

Opinions of Academic Administrators Regarding Constructing a Quality Culture at Education Faculties*

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Abstract

Teacher quality is directly related to the quality of education. It is important that teacher candidates be very well equipped at pre-service period as well as be followed during in service period. The aim of teacher education is to equip student teachers with knowledge, skills and attitudes regarding the teaching profession. In this context, it is important to construct a quality culture at education faculties to improve the quality. In this study, one dimension of a multidimensional study on internal quality standards was focused on. This study was based on a mixed methods design. While quantitative data gathering techniques (document analysis) were used to determine the current quality policies at education faculties, qualitative data gathering techniques (interview) were used to determine the suggestions regarding applications to foster a quality culture of academic administrators (deans, vice deans and department chairs). When results of the study about quality policies were analyzed, it was observed that while there were quality policies of universities at their internet sites and as a written document, such policies were not prevalent at faculty level. In addition to this, when the opinions of academic administrators regarding quality applications to foster the quality of teacher education and a quality culture were analyzed, it was observed that there was a consensus regarding constructing quality policies at the faculty level by a participating view, informing all participants about this study and the necessity to apply the decisions. In this context, it is necessary to guarantee that required mechanisms, processes, and functions are existing to reach the desired quality and systems to be designed to help the institutions to reach their target.

Keywords: quality, quality culture, ESG, education faculty, academic administrator

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Eđitim Fakltelerinde Kalite Kltr Oluřturma Srelerine İliřkin Akademik Ynetici Grřleri

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đretmen kalitesi bir Eđitim sisteminin kalitesi ile dođru orantılıdır. đretmenlerin hizmet iinde takip edilmesi ve desteklenmesi kadar hizmet ncesinde de ok iyi donatılmıř olarak mezun olmaları gerekmektedir. đretmen eđitiminin amacı, đretmen adaylarının đretmenlik mesleđine iliřkin bilgi, beceri ve yetkinliklere sahip olmalarını sađlamaktır. Bu bađlamda Eđitim Fakltelerinde niteliđi artırıcı bir faktr olarak kalite kltrnn oluřturulması nem tařımaktadır. alıřmada ok boyutlu i kalite standartları zerinde yrtlen kapsamlı bir alıřmanın bir boyutu zerinde durulmuřtur. Bu arařtırmada nicel ve nitel arařtırma desenlerinin bir arada kullanıldıđı karma yntem; eđitim/eđitim bilimleri fakltelerinde mevcut kalite politikalarının belirlenmesi amacıyla nicel veri toplama teknikleri (belge analizi) ile bilgi toplanmasına, ardından akademik yneticilerin (dekan/dekan yardımcıları ve blm başkanları) grřlerine dayalı olarak đretmen eđitiminde niteliđi artıracak kalite kltr uygulamalarına iliřkin nerilerin belirlenmesi iin nitel veri toplama tekniklerinden (grřme) yararlanılarak derinlemesine bilginin elde edilmesine olanak sađlaması nedeniyle tercih edilmiřtir. Sonu olarak; kalite politikaları konusunda arařtırmada ulařılan sonular incelendiđinde niversitelerin yazılı ve internet ortamında paylařılan bir kalite politikası olmasına rađmen faklte dzeyinde bu politikaların yaygın olmadıđı grlmřtir. Bununla birlikte akademik yneticilerin, đretmen eđitiminin niteliđi artıracak kalite uygulamaları ve kalite kltr oluřturulmasına iliřkin nerileri incelendiđinde faklte dzeyinde katılımcı bir anlayıřla kalite politikalarının oluřturulması, bu politikalardan tm katılımcıların haberdar edilmesi ve alınan kararların etkili bir řekilde uygulanması gerektiđi konusunda hemfikir olduđu anlařılmaktadır. Bu bađlamda istenen kaliteye ulařılmasını sađlamak iin gerekli mekanizmaların, srelerin ve iřleyiřlerin mevcut olduđunun garanti altına alınması ve kurumların hedeflerine ulařmalarında onlara yardımcı olacak sistemlerin tasarlanması gerekmektedir.

Anahtar Szckler: kalite, kalite kltr, ESG, eđitim fakltesi, akademik ynetici

Introduction

While the number of students at education faculties is increasing in Turkey, these faculties face the problem of quality. The quality of teachers is directly related to the quality of an education system. It is important that teacher candidates be very well equipped at pre-service period as well as be followed during in service period. The aim of teacher education is to equip student teachers with knowledge, skills and attitudes regarding the teaching profession. In this context, it is important to construct a quality culture at education faculties to improve the quality. In this study, one dimension of a multidimensional study on internal quality standards was focused on. It is believed that the opinions of academic administrators regarding constructing a quality culture will provide insight to improve the quality of teacher education.

It is observed in all developed and developing countries that the importance of educational institutions is increasing every day since they are responsible with educating a qualified human force necessary for the improvement of economic, social, political, and technical ways.

The aim to construct a democratic, contemporary, secular, and civilized progressing environment by creating knowledge, opinions and technology and to make this permanent is a need both for developed as well as undeveloped countries.

Transformations regarding knowledge creation and free movement as well as economic and social areas have led countries to review their education policies and plan the contents, processes, and results of education programs more carefully (Niemi and Kemmis, 2012; Bolaert, 2014).

Although numerous definitions have been made, quality as a concept is abstract and there is still not a widely accepted consensus on its definition (Kumbasar, 2009). The dictionary definition of quality is characteristic (TDK, 2015a). The dictionary definition of characteristic is the feature to be good or bad, to define how a thing looks like, to differentiate an item from the others (TDK, 2015b). Quality, in one way, is closely related to concepts such as change, improvement reform, construct and is an expression of valuing people, constantly changing and renewal.

Transformations regarding knowledge creation and free movement in addition to economic and social areas worldwide affect the education service as a whole. It is important that the quality of students, teachers, schools, and universities be increased as well as their quantitative increase.

The complexity of educational activities and the diversity of factors affecting institutions in various ways necessitate to analyse the concept of quality and the criterion determining quality in view of stakeholders working at institutions. Higher education institutions feel the need to define and construct their own quality assurance systems according to their principles and aims rather than accepting a previously determined definition and complying with pre-determined standards (Başaran, 2012).

Teachers in many developed countries feel themselves under pressure to improve learning outcomes and the quality of education to create better and qualified workforce (Bassett, 2008). As Barber and Mourshed (2007) state, the quality of an education system is the quality of teachers in that system. While the number of schools and students is increasing

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quantitatively in Turkish education faculties, they face serious problems in terms of quality. It is important that teacher candidates be very well equipped at pre-service period as well as be followed during in service period. The aim of teacher education is to equip student teachers with knowledge, skills and attitudes regarding the teaching profession. In this context, it is important to construct a quality culture at education faculties to improve the quality.

It is aimed in this study to analyse the current policies at education /educational sciences faculties and to determine the opinions of academic administrators working at education faculties regarding constructing a quality culture. Thus, answers to the following questions were sought;

- Are there written quality assurance policies at education faculties? If there are, then, what do these policies contain?
- What is the level of reflection of the current situation of the quality evaluation reports regarding actions for quality at institutions including self-evaluation of institutions?
- Do the applications of quality assurance policies determined by the Higher Education Institution constitute awareness on academic administrators, academics and students regarding quality?
- What are the views of academic administrators regarding constructing a quality culture to improve the quality at education faculties?

Method

This study is based on a mixed method design in which both quantitative and qualitative techniques were used. Studies of mixed methods design aim at strengthening the study by combining both methods to understand a phenomenon when quantitative and qualitative studies cannot be conducted separately and alone (Gay, Mills and Airasian, 2009). While quantitative data gathering techniques (document analysis) were used to determine the current quality policies at education faculties, qualitative data gathering techniques (interview) were used to determine the suggestions regarding applications to foster a quality culture of academic administrators (deans, vice deans and department chairs).

Sample

As the study is based on a mixed method design and as both quantitative and qualitative data gathering techniques were used, selection of the study group was determined at two phases. To gather data from academic administrators (deans, vice deans, chairs of departments) working at 18 states and 6 private education faculties a questionnaire was formed. To support data gathered from the questionnaire, interviews were conducted by using stratified sampling at 97% accuracy level (Büyüköztürk et al, 2008) and a randomized sampling size was obtained. Table 1 presents data about the distribution of academic administrators who participated into the study.

Table 1. *Number of academic administrators for questionnaire and interview*

Position	Questionnaire	Interview
Dean	12	21
Vice Dean	15	44
Department Chair	30	73
Department Head	24	59
Total	81	197

Data Sources

Data sources of the study comprise documents about internal quality assurance such as reports, presentations, web pages of universities who took part in the study.

Data Gathering Tools

Within this study a document analysis form to determine the current state of quality policies of universities and the contents of such policies was used. In addition, a questionnaire and interview forms were used to determine the opinions regarding constructing a quality culture to improve the quality at education faculties and to analyse the effects of current practices to quality. The draft forms prepared by researchers in the light of literature were analysed by three area experts, 5 experts of measurement and evaluation, two language experts and 4 experts of curriculum development to determine content validity, and the appropriateness of items for language and technical matters. As a result of feedback by experts, draft forms were rearranged, and pilot studies were conducted. Forms then were rearranged and finalized by feedback from the pilots.

Data Analysis

Content analysis was used to analyse data. Document analysis, frequency and percentages were calculated based on data gathered from questionnaires. Data from the interviews were analysed by Nvivo 8.0 data analysis program according to content analysis approach.

Findings

Current Practices: Quality Policies and Constructing and Improving Institutional Quality Culture

At the 7th entry of Higher Education Quality Assurance Regulation published at Official Gazette (Resmi Gazete) on 23rd July 2015 by Higher Education Council, it was proposed to set up higher education quality commissions at universities and duties and responsibilities of these councils were determined by the 8th entry of the same regulation. In this regard, quality assurance commissions were set up at universities and regulations were established. Universities within the scope of this regulation, were asked to publish Institutional Internal Evaluation Report containing the results of institutional evaluation and quality improvement studies online through their internet sites.

Regulations were not added to documents to be analysed regarding quality policies since each university has the same contents. Except from this, universities' internal evaluation reports of 2016, their documents of quality policies, booklets of quality, web sites where they share knowledge and reports of quality policies were included within the study.

Findings regarding document analysis of current practices about quality policies are presented at Table 2.

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Table 2. Findings regarding sub dimension practices of quality policies (document analysis)

Quality policies	f	%
The institution has a written or online quality policy/regulation shared by the public	15	62,5
Education faculty has a written quality policy	1	4,1
Students were involved in the process while constructing quality policy	4	16,6
Academics were involved in the process while constructing quality policy	11	45,8
Administrative staff were involved in the process while constructing quality policy	3	12,5
Alumni were involved in the process while constructing quality policy	1	4,1
Research institutes were involved in the process while constructing quality policy	3	12,5
Employers were involved in the process while constructing quality policy	5	20,8
Professional associations were involved in the process while constructing quality policy	4	16,6
Quality policy includes all quality processes implemented at the institution.	12	50,0
Quality policy includes all quality processes targeted to be implemented at the institution.	12	50,0
Quality policy includes organization of the quality system.	12	50,0
Quality policy includes responsibilities of institutional administrators during quality processes.	8	33,3
Quality policy includes responsibilities of academics during quality processes.	13	54,1
Quality policy includes responsibilities of administrative staff during quality processes.	9	37,5
Quality policy includes responsibilities of students during quality processes.	10	41,6
-Quality policy includes responsibilities of other stakeholders during quality processes.	7	29,1
Quality policies aim to contribute to constructing institutional quality culture.	6	25,0
Quality policies aim to provide the workers to internalize a quality conception.	8	33,3
There is someone at each faculty/department/program responsible with quality.	12	50,0
There is a handbook at each faculty/department/program stating standards and processes of quality.	6	25,0

When Table 2 is analysed according to document analysis results, it can be observed that among 24 universities, 15 universities have and share a written or online quality policy and one university has them even at the faculty level. When designing the quality policy, students (16%), academics (45%), administrative staff (12%), alumni (4%), research institutes (12%), employers (20%) and professional associations (16%) were included in the process. In addition to this, at 50% of the universities within the study, while quality policy contained quality processes and quality system organization which has been implemented and been aimed to implement at the institution, responsibilities of academics (54%), administrative staff (37%), students (41%) and other stakeholders (29%) were stated at quality policies.

In addition, it was stated in the quality policy that contribution to constructing an institutional quality culture (25%) and adopting a quality conception by all workers (33%)

were aimed. According to document analysis results, while there are 12 universities in which there is a team responsible with quality at faculty/department/program level, only 6 of them have a handbook containing quality standards and processes.

To determine the current practices about quality policies, academic administrators were asked whether they read the “Strategic Plan” or “Institutional Internal Evaluation Report” and their opinions were gathered regarding the reports’ status to reflect the real state. Findings obtained from the interviews are presented at Table 3.

Table 3. *The distribution of academic administrators’ opinions regarding the sub dimension quality policies (interview)*

State		Participant opinions		
		Yes	Partly	No
KIDR (Corporate Internal Evaluation Report) Reading strategic plan	f	28	30	33
	%	34,5	37,5	40,0
KIDR (Corporate Internal Evaluation Report) Strategic plan reflecting the real state	f	18	21	42
	%	22,2	25,9	51,8

As seen in Table 3, 40% of the 81 academic administrators who participated into the study stated that they did not read the reports about quality processes prepared at the institution and published as accessible by anyone. While 34 percent stated that they fully read the reports, 37% stated that they partly read the reports. When results regarding reports’ level of reflecting the real cases about quality processes are analysed, it was seen that few academic administrators believe that the reports reflect reality (f:18) while the majority thinks that (%51) reports do not reflect the real circumstance.

Opinions of Academics Regarding the Effects of Current Practices on Quality

In order to determine the effects of current practices on quality regarding quality policies, academic administrators’ opinions were asked about the effects of constructing awareness regarding quality processes of higher administration and academic staff working at institutions of the current policies and findings obtained are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. *The distribution of opinions of academic administrators regarding the effects of quality policy practices on the awareness of university higher administration, academic staff, and students (interview)*

Level of awareness		Higher	Academic	Student
		administration	staff	
They have a high level of awareness	f	40	13	8
	%	49,3	16,0	9,8
Latest policies created a remarkable level of awareness	f	29	11	-
	%	35,8	13,5	-
There is none at the beginning, but their awareness is raising during the process.	f	-	-	42
	%	-	-	51,8
They have partial awareness and it differs personally.	f	9	42	11
	%	11,1	51,8	13,5
It cannot be said that they have awareness.	f	3	15	20
	%	3,7	18,5	24,6

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When Table 4 is analysed, it can be observed that academic administrators have a high level of awareness regarding quality processes at universities (49%) and that higher administration have increased their awareness with latest policies (35,8%). In addition, participants stated that the awareness of academics changes substantially personally, and they have partial awareness (51%). On the other hand, few academic administrators (f:3) have stated that higher administration does not have awareness regarding quality processes. About the reflection of policies of quality processes on students, participants also stated that students did not have awareness at the beginning but they had a higher awareness level (51%) in time during their education process.

When the answers of the participants are analysed, it can be observed that quality policies created an awareness dominantly on higher administration. On the other hand, there is consensus on the opinion that quality policies did not create such an important awareness at the same speed and rate on academic staff and students.

Opinions / Suggestions of Academic Administrators Regarding Quality Practices to Improve the Quality of Teacher Education

Academic administrators were asked about their opinions regarding constructing a quality culture and quality processes to improve the quality of teacher education in terms of quality policies and findings are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. *The distribution of academic administrators' opinions/suggestions regarding practices to improve quality in terms of quality policies (questionnaire)*

Quality policies	f	%
The faculty needs to have policies regarding quality processes.	180	91,3
Policies need to be formed by a participatory action in the light of common principles.	188	95,4
The administration needs to inform academic staff, teachers, and students about quality policies and methods of implementation.	197	100,0
Agreed upon decisions need to be effectively implemented.	183	92,8
The faculty needs to have studies with national/international partners.	136	69,0
Improvement needs to be highlighted by means of regular meetings and workshops.	129	65,4
Higher administration needs to have effective leadership for quality practices.	116	58,8
Academic staff who study on quality practices need to be honored by a certificate of achievement, or promotion.	117	59,3
Administrative staff who study on quality practices need to be honored by a certificate of achievement, or promotion.	107	54,3
Students who study on quality practices need to be honored by a certificate of achievement, or promotion.	113	57,3
There should be units responsible with quality at the faculty/program.	41	20,8
There should be a group or commission to carry out studies on the developments of teacher education at the faculty.	25	12,6

As can be seen in Table 5, academic administrators hold the opinion that it is necessary to have quality policies at the faculty level (91%), policies need to be formed by a participatory view (95%), inform the stakeholders about decisions and policies (100%), and

implement the agreed upon decisions (92%). According to academic administrators, other necessary implementations to improve the quality of teacher education are studies with national/international partners, highlighting improvements, and an effective leadership of the higher administration. Some academic administrators also stated that it will be encouraging to reward academic staff (59%), students (57%), and administrative staff (54%) who carry out studies on quality practices with certificate of achievement, or promotion.

In the light of these findings, it can be said that academic administrators share the same opinion that quality policies need to be formed at the faculty level by a participatory action, all stakeholders need to be informed about these policies and decisions need to be effectively implemented.

Conclusion and Discussion

This study aims to find out the opinions of academic administrators working at education faculties regarding constructing a quality culture as well as the current policies at education/educational sciences faculties. When the findings regarding quality policies are analysed, it can be said that although universities have a written or online quality policy, such policies are not prevalent at the faculty level. Although it was reported that students, academic staff, administrative staff, alumni, research institutes and professional organizations were involved in the process of quality policy formation, academic staff stated during the interviews that such policy documents do not completely reflect the reality. In the quality policies, it was stated to aim to contribute to institutional quality culture and to make all workers adopt a quality approach. It can be said that although policies of quality processes affected the awareness of higher administration greatly, they did not have a great reflection on students and academic staff at the beginning but rather impacted them during their education process in time.

When the opinions of academic administrators regarding constructing quality practices and quality culture to improve teacher education are analysed, they share the opinion that policies need to be formed by a participatory view at the faculty level, stakeholders need to be informed about decisions and policies, and agreed upon decisions need to be implemented. As Harvey and Green state (1993), no matter how it was assessed or defined, required mechanisms, processes and implementations need to be guaranteed to reach the desired quality and systems need to be planned to help institutions to reach their targets. When Quality Assurance Standards and Principles of European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2017) are analysed, it is seen that the emphasis is increasing with each new regulation.

When compared with international standards, the results of our students aged 9 and 15 from such exams as PISA, TIMSS, and PIRLS (Bakioğlu and Yıldız, 2013; Çobanoğlu and Kasapoğlu, 2010; MEB-EARGED, 2003, 2009; OECD; 2004, 2007, 2014; Uzun, Bütüner and Yiğit; 2010) necessitate to educate quality teachers who are responsible with raising quality students and improve the quality at education faculties. It is important that education faculties responsible with educating student teachers perceive quality assurance developments at higher education as an opportunity to meet the expectations of the state, society, school, students and parents. In addition, it is also important that education faculties construct quality assurance systems and take action to implement these systems.

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