A Comparative Analysis of the Institutional Quality Evaluation Processes in Turkish, European, and American Higher Education Systems

Türk, Avrupa ve Amerika Yükseköğretim Sistemlerinde Uygulanan Kurumsal Kalite Değerlendirme Süreçlerinin Karşılaştırmalı Analizi

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Özet

Dünyada değişen ekonomik, kültürel, politik ve toplumsal koşullar diğer alanları etkilediği gibi yükseköğretim alanını da etkilemektedir. Değişen koşulların etkisiyle yükseköğretim kurumlarının işlevlerinin kapsamı hem genişlemiş hem de bunlara yenileri eklenmiştir. Bu değişikliklerin yanı sıra yükseköğretim kurumlarına olan talep eğitim, araştırma ve topluma hizmet boyutlarında her geçen gün artmaktadır. Yükseköğretim alanında yaşanan büyüme ve yükseköğretim kurumlarının toplum üzerindeki etkisinin derinleşmesi, yükseköğretim kurumlarının faaliyetlerinin niteliğine ilişkin sorgulamalar yapılmasına neden olmaktadır. Bu doğrultuda, yükseköğretim kurumlarında kurumsal kalite değerlendirme süreçleri yürütülmektedir. Araştırmanın amacı, Türk, Avrupa ve Amerika yükseköğretim sistemlerinde uygulanan kurumsal kalite değerlendirme süreçlerinin yapısal analizi ve karşılaştırılmasıdır. Araştırmanın bulguları, ülkemizde Yükseköğretim Kalite Kuruluna, yükseköğretim kurumlarındaki kalite komisyonlarına ve benzer bir konuda bilimsel çalışma yapacak olan diğer araştırmacılara katkı sağlayacağından önemlidir. Araştırma betimsel modeldir ve nitel yöntem kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın çalışma grubunu Türkiye, İngiltere, Norveç, Finlandiya ve Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin kurumsal kalite değerlendirme kuruluşları oluşturmaktadır. Veriler doküman incelemesi yöntemiyle toplanmış ve doküman analiziyle çözümlenmiştir. Bulgulara göre Türkiye, İngiltere, Norveç, Finlandiya'da kurumsal dış değerlendirme ya da denetim modelleri kullanılırken, Amerika'da kurumsal akreditasyon sistemi kullanılmaktadır. Tüm ülkelerde uygulanan kalite değerlendirme süreçlerinin temel amaçlar, değerlendirilen boyutlar, değerlendirme yaklaşımı, değerlendirme sürecinde görev alan kişiler ve değerlendirme türü bakımından genel olarak benzerlik gösterdiği ancak, ülkelerin yükseköğretim sistemlerindeki yönetim, koordinasyon ve tanınma uygulamalarına göre farklılıklar olduğu belirlenmiştir. Türk yükseköğretim sisteminde kurumsal kalite değerlendirme süreçlerinin nitelikli bir şekilde yürütülebilmesi için, ulusal koşullar göz önünde bulundurularak sistemli bir şekilde düzenlenmeli ve uygulanmalıdır.

Anahtar sözcükler: Kurumsal kalite değerlendirme, yükseköğretim, yükseköğretimde değerlendirme.

Abstract

Changing economic, cultural, political, and social conditions worldwide have a big impact on higher education. Under the influence of changing conditions, the functional scope of higher education institutions has expanded and new functions have been added. In addition to these changes, the demand for higher education institutions is increasing day by day in terms of education, research, and service to society. The expanding functions of higher education and its deepening impact on society call for quality activities of higher education institutions. Therefore, institutional quality evaluation processes are carried out in higher education institutions. This study aims to analyze and compare institutional quality evaluation processes applied in Turkish, European, and American higher education systems. The findings obtained are important as they will contribute to the Higher Education Quality Council of Türkiye, quality commissions in higher education institutions, and other researchers who will conduct scientific studies on this subject. It is a descriptive and qualitative study whose sample consists of institutional quality evaluation agencies from Türkiye, England, Norway, Finland, and the United States of America. The data in the study were collected and analyzed by applying the document analysis method. The findings indicate that institutional external evaluation or audit models are used in Türkiye, England, Norway, and Finland while an institutional accreditation system is used in the USA. Although the quality evaluation processes applied are generally similar in terms of basic objectives, assessed dimensions, assessment approach, people involved in the implementation of the assessment, and assessment type, there are differences in aspects such as the management, coordination, and recognition practices of the countries' higher education systems. Taking into account national circumstances, the institutional quality evaluation processes in the Turkish higher education system should be organized and implemented in a systematic way to ensure quality higher educational practice.

Keywords: Higher education, higher education evaluation, institutional quality evaluation.

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Rapidly changing living conditions require individuals who have the knowledge and competencies to anticipate and adapt to possible new changes through education. Education is a process that involves not only a single individual, but also a process that includes the society in which the educated individual interacts. The education level and educational quality of an individual are indicators of the educational quality of society. Each level in the education system gradually contributes to the individual's educational quality.

Higher education plays an important role in the future of society (Eroğlu, 2004), contributing to social development by increasing socio-economic, scientific, and cultural accumulations (Akbulut Yıldırmış & Seggie, 2018). According to Barnett (2004), higher education worldwide is undergoing a series of changes, influenced by factors such as globalization, the revolution that comes with digital technologies, the impact of society on higher education, participation in higher education, access, equal opportunities, and competition. Some of these changes put higher education institutions (HEIs) in challenging relationships with the government, students with different expectations, the business world at the intersection of competition and marketing, and other higher education institutions. (Barnett, 2004). In such a context, various efforts are taken to inspect higher education institutions to hold them accountable to society and the government (Çetinsaya, 2014; Deveci, 2012; Turkish Higher Education Quality Council [THEQC], 2019). Reasons for such efforts include but are not limited to the deepening impact of higher education institutions on society, the expenditures made for the execution of higher education activities, and the impact of the quality of the information produced on global competition (Hamutoğlu, Ünveren-Bilgiç, & Elmas, 2020). Within the scope of these regulations, the importance attached to evaluation studies on audit processes, transparency, accountability, quality, and quality standards by governments and higher education institutions has increased (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2004; Stockmann & Meyer, 2016). ■■ Figure 1 outlines the areas affecting the quality movement in higher education and the relationships between them.
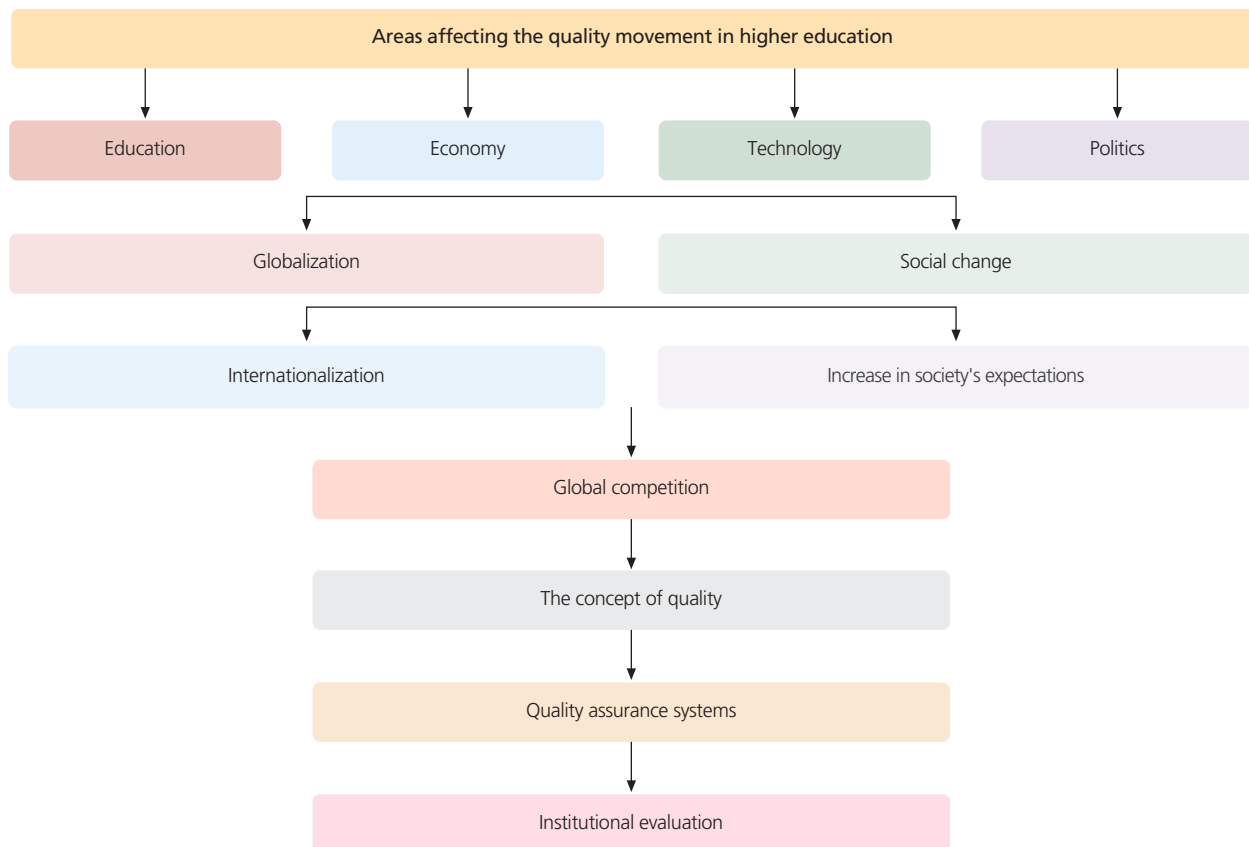
■■ **Figure 1.** Areas affecting the quality movement in higher education.

Changes in education, economy, technology, and politics paved the way for globalization and social change. Parallel to the evolution of the economy and technology, the development of the workforce and the importance of quality have come to the fore (Gürbüz & Ergülen, 2008). The effects of developments and changes in social, political, and communication fields have also increased the growing social demand and expansion of systems, and consumer demand for transparency (Martin & Stella, 2007). These effects play a role in increasing the importance of quality in higher education institutions as well as in all fields (Gürbüz & Ergülen, 2008). This process has affected the acceleration of global competition and the development of the concept of quality, which plays an important role in global competition. The spread of the concept of quality, and concerns related to quality have led to the emergence of quality assurance systems and institutional evaluation processes (Martin & Stella, 2007).

Accreditation is the first form of quality assurance that emerged in North America, Central, Northern, and Eastern Europe. To encourage development, European countries encourage competition in higher education systems by using competitive conditions to determine national rankings and research budget allocation (Bok, 2013). With the introduction of university rankings, graduate tracking, and other surveys by governments and professional bodies into higher education, the foundations for a modern, large-scale, systematic higher education quality assurance system have been developed (Yingqiang & Yongjian, 2016). According to Bok (2013), many governments, especially in the United States, have liberalized regulatory controls over the planning, budgeting, and administration of universities. They try to support entrepreneurship by giving more authority to managers and academics within the institution. As a result, governments need to hold higher educational institutes accountable regularly by creating elaborate systems to evaluate the research and educational effectiveness of universities (Bok, 2013), and to develop systematic, government-sponsored quality assessment mechanisms nationwide (Barnett, 2004).

Many countries have started to carry out quality assessment studies in higher education (Harvey & Knight, 1996) and have established units or institutions/organizations responsible for quality assurance. A successfully implemented quality assessment and assurance system provides information that will convince institutions and the public about the quality of activities in higher education institutions. This system will also offer suggestions on how higher education institutions can improve what they do (Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in The European Higher Education Area

[ESG], 2015). The quality assurance system in higher education, which started in the 2000s in Türkiye, has been provided by the institutional evaluation processes carried out by THEQC since 2015 (THEQC, 2019).

There are differences in the quality assessment systems by countries. In some countries, governments implement assessment systems and management control mechanisms that require reporting to improve quality (El-Khawas, DePietro-Jurand, & Holm-Nielsen, 1998); some other countries provide quality assurance through accreditation; some other countries provide it through evaluation committees or external evaluation processes that take place in cycles. No matter whether the quality assurance is achieved through the accreditation or external evaluation process, this process must be carried out systematically, following scientific principles and fundamentals, and by experts in this field (Boyle & Bowden, 1997; Martin & Stella, 2007).

Through quality evaluation processes wisdom is also needed in addition to the ones stated above. To reach wisdom, a workflow must be followed from data to information, from information to knowledge, and from knowledge to wisdom. As seen in Figure 2, the data are symbols that show the properties of objects and events. Information is data that has been processed to increase usefulness. Therefore, the difference between data and information arises from their functionality (Ackoff, 1999). Information answers descriptive questions such as who, what, when, where, and how many. When we have the knowledge, explanations that answer the question of how can be made. To reach wisdom, it is necessary to show that understanding/ comprehension is realized by answering the question why. These explanations can be associated with institutional evaluation. Thus, institutional evaluation processes should be carried out based on data, information, knowledge, and wisdom to increase both the efficiency and effectiveness of the evaluated institution or program.

The issue of quality in Türkiye was not handled at the national level and in a systematic structure parallel to the new developments in this field until the 2000s (Deveci, 2012) Therefore, analyzing the quality evaluation processes for higher education institutions in the USA and European countries and comparing them with the process in Türkiye is important. In addition, although the quality assurance system and institutional evaluation processes of higher education institutions in Europe are carried out within the framework of ESG, there are differences in practices among these institutions. To reveal these differences, the institutional quality evaluation processes applied in Turkish, European, and American higher education systems were examined and ana-
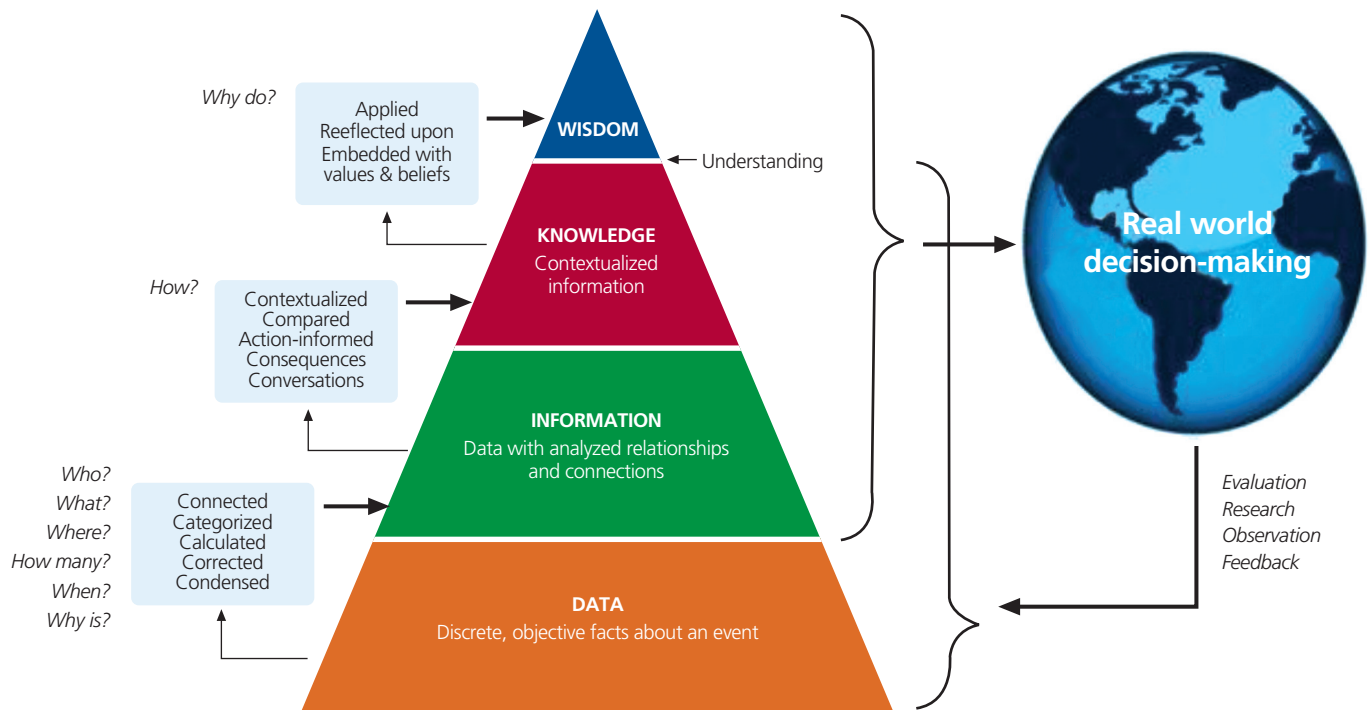
Figure 2. The pyramid of data turns into wisdom (*Source:* Bucata & Rizescu, 2019).

lyzed. The findings obtained from the analysis and comparison of these processes are important as they will contribute to THEQC, quality commissions in higher education institutions, and other researchers who will conduct scientific studies on this subject.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this research is to analyze and compare the institutional quality evaluation processes applied in Turkish, European, and American higher education systems. In line with this purpose, an answer to the following research question was sought in the study:

- How do institutional quality assessment processes applied in Turkish, European, and American higher education systems differ according to the naming of the evaluation system, the purpose of the evaluation, the dimensions of the evaluation, the evaluation approach, the people involved in the evaluation process and the type of evaluation?

Method

In this section, information about the research model, study group, data collection tools, data collection, and analysis are given.

Research Model

A qualitative research method was used in this study, in which institutional quality assessment processes applied in Turkish, European, and American higher education systems were structurally examined and compared. In this direction, the structural dimensions of quality assessment processes are described in depth (Kumar, 2011; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016).

Study Group

The study group of the research consists of institutional quality evaluation institutions in Türkiye, England, Norway, Finland, and the United States of America (USA) (■ Table 1). The criterion sampling method, which is one of the purposive sampling methods, was used in the formation of the study group. Three criteria were used to determine the countries included in the study group and their institutional quality evaluation institutions: Countries with top-ranked universities in the world rankings (Quacquarelli Symonds [QS], 2019; Times Higher Education [THE], 2019; University Ranking by Academic Performance [URAP], 2019), countries with the institutions/agencies that ensure the execution of the quality evaluation processes in the higher education systems and availability of documents related to institutional quality evaluation

Table 1. Study group of the research.

	Country	Continent	The Institution/Agency ensuring the implementation of quality evaluation processes in the higher education system
1	Türkiye	Asia-Europe	Turkish Higher Education Quality Council (THEQC)
2	England	Europe	The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) Designated Quality Body in England (DQB)
3	Norway	Europe	Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (NOKUT)
4	Finland	Europe	Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC)
5	USA	America	Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA)

processes on the official websites of institutions/agencies that ensure the execution of quality evaluation processes in higher education systems.

Data Collection Method, Sources, Tool, and Data Collection

The document analysis method was used to collect data in the research. The documents examined as the data source of the research are regulations, guides, criteria, reports on the official websites of the quality institutions (THEQC, QAA/DQB, NOKUT, FINEEC, CHEA) responsible for the institutional quality assessment processes applied in higher education systems in Türkiye, England, Norway, Finland, and the USA, and the literature on these processes.

The data were collected through a document analysis table. The themes in the document review table were rearranged after the documents related to the institutional quality evaluation processes applied in higher education systems in Türkiye, England, Norway, Finland, and the USA were carefully examined (Table 2).

Data Analysis

This study examines the documents on the official web pages of the institutional quality evaluation processes applied in higher education systems. The collected data were analyzed with the document analysis method (Bowen, 2009). The themes in the document review table were written separately for each quality evaluation institution in electronic form. In cases where sufficient information on a theme could not be directly found on websites, information was requested by sending an e-mail to the relevant institution. The data of each theme of the five organizations in the study group were put side by side in each theme line, and a single table (Table 3) was prepared to show the findings comparatively.

In the research, the steps suggested by Fraenkel and Wallen (2009) were followed to both improve and check validity and reliability. In the document review, primary sources were prioritized for the data to be original. The data analyzed from different sources are presented simultaneously by comparison to avoid the creation of inconsistent definitions or explanations on a subject from documents that do not include different perspectives. The researchers discussed the meanings of the terms within the scope of the subject to understand the documents more accurately and deeply. The meanings of the concepts related to the subject such as institutional evaluation, external evaluation, internal evaluation, and accreditation were re-examined by reviewing the literature. During the document review process, new information and expressions such as the Deming/Shewhart cycle, and regional/national accreditation were taken into account to increase reliability. Feedback was received from two academics, who had published on the subject, regarding the relevance of the research findings and comments. All the documents obtained regarding the quality evaluation institutions of the countries and their activities were recorded electronically. Finally, the sources for all the explanations included in the research are shown in the text and the references section.

Results

The findings obtained on the structural analysis and comparison of the institutional quality evaluation processes applied in Turkish, European, and American higher education systems are presented below.

Naming the Evaluation System

Institutional quality evaluation agents in higher education systems are called as follows:

- Institutional External Evaluation and Accreditation in Türkiye
- Quality and Standards Review in England
- Institutional Quality Assurance Audit in Norway
- The Quality Audits of Higher Education Institutions in Finland
- Institutional Accreditation in the USA

Table 2. General information on evaluation agent for institutional quality assurance in Türkiye, England, Norway, Finland, and the USA.

Country/ organization	Year of foundation	General information
Türkiye/ THEQC	2015	Institutional quality evaluation processes in the Turkish higher education system are regulated by the Turkish Higher Education Quality Council (THEQC). THEQC is an institution with administrative and financial autonomy, a public legal entity, and a special budget (THEQC, 2020). The main duties of THEQC are listed in detail in the Regulation on Higher Education Quality Assurance and the Turkish Higher Education Quality Council (Official Gazette, 2018; THEQC, 2019). Some of the main duties of THEQC are to make evaluations according to national and international quality standards regarding the quality levels of leadership, government and quality, learning and teaching, research and development and service to society, to carry out external and internal quality assurance, accreditation processes and authorization of independent external evaluation institutions (THEQC, 2019; THEQC, 2022).
England/ QAA DQB	1997 2018	The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) carries out quality assessment processes in higher education institutions in England for Higher Education. QAA is an independent body that monitors and advises on standards and quality in UK higher education. The main tasks of QAA are setting and monitoring standards for UK higher education institutions and access to courses leading to higher education degrees, including the development of the Quality Code for higher education, advising on the right to be named a UK university, reviewing UK higher education and preparing a report on the findings, and examining complaints about academic standards and quality in higher education. In addition, QAA provides training, guidance, and support to help UK higher education institutions develop their own quality assurance processes. QAA was designated as the Designated Quality Body (DQB) for England in 2018.
Norway/ NOKUT	2003	Institutional quality evaluation processes in the Norwegian higher education system are carried out by the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT). NOKUT is an independent specialist organization under the Ministry of Education and Research. NOKUT's main tasks are the evaluation of the systems of higher education institutions in terms of quality assurance, accreditation of higher education and vocational education institutions and programs, review of previous accreditation, evaluation of the importance given to the evaluation of quality in higher education, recognition of qualifications offered by foreign higher education institutions and Norwegian higher education institutions (Langfeldt, Harvey, Huisman, Westerheijden, & Stensaker, 2008).
Finland/ FINEEC	2014	The Finnish Education Evaluation Center (FINEEC) carries out institutional quality evaluation processes in the Finnish higher education system. FINEEC is an independent organization operating as a separate unit within the Finnish National Education Agency. The main tasks of FINEEC are evaluating the activities of basic education institutions and higher education institutions in accordance with the national evaluation plan, evaluating the learning outcomes related to the program objectives, and supporting educational institutions in matters related to evaluation and quality management (Loukkola, Vinther-Jørgensen, Pol, & Treml, 2017).
USA/ CHEA, USDE	1996	Accreditation bodies recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) or the US Department of Education (USDE) carry out institutional quality assessment processes in higher education institutions in the USA. These organizations may only be recognized by CHEA or USDE, or by both. Organizations other than CHEA that provide institutional accreditation in the USA are divided into three; regional, national-religious, and national-occupational. CHEA is a private non-government agency, while USDE is a federal government agency. CHEA's main task is to examine the capacity of accreditation bodies to provide and improve the academic quality of higher education institutions and programs according to CHEA standards. The main task of USDE is to examine the capacity of accrediting agencies to validate eligible higher education institutions and programs for federal funds, including student aid, based on federal standards.

The data analysis suggests that traditionally the concepts of *evaluation* and *accreditation* are used and the concept of accreditation has been in use from 2020 in the Turkish higher education system. The concept of *review* in the higher education system of England and the concept of *the audit* are used in the higher education systems in Norway and Finland. In the USA higher education system, the concept of *accreditation* is used. It is known that accreditation is different from other quality evaluation processes. It is a process "by which a (non-)governmental or private body evaluates the quality of a HEI as a whole or a specific educational program to formally recognize it as having met certain pre-determined minimal criteria or standards (Vlasceanu, Grünberg, & Pârlea, 2007, p. 25)."

At the end of the accreditation process, positive or negative decisions are made, such as recognition or granting a license for a certain period. The concepts of audit and review have been used interchangeably by Vlasceanu and others (2007). Moreover, Vlasceanu and others (2007) state that in the United Kingdom, evaluation is also called a review. However, the concepts of evaluation and audit do not refer to exactly the same processes (Figure 3). According to the Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Career Development (AKKORK, 2020), evaluation is the control of dimensions such as education, research, personnel, and infrastructure of a university, academy, institute, or program. An audit is defined as the activity in which the institutional quali-
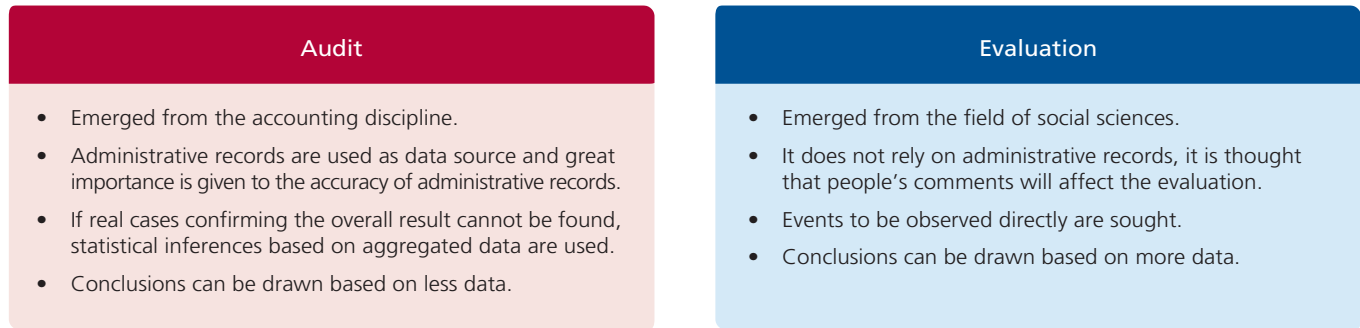
Table 3. Findings regarding institutional quality evaluation processes implemented in Turkish, European, and American higher education systems.

Country/ Institution	Türkiye/ THEQC	England/ QAA	Norway/ NOKUT	Finland/ FINEEC	USA/ CHEA, USDE
Naming the evaluation system	Institutional External Evaluation and Accreditation	Quality and Standards Review	Institutional Quality Assurance Audit	The Quality Audits of Higher Education Institutions	Institutional Accreditation
Purpose of evaluation	To evaluate the compliance of the HEI with the mission/ vision and strategic goals the institution defines and whether it adopts the continuous improvement approach.	To provide proof to the Office for Students (OfS) about whether providers meet the requirements of the OfS regulatory framework. To provide proof to the OfS to allow the OfS to decide whether registered providers are neglecting or are at increased risk of neglect of their conditions of registration.	To verify whether the HEI's internal quality assurance ensures the quality of education and encourages improvement.	To evaluate the consistency of the quality work of HEIs according to European standards. To evaluate whether the effective enhancement of HEIs is achieved through the quality system. To support internationalization, experimenting, and a creative atmosphere in HEIs. To collect clear and transparent information on the quality process at HEIs.	To ensure minimum quality in HEIs. To make sure HEIs have processes to try to do what they do better.
Evaluated dimension	Leadership, governance, and quality Learning and teaching Research and development Service to society	Learning and teaching	Learning and teaching	Competence • Learning and teaching Impact and renewal • Research, development and innovation • Societal impact Quality and well-being • Quality system and strategic management Learning organisation • An evaluation area chosen by the HEI	Mission Integrity: Ethics and responsibility Learning and teaching Institutional planning and effectiveness Management system (Differentiating among accreditation agencies)
Evaluation approach(es)	Continuous improvement	Student-centered	Student-centered	Enhancement-led evaluation Student-centered	(Differentiating among accreditation agencies)
Persons involved in the evaluation process	Institutional External Evaluation Commission Head of evaluation team/ Evaluators • Academics • Administrative staff • Students • Employer/professional practitioners	Provider facilitator QAA officer QAA Quality Assurance Manager • Senior QAA officer Evaluation team • Different experts, expert consultants according to the fields	Evaluation team • Academics • Students	Project supervisor Evaluation team • Academics • Students • Employer/professional practitioners	Evaluation team • Academics • Managers • Members of the public interested in higher education
Evaluation type	Peer	Peer	Peer	Peer	Peer

ty control system is controlled at the institutional or program level (AKKORK, 2020). According to another definition (Reddy, 2017), evaluation is the systematic assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of a program; on the other hand, the audit is determining the compliance of programs, activities, and functions with predetermined standards. While the purpose of the evaluation is stated as making a judgment about the quality of the service available, the purpose of the audit is stated as measuring the practices against a standard (Twycross & Shorten, 2014; Vlasceanu et al., 2007). According to Havens (1980), when examining a program, answers to the

same basic questions are sought in both the audit and evaluation processes: "What happened? How does this compare to some standards? What can be done to improve performance in the future?" Although answers to the same questions are sought in both processes, there are theoretical and philosophical differences between the two concepts, stemming from the traditions of the intellectual disciplines they evolved from (Davis, 1990; Havens, 1980).

Havens (1980) emphasizes that the administrative records available to the auditor may not always be complete and reli-

Audit	Evaluation
• Emerged from the accounting discipline. • Administrative records are used as data source and great importance is given to the accuracy of administrative records. • If real cases confirming the overall result cannot be found, statistical inferences based on aggregated data are used. • Conclusions can be drawn based on less data.	• Emerged from the field of social sciences. • It does not rely on administrative records, it is thought that people's comments will affect the evaluation. • Events to be observed directly are sought. • Conclusions can be drawn based on more data.

Figure 3. Differences in audit and evaluation processes.

able, while the evaluator can never observe everything that needs to be observed to support firm conclusions. Therefore, observation and statistical inference can be used together. In addition, Pierre, Peters and Fine Licht (2018) stated that the perception of the differences between audit and evaluation has changed significantly in recent years, and audit has largely turned into a new evaluation form.

Purpose of Evaluation

The purposes of the institutional quality evaluation processes applied in the higher education systems are expressed in different ways in Türkiye, England, Norway, Finland, and the USA. The purpose of the Institutional External Evaluation and Accreditation in Türkiye is to evaluate the compliance of the HEI with the mission/ vision and strategic goals the institution defines and whether it adopts the continuous improvement approach (THEQC, 2020, 2021).

The purposes of the Quality and Standards Review in England are to provide proof to the Office for Students (OfS) about whether providers meet the requirements of the OfS regulatory framework and to allow the OfS to decide whether registered providers are neglecting or are at increased risk of neglect of their conditions of registration. (The Designated Quality Body in England [DQB], 2022; The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education [QAA], 2019). In England, the OfS was established as the independent regulator of higher education by the Higher Education and Research Act 2017. The legal functions of the OfS include publishing the regulatory framework for higher education in England and keeping track of higher education institutions officially registered with the OfS and managed by the OfS (QAA, 2019). The regulatory framework sets out the basic requirements that higher education institutions must meet for enrollment in OfS. DQB is operated on an arms-length basis by QAA and in accordance with the provisions of the Higher

Education and Research Act 2017 carries out its evaluations in line with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, which was revised and republished in 2018 (DQB, 2022). The Quality Code provides a reference point for effective quality assurance and sets out a set of expectations that clearly and concisely articulate the results organizations must achieve in setting and maintaining the standards of their awards and managing the quality of service they deliver (QAA, 2019).

The purpose of the Institutional Quality Assurance Audit implemented in the higher education system in Norway is to verify whether the HEI's internal quality assurance ensures the quality of education and encourages improvement which means how HEIs use the quality assurance practices and the information they collect to improve their education (Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education [NOKUT], 2017).

The purposes of the Quality Audits of Higher Education Institutions highlight learning and teaching, which is the most important function of HEIs. The main function of external quality assurance is to encourage the change and development of the learning and teaching process (Stensaker, Langfeldt, Harvey, Huisman, & Westerheijden, 2011; Szymenderski, Yagudina, & Burenkova, 2015) because the quality of education is a key issue in the creation of the global higher education area (Finnish Education Evaluation Centre [FINEEC], 2019). The purposes of the Quality Audits of Higher Education Institutions implemented in the Finnish higher education system are evaluating the consistency of the quality work of HEIs according to European standards, evaluating whether the effective enhancement of HEIs is achieved through the quality system, supporting internationalization, experimenting and a creative atmosphere in HEIs and collecting clear and transparent information on the quality process at HEIs (FINEEC, 2019). The purposes of the Institutional Accreditation process implemented in the US higher educa-

tion system are to ensure minimum quality in higher education institutions and to make sure that institutions have processes to try to do what they do better (Eaton, 2016).

When the objectives of the institutional quality evaluation processes implemented by the countries in their higher education systems are analyzed, these purposes are thought to be expressed as different forms of the same functions. Billing's (2004) study comparing the purposes of international external quality assurance systems in higher education and investigating whether national quality assurance frameworks show similarity or diversity is the source of this view. The dimensions expressed by the purposes are listed as improving quality, providing publicly available information on quality, standards, objectives achieved, and the use of resources, and contributing to the planning process in accreditation and higher education systems (Billing, 2004).

Langfeldt, Stensaker, Harvey, Huisman, and Westerheijden (2009) also state that quality assurance activities in higher education institutions are carried out to serve various interrelated general purposes. These purposes are ensuring that higher education institutions, practices, or programs meet the required standards, closing the programs that do not comply with the standards, performing institutional or program accreditations, and informing students and other stakeholders about the quality of higher education institutions and their education. Billing (2004) states that national quality assurance systems across countries have much in common. However, the different ways in which the purposes of institutional quality evaluation systems are expressed between countries can be explained in concepts such as applicability, size of the higher education sector, legal rigidity, or flexibility of the quality assurance system.

Evaluated Dimensions

The differentiating features of the institutional quality evaluation processes applied in the higher education systems of the countries due to common and various factors draw attention when the evaluation dimensions are analyzed. Within the scope of the Institutional External Evaluation and Accreditation in Türkiye, evaluations are made in the dimensions of leadership, governance and quality, learning and teaching, research and development, and service to society (THEQC, 2022). In the institutional quality evaluation processes applied in the England and Norway higher education systems, the learning and teaching dimension stands out. Various other types of evaluation are carried out in England and Norway. In the Quality Audits of Higher Education Institutions in the Finnish higher education system, evaluations are made on learning and teaching, research, development, innovation, societal impact, quality system, and strate-

gic management, an evaluation area chosen by the HEI (FINEEC, 2019). In the Institutional Accreditation process implemented in the US higher education system, evaluations are made under the headings of mission, integrity: ethics and responsibility, education and training, institutional planning and effectiveness, and management system. However, since Institutional Accreditation in the USA is carried out by various accreditation agencies, the dimensions evaluated differ between accreditation agencies.

The dimension common to the higher education systems of all countries is learning and teaching. Although the quality of learning and teaching in higher education institutions is one of the main focuses that led to the establishment of national quality assurance systems in European countries (Syzmenderski et al., 2015), there are relatively few studies focusing on the impact of institutional quality evaluation processes on this dimension (Coates, 2006; Stensaker et al., 2011). In Syzmenderski and others' (2015) study, which investigated the effects of quality assurance systems on the quality of learning and teaching in universities, lecturers expressed their doubts about the effectiveness of the quality assurance system on the quality of learning and teaching. In addition, almost all students had difficulty in explaining the effect of external evaluation on the quality of learning and teaching.

Evaluation Approach

In the institutional quality evaluation processes applied in higher education systems, continuous improvement approach is adopted in Türkiye, student-centered approach in England and Norway, enhancement-led evaluation and student-centered approach in Finland, and approaches that differ among accreditation institutions in the USA.

The source of the continuous improvement approach is the Kaizen philosophy. Kai, change; Zen means better. The concept of Kaizen means continuous improvement as a whole. Masaaki Imai, who introduced the Kaizen philosophy to the world officially in the 1980s, explains that quality is everything that can be improved and that the first thing that comes to mind when talking about the concept of quality is the quality of the "product" or "service" (Kalaycı, 2008). Deming's cycle (Shewhart/PDCA cycle), which is considered the basis of modern quality studies with the philosophy of Kaizen, can be used in the application of the continuous improvement approach.

The implementation of institutional quality evaluation processes in England, Norway, and Finland's higher education systems all adopt the student-centered approach, which once again reveals the importance of students, who are the most important stakeholders of higher education institutions in quality evaluation processes. In ESG, which is the basic

guide of quality assurance systems in higher education institutions, it is a must to include students in quality processes and to get their opinions (ESG, 2015; Merabishvili, Tsereteli, & Espineira Bellon, 2017). Ensuring student participation in these processes provides an index of the extent to which students research what will make quality education happen, information about what students do, and a tool for determining the efficiency of higher education (Coates, 2006).

Enhancement-led evaluation which is applied alongside the student-centered approach in Finland is based on participation and interaction. The objectives of the enhancement-led evaluation are to involve the personnel, students, and stakeholders of the higher education institution in recognizing the strengths, good practices and areas to be developed in the functioning of the institution, to support higher education institutions in reaching their own goals and to create a premise for the continuous improvement of the institutions (FINEEC, 2019). As such, enhancement-led evaluation is similar to the continuous improvement approach adopted in Türkiye.

Persons Involved in the Evaluation Process

Our data analysis shows that the persons involved in the evaluations are generally similar in their titles and qualifications/features.

The Institutional External Evaluation and Accreditation Commission (IEER) is responsible for the execution of evaluations in higher education institutions in Türkiye (THEQC, 2021). IEER first creates a pool of volunteer evaluators and determines the assessment teams. Evaluation teams include academics, administrative staff, students, and employers/professional practitioners. The team leader and members who will take part in the evaluation teams must complete the evaluator training. Evaluations are made about whether there is a conflict of interest or not between the evaluation team and the higher education institution to be evaluated (THEQC, 2020, 2021).

In the execution of the Quality and Standards Review implemented in England, the QAA officer, QAA quality assurance manager who is a senior QAA officer, provider facilitator and the evaluation team take part. The size and composition of the evaluation team vary according to the scope of the evaluation and the characteristics of the higher education institution. The evaluation team consists of different experts and consultants from different fields. Experts are expected to have rich experience and strong expertise in the field for which they are responsible. In addition, regardless of their field of expertise, all experts should have some common knowledge and skills regarding quality evaluation processes. Members of the evaluation team must attend training provided by QAA before

participating in the assessment. To reveal possible conflicts of interest between the evaluation team and the higher education institution, the higher education institution is informed about the team members (QAA, 2019).

The evaluation team, which takes part in the Institutional Quality Assurance Audit implemented in Norway, consists of academic experts with background/knowledge in corporate governance, quality assurance, academic staff, affiliation to a foreign institution, and an institutional-level student representative. NOKUT offers specialist training, enabling the members of the assessment team to participate in the training. Before the evaluation team is approved, information about the evaluation team members is requested from the higher education institution to evaluate whether there is a conflict of interest with the higher education institution (NOKUT, 2017).

Within the scope of The Quality Audits of Higher Education Institutions implemented in Finland, higher education institutions have the right to choose a national or international evaluation team in the evaluation process. International assessment teams must have one or more Finnish members with expertise in the Finnish higher education system. Evaluation teams usually consist of four members: the project manager on behalf of FINEEC, academics, students, and employers/professional practitioners. The head of the evaluation team is required to have previous experience in evaluating the activities of higher education institutions and to have extensive knowledge of the higher education system. Prior to the appointment of the evaluation team, higher education institutions have the right to obtain/provide information about team members to avoid any conflict of interest (FINEEC, 2019).

In the Institutional Accreditation implemented in the USA, the evaluation team consists of academics, administrators and members of the public interested in higher education. In the accreditation process, the faculty and administrative peers of the profession are involved, and academics and administrators provide information to the visiting teams. These members who carry out the peer review process also constitute the majority of the members of the accreditation commissions or boards that make decisions regarding their accreditation status. During the visit to the higher education institution, non-academic public members interested in the field of higher education can also join the team of academics and administrators (Eaton, 2015).

There was no finding that students were included in the evaluation teams that took part in the quality evaluation processes carried out in England. In the accreditation system implemented in the US higher education system, student participation is not allowed in regional and national accreditation institutions, while student participation is provided in some of

the institutions responsible for program accreditation. Considering the importance of student participation in quality assurance processes, this seems to be a feature that needs to be revised in the UK and the USA.

Evaluation Type

All of the institutional quality evaluation processes applied in higher education systems in Türkiye, England, Norway, Finland, and the USA are peer-reviewed. Peer review is the evaluation of a business by one or more people with similar competencies as its producers. In the institutional quality evaluation processes applied in higher education systems, peer review is carried out with the participation of academic staff. Application of peer review, which focuses on mutual assistance to increase quality, can be expected to yield better results because most of the evaluation methods can be seen as threatening (Bingham & Ottewill, 2001; Chapman, 2017; Kalaycı, 2009). Evaluation is as specific as a medical diagnosis process: it asks questions that we do not want answers to be given, with occasional bad results (Theall, 2008 *cited in* Kalaycı, 2009). On the other hand, the strengths of peer review are:

- It provides a professional and detailed exploration of a topic.
- Ideas and practices related to a topic are shared.
- It increases the knowledge and understanding of academics about each other's units and enables participants to approach other units from a wider perspective.
- It enables evaluators to develop themselves professionally, such as through reflection and action planning.

In studies related to peer review, it is stated that this method has weaknesses as well as strengths (Bingham & Ottewill, 2001; Bloxham, Hudson, Outer, & Price, 2015). The poor preparedness of the evaluators, doubts as to whether the assessment was carried out rigorously, the lack of clear evidence on which evaluators base their opinions, and the inclusion of personal comments instead of interpreting standards based on a discipline are aspects that weaken peer review.

To ensure the effectiveness of the peer review process, some factors at the institutional level should be taken into account. For instance, a senior leader should be appointed to be responsible for actions in the region. There should be institutional registration of trained peer reviewers. Staff also need to be trained to best ensure the quality evaluation of the learning and achievement standards, as well as to align policy and process regarding probation, promotion, performance management, awards and recognition, and evaluation. Compliance with academic governance processes, committees, and other audit processes should be involved. Incentives to participate in peer review should be encouraged, and research on how to design quality evaluation and implement its activities needs to be promoted (Booth, Beckett, & Saunders, 2015).

Discussion

The data on institutional quality evaluation processes carried out in higher education systems in Türkiye, England, Norway, Finland, and the USA were analyzed in accordance with the following themes: the naming of the evaluation system, the purpose of the evaluation, the evaluated dimension, the evaluation approach, the persons involved in the evaluation process, and the evaluation type. The conclusions reached as a result of this analysis are as follows: Institutional quality evaluation processes in higher education systems are organized and carried out by autonomous or independent institutions. While the applied quality assessment processes are similar to each other in Türkiye and European countries, a different system is applied in the USA. Türkiye, England, Norway, and Finland use institutional external evaluation or audit models, while the USA uses the institutional accreditation system. The purposes of the quality evaluation systems vary according to the management, coordination, and recognition practices of the countries in their higher education systems. However, the main purposes such as improving the quality of higher education institutions, ensuring public accountability for the goals achieved, and using resources are included in the quality evaluation systems of all countries. The dimension that is considered common in the higher education systems of all countries is learning and teaching. In institutional quality evaluation processes, a continuous improvement approach is applied in Türkiye, student-centered approach in England and Norway, enhancement-led evaluation, and a student-centered approach in Finland. The approaches applied in the USA differ among accreditation agencies. In Türkiye, England, Norway, Finland, and the USA, the people taking part in the evaluations are generally similar in terms of title and qualifications/features they should have; however, while student participation is included in the quality evaluation processes in the higher education systems of Türkiye, Norway, and Finland, no finding could be obtained about whether the student is included in the evaluation team in England. In the accreditation system applied in the US higher education system, student participation in regional and national accreditation institutions is not included; however, student participation is allowed in some of the organizations responsible for program accreditation. Finally, peer review is carried out in the quality evaluation processes applied in the higher education systems of all the countries included in the research.

Universities have three main tasks: learning and teaching, research and development, and service to society. The importance given to these tasks varies according to the circumstances.

These circumstances can be of economic, cultural, political, and social origin. The implementation of these three tasks and the evaluation of the applications are important in terms of increasing the quality. Thus, the implementation of quality evaluation processes in higher education systems all over the world has become a necessity. This imperative process needs to ensure quality because what we measure evolves. The main point in quality processes should be the criticism of the criteria, evaluation approaches, and principles used in the process, rather than criticizing the process. Barnett's (1992) views on the educational goals of the university, Harvey and Green's (1993) concept of transformational quality, and Billington's (2011) concept of educere are all based on a perception that a continuous transformation of individuals and universities takes place, which enriches the student, faculty, and university intellectually. The most basic purpose of institutional quality evaluation processes should be to create an intellectual environment and to develop the world of thought of its stakeholders. In addition, public accountability is extremely important among the objectives of quality evaluation processes. Accountability is one of the most important practices for the formation of a democratic university.

Successful universities in Europe and the USA are undergoing a planned change and transformation (Ayten, 2016). Analyzing the institutional quality evaluation processes applied in higher education systems in Türkiye, England, Norway, Finland, and the USA, it was determined that the Institutional External Evaluation and Accreditation implemented in Türkiye shows similarities with the systems applied in these countries. The Institutional External Evaluation and Accreditation overlaps more with the quality evaluation systems applied by European countries, especially regarding the Bologna process. However, there are also critical views in the literature regarding the effects of these processes being similar:

- The most important problem with the restructuring process is the unexpected scope and depth of the changes made, as well as the similarity with the changes in many different countries with different social, political, historical, and economic characteristics. Although the speed and dynamics of this change vary according to the specific historical conditions and social formation of each country, it is seen that the direction of the reforms follows a very similar path when the latest political initiatives are put into practice by states around the world are taken into account. Across all continents, many government plans, constitutional reforms, legislative actions, regulations, and proposals bring universities closer to the demands of the state and the market. This situation has various consequences in terms of higher education finance, administration, and mission, and ultimately causes problems in the freedom to set their own agenda,

which is preferred by individual institutions (Schugurensky, 2013 *cited in* Bağmen Kaya, 2019, pp. 134–135).

Another view that is parallel to the above view is as follows:

- Under the influence of the growing power of neoliberal ideological genres, education is increasingly commodified. Educational institutions, on the other hand, are transformed into products by being exposed to the logic of the markets. People working at all levels of educational institutions are increasingly valued unequally not for their contribution to the economy, to national and international competitiveness, but only for their contribution to exam results… The great pressure to judge teaching by performance evaluation alone is just a powerful indicator of these trends (Apple, 2017).

Freire (1996) says pedagogy that focuses on production and consumption, which does not think in any way about what we produce, who benefits from what we produce, and who harms what we produce, is definitely not critical pedagogy. We can address this view of Freire specifically with regard to this subject as follows. What we evaluate in higher education systems, who benefit from the evaluation results, and who/what the evaluation results contribute to or harm is an issue that should definitely be considered.

Application of peer review in quality evaluation processes in all countries analyzed is remarkable, but there are concerns in the literature about the objective implementation of peer review (Bloxham et al., 2015; Daniel, Mittag, & Bornmann, 2007). Billing and Thomas (2000) state that evaluation of teaching staff in England is considered very natural. However, a senior academic in Türkiye may perceive it as a threat to autonomy and personal rights, due to the differences in the national higher education systems.

Institutional quality evaluation processes in Türkiye need to be organized and carried out systematically, with in-depth thinking. To be able to do this, the institutional quality evaluation processes of the countries that are more successful in higher education should be analyzed by considering multiple dimensions and by expanding the study group. The quality evaluation processes in Türkiye should be developed cyclically, considering the national conditions.

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