

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Student Participation in Education in Law Faculties: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

Legal education in Türkiye has experienced a rapid expansion in the last two decades. In this context, the long-standing critical observations on legal education have sharpened and the conviction that quantitative increase has triggered qualitative erosion has become widespread. However, it is difficult to say that field studies that penetrate the education and training processes in law faculties and analyse the subject empirically have been conducted. This study aims to examine the behaviours, attitudes and opinions of students, who are one of the stakeholders of legal education, during the education process, and in doing so, to discover the points of differentiation between faculties established before 2000 and faculties established after 2000. For this purpose, data on the actions, attitudes and opinions of 296 students were collected through a questionnaire. The analyses show that students in law faculties are mostly in a passive position; they do not have the opportunity to participate in the education and training processes in a way to develop the competencies and predispositions they will need after graduation. One of the important findings is that law students at the new public university established after 2000 can participate in education in a more active, versatile and qualified way than the students of the old faculties. Finally, the students' opinions contain common patterns that law faculties provide an exam-oriented and doctrinal education, that the practical and application dimension is weak, and that it does not adequately prepare them for professional life.

Keywords: Legal education, law students, law faculties, student participation, higher education expansion

Öz

Türkiye’de hukuk eğitimi son yirmi yılda hızlı bir genişleme yaşamıştır. Bu bağlamda hukuk eğitimine dair öteden beri var olan eleştirel tespitler keskinleşmiş; niceliksel artışın niteliksel aşınmayı tetiklediği kanaati yaygınlaşmıştır. Bununla birlikte hukuk fakültesinde yaşanan eğitim-öğretim süreçlerine nüfuz eden ve konuyu empirik şekilde analiz eden saha araştırmalarının yürütüldüğünü söylemek zordur. Bu çalışma, hukuk eğitiminin paydaşlardan biri olan öğrencilerin eğitim sürecinde hangi eylem, tutum ve görüşlere sahip olduğunu incelemek; bunu yaparken de 2000 öncesinde kurulmuş fakültelerle 2000 sonrasında kurulmuş fakülteler arasında hangi noktalarda farklılaşma olduğunu keşfetmeyi amaçlar. Bu amaçla 296 öğrencinin katıldığı bir anket yoluyla öğrencilerin eylem, tutum ve görüşlerine dair veri toplanmıştır. Yapılan analizler, hukuk fakültelerinde öğrencilerin ekseriyetle pasif bir konumda olduklarını; eğitim-öğretim süreçlerine mezun olduktan sonra ihtiyaç duyacakları yetkinlik ve yetkinlikleri geliştirecek şekilde katılma fırsatı bulamadıklarını göstermektedir. Araştırmanın önemli bulgularından biri 2000 sonrasında kurulmuş yeni kamu üniversitesindeki hukuk öğrencilerinin, eski fakültelerin öğrencilerine göre daha aktif, çok yönlü ve nitelikli şekilde eğitime katılabildiğidir. Son olarak, öğrencilerin görüşleri hukuk fakültelerinde fazlasıyla sınav odaklı ve kitabi bir eğitim aldıkları, pratik ve uygulama boyutunun zayıf kaldığı, meslek hayatına yeterince hazırlamadığı noktasında ortak kanaatler içerir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hukuk eğitimi, hukuk öğrencileri, hukuk fakülteleri, öğrenci katılımı, yükseköğretimin genişlemesi

Introduction

The state of legal education and the issue of reforming legal education has long been a topic of debate. The increase in the number of newly established law faculties in both public and foundation universities since the 2000s has shaped the discussions on legal education around the conviction that quantitative increase leads to qualitative erosion. In fact, legal education was included as a separate target in the third Judicial Reform Strategy in 2019 (Ministry of Justice, 2019). In this strategy, Target 3.1. is stated as 'a new model will be established to increase the quality of legal education', and it is clear that the expression of a new model is both ambitious and carries a critical meaning regarding the current functioning. In the context of this objective, it is stated that 'students will be provided with internships in judicial and administrative judicial units', the curriculum will be updated, and the duration and model of education will be 'redefined'.

What is striking in the discussions on legal education is that the extent to which stakeholders and actors such as students, academics, university administration, bar associations, the Ministry of Justice, etc., who have different roles and influential powers in the field of education, exhibit which behaviours and to what extent, and how their relationship with education develops through these behaviour patterns, have not been empirically explored. In other words, looking at the field of legal education in terms of the actions and attitudes of the perpetrators in this field is necessary to deepen the existing findings and to socially diagnose the issue correctly. In addition, it has not been explored how the expansion in legal education since the 2000s has brought about a differentiation between the old faculties and the new faculties in terms of the actions and patterns of the stakeholders of education.

This article aims to empirically analyse the actions, attitudes and opinions of students, who are one of the stakeholders in legal education in Türkiye, during the education process; and in doing so, to discover the points of differentiation between faculties established before 2000 and faculties established after 2000. For this purpose, in this study, by using the questionnaire technique, students' action patterns in faculty life, their attitudes

and opinions about the education they received at the faculty were analysed. In the analyses, the points at which gender, class and university type differences are significant were discovered. This study claims to make a data-based contribution to the current functioning of legal education in terms of the problems and deficiencies in the eyes of students.

Literature

Over the past two decades, Türkiye has pursued an ambitious higher education expansion policy, particularly after 2006, aiming to increase access for lower social classes and less developed cities (Erdoğan, 2023; Gür & Gök, 2023). While this move enabled greater enrolment and regional inclusion (Durak et al., 2022; Tekel & Su, 2023), it also triggered concerns about educational quality, graduate competencies, and institutional outcomes. Studies based on research and development point to a rise in both competitive and isomorphic structures (Belenkuyu & Karadağ, 2024). Similarly, interviews with rectors of newly founded universities reveal widespread academic and administrative challenges, underlining the limitations of rapid growth without sufficient planning (Özoğlu et al., 2016). Despite being politically popular and effective in terms of quantity, the expansion has not been matched by improvements in teaching quality, research capacity, or student services (Tekel & Su, 2023), raising doubts about whether this structural transformation serves long-term educational goals.

Against this background, many social actors in the legal field of Türkiye have been complaining about the quality problem in legal education and the increase in quotas for a long time (Erdem, 2021). It is stated that the mass scale of legal education and the theoretical approach to legal education is an obstacle in 'raising a good jurist' (Kılıç, 2013, p. 19). In large faculties, which are seen as 'well-established schools', due to large quotas, lectures are given through lectures, feedback is not received, and student participation loses importance (Atasoy et al., 2020, p. 220). The "takrir" method is a method in which the academician addresses hundreds of students, it is difficult for students to ask

questions in class, and therefore reduces active participation (Gözler, 2008, p. 3029). The fact that the number of students per academic staff is very high triggers that academic staff cannot spare time neither for their academic studies nor for the graduate students or undergraduate students under their supervision (Özen, 2018, p. 193). In the current context, excess quota rather than new faculties emerges as a main problem; it is recommended that classes should not be more than 20-30 people for a professional education (Atar, 2018, p. 186).

A second problematic area pointed out in the literature on legal education is that the education is focused on theory/doctrine and does not adequately prepare for professional practices. Continuing the continental European legal tradition, the current Turkish legal education focuses on 'theoretical/systemic integrity' with a limited emphasis on practice (Kılıç, 2013, p. 17). It has been stated that this approach, which means the recognition and internalisation of the law in a bookish manner, sometimes consists of teaching on the basis of legislation, and therefore cannot go beyond training legal technicians (Atar, 2018, p. 187). The infrastructure required for the use of extracurricular education and training methods such as problem-based learning, case method, mock trials, which are common in Anglo-Saxon legal education, is not ready (Akyol, 2021, p. 89). The current education, which is expected to prepare future lawyers for the concrete practices that they will constantly do throughout their professional lives, does not adequately prepare them for the competitive relations, attorney-client relations, and business partnership relations that will be required in lawyering (Kılıç, 2017, p. 97). The fact that law students are not obliged to do an internship or write a graduation thesis during their undergraduate education causes many students to graduate without ever seeing public institutions such as courtrooms, execution offices, registry offices and similar public institutions or without conducting any research on their field (Uyumaz & Erdoğan, 2015, p. 459).

In addition to this second dimension, attention has also been drawn to other problems that are different manifestations of the same approach. While the world of law and the subjects of the judiciary are gradually opening up to all areas of social life

from economy to culture, the lack of sufficient space for fields such as sociology, psychology, economics and philosophy in legal education desensitises future jurists to non-law (Erdem, 2021, p. 314). Areas such as accounting, finance and logic, which law graduates will often need in their professional life, are also left blank (Gözler, 2008, p. 3028). The fact that the four-year undergraduate education does not leave enough room for these fields related to law and does not include specialisation within itself is seen as a handicap: Students cannot gain in-depth understanding and predisposition since there is no education level that trains lawyers who have specialised in certain fields, as in medicine (Atasoy et al., 2020, p. 221; Özen, 2018, p. 194; Tiryakioğlu, 2018). This situation prevents competence especially in the world of lawyers.

When the two main dimensions summarised above are evaluated together, it is seen that, on the one hand, there has been an expansion in legal education as part of a whole higher education system; on the other hand, the old approaches continue. In fact, legal education in Türkiye has always been a doctrinal and unidirectional structure in which theoretical knowledge and accumulation is conveyed by academics in a unidirectional way, active participation of students is not sought, and taught in crowded classrooms (Akıncı, 2001, p. 21; Ansay, 1969, p. 304; Başözen & İyiler, 2010, p. 1481). However, the dynamic that has turned this situation into a crisis has been the erosion of the quality of graduates and especially the value of the diploma in business life with the expansion of legal education. In other words, while the disadvantages of the aforementioned unidirectional and doctrinal approach in the legal professions in the old context, where a small number of law faculties graduated, were not felt thanks to the fact that the professional market was not crowded, today, in the expanding and competitive professional fields, the areas where law faculties are unprepared are coming to light. Today, in order to survive in the legal professions, to progress, to earn a satisfactory income and status, prospective lawyers need to have much more competence and skills than in previous generations.

The literature reviewed so far evaluates legal education from the perspective of experts. How

students, who are the recipients of legal education, relate to the education they receive in the current framework, which behaviours they develop, their expectations and needs are a dimension that needs to be determined. In this respect, in order to test the aforementioned issue of increase in quantity and loss of quality regarding legal education at the research level, a research was conducted on law students. In the survey, students from the law faculties of two old public universities established before 2000 with large quotas and students from the law faculties of a new public university established after 2000 with relatively low quotas participated in the survey. Thus, it was traced how faculty differences, which constitute the axis of the debate in the literature, affect the relationship students establish with legal education.

Method

In order to provide an empirical comparison of the problems identified in the literature on legal education, this study aims to be an exploratory and comparative quantitative research conducted through a survey administered to law students. The population of this research is the students of the law faculties of two public universities established before 2000 and one new public university established after 2000. The names of the faculties are kept confidential since the aim of the research is not to measure the quality of education of the faculties; furthermore, although discussions on legal education at foundation universities are included in the literature, a foundation university was not included in the research population since it would require a separate measurement. The quotas of the two old faculties range between 350-500, while the quota of the new faculty is below 200. The extent to which the difference in quota affects the situation pointed out in the literature in terms of student behaviour and opinions was kept measurable in this respect. For the survey application, an application was made to Istanbul Medeniyet University Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee and ethics committee permission was obtained with the Board's decision numbered 2024/5 and the letter numbered E-38510686-050.04-2400033547. The research was conducted in June-

July 2024. The disclosure text on the first page of the questionnaire was read by the students participating in the study and the voluntary consent form was filled out.

Table 1. Distribution of the sample

	N	%
Gender		
Male	124	41,9
Female	172	58,1
Class		
2	114	38,5
3	99	33,4
4	83	28,0
University		
New	147	49,7
Old	149	50,3
Total	296	100,0

The sample analysed in this study consists of 296 participants. While the law faculties were purposively selected to reflect differences in institutional background (pre- and post-2000 public universities), participants within each faculty were recruited through convenience sampling based on class attendance and willingness to participate. Data collection was carried out by visiting classes in each faculty and administering the digital questionnaire directly to students. Although this method limits the generalizability of the findings, efforts were made to ensure diversity across year levels and gender within each faculty. The resulting sample shows a proportional balance between new and old universities (147 and 149 participants, respectively), and the gender distribution (172 female, 124 male) is also consistent with known demographic trends in law faculties. According to the most recent enrolment data available in the YÖK Atlas database, the total number of registered students in the three selected law faculties is 3,937 as of May 2024. Based on a sample size of 296, the margin of error was calculated to be $\pm 5.5\%$ at a 95% confidence level, assuming maximum variability ($p = 0.5$). This estimation was made using the standard finite population correction formula.

Since the survey was conducted during the summer term (June–July 2024), which corresponds to the final weeks of the academic semester, when overall student presence on campus typically decreases, this timing did not compromise the valid-

ity of the data collection. Rather, it reflected a pragmatic approach to reaching students who remained engaged through final lectures, assessments, or administrative activities. Although the total number of students participating in the survey from law faculties of different universities is over 400, for the purpose of this study, only the participants from the three aforementioned state universities were included in the analysis. Participants from the old state universities constitute the 'old' category as a single group. Thus, old universities were grouped as a control group in order to identify the differentiating aspects of the new state university; in addition, a balanced institutional distribution was maintained.

In the questionnaire, basic information of the students such as gender, class, university, grade point average was asked. This information was included in the analysis as independent variables. Two sets of questions were used to measure students' relationship with legal education in terms of both behaviour and attitude. The first set of questions aimed to measure the frequency of 15 behaviours from 'I went to class' to 'I wrote a petition'. Here, a 5-point Likert scale was used; answers were taken as 1-Never, 2-Rarely, 3-Sometimes, 4-Frequently and 5-Always. These answers were then calculated as points and how they differed under the influence of different independent variables was measured by statistical analysis. The second set of questions is a 5-point Likert-type question to measure the extent to which students agree with 5 different statements to measure their attitudes. In these questions, answers were received as 1 - Strongly disagree, 2 - Disagree, 3 - Not sure, 4 - Agree and 5 - Strongly agree. These answers were also converted into points and analysed. In the following sections, which include the analysis of the two sets of questions, the proportional distribution of these answers is sometimes expressed in the text at the points that need to be clarified.

An interesting finding of the research was revealed in the open-ended question 'Do you have any final comments you would like to express?' which is included as the last question in many social scientific questionnaires. This question was answered by 197 out of 296 students, in other words

66 per cent. Since this rate was quite high, the comments entered by the students were analysed and it was seen that some of the comments were in one or two sentences and some were in the range of 400-500 words. From this point of view, these comments were coded and analysed under certain themes; it was determined that the themes found in the analysis were compatible with the findings of the first two sets of questions and that the tendency of students to share their opinions, criticisms and convictions about the education they are in should be examined separately. For this reason, the last part of the findings section of this study is devoted to student opinions.

Findings

General view of student behaviours

There are 15 statements asked to measure the frequency of behaviours of law students during the education process. When we look at the total mean values of these 15 statements, the first thing that draws attention is that all behaviours except 'I went to class' and 'I took notes in class' have a score below 3 and the options of '1-never' and '2-rarely' are predominantly selected in the frequency of these behaviours. In this respect, it is seen that law students are not actively involved in the educational process at the faculty, except going to class and taking notes. It is clear that students are in a relatively passive position especially during the lectures. 64.2 per cent of the students said that they never or rarely ask questions in class, and 66.2 per cent said that they never or rarely express their own opinions in class. The only behaviour with a mean score close to 3 is 'I studied for exams with other students'. This implies a tendency to passively follow the course content, obtain notes and study as much as necessary in an exam-oriented manner.

A second issue is that behaviours that enable active learning are required from law school students at very low levels. Preparing written assignments and making presentations are among the most important of these behaviours; when it is remembered that legal professions make constant use of written and oral expression skills, it is critical that

students apply to these two behaviours with an extremely low frequency of 1.75 and 1.44.

lecturer is one of the lowest indicators with a score of 1.66. 13.5% of the students said that they sometimes, 4.7% often and 1.7% always consult with the lecturer. Considering the situation of following the

Table 2. Mean scores of student behaviours according to categorical variables

Expressions	Average	Gender		Class			University	
		Male	Female	2	3	4	New	Old
I went to class	3,58	3,29	3,78	3,75	3,71	3,21	3,76	3,41
I took notes in class	3,63	3,19	3,95	3,57	3,85	3,43	3,71	3,54
I asked a question in class	2,26	2,25	2,27	2,35	2,27	2,12	2,38	2,14
I expressed my opinion in class	2,21	2,18	2,21	2,27	2,24	2,04	2,37	2,04
I prepared a written assignment	1,75	1,65	1,82	1,87	1,76	1,58	1,84	1,66
I gave a presentation	1,44	1,41	1,44	1,65	1,44	1,14	1,58	1,28
I read the course texts in advance	2,17	2,13	2,22	2,23	2,22	2,04	2,16	2,21
I did group homework with other students	1,56	1,45	1,61	1,83	1,63	1,11	1,72	1,37
I studied for exams with other students	2,84	2,82	2,84	3,01	2,71	2,77	2,97	2,68
I contacted the lecturer via e-mail	2,43	2,24	2,57	2,27	2,52	2,55	2,53	2,32
I talked to the lecturer about my exam paper	1,67	1,66	1,67	1,66	1,67	1,69	1,72	1,61
I discussed my career plans with the lecturer	1,66	1,55	1,73	1,56	1,74	1,69	1,63	1,68
I took test-style exams	2,72	2,72	2,73	2,33	3,26	2,61	2,06	3,38
I attended mock hearing	1,42	1,41	1,43	1,32	1,61	1,33	1,42	1,41
I wrote a petition	1,87	1,95	1,81	1,89	1,89	1,81	1,98	1,76

The rate of students who said that they prepared written assignments is 19.6%, while the rate of students who said that they made presentations is 9.8%. In this sense, it is necessary to see that students are weak not only in terms of taking the floor but also in terms of preparing written and oral content for the course. In addition, reading the course texts in advance and doing group assignments with other students are also weak behaviours among law students. Similarly, the scores of the statements such as 'I went to a mock hearing' or 'I wrote a petition' are also extremely low. This shows that the development of the basic practical skills required by the professional world that awaits students after graduation is not intensive at the faculty.

A third finding is that the interactions with academics is limited. Communicating with professors via e-mail is a minimum way of communication, but the rate of students who say never is 23% and the rate of students who say rarely is 28.7%. On the other hand, 32.4% of the students stated that they sometimes communicate via e-mail. The score of the basic feedback method such as discussing with the professor about the exam paper is much lower. 56.8% of the students stated that they never and 25% of the students stated that they rarely discussed the exam paper with the lecturer. Similarly, the behaviour of discussing career plans with the

lectures in a passive position, it is not difficult to guess that the interactions with academics are not productive and qualified enough. In fact, the low frequency of concrete practical behaviours that require feedback, such as preparing written assignments and making presentations, also contributes to the inability to establish high value-added interactions with professors.

What affects student behaviour?

At this point, it is important to determine how the behaviour frequencies of law students differ in the education process. In this study, MANCOVA analysis was conducted to measure how gender, class, university type and GPA variables lead to differences in student behaviours. MANCOVA (Multivariate Analysis of Covariance) is a statistical method to measure how multiple independent variables affect multiple dependent variables together. As in ANOVA tests, a *p* value less than 0.05 in this analysis indicates that the effect of independent variables is significant (Singh, 2008, p. 186). Gender, class and university type are independent variables in this analysis; GPA is included as a covariate variable. In other words, while measuring the effect of GPA, its effect on other variables was controlled for the possibility that successful students participate more actively in education. In

addition, it was also analysed whether the interaction of the three independent variables with each other was significant; the significant Class-University interaction is shown in the table.

difference in terms of going to class. When we look at the average scores, it is seen that last year students (3,21) declare that they go to class with a weaker frequency than third (3,71) and second (3,75) year students.

Table 3. Significant variables affecting student behaviours in MANCOVA analysis

Expressions	Gender	Class	University	Class*Uni.	GPA
I went to class	< 0,001***	< 0,001***	0,004**	0,004**	< 0,001***
I took notes in class	< 0,001***	0,109	0,053	0,332	0,078
I asked a question in class	0,886	0,301	0,049*	0,023*	< 0,001***
I expressed my opinion in class	0,788	0,234	0,004**	0,182	< 0,001***
I prepared a written assignment	0,167	0,114	0,234	0,945	0,122
I gave a presentation	0,683	< 0,001***	0,013*	0,182	< 0,001***
I read the course texts in advance	0,343	0,311	0,475	0,828	0,021*
I did group homework with other students	0,067	< 0,001***	0,008**	0,018*	0,087
I studied for exams with other students	0,933	0,201	0,135	0,406	0,677
I contacted the lecturer via e-mail	0,007**	0,101	0,005**	0,145	0,097
I talked to the lecturer about my exam paper	0,901	0,973	0,208	0,015*	0,044*
I discussed my career plans with the lecturer	0,107	0,425	0,952	0,003**	0,017*
I took test-style exams	0,974	< 0,001***	< 0,001***	0,011*	0,004**
I attended mock hearing	0,789	0,031*	0,254	0,853	0,015*
I wrote a petition	0,252	0,756	0,033*	0,078	0,008**

Note: * for $p < 0.05$, ** for $p < 0.01$, *** for $p < 0.001$.

Firstly, it was observed that gender made a difference in the frequency of going to class behaviour. Female students with a mean score of 3.78 went to class more often than male students with a mean score of 3.29 ($p < 0.001$). Similarly, female students with a mean score of 3.95 differed significantly from male students with a mean score of 3.19 in terms of the frequency of note-taking. Obviously, female students have a more active attitude in terms of following the course and obtaining the course content personally. Apart from this, gender has a significant difference only in the behaviour of communicating with the lecturer via e-mail. While the frequency of female students in this behaviour is 2.57, it is 2.24 for male students. Apart from these, there is no significant difference between men and women in other behaviours. This shows that the tendency of law students to establish a relatively passive and exam-oriented relationship with the faculty is common for both men and women. The fact that the interaction of the gender variable with class and university type is not significant indicates that this common situation continues as the class progresses or in different university types.

Class variable affects the frequency of more behaviours than gender. Firstly, there is a significant

In other words, when law students reach the last year of their studies, their class attendance behaviour weakens significantly. Similarly, the behaviour of making presentations has a significant differentiation with a score of 1.14 in the fourth grade, 1.44 in the third grade and 1.65 in the second grade. Second year and third year are slightly more likely than fourth year to have made presentations in their semesters. Similarly, the behaviour of doing homework with other students, which already has a low frequency in total, decreases to the lowest level of 1.11 in the last year. The fact that the frequencies of going to class, making presentations and doing homework together are lower for fourth year students compared to the previous grades indicates that the relationship established with the faculty becomes more diluted as they approach graduation. The last two behaviours in which the class variable showed a significant difference were taking exams and attending mock trials. When the mean scores of these two variables are analysed according to the grades, it is seen that 3rd grade students have a higher frequency.

The university type variable, which is divided into Old-New, has a significant difference in 7 different behaviours. First of all, although it is lower

than gender and class variables, it creates a significant difference in terms of going to class ($p = 0.004$). With a score of 3.76, students of new public universities go to class more frequently than students of old public universities. The high quotas of the old universities and the fact that attendance is not compulsory may have been effective in this. Interestingly, the frequencies of new public university students asking questions and expressing their own opinions in class are also significantly higher than the students of old universities. Therefore, it does not seem sufficient to explain the difference in class attendance only by the crowdedness of the old public universities. New public university students exhibit a more active participation by taking the floor during the course.

The fact that new university students participate more actively in the lesson is reinforced by the difference in other behaviours: There is a significant difference in the statement 'I made a presentation' according to university type ($p = 0,013$). While the presentation score of the new university students is 1.58, it is 1.28 for the students of the old universities. Of course, a score of 1.58 indicates that the opportunity or necessity to make presentations is rare in new public universities, but the fact that the difference is significant coincides with the more active participation of students in the new university. As a matter of fact, the average score of the students of the new university in terms of taking test exams was 2.06, while the average score of the students of the old universities was 3.38. This situation shows that at least in some courses at the law faculty of the new university, students are enabled to participate more actively in education and training with measurement and evaluation methods other than tests. In the behaviour of communicating with the lecturer via e-mail, the score of the students of the new university was significantly higher, indicating that student activism in the new university is not limited to course content, but also includes a more communicative lecturer-student interaction.

It was observed that the frequencies of some behaviours showed a significant difference in the interaction of class and university type.

Table 4. Mean values of class-university interaction affecting student behaviours

Expressions	New University			Old Universities		
Class	2	3	4	2	3	4
I went to class	3,76	3,91	3,64	3,69	3,64	2,82
I asked a question in class	2,34	2,41	2,46	2,38	2,23	1,82
I did group home-work with other students	1,97	1,91	1,03	1,38	1,55	1,16
I talked to the lecturer about my exam paper	1,61	1,77	1,96	1,85	1,64	1,43
I discussed my career plans with the lecturer	1,47	1,73	1,95	1,88	1,74	1,45
I took test-style exams	2,16	2,09	1,85	2,92	3,61	3,24

The difference in class attendance behaviour is significant: In the new public university, the frequency of attending class does not decrease significantly as the students pass through the classes. However, the frequency of class attendance of the students at the old public universities decreases rapidly from 3.64 to 2.82 points in the transition from the third year to the last year. This shows that the new university is able to keep its students attending the lectures even in the last year. Similarly, while the behaviour of asking questions to the class decreases to a low level of 1.82 in the last year in the old universities, it becomes more frequent in the new university in the opposite direction and increases to 2.46 in the last year. This shows that the new university is not only able to ensure that students come to the class, but also to be more active in the class as the class passes. As a matter of fact, the frequency of taking tests as a measurement-assessment method, with which students establish a more pragmatic relationship, also decreases as the class progresses at the new university.

Another issue that emerges in the interaction of university type with the class variable is the interactions with the professors. As pointed out above, the new university students' behaviour of communicating with the lecturer via e-mail has a significantly higher frequency. Reinforcing this, it is seen here that the behaviour of discussing with the lecturer about the exam paper becomes more frequent as the grade progresses in the new university. It is 1.61 for second year students, 1.77 for third year students and 1.96 for fourth year students, respectively. In the old universities, on the

contrary, the frequency of discussing the exam paper with the lecturer decreases steadily as the grade progresses. Very similarly, the frequency of discussing career plans with the lecturer increases as the class progresses at the new university, but decreases steadily at the old universities. This indicates that the new university brings the academic-student interactions to a more qualified and beneficial point for the student as the class progresses. In the old universities, on the other hand, this interaction is gradually diluted as the class progresses.

Student attitudes

In addition to the frequencies of law students' behaviours in faculty life, their opinions and attitudes towards the education process were measured through five statements. The first element that draws attention in the table is that although the tendency to passively follow the courses is dominant, as identified in the previous section, it is not easy to pass the courses and it is necessary to follow the courses personally. The low mean scores for the statement "It is enough to study from photocopied notes to pass the courses" indicates this (2.43). Proportionally, 81.7% of law students disagree with this statement. In this respect, studying law is not an easy process for students.

writing petitions are extremely rare, is more doctrine and legislation-oriented in the eyes of the students. However, on the other hand, the agreement with the third statement is also above 3: "I have seen enough case studies" with 73.5% of the students. This method, which is applied especially in the third and fourth year courses, enables students to internalize theoretical knowledge in the context of different events and situations.

Another finding indicating a low level of professional skills acquisition is the mean scores of the statements in the last two rows of the table. Students have a relatively negative view that the courses have improved their oral communication skills and provided them with the concrete skills needed to be a successful lawyer. The rate of students who think that they have improved their verbal communication skills is 32.8%, while the rate of students who think that they have acquired the practical skills required to be a lawyer is 18.2%. Therefore, although legal education does not allow students to pass by studying from photocopied notes and there are courses that include case studies, students' opinions are not positive in terms of direct acquisition of professional skills. This indicates that professional skills are postponed to the post-faculty period.

Students' attitudes differ in some points according to gender, class and university type variables.

Table 5. Mean scores of student attitudes according to categorical variables

Expressions	Average	Gender		Class			University	
		Male	Female	2	3	4	New	Old
It is enough to study from photocopied notes to pass the courses	2,43	2,79	2,17	2,46	2,32	2,51	2,48	2,38
I received an education focused on doctrine and legislation	3,83	3,85	3,81	3,69	3,82	4,04	3,81	3,86
I have seen enough case studies	3,58	3,58	3,59	3,87	3,44	3,36	3,74	3,42
I improved my oral communication skills thanks to the courses	2,88	2,68	3,02	2,92	2,96	2,71	3,07	2,68
I gained the practical skills needed to become a good lawyer	2,57	2,44	2,67	2,49	2,69	2,55	2,64	2,51

On the other hand, the statement "I received an education focused on doctrine and legislation" received the highest average score (3.83). In terms of percentage, 74.7% of the students agree with this statement. This situation points to the doctrinal nature of the content of legal education. As it was determined in the previous section, the education process, in which practical skill-oriented activities such as making presentations, preparing written assignments, participating in mock hearings and

First of all, the analysis shows that the student's grade point average does not make a difference in these attitudes, which indicates that these attitudes are common among successful or unsuccessful students. There are two differences in terms of gender: The average score of male students for the statement "It is enough to study from photocopied notes to pass the courses" is 2.79, while the average score of female students is 2.17. In this sense, male

students tend to have a more pragmatic relationship with exams.

Another aspect where gender has an effect is revealed in the statement "I improved my oral communication skills thanks to the courses": Female students agree with this statement with an average score of 3.02, while male students agree with an average score of 2.69.

The two statements for which university type was significant were "I have seen enough case studies" and "I improved my oral communication skills thanks to the courses". The mean scores of these statements were 3.74 and 3.07, respectively, for new university students, while 3.42 and 2.68 were observed for students from old universities.

Table 6. Significant variables affecting student attitudes in MANCOVA analysis

Expressions	Gender	Class	University	Class*Uni.	GPA
It is enough to study from photocopied notes to pass the courses	< 0,001***	0,574	0,439	0,737	0,081
I received an education focused on doctrine and legislation	0,781	0,027*	0,608	0,256	0,271
I have seen enough case studies	0,942	0,011*	0,006**	0,046*	0,962
I improved my oral communication skills thanks to the courses	0,026*	0,051	0,002**	0,021*	0,091
I gained the practical skills needed to become a good lawyer	0,098	0,115	0,297	0,341	0,322

Note: * for $p < 0.05$, ** for $p < 0.01$, *** for $p < 0.001$.

It is interesting to note that while in the previous section the difference between men and women in the frequency of behaviours such as asking questions or expressing one's own opinion in class was not found to be significant, a different opinion was observed at this point.

The grade variable makes a difference in two statements. Firstly, law students agree more with the statement "I received an education focused on doctrine and legislation" as they advance in grade. While the average score for 2nd class is 3.69 for this statement, there is a very high level of agreement with this statement with 4.04 in the final year. Proportionally, 69.3% of second year students, 73.8% of third year students and 83.1% of fourth year students agree with this statement. This increase means that the attitude towards doctrine-and legislation-oriented education deepens as the grades increase. The second statement that differs according to class is the statement "I have seen enough case studies": Here, the agreement with this statement decreases steadily as the grade progresses. As law students get closer to graduation, their attitudes towards the education they have received are reinforced. Although there is no statistically significant difference, as shown in the table, the average scores of the final year students decrease compared to the previous years in terms of the development of verbal communication skills and the acquisition of concrete skills required as a lawyer.

In this sense, it is reinforced that new university students are more actively and efficiently involved in education and training processes as seen in the previous sections. In addition, these two statements also show a statistical difference in the interaction of class and university type variables. When looked closely, the conviction that they have seen enough case studies weakens as the class progresses in both university types, but this weakening occurs at a low rate among new university students, while there is a rapid decrease from 4.08 to 3.16 for students of old universities. More interestingly, in terms of the development of verbal communication skills, new university students have a more positive attitude as they advance in grade, while the average score of students from old universities decreases to 2.25. This indicates that new university students are able to take more satisfactory courses as they advance in grade.

Table 7. Mean values of class-university interaction affecting student attitudes

Expressions	New University			Old Universities		
	2	3	4	2	3	4
I have seen enough case studies	3,81	3,77	3,59	4,08	3,35	3,16
I improved my oral communication skills thanks to the courses	2,98	3,14	3,23	2,73	2,91	2,25

Student opinions

The students' open-ended opinions asked at the end of the questionnaire were coded and grouped. In the coding, 197 opinion texts were distributed under 18 different group labels. As seen in the table, the most frequently mentioned code was "lack of practice/application". This was followed by "memorization/exam-oriented education" with 37 codes. Other prominent groups are "disconnected from professional life" with 23 codes, "too many faculties/graduates" with 21 codes and "arbitrary attitudes of professors" with 17 codes. It was observed that the students overwhelmingly presented critical opinions and that the code groups were related to each other. Therefore, in this section, the code groups will be evaluated in relation to each other.

Table 8. Codes of student opinions

	<i>N</i>	%
Lack of practice/application	42	21,3
Rote memorization/exam-oriented education	37	18,8
Disconnected from professional life	23	11,7
Too many faculties/graduates	21	10,7
Arbitrary attitudes of professors	17	8,6
Intensive curriculum	14	7,1
Education should be related to internship	9	4,6
Mock hearings	5	2,5
insufficient social science in courses	5	2,5
Writing petition	4	2,0
Lack of freedom	4	2,0
Adaptation to online education	3	1,5
Foundation universities are inadequate	3	1,5
Nepotism	3	1,5
Lack of English	2	1,0
Studying for financial purposes	2	1,0
Corrosive	2	1,0
Weak digitalisation	1	0,5

Too many faculties/graduates: A common opinion among law students is that there are "too many faculties/graduates". There are 21 student opinions coded in this way. Law students have stated that too many faculties have been opened, that this has lowered the reputation and quality of the field of law, and that some faculties should be closed. Although this view is widespread not only among

students but also among professors and legal professionals, it is interesting that even students studying at a university founded after 2000 share this opinion. In addition, there are three student opinions under the code "foundation universities are inadequate" and two student opinions under the code "studying for financial purposes", which expresses that those who come to the faculty come for financial purposes rather than law due to the decrease in quality. Among the student opinions, the view that the quality of education at the faculty should be improved is particularly noteworthy.

Intensive curriculum: An important opinion accompanying law students' complaints about the large number of law faculties is related to the curriculum taught in the faculties. There are 14 student opinions under the code "intensive curriculum". Both the students of the old universities and the students of the new university stated that there is a very intensive curriculum at the faculty, that they take many compulsory courses, and that the available time is not enough to both teach the subjects properly and to be successful in the courses. When the grade point averages of the students with this view are examined, it is seen that all but one of them have an average of 3 or above, which indicates that while the students complain about the intensity of the curriculum, they do not try to justify their academic failure.

Rote memorization/exam-oriented education: This code, which was coded 37 times and had the second highest frequency among student opinions, points to the memorization and exam-oriented structure of education. In fact, students' complaints about the number of faculties and intensive curricula also make sense when linked to this structure of education. In particular, students from the old faculties with crowded quotas stated that they could study for exams without going to classes thanks to the absence of attendance. It was said that some academics conduct open exams on the law, and sometimes they are expected to memorize the law. The adjective "rote memorization" was found in many comments and was sometimes used in the sense that students were asked to memorize

information rather than the power of interpretation, and sometimes that bookish information that is unrelated to life is more important. Students who took courses during the pandemic period stated that this structure of the old universities, which put the student in a passive and exam-oriented position, was felt more at that time. Finally, the code “insufficient social science in courses” in 5 student opinions gains meaning in the context of rote learning: Especially the students of the old faculties stated that subjects such as philosophy of law, sociology of law, scientific research were passed over quickly in legal education; whereas law is a social science.

Arbitrary attitudes of professors: A prominent theme among the opinions of law students, coded 17 times, is related to the attitudes of academics. Although students generally expressed that they were satisfied with the qualifications of the academics they took courses from, they shared their negative opinions and experiences on three points: Authoritarian attitudes that prevent students from attending classes, arbitrariness and unfairness in the evaluation of exams, and ideological views overriding the course. None of the student opinions mention the names of the academics who are the subject of these complaints; in fact, what is important here is that these attitudes, which make the intensive but passive curriculum and exam-oriented student performance at the law faculty even more inefficient, are ingrained in the minds of the students.

Lack of practice/application: This code, which has the highest frequency among the students' opinions, includes 42 opinions. Much more strongly than factors such as the curriculum, exam-oriented education, and the attitudes of the professors, students expressed the opinion that the education they received remained theoretical, bookish and cognitive. In other words, students complain that their legal knowledge and familiarity do not translate into practical skills and predispositions corresponding to the decision-making, implementation, jurisprudence and solution development aspects of law. In fact, it is known that there are practical courses in some faculties and courses, but it can be

said that these courses are not considered sufficient or that they do not lead to strong enough gains within the passivizing structure of the faculty. It is noteworthy that second- and third-year students, who will probably take such practical courses in their remaining semesters, feel the lack of practice early in the faculty process regarding the skills and predispositions that await them in the profession. In addition, the code “writing petition” is mentioned 4 times and the code “mock hearings” is mentioned 5 times, expressing opinions that concretize the lack of practice.

Education should be related to internship: The lack of practice finds its most concrete expression in the opinion that internship should be included in education. This code is mentioned in 9 student opinions. In addition to needs such as writing petitions and attending hypothetical hearings, students stated that the internship as a lawyer after graduation should be included in the duration of the faculty. There is even a view that the internship should be included in every year, not in the last year. This shows that they are aware of the need to internalize the requirements of the professional life that awaits them during their faculty years.

Disconnected from professional life: The lack of practice regarding the education received by law students and the belief that internships should be a part of the education stand out most sharply in terms of being disconnected from professional life. This code is mentioned in 23 different student opinions. Although students think that they receive a good education at the faculty, they are worried about floundering in their professional careers after graduation and not having the basic predispositions. The difference between faculty and profession has become a common assumption for students both in the old faculties and in the new faculties. Of course, law faculties may claim to provide the fundamentals of law, legal understanding and notion rather than formation for a specific profession, but the current reality is that an increasing number of law graduates need to be prepared directly for the professional world.

Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this research is to examine the current state of legal education in terms of students' world of action and meaning. The rapid expansion of legal education in the last two decades has triggered debates on the nature and outcomes of the legal education. In this study, the students of the law faculty of a public university established after 2000 were analysed in comparison with the students of two public universities established before 2000. Thus, an exploratory research was conducted to find out in which type of faculties the alleged erosion of quality in the expansion of legal education took place more.

Law students exhibit the behaviours of going to class and taking notes, but the frequency of behaviours such as asking questions and expressing their opinions in class is very low. In addition, behaviours that would enable skill development such as preparing written assignments or oral presentations are extremely rare. Moreover, students do not seem to have enough productive and qualified communication with academics. The lack of meaningful academic interaction aligns with observations that large student-to-staff ratios hinder both teaching quality and academic supervision (Özen, 2018). Finally, situations that directly prepare students for professional life, such as writing petitions and participating in mock trials, are situations that very few students have the opportunity to engage in. The mostly passive nature of law students' involvement in education seems to be in line with the literature; this is the first time that the weakness of the interactions with academics has been found empirically.

The finding that students primarily attend classes passively, with limited oral participation and feedback, supports previous research that describes legal education in Türkiye as predominantly lecture-based and doctrinal (Gözler, 2008; Akıncı, 2001). However, it is found that this passive attitude varies according to certain factors. Female students are more active in going to class and taking notes than male students. It was also observed that female students were more active in communicating with academics via e-mail. The fact that there is no significant difference in other

behaviours shows that the interactions established with the faculty do not differ according to the difference between men and women in general. When analysed by class, fourth year students are at a lower level in terms of attending lectures, making presentations, and working with other students than the students of previous classes. This indicates that the student's generally passive and exam-oriented relationship with education becomes chronic as the grade progresses; a pattern that suggests a deepening detachment from the educational process as students approach graduation—a trend not thoroughly addressed in the existing literature.

The old-new faculty distinction, which constitutes the focus of this study, was found to be the variable that made a difference in the greatest number of topics among students' behaviours. Students at new public universities go to class more often, ask questions in class, express their own opinions in class, make presentations, and communicate with academics via e-mail than students at old public universities. In addition, new university students took fewer test-based exams. These findings indicate that students at the new university have the opportunity to participate more actively in education. Interestingly, the higher level of student engagement observed in the new university contrasts with the common assumption that institutional age correlates with quality (Atasoy et al., 2020). Although the high quotas of old universities are mentioned in the literature, it has been determined in this study that a new public university can offer a more participatory and active educational environment with a relatively small number of quotas.

Moreover, when the students at the new university reach their last year, the level of going to class behaviour decreases less than the students of the old universities. In addition, the behaviours of asking questions in class, seeing the exam paper, and discussing career plans with academics decrease in the fourth year for students from old universities, while they increase for students from new universities. These findings indicate that the new university is able to maintain students' active participation in education as they progress through the grades.

Secondly, this study asked students to what extent they agree with five different statements about their educational life. The opinion that they received a doctrine and legislation-oriented education is highly favoured by the students. Students' widespread agreement on the doctrinal and legislation-oriented nature of their education confirms long-standing critiques in the literature about the lack of practical training in legal education (Kılıç, 2013; Atar, 2018). On the one hand, students find it difficult to study law and do not find it sufficient to study notes in order to pass exams, on the other hand, they state that their oral communication skills are not sufficiently developed and that they have not acquired the concrete skills required in lawyering.

Male students are more likely to agree that photocopied notes are sufficient to pass exams, while female students are more likely to agree that their oral communication skills are improved in the courses. The opinion that there is doctrine and legislation-oriented education increases as the grade progresses. Participation in the opinion that there are enough case studies decreases as the grade progresses. As the old university students reach their final year, their attitudes generally become more negative and critical. New university students, on the other hand, are more likely to agree that they have seen enough case studies and that they have improved their oral communication skills.

Finally, the opinions of the students shared freely and open-endedly at the end of the questionnaire were analysed. As a result of the coding, certain themes were found to be common. Firstly, in line with the literature, students criticized the fact that there are too many law faculties. Secondly, it was stated that the curriculum at the faculty was intensive and comprehensive and that four years were not enough for this. However, more importantly, there is a strong opinion that an exam-oriented, rote-learning approach to education does not bring them qualified and permanent gains. During the education process, experiences were shared that academics were not constructive and fair both in terms of measurement and evaluation and in terms of ensuring the active participation of students during the course. Although the literature

frequently criticises the passive nature of legal education (Kılıç, 2013; Akıncı, 2001), it rarely provides empirical data on the quality of student-faculty interactions. This study reveals for the first time that meaningful and productive interaction with academic staff is minimal.

The most common opinion shared by the students is that the practical side of legal education is weak and that it is far from the concrete requirements, skills and predispositions of the professional life that awaits them. This revelation of the need for skills and predispositions such as writing a petition, attending a mock hearing, going to the courthouse, and negotiating is in line with the findings of the quantitative analysis part of this study. In order to overcome this situation, students stated that the structure of the curriculum should be changed, law should have more contact with other social sciences, legal education should include life and the current legal world, and the internship process should be repositioned as a part of education.

One limitation of this study is that the sample was selected through a non-probability convenience sampling method, which restricts the generalisability. While the sample was balanced in terms of university type and gender, the findings should be considered exploratory rather than definitive. In future research, a more representative sampling strategy that includes a wider range of both newly established and long-standing law faculties across different regions of Türkiye could provide a broader framework. In order to deepen and compare the findings of this study, it is possible to examine a more comprehensive population that would include foundation universities, making it possible to compare law faculties in different provinces. In addition, more layered research needs to be conducted in which legal academics, professionals and practitioners, as well as students, are involved, thereby illuminating the bridges between legal education and the legal professions in a multidimensional way. It is hoped that further research on legal education will serve Türkiye's future generations of lawyers to experience a more qualified faculty process.

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