study	Established before 1982	172	38.23
	Established between 1982 - 2000	105	23.33
	Established after 2000	173	38.44
Unit of Study	Faculty of Education	90	20.00
	Faculty of Arts and Sciences	64	14.22
	Faculty of Engineering and Architecture	143	31.77
	Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences	57	12.66
	Faculty/School of Health Sciences	27	6.00
	Faculty of Medicine	23	5.11
	Faculty of Communication	13	2.88
	Faculty of Law	8	1.77
	Faculty of Fine Arts	7	1.55
	School of Physical Education and Sports	5	1.11
	Other	13	2.93

The study group comprised 9 professors, 6 associate professors, 8 assistant professors, 3 lecturers, 1 research assistant doctor, and 3 research assistants, selected based on diversity criteria such as the establishment year of the universities where they serve, their academic fields, and titles. Demographic details of the participants are provided in ▊ Table 3.

Data Collection

The quantitative data for the study were gathered utilizing a custom measurement tool and incorporating the Higher Education Council statistics. This tool helped identify indicators of quality in higher education and gauge perceptions of university quality from the perspectives of faculty members and students. Following the quantitative results and literature review, qualitative research was conducted to enhance understanding of the problem and propose solutions. Prior to formulating the semi-structured interview form for qualitative research, a thorough literature review was conducted, a conceptual framework was established, and the questions to be included in the interview form were defined. Conceptual frameworks, which can range from preliminary to detailed, theory-based, logical, and descriptive, elucidate the fundamental concepts, key factors, structures, and variables under consideration and their interrelations (Miles & Huberman, 2015). In the qualitative component of the study, a semi-structured interview form was employed. This form lacked fixed expressions and question specifics, but included flexible questions crafted to glean similar types of information from diverse individuals and to ascertain participant perspectives (Merriam, 2015).

◼ Table 3.
Demographic Information of the Qualitative Research Study Group.

Serial Number	Code	Academic Rank	Gender	Years of experience	Field of Study	Year of Establishment of the Institution where Faculty Members are Employed
1	OE1	Professor	Male	16	Natural	Established before 1982
2	OE2	Professor	Male	29	Health	Established after 2000
3	OE3	Professor	Male	11	Health	Established after 2000
4	OE4	Professor	Male	22	Education	Established before 1982
5	OE5	Professor	Male	13	Health	Established after 2000
6	OE6	Professor	Male	22	Natural	Established between 1982-2000
7	OE7	Professor	Female	19	Education	Established between 1982-2000
8	OE8	Professor	Female	19	Education	Established before 1982
9	OE9	Professor	Female	32	Education	Established before 1982
10	OE10	Associate Professor	Male	12	Natural	Established after 2000
11	OE11	Associate Professor	Male	26	Education	Established after 2000
12	OE12	Associate Professor	Male	10	Social	Established after 2000
13	OE13	Associate Professor	Female	21	Education	Established before 1982
14	OE14	Associate Professor	Male	16	Education	Established between 1982-2000
15	OE15	Associate Professor	Male	17	Education	Established after 2000
16	OE16	Assistant Professor	Male	29	Natural	Established between 1982-2000
17	OE17	Assistant Professor	Female	2	Education	Established between 1982-2000
18	OE18	Assistant Professor	Male	18	Natural	Established after 2000
19	OE19	Assistant Professor	Female	14	Social	Established after 2000
20	OE20	Assistant Professor	Male	21	Natural	Established after 2000
21	OE21	Assistant Professor	Male	2	Social	Established after 2000
22	OE22	Assistant Professor	Female	3	Social	Established after 2000
23	OE23	Assistant Professor	Female	12	Education	Established before 1982
24	OE24	Lecturer	Female	9	Social	Established after 2000
25	OE25	Lecturer	Male	9	Health	Established after 2000
26	OE26	Lecturer	Male	11	Natural	Established after 2000
27	OE27	Research Assistant, PhD	Male	5	Education	Established between 1982-2000
28	OE28	Research Assistant	Male	9	Education	Established before 1982
29	OE29	Research Assistant	Male	8	Social	Established before 1982
30	OE30	Research Assistant	Male	7	Education	Established between 1982-2000

Data Collection Tools

In this study, the researcher-developed "Higher Education Quality Indicators: Faculty Members Scale", "Higher Education Quality Indicators: Student Scale", and "Semi-Structured Interview Form on the Quality of Higher Education" were used to gauge the perceptions of faculty members and students regarding quality in higher education and higher education quality indicators.

Data Analysis

The collected data from the quantitative phase of the study were analyzed utilizing suitable statistical tests, selected based on the quantity and nature of the variables present in the developed measurement tool (Çokluk et al., 2012). These included t-tests, ANOVA, percentage, frequency, and arithmetic mean analyses executed through the SPSS software package.

■ Table 4.
Comparison of Faculty Members' Perceptions of University Quality Dimensions Based on the Year of Establishment of Their Affiliated University.

Dimensions	Year of University Establishment	n	M	SD	df	F	p	Significant Difference
Teaching-Learning	A- Established in 1982 and before	190	3.23	.72	389	5.457	.005*	A>B, C>B
	B- Established between 1982-2000	92	2.91	.67				
	C- Established after 2000	108	3.20	.74				
	Total	390	3.16	.73				
University Structure	A	190	2.94	.80	389	3.437	.033*	C>B
	B	92	2.80	.71				
	C	108	3.12	.84				
	Total	390	2.9	.80				
Socio-Cultural Opportunities	A	190	2.95	.75	389	3.050	.049*	C>A
	B	92	2.94	.71				
	C	108	3.17	.77				
	Total	390	3.00	.75				
Internationalization	A	190	3.23	.84	389	7.011	.001*	A>B, A>C
	B	92	2.79	.86				
	C	108	3.16	.88				
	Total	390	3.13	.87				
Economic Opportunities	A	190	2.98	.79	389	.575	.563	
	B	92	2.90	.84				
	C	108	3.03	.77				
	Total	390	2.98	.79				
Student Needs	A	190	3.18	.93	389	2.763	.064	
	B	92	2.97	.76				
	C	108	3.30	.89				
	Total	390	3.17	.89				
Accreditation	A	190	3.24	1.00	389	3.619	.028*	C>B
	B	92	3.00	.73				
	C	108	3.39	.84				
	Total	390	3.23	.93				
Preference	A	190	3.48	.81	389	38.869	.000*	A>B, A>C
	B	92	2.68	.73				
	C	108	2.88	.71				
	Total	390	3.20	.84				
Technological Competence	A	190	3.57	.81	389	1.782	.170	
	B	92	3.37	.72				
	C	108	3.49	.73				
	Total	390	3.51	.78				
Total Scores	A	190	3.16	.61	389	5.400	.005*	A>B, C>B
	B	92	2.91	.58				
	C	108	3.19	.63				
	Total	390	3.12	.61				

*p< .05

In the qualitative phase, data gathered through interviews were analyzed via a descriptive analysis technique, one among various qualitative research analysis methods, using the MAXQDA qualitative data analysis program. In the course of conducting the interviews, conscientious endeavors were undertaken to depict the multifarious perspectives and cogitations of the faculty members in a manner that approximates veracity within the limitations inherent to the process.

Findings

Quantitative Findings

The quantitative results of the study are outlined under two subheadings, corresponding to the faculty members and students that constitute the study's sample.

Quantitative Findings Related to Faculty Members

In the quantitative phase of this study, the data collected using the "Higher Education Quality Indicators: Faculty Members Scale", designed by the researcher, was analyzed. It revealed significant differences in faculty members' perceptions of higher education quality across state universities. A statistically significant difference was observed according to the gender variable in the sub-dimensions of education-teaching, university structure, internationalization, accreditation, and overall score. Differences were also significant according to the administrative role variable within the sub-dimensions of education-teaching, university structure, socio-cultural opportunities, student needs, accreditation, preference, and overall score. For the education status variable, significant differences emerged in the sub-dimensions of internationalization and technology competence. According to the age variable, significant differences were identified in the sub-dimensions of socio-cultural opportunities, preference, and technology competence; for the years of experience variable, significant differences were observed in the sub-dimensions of education-teaching, preference, and technology competence. Significant differences were also present based on the field of study variable in the sub-dimensions of education-teaching, socio-cultural opportunities, accreditation, technology competence, and overall score. There were significant differences according to the year of establishment of the affiliated university variable in the sub-dimensions of education-teaching, university structure, socio-cultural opportunities, internationalization, accreditation, preference, and overall score. Significant differences were noted based on the academic rank variable within the sub-dimensions of education-teaching, university structure, socio-cultural opportunities, preference, technology competence, and overall score. Finally, there were significant differences according to the faculty or school affiliation variable in the sub-dimensions of education-teaching, socio-cultural opportunities, economic opportunities, student needs, accreditation, preference, technology competence, and overall score. Subsequent sections present the faculty members' views on higher education quality, specifically in relation to the year of establishment of the universities they serve.

■■ Table 4 presents a comparative analysis of faculty members' views on the quality of higher education, specifically organized by the year of university establishment where they are employed. According to ■■ Table 4, significant differences exist among faculty members' perceptions of the universities' quality dimensions, including "education-teaching" (F(389)= 5.45, p<.05), "structure of the university" (F(389)= 3.43, p<.05), "socio-cultural opportunities" (F(389)= 3.05, p<.05), "internationalization" (F(389)= 7.01, p<.05), "accreditation" (F(389)= 3.61, p<.05), "preference" (F(389)= 38.86, p<.05), and "total scores" (F(389)= 5.40, p<.05). These perceptions vary significantly based on the universities' establishment year.

Upon scrutinizing the differences among the groups, it is observed that faculty members employed at universities established between 1982 and 2000 perceive the "education-teaching" dimension ($M = 2.91$) to be less satisfactory than their counterparts at universities established either in or before 1982 ($M= 3.23$) or after 2000 ($M = 3.20$). In other words, faculty members from universities established between 1982 and 2000 view their institutions as deficient in the education-teaching dimension compared to those employed at universities established either before or after that period. A review of the different groups' views reveals that faculty members employed at universities established after 2000 rate the "structure of the university" dimension ($M = 3.12$) less positively than those from universities established between 1982 and 2000 ($M= 2.80$). This suggests that faculty members from universities established post-2000 consider their institutions' structure to be more lacking compared to those at universities established between 1982 and 2000. When differences among the groups are evaluated, it appears that faculty members working at universities established post-2000 hold higher ratings for the "socio-cultural opportunities" dimension ($M = 3.17$) compared to those at universities established in or before 1982 ($M= 2.95$). This indicates that faculty members from universities established after 2000 perceive their institutions as more proficient in offering socio-cultural opportunities compared to those working at universities established in or before 1982. Analyzing the differences between groups, the opinions of faculty members from universities established between 1982 and 2000 concerning the "internationalization" dimension ($M = 2.79$) are less favorable than those working at universities established either in or before 1982 ($M = 3.23$) or after 2000 ($M = 3.15$). Therefore, faculty members at universities established post-2000 deem their institutions more accomplished in the internationalization dimension than those working at universities established either between 1982 and 2000 or in or before 1982. Lastly, upon evaluating the differences among the groups, it appears that faculty members employed at universities established post-2000 perceive the "accreditation" dimension ($M = 3.39$) more positively than those from universities established between 1982 and 2000 ($M = 3.24$). This indicates that faculty members from universities established after 2000 consider their institutions to be more adept in the accreditation dimension compared to those working at universities established between 1982 and 2000.

An examination of the differences among groups reveals that faculty members employed at universities established in 1982 or earlier hold more positive views regarding the "preference" dimension (M = 3.48) compared to those at universities established either after 2000 (M= 2.88) or between 1982 and 2000 (M= 2.68). Thus, faculty members from universities established in or before 1982 perceive their institutions as more adequate in the preference dimension than those at universities established either between 1982 and 2000 or after 2000. Reviewing the group differences further shows that faculty members working at universities established between 1982 and 2000 hold less favorable views for the "total score" dimension (M = 2.91) compared to those employed at universities established either after 2000 (M =3.19) or in 1982 or earlier (M = 3.16). This suggests that faculty members from universities established either in or before 1982, or after 2000 perceive their institutions as more satisfactory in terms of the total score than those at universities established between these years. This finding implies that faculty members at universities established between 1982 and 2000 harbor higher expectations compared to those employed at other institutions.

Notably, the faculty members' views on the universities' quality dimensions do not differ significantly based on the variable of their universities' establishment year in the "economic opportunities", "student needs", and "technology competence" dimensions.

Quantitative Findings Related to Students

In the quantitative stage of the study, data was collected using the "Higher Education Quality Indicators: Student Scale" designed by the researcher. The analysis revealed that the perceptions of students studying at public universities regarding higher education quality did not significantly differ based on the variables of gender, educational level, and preference ranking. However, significant differences were noted according to their current year of study, influencing the sub-dimensions of education-teaching, university structure, curriculum, internationalization, and overall score. The field of study also introduced significant variation, affecting the sub-dimensions of university structure, socio-cultural opportunities, curriculum, internationalization, and overall score.

■■ Table 5.
Comparison of Students' Perceptions of University Quality Dimensions Based on the Year of Establishment of Their Attended University.

Dimensions	Year of University Establishment	n	M	SD	df	F	p	Significant Difference
Teaching-Learning	A- Established in 1982 and before	172	2.85	.90				
	B- Established between 1982-2000	105	2.65	.83	449	.702	.496	
	C- Established after 2000	173	2.82	.82				
	Total	450	2.83	.86				
University Structure	A	172	2.87	.91				
	B	105	2.93	.79	449	.093	.911	
	C	173	2.90	.86				
	Total	450	2.89	.88				
Socio-Cultural Opportunities	A	172	2.76	.93				
	B	105	2.56	.86	449	4.414	.013*	A>C
	C	173	2.50	.89				
	Total	450	2.63	.92				
Curriculum	A	172	3.00	.94				
	B	105	3.10	.94	449	3.153	.044*	C>A
	C	173	3.22	.78				
	Total	450	3.11	.87				
Internationalization	A	172	3.14	.96				
	B	105	2.80	.90	449	3.177	.043*	A>C
	C	173	2.95	.91				
	Total	450	3.03	.94				
Total Scores	A	172	2.89	.81				
	B	105	2.77	.68	449	.457	.634	
	C	173	2.83	.72				
	Total	450	2.85	.76				

*p< .05

Based on the age variable, significant differences were identified in the sub-dimensions of education-teaching, university structure, socio-cultural opportunities, curriculum, internationalization, and overall score. Significant differences were noted according to the year of university establishment variable in the sub-dimensions of socio-cultural opportunities, curriculum, and internationalization. Moreover, the faculty or school of study introduced significant variation in the sub-dimensions of education-teaching, university structure, socio-cultural opportunities, curriculum, internationalization, and overall score. The subsequent section presents the students' perspectives on the quality of higher education, according to the variable of the year of their university's establishment.

■■ Table 5 presents a comparative analysis of students' views on the quality of higher education, according to the variable of their university's year of establishment. According to ■■ Table 5 significant differences emerge in students' views on the quality dimensions of universities, namely "socio-cultural opportunities" (F(449)= 4.41, p<.05), "curriculum" (F(449)= 3.15, p<.05), and "internationalization" (F(449)= 3.17, p<.05), based on the year of their university's establishment.

■■ Table 5 unveils a significant difference at the .95 confidence interval among the responses of students attending universities established after the year 2000 and those founded in or prior to 1982, specifically concerning the "curriculum" dimension of higher education quality. Based on the establishment year of their respective universities, the mean responses for the "curriculum" dimension stand at 3.22 for those at universities founded post-2000 and 3.00 for those at universities established in or before

1982. In essence, students enrolled at universities founded in or before 1982 perceive the quality of higher education institutions to be relatively less adequate in the curriculum dimension compared to their counterparts at universities established after 2000. This finding implies that curricula of universities established post-2000 are contemporary, reflect the needs of the era and societal expectations, and are consistently up-to-date.

■■ Table 5 also discloses a significant divergence at the .95 confidence interval between the responses of students studying at universities founded in or before 1982 and those established after 2000 regarding the "socio-cultural opportunities" dimension. Depending on the establishment year of their university, the mean responses to the "socio-cultural opportunities" dimension measure at 2.76 for students at universities founded in or before 1982, and 2.63 for those attending universities established post-2000. In other words, students from universities established in or before 1982 perceive the quality of higher education institutions to be more satisfactory in the socio-cultural opportunities dimension compared to those at universities established post-2000.

Furthermore, ■■ Table 5 highlights a meaningful difference at the .95 confidence interval among the responses of students at universities established in or before 1982 and those established post-2000, particularly in the "internationalization" dimension. Depending on the establishment year of their university, the mean responses for the "internationalization" dimension stand at 3.14 for students at universities founded in or before 1982 and 2.95 for those studying at universities established after 2000.

■■ **Figure 2.**
Themes, Categories, and Codes Identified through Qualitative Data Collection Instruments
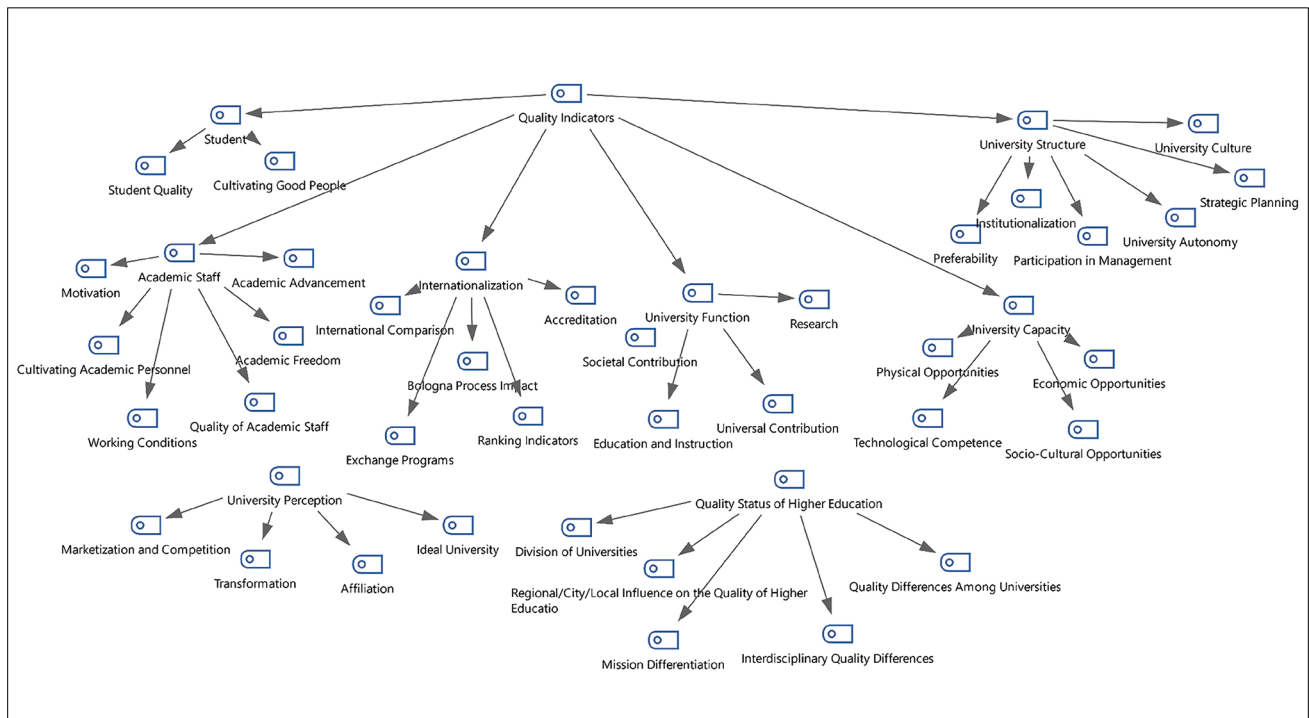
This suggests that students at universities established in or prior to 1982 perceive the quality of higher education institutions to be more satisfactory in the internationalization dimension than students at universities founded after 2000.

These findings suggest that universities established in or prior to 1982, given their years of existence, present a more institutionalized structure, offering greater socio-cultural and international opportunities to their students. However, the students' perceptions of the quality dimensions of universities do not appear to differ based on the establishment year of their university in terms of the "education-teaching" and "structure of the university" dimensions, as well as total scores.

Qualitative Findings

The qualitative component of this study illuminates the perceptions of faculty members concerning the quality in higher education, drawn from their personal experiences, which span from their undergraduate studies to their postgraduate teaching and professional lives. These perceptions are articulated in their own words. Through the content analysis of faculty members' perspectives on the theme and categories that delineate a quality university, the data was organized into three primary themes, sixteen categories, and twenty-seven codes.

Based on the information procured from faculty members concerning the issue of quality in higher education, the themes of "Quality Indicators," "the quality status of higher education," and "university perception" emerged. The quality indicators theme is composed of categories such as university structure, university capacity, university operations, internationalization, academic personnel, and students. The quality status of higher education theme encompasses categories like quality discrepancies between universities, quality variations across disciplines, the influence of geographical location on the quality of higher education, mission differentiation, and the division of universities. The university perception theme includes categories of the ideal university, affiliation, transformation, marketization, and competition. ▮▮ Figure 2 illustrates the structure of themes, categories, and codes generated as a result of the research. Subsequently, selected perspectives from the faculty members are provided.

Faculty members have indicated that university autonomy serves as a critical determinant of quality in higher education. Contrarily, they posited that the absence of such autonomy in Turkish universities contributes to uniformity, and the dominance of central administration over these universities adversely influences quality. A selection of their perspectives on the concept of university autonomy are presented below.

"Scrutinizing the structure of our nation, centralization frequently emerges as a paradigm often criticized and, indeed, consistently stymieing universities... The maneuverability of universities, their decision-making capacity, action, and implementation of those decisions, are greatly hampered... The current context within which universities operate shapes policy from above. Rather than conforming to the mission and vision of individual universities, these seem to be moulded around the centralist structure's objectives" (OE13).

"Without freedom, a true university cannot exist. Freedom is entwined with autonomy, academic freedom, and administrative liberty, and we must also consider financial independence... In this respect, we cannot even begin discussing quality in university education in Türkiye, let alone university education itself. Higher education institutions should have self-governance... As these are currently dictated from external sources and superiors, I assert that there is no academic freedom at present, and without academic freedom, the quality of education cannot be contested. Moreover, we need to first deliberate what conditions must be fulfilled for an institution to be deemed a university" (OE4).

Faculty members suggest that the level of global contribution of the knowledge produced serves as a quality indicator in higher education. They contend that sharing the knowledge produced at an international level and its global contribution positively influence quality. Some participant responses related to this research code are as follows:

"The university is universal, as is science. What contributions are we making to science? In this context, our publications, projects, citations, journals, conferences - where do they stand in the global arena? Hence, our status in this competitive environment is indicative of our quality" (OE3).

"The prevailing perception globally is that the university, by its origins and the knowledge it generates, is a universal institution. Fundamentally, the university is an institution that rejects any form of discrimination. We disseminate knowledge; it is not owned, it is a communal property, I instruct everyone, I disseminate it to all. There is another point: we do not discriminate, it is accessible to all, it is universal" (OE15).

Faculty members opine that university accreditation exerts a positive influence on quality. However, some participants contended that it bears no impact. Here are a few participant responses regarding the accreditation code:

"Accreditation signifies a mark of quality for universities. Given that achieving accreditation entails meeting certain standards within its domain, it suggests that a program or faculty which has received accreditation has broadly met the anticipated standards in that field. A higher education institution or program meeting such standards can be discussed in terms of quality" (OE11).

"The accreditation of a university represents a structure that enjoys recognition, meets international criteria, operates systematically and smoothly, abides by established regulations, and never resorts to randomness, instead engaging in planned scientific activity" (OE25).

Faculty members have emphasized the significance of academic staff selection in the context of university quality. Here are a few participant responses regarding the academic staff selection code:

"In faculty member recruitment, as well as the appointment of research assistants, etc., I would prefer a university where vacancies are not created with a specific person in mind. Rather, a vacancy should be posted based on certain skill sets, allowing those with the relevant skills to apply. In truth, I would like to serve in a university that hires staff based on genuine need" (OE18).

"There is a recruitment process that disregards merit. I've experienced it. I was asked to prepare exam questions and also supply the answer keys. As I did not have the authority to conduct the examination for the potential recruit, they expected me to send the answers so the candidate could memorize them. Given my experience, I am aware. In a system that does not prioritize merit, I don't believe the policies followed are effective" (OE26).

Faculty members have emphasized the importance of academic freedom in the context of university quality. Here are a few participant responses regarding the academic freedom code:

"At times, we become wary of 'who says what'. We tread cautiously when attempting to discuss power dynamics. We tend to self-censor, particularly with sensitive subjects. I assert that there is no academic freedom currently, and where academic freedom is absent, quality of education cannot be a subject of discussion. Furthermore, we need to first discuss the preconditions for an institution to qualify as a university" (OE4).

Faculty members indicate that student quality is an integral factor in the context of university quality. Some participant responses concerning the student quality code are as follows:

"There is certainly a direct relationship between the score a student obtains from the placement examination conducted by OSYM and the student's academic success" (OE18).

"I observe a continuous decline in student competencies. Students, increasingly influenced by popular culture, attempt to acquire information through social media,

accepting such data as factual and exhibiting a distorted sense of reality. In the past, students were more inclined to read and partake in socio-cultural activities, addressing societal issues. However, contemporary students seem to be estranged from basic societal matters and fail to act as transformative forces" (OE7).

Participants regard "inter-university quality differences" as a significant indicator of quality. Here are a few participant responses regarding the category of inter-university quality differences:

"Institutionalized universities, with their established educational offerings, infrastructure, and human resource capabilities, provide a more qualitative education, more suited to a university than that provided by newly established universities" (OE7).

Participants perceive the "effect of region/city on the quality of higher education" as a vital quality indicator. Here are a few participant responses regarding the category of the effect of region/city on the quality of higher education:

"Universities established in remote regions of Anatolia suffer from issues of accessibility, negatively influencing the quality of education" (OE19).

"The influence of city factors extends to both student and faculty member preferences. Universities located in larger cities, often being relatively established, enjoy substantial advantages in terms of infrastructure, potentially enhancing their quality" (OE11).

Faculty members suggest that universities are undergoing transformation. Here are a few participant responses regarding the transformation sub-theme:

"There's a noticeable academic decay and deterioration worldwide, an apparent degeneration in academia. Academic capitalism has emerged as a significant issue for academia globally" (OE29).

"Education has evolved into an arena for capital to reproduce itself" (OE28).

"Technological advancements have plunged higher education into a turbulent state, characterized by daily changes. As everything evolves, so do universities. Those capable of adapting to these changes may potentially surpass even historically significant universities. Such an advantage exists today" (OE6).

"There's a clear hegemonic, neo-liberal attack on academia globally, progressing simultaneously in all countries with a 'publish or perish' mentality. This privatizing and profit-oriented mentality has influenced and shaped academia" (OE7).

Participants perceive the sub-theme of "marketization and competition" as a significant quality indicator. Some faculty members posit that marketization and competition are inevitable trajectories for universities, while others assert that these concepts are incompatible with universities' inherent purposes. The following are responses from participants on the sub-theme of marketization and competition:

"In a capitalist and global world, universities have transformed into arenas where relationships are solely conducted through market dynamics and intellectual property and patent considerations" (OE17).

"Individuals prioritize personal development over societal progress, evaluating their entire university experience and graduation status from a personal standpoint" (OE13).

"My belief is that our focus should not lie in competing with other universities but in fostering more collaboration and sharing the knowledge we produce not only with our own society but with societies globally" (OE4).

"Furthermore, there is the assertion that fields closer to the market utilize extensive resources while social science disciplines receive inadequate support. Consequently, a profit-oriented, rather than social, university approach prevails worldwide" (OE4).

Discussion

In this study, a mixed-method approach was utilized to investigate faculty members' and students' perspectives on the quality indicators of higher education. The discussion was driven by an amalgamation of quantitative and qualitative research findings.

The research findings underscored that faculty members and students assess the quality of higher education based on diverse indicators. There exist significant differences in faculty members' viewpoints on quality indicators, contingent on variables including gender, administrative duty, educational status, age, years of experience, field of study, the founding year of the university they serve, and their academic rank. Conversely, students' perspectives diverge based on academic year, field of study, age, and the establishment year of their university.

Below are key findings pertaining to significant differences in accordance with faculty members' viewpoints: Female faculty members contend that their respective universities fulfill quality indicators concerning aspects like education-instruction, university structure, internationalization, accreditation, and attractiveness. They believe their quality expectations are adequately met. Faculty members with administrative duties perceive their universities as more sufficient, likely attributable to their decision-making roles during implementation. Younger faculty members anticipate an expansion of socio-cultural opportunities at their universities. Faculty members with advanced educational status perceive higher quality in their universities compared to those with lower educational status. As faculty members age, they regard their university's attractiveness as an indicator of quality. Those with less years of experience perceive universities as less competent compared to more senior faculty members, who, while viewing the attractiveness of the university as a quality indicator, also acknowledge challenges in technology use.

Faculty members from the field of educational sciences feel their universities are not living up to their expectations. Conversely, those from the fields of science and health sciences consider their universities technologically adequate and believe that accreditation processes positively influence university quality. The underlying reasons for these perceptions are the technological investments made by universities and the initiation of accreditation processes in related departments. Faculty members serving in universities established before 1982 perceive their universities to exhibit superior quality. Factors influencing this perception include these universities' established reputation, opportunities for faculty and student exchange programs, preference by international faculty members and students, the ability to offer foreign language study options, collaboration opportunities with foreign universities, preference by domestic faculty members and students, and faster job placements for graduates compared to other universities.

In terms of academic ranks, professors perceive their universities as more competent than other faculty members do. However, research assistants and lecturers view the socio-cultural opportunities offered by universities as inadequate compared to faculty members with different titles. While professors identify the attractiveness of the university as a quality indicator, research assistants are found to be more proficient in using technology compared to faculty members with different titles.

Students' perspectives on the quality indicators of higher education did not display significant differences concerning gender, educational level, and preference rank, with respect to teaching and learning, university structure, socio-cultural opportunities, curriculum dimensions, and overall score level. Freshmen, according to the variable of academic year, exhibited a more positive outlook than students at other levels regarding activities, opportunities, learning outcomes, evaluation processes, administrative functions, satisfaction measurement, curriculum implementation, and internationalization-related initiatives, covering aspects of teaching and learning, university structure, curriculum, and internationalization.

In relation to learning area, students specializing in educational sciences perceived their university as less competent compared to students in other disciplines. This perception, particularly among educational sciences students, is attributed to their hands-on pedagogical training, allowing them to evaluate the curriculum more critically.

Regarding internationalization, students from science, health, and social sciences deem universities more proficient. This view is shaped by the abundance of international mobility opportunities offered in these fields.

As per the age factor, students aged 18-19 and 26-27 viewed their university as more proficient than other age groups, aligning with findings related to academic year. Students enrolled in universities established before 1982 perceive their universities as more competent. This perception is influenced by factors such as the institutionalized structure of established universities, more opportunities provided, and the developmental state of the universities' locations. However, curricula offered by these universities do not meet students' expectations and are seen as outdated, prompting students at these universities to view the curriculum dimension more negatively than other groups.

According to faculty members' perspectives, key indicators of quality in higher education include the university structure, the perceived quality of the institution, and its overall perception. The university culture, identified as a quality indicator, is characterized by the university's history and values, upheld through uncodified practices. The absence of experienced academic autonomy and the limitations imposed on academic freedom by standardization in higher education organizations are seen to negatively affect the quality of education. It was noted that strategic plans, highlighted as a quality indicator in the study, do not necessarily align with the universities' needs and are inadequately tracked, controlled, and evaluated, adversely affecting quality. Conversely, faculty members' involvement in management and decision-making processes was found to enhance quality. Participants did not view preferability alone as a quality determinant, suggesting that factors such as the baseline established by the central examination system, universities' offerings, graduates' employability, and the expectations and perceptions of faculty members and students collectively dictate universities' preferability.

Faculty members believe that economic opportunities, a recognized quality indicator in higher education, influence personnel employment, research activities, project executions, scientific studies, participation in symposiums and congresses, and the publication of academic articles. Socio-cultural and physical opportunities, fulfilling faculty members' and students' expectations and needs, achieving intended outcomes from curricula, and fostering a sense of university belonging are perceived to impact quality. The study underlined the universality of knowledge, its contributions to humanity, its dissemination on national and international platforms, and the need to encourage faculty members in these respects. Universities' integration with society, their responsiveness to expectations, and their positive contributions are viewed as quality enhancers. From the faculty members' standpoint, universities' educational environments, curricula, and assessment-evaluation aspects cater to student expectations and the needs of the era, and meet stakeholders' curriculum expectations, thereby enhancing students' high-level thinking skills. Measuring targeted outcomes through diversified assessment-evaluation methods is seen as a positive influence on quality.

Some faculty members, within the study, held that university accreditation positively impacts quality by ensuring adherence to national and international standards of recognition, relevance, and adequacy. In contrast, others opined that accreditation does not improve quality and merely adds to their workload. The study discovered that certain faculty members perceive ranking indicators as political tools exerting pressure on universities without enhancing quality. Conversely, others believe that a university's recognition, relevance, and adequacy positively sway its quality. The study found that exchange programs stimulate students and faculty, enrich their cultural understanding, and hone their professional skills via international interactions. However, faculty members' time spent overseas was considered inadequate, and they reportedly found scant opportunities to utilize their gained knowledge in Türkiye. The study concluded that faculty members harbor varied views on accreditation, the Bologna Process, ranking indicators, and exchange programs as quality indicators.

Faculty members perceive foreign universities as superior in terms of research, teaching and learning, economic and physical resources, working conditions, democratic culture, and societal access to education. The study emphasized the need to increase the influence of centralized examinations in academic staff selection, insist on objective evaluations, avoid personalizing criteria, and encourage the adoption of universal standards in universities. Influences such as nepotism, political affiliations, and personal relationships were identified as significant factors. Regarding the development of academic personnel, the study inferred a deficiency in universities and faculty members' proficiency in implementing teaching methods and techniques. Postgraduate education was found to inadequately cultivate teaching skills and failed to supply the necessary resources and environment to meet demands. Faculty members should have the opportunity to gain international experience and complete their pedagogical processes at various universities. The current academic promotion system, as perceived by academics, is inadequate. Promotion criteria, primarily centered around fulfilling requirements and accumulating points, need to be restructured to motivate researchers. The study determined a decrease in academic freedom and participatory decision-making in universities. The surge of politicization and subsequent ideological apprehensions restrict faculty members' expression, resulting in self-censorship. Faculty members opine that university resources are insufficient, leading to the inability to produce competent graduates for the labor market, resulting in graduates' unemployability. Students are also perceived to lack questioning and critical skills. As per academic opinion, the academic and socio-cultural competence of students and their success in centralized examinations are decisive in determining a university's quality measure. The students' competence subsequently impacts faculty members.

Furthermore, a perceived lack of critical thinking among students and their indifference to societal events is believed to contribute to quality degradation.

According to faculty members, technological advancements have diminished quality disparity among universities. However, this discrepancy has heightened between provincial and central universities. Differences in quality among universities arise from administrative, institutional, and establishment criteria, disparities in academic staff, university resources, and geographic location. Efforts to bridge this quality gap are deemed insufficient. Participating faculty members propose that a university's location, infrastructure, the competence of administrators and faculty members, its economic capabilities, and culture differentiate quality across disciplines. As per the participating faculty members' view, an ideal university embodies universal values, addresses societal issues, leads in thought and action, promotes freedom, embodies democratic principles, includes all stakeholders in management, conducts social and cultural activities, fulfills the needs of faculty members and students, ensures adequate financial resources, produces quality graduates, refrains from employing politics as a tool of pressure, and prioritizes competence. Despite the challenges of bureaucracy, adverse working conditions, and difficulties associated with their current locations, academics express a preference to work in their home countries and universities, influenced by their sense of national and institutional loyalty. Their perspectives vary concerning sustaining international collaborations, the benefits of overseas experience for professional development, and the importance of an environment that promotes free thinking and working.

Recommendations

The insights gathered from this study via qualitative and quantitative methodologies demonstrate that the perceptions of faculty members and students regarding quality indicators in higher education are influenced by variables including gender, age, academic rank, tenure, leadership role, educational status, field of study, founding year of the university they serve or attend, and their respective faculties. In the case of students, variables such as gender, educational status, field of study, years of experience, age, grade level, founding year of their university, and their chosen faculty play a role. Quantitatively, key dimensions such as education and teaching, university structure, socio-cultural opportunities, internationalization, economic opportunities, student needs, accreditation, preference, and technology/academic competence were identified from faculty members' viewpoints. Similarly, from students' perspectives, dimensions such as education and teaching, university structure, socio-cultural opportunities, curriculum, and internationalization were established. The qualitative analysis revealed quality indicators for higher education, university perception themes, and sub-themes that included university structure, university capacity, university function, internationalization, academic staff, students, inter-university and inter-disciplinary quality differences, the influence of region/city on higher education quality, the ideal

university, marketization, and competition. Faculty members' viewpoints on quality indicators aligned well with both quantitative and qualitative research results. Based on these findings, factors such as education and teaching, university structure, provided socio-cultural opportunities, university internationalization, economic opportunities, student needs, accreditation, preference, and technological competence should be considered when defining a quality university.

Qualitatively, within the 'University Structure' category as a quality indicator of higher education, codes such as university culture, university autonomy, strategic planning, participation in management, institutionalization, and preference were identified. Within the 'University Capacity' category, codes corresponding to economic opportunities, socio-cultural opportunities, physical opportunities, and technology competency were determined. The 'University Function' category included codes for research, universal contribution, social contribution, and education-teaching. The 'Internationalization' category had codes for accreditation, ranking indicators, impact of the Bologna Process, exchange programs, and international comparisons. Under the 'Academic Staff' category, codes such as academic freedom, academic advancement, academic personnel training, motivation, working conditions, and academic staff quality were recognized. 'Student' category comprised codes for good human development and student quality. The 'Quality Situation of Higher Education' encompassed categories such as inter-university quality differences, inter-disciplinary quality differences, influence of region/city on the quality of higher education, mission differentiation, and university divisions. Under the theme of 'University Perception', categories like ideal university, belonging, transformation, marketization, and competition were detected. The themes, categories, and codes identified as quality indicators of higher education in qualitative research showed substantial alignment with dimensions and items determined in quantitative research. Thus, the quality indicators of higher education ascertained through quantitative and qualitative measurement tools should be employed to assess the quality status and level of universities.

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