

Academic Citizenship; An Analytic Cross-Cultural Study of ÇOMU and VUB Academic Perceptions

Akademik Vatandaşlık; ÇOMÜ ve VUB Akademik Algılarına İlişkin Analitik Kültürlerarası Bir Çalışma

Zyinat Esenalieva¹ | Hasan Arslan² | Yujie Xue³

Makale Bilgisi

Araştırma Makalesi

¹ Dr., Eğitim Bilimleri, ÇOMÜ,
Çanakkale/ Türkiye
ORCID: [0000-0003-2836-5805](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2836-5805)
E-Mail: esenalievazyinat@gmail.com

² Prof.Dr., Eğitim Bilimleri, ÇOMÜ,
Çanakkale/ Türkiye
ORCID: [0000-0002-8011-3069](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8011-3069)
E-Mail: arslan.phd@gmail.com

³ Dr., Eğitim Bilimleri, VUB,
Brüksel/ Belçika
ORCID: [0000-0002-7295-903X](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7295-903X)
E-Mail: yujiequef@gmail.com

Sorumlu Yazar:
Zyinat Esenalieva

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Öz

Bu çalışma, Türkiye ve Belçika'daki kamu üniversitelerinde çalışan on uzman akademisyenle yapılan yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelerden elde edilen verilere dayanarak, akademisyenlerin yükseköğretimde akademik vatandaşlığa ilişkin algılarını araştırmaktadır. Bu çalışma, akademik vatandaşlığın çağdaş gelişimini engelleyen zorlukları keşfetmeyi amaçlamıştır. Nitel bir araştırma tasarımına rehberlik eden çalışma, akademik vatandaşlığın kapsamı ve uygulaması ile ilgili sekiz araştırma sorusunu ele almıştır. Elde edilen veriler, nitel araştırma yöntemlerinde kullanılan içerik analizi tekniği kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Bulgular, akademik vatandaşlığın hem kurumsal olarak hem de daha geniş toplulukları içinde üniversitelerin kültürünü, yönünü ve başarısını şekillendirmede oynadığı önemli rolü vurgulamaktadır. Akademik vatandaşlık, toplumsal katılıma ve kurumsal etkinliğe katkıda bulunmak için üniversitenin ötesine uzanan araştırma, öğretim, öğrenme ve hizmet sorumluluklarını kapsar. Çalışma, Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart Üniversitesi (Türkiye) ve Vrije Universiteit Brussels'taki (Belçika) akademik vatandaşlığı, akademik hizmet, iş birliği, çeşitlilik ve kapsayıcılık ve araştırma olmak üzere dört boyuta odaklanarak incelemiştir. Katılımcılar, hem akademik vatandaşlığın yükseköğretimdeki merkezi önemini hem de ilerlemesini engelleyen idari iş yüklerinin yarattığı zorlukları vurgulamışlardır. Çalışma, yenilikçi bakış açıları ve çözümler üretebilecek farklı akademik gruplar arasında iş birliğini ve bilgi alışverişini teşvik ederek eksiklikleri gidermeye yönelik önerilerle sonuçlanmaktadır. Bu görüşler, yükseköğretimde akademik vatandaşlığı geliştirmek isteyen politika yapıcılar ve eğitimciler için değerli bir rehberlik sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Akademik Vatandaşlık, Yükseköğretim, Türkiye, Belçika, Analitik Araştırma

Abstract

This study investigates academicians' perceptions of academic citizenship in higher education, drawing on data from semi-structured interviews with ten specialized academic researchers, working at public universities in Türkiye and Belgium. This study sought to explore the challenges that impede the contemporary development of academic citizenship. Guided by a qualitative research design, the study addressed eight research questions concerning the scope and practice of academic citizenship. The obtained data were analyzed using the content analysis technique used in qualitative research methods. The findings highlight its pivotal role in shaping the culture, direction, and success of universities, both institutionally and within their broader communities. Academic citizenship encompasses responsibilities in research, teaching, learning, and service, extending beyond the university to contribute to societal engagement and institutional effectiveness. The study specifically examined academic citizenship at Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University (Türkiye) and Vrije Universiteit Brussels (Belgium), focusing on four dimensions: academic service, collaboration, diversity and inclusion, and research. Participants emphasized both the centrality of academic citizenship in higher education and the challenges posed by administrative workloads that hinder its advancement. The study concludes with recommendations to address the gaps, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange across diverse academic groups that may generate innovative perspectives and solutions. These insights offer valuable guidance for policymakers and educators seeking to enhance academic citizenship in higher education.

Keywords: Academic Citizenship, Higher Education, Türkiye, Belgium, Analytic Research.

1. Introduction

With the development of technology, the quality of higher education has become one of the important factors of a country's development. One of the major roles in the quality and effectiveness of higher education is academic citizens. The concept of academic citizenship can be expressed as academics conducting research, teaching, learning and providing benefits to the academic community. Innovative behaviors of academics are seen as important elements for higher education institutions. It contributes to the rich academic culture by following the principles of honesty, equality, diversity and inclusiveness, collaboration and research expected from academic citizens and ensures the safety, reputation and participation of all members of the academic community. Young academic citizens, who have an important role in higher education growth, are tasked with provocative teams and maintaining high standards (Caliskan et al., 2021). Higher education institutions need academic citizens to achieve their goals. Despite the importance of the field, there is still very little research on the competencies these emerging leaders need (Caliskan et al., 2021; Juntrasook et al., 2013).

The changing policy of higher education and the diversity of academic studies have led to debates in explaining the concept of academic citizenship and have also been the subject of discussion in higher education. Moreover, much of the literature suggests that academic citizenship has experienced a long period of decline, referred to in the literature as a 'long farewell' (Thompson et al., 2005). Studies on academic citizenship are extremely important in order to have academic citizenship criteria and to be able to use it properly. Innovative behaviors of academics are seen as important elements for higher education institutions. Before, it was believed that leadership is an innate quality, but over the last three decades it is accepted as developable skills (Reyes et al., 2019). Therefore, in order to be beneficial to future generations and society, there is a need to better understand how academic citizenship works and to be able to apply it in the best way.

Higher education institutions have entered a process of change along with technological, scientific and economic changes. Consequently, academic citizenship is becoming more important in higher education institutions in order to easily adapt to these changes. Success of higher education institutions can be evaluated by the breadth of academic citizens. Modern academicians research, teach, learn and fulfill the responsibilities assigned to them. Considering their role in the production and management of knowledge, it can be said that universities are the most important social institutions of our age (Rhoades & Szelenyi, 2009). The implementation and development of academic citizenship in higher education will increase the quality of higher education. Although it has experienced a decline in the past, the subject of academic citizenship has regained its importance and it is possible to come across many studies recently. Studies on the subject will increase academic citizenship and contribute to the governance of academics and better management of universities. Therefore, it is important for the concept of academic citizenship to become widespread in higher education.

1.1 Academic Citizenship

Academic citizenship has been widely discussed in the report 'Academic Ethics' prepared by a group of scholars led by the American sociologist Max Weber, co-authored by Talcott Parsons and Edward Shils in 1982 (Shils, 2008). In the report, academic citizenship was defined as an obligation complementary to teaching and research. An academic citizen is someone who is prepared to make a positive contribution as a member of a set of overlapping communities, to take responsibility for the welfare and development of students and colleagues, and to contribute to the life of the institution through decision-making. In his study analyzing the criteria governing academic appointments, Shils (2008) stated that any university

should select not only the intellectually best candidate but also someone who will fulfill his/her duty as a loyal and responsible academic citizen to the university and the academic world (Macfarlane, 2006).

Modern universities have placed great emphasis on serving society. The most important bridge between the university and society is academics. The principles of academic citizenship extend to community involvement, research and university-affiliated activities. Academic citizenship, which follows the principles of academic service, academic integrity, academic collaboration, academic research, academic diversity and inclusion, academic mentoring, and advocacy, contributes to a rich academic culture and ensures the safety, dignity, and participation of all members of the academic community. Academic citizens are academics who carry responsibilities towards their colleagues, students and discipline. Macfarlane (2007) found basic commonality in perception of the core meaning of academic citizenship in a sample of 30 university staff drawn from institutions in the United Kingdom, North America, Australia, Canada and Southern Europe. Participants in the study viewed academic citizenship as membership in a community of both academic colleagues and students. Participants also evaluated academic citizenship in terms of broader criteria, such as the meaning of their work and contribution to society. There were also participants who defined academic citizenship as strictly a contractual obligation. An academic must fulfill his duty to the academic world as a loyal and responsible academic citizen (Macfarlane, 2012). The importance of academic citizens is increasing due to the increase and developments in higher education institutions and the role of institutions in the development of the country's scientific, economic, technological and human resources. Universities need to have well-trained faculty members, to retain them, and to continuously develop and improve the quality.

Academic Service: As active academic citizens, academics are required to serve their universities and help their institutions keep pace with rapidly changing trends that require continuous curricular innovation. Although the concept of academic service varies from university to university, the general aim is to support students and researchers in their academic journey and contribute to their overall success. The concept of academic citizenship has been associated with the service role that is part of academic work. Macfarlane (2007) argues that academic citizenship can be conceptualised as a service pyramid, with each section being given a distinct status. At the apex of the pyramid, in descending order of academic and reward status, are public service, disciplinary or professional service, institutional service, professional service and student service.

Academic Collaboration: Effective academic collaborations lead to the production of new knowledge, the development of innovative solutions, and the advancement of academic and societal goals. Communication, mutual respect, and shared goals are essential for successful collaborations. Academic collaborations involve collaboration and partnership between individuals and institutions to achieve common academic goals. Hoppe and Reinelt (2010) categorized peer leadership networks, organizational leadership networks, field policy networks, and collective leadership networks in academic collaboration and discussed their importance. It is necessary to establish connections, share, and work in partnerships between universities, to create a global research and higher education community.

Academic Diversity and Inclusion: We live in a more culturally diverse society, and universities are a reflection of this. The growth of mass higher education means that the academic community itself is larger and more diverse (Altbach, 1995). Academic citizenship involves promoting diversity and inclusivity. That is, it involves encouraging diversity and respecting the rights and views of all individuals, regardless of their background, ethnicity or other personal characteristics. Furthermore, academic diversity and inclusivity refers to efforts to create an environment in which individuals with different backgrounds, experiences and perspectives can thrive in educational institutions. These principles promote equality, respect and belonging, ensuring that everyone has access to quality education and the opportunity to succeed, regardless of race, gender, socioeconomic status, ability or

cultural background. Given its diverse population, academics are encouraged to respect and appreciate the diversity of cultural, religious and political perspectives in the country. Access to higher education should be equitable and open to all who qualify, and should be equipped to accommodate students and staff from all ethnic groups and cultures. In the current digital age, universities are expected to play an active role in combating many problems that arise at global, regional and local levels.

Academic Research: Research in higher education has an important role in the transfer of knowledge that has existed since the foundation of universities and in adding new knowledge. The purpose of the university is expressed as producing knowledge by conducting basic scientific research together with education and training that are not oriented towards a specific profession and transferring this knowledge to new generations (Scheytt & Scheytt, 2005). The research-oriented method in universities should have the distinctive feature of academics providing research-based education and ensuring the autonomy of universities in this regard (Muller, 1985). Since the understanding of science for science's sake is at the forefront in academic research, scientific education is also considered as the privilege of the elite and the academy as an intellectual aristocracy rather than a material gain. Universities are accepted as institutions that carry a wide range of duties, authorities and responsibilities. These duties include important functions such as producing knowledge and technology, conducting scientific research, disseminating this scientific information, and contributing to national and universal development (Teyfur & Çakır, 2018).

2. Method

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative content analysis design to explore meanings derived from participants' lived experiences. Qualitative research is particularly appropriate for systematically examining how individuals interpret and construct meaning within specific social contexts, emphasizing depth of understanding rather than representational generalizability (Patton & McClure, 2009). In line with this approach, purposive sampling was utilized to select information-rich cases that were most relevant to the research objectives. Accordingly, semi-structured interviews were conducted with academicians from Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University and Vrije Universiteit Brussels. Interviews are a valuable qualitative data collection method as they enable researchers to examine how events, contexts, and experiences shape individuals' perceptions, thoughts, and emotions, while also providing access to social realities that can only be understood through participants' narratives (Gaižauskaitė et al., 2016). The interview questions were divided into four groups. The first two questions were designed to reveal the academic service attitudes of the participants. Third and fourth questions were designed to reveal the academic collaboration attitudes, fifth and sixth questions were designed to reveal the academic diversity and inclusivity attitudes of the participants. Seventh and eighth questions were designed to reveal the academic research attitudes of the participants.

Population and Sample

A purposive sampling strategy was employed in this study to recruit academicians from two higher education institutions: Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University (ÇOMU) and Vrije Universiteit Brussels (VUB). Purposive sampling was selected to ensure the inclusion of information-rich participants who possessed relevant academic experience and insight aligned with the aims of the study. Five participants were selected from each institution, resulting in a total sample of ten academicians. This sample size was deemed sufficient to achieve thematic saturation, as the aim was to obtain in-depth insights rather than

statistical generalization. To protect confidentiality and ensure ethical rigor, participants were anonymized using coded identifiers, with ÇOMU participants labeled as Ç1–Ç5 and VUB participants as V1–V5.

Ethical Issues

Before collecting data, ethical approval was obtained from the Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Scientific Research Ethics Committee, No: E-84026528-050.99.04-2400106260 dated 26.04.2024.

Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews using an interview form developed by the researchers based on the relevant literature and the objectives of the study. Semi-structured interviews were preferred to ensure consistency across participants while allowing flexibility to explore individual experiences in depth. The interview form was organized around predefined thematic areas and administered online. An invitation link to the interview form was distributed to academic staff through official correspondence, personal email and institutional email addresses to facilitate participation. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. The data collection process was conducted within a specified time frame, and all responses were recorded and securely stored for analysis.

Data Analysis

The collected interview data were systematically examined using qualitative content analysis. This approach enabled the researchers to identify, categorize, and interpret patterns, themes, and relationships within participants' narratives. By coding the data iteratively and organizing it according to emerging thematic structures, the analysis provided a rigorous and transparent framework for understanding participants' perspectives across multiple dimensions of academic practice.

Table 1.

Comparative Distribution of Demographic Characteristics of ÇOMU and VUB Academicians

Variables	Groups	ÇOMU		VUB	
		n	%	n	%
Gender	Female	3	80,0	4	90,0
	Male	2	20,0	1	10,0
Age	25-35	5	100	5	100
	36-45	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
	46-55	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
	56 and above	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
Professional Seniority	6-10 Years	0	0,0	1	10,0
	11-15 Years	4	90,0	4	90,0
	16 and above	1	10,0	0	0,0

As given in Table 1, 80% of the ÇOMU academicians who participated in the research are female and 20% are male, while these rates are 90% and 10% for VUB academicians, respectively. In terms of age distribution, all participants from both universities are in the 25-35 age group. In terms of professional seniority distribution, 90% of ÇOMU academicians have been working for 11-15 years, and 10% have 16 years of seniority and over; Among VUB academics, the 11-15 year seniority rate is the same at 90%, with the 6-10 year seniority rate of 10%. These findings reveal that the two groups contain structurally significant quantitative similarities in terms of age and seniority.

3. Findings

In this section, the findings obtained from the answers given by the participants to the Academic Citizenship interview form questions are presented.

1. Academic Service Attitudes of the Participants

In the first part of the interview, the participants were asked about activities they do to improve academic skills and things they prioritize in academic planning and career development. The following two questions were addressed;

RQ 1. What activities do you do to improve your academic skills? Can you briefly explain it under headings?

RQ 2. What do you pay attention to in your academic planning and career development?

Table 2.

Findings Regarding Academic Service Attitudes

Group	Code	Participants	f
ÇOMU	Academic Studies	Ç1, Ç2, Ç3, Ç5,	4
	Writing Articles	Ç1, Ç2, Ç3, Ç4, Ç5,	5
	Literature Review	Ç1, Ç3, Ç4, Ç5,	4
	Time Management	Ç2, Ç4,	2
	Academic Network		
VUB	Academic Studies	V1, V2, V3, V4, V5,	5
	Writing Articles	V1, V2, V3, V4,	4
	Literature Review	V1, V2, V3, V4,	4
	Time Management	V5	1
	Academic Network	V2, V4	2

According to the findings in Table 2, both ÇOMU and VUB academicians most frequently emphasized codes was participating in conferences, producing academic publications and supporting colleagues. These activities appear to be central components of academic service in both institutions.

Within the theme of academic planning and career development, the codes identified include producing high-quality publications, using time effectively and in a well-planned manner, and adhering to ethical principles in academic work. Unlike the participants from ÇOMU, VUB academicians mentioned 'Academic Networking' under the second research question. This suggests that VUB participants placed particular emphasis on academic networking.

As for the activities, almost all participants mentioned joining diverse workshops, research seminars, literature review etc.

I join research seminars, watch online tutorials, read toolkit books (V1), Firstly, I read academic papers; 2. peer-learning from other colleagues; 3. join some workshops (V3), I follow developments in research methods and techniques. I examine sample articles and journals on this subject. I share with colleagues about various methodologies (Ç1), I review literature. I attend conferences. I take part in research projects. I do scientific research, I care about studies about my field, I follow developments in the world. (Ç2).

Regarding the participants' priorities in academic planning and career development; ‘

I prioritize educational goal setting (V4), First of all, I determine my career goals and then work to achieve them (Ç1), Knowing of the opportunities present, see how my future links to the society. (V5), I need to pay more attention to build my own academic network and get some projects and fundings. (V2).

One participant from ÇOMU stated the difficulties in planning and prioritizing things as follows;

Planning is very difficult. The workload is very heavy. However, I pay great attention to issues such as complying with ethical rules, doing things with effort and doing them well (Ç5). The participants Ç2, Ç4 and V5 mentioned about time; ‘I pay attention to time. I use time effectively and in a planned manner’, I want the subject I will spend time on to contribute to my field, I care about following current issues.

2. Academic Collaboration Attitudes of the Participants

In the second part of the interview, the participants were asked about their road map in developing interdisciplinary and project studies and what they do to improve academic collaboration. The following two questions were addressed;

RQ 3. What are you doing to improve academic collaboration and networking?

RQ 4. What kind of road map do you follow in developing interdisciplinary and project studies?

Table 3.

Findings Regarding Academic Collaboration Attitudes

Group	Code	Participants	f
ÇOMU	Academic Sharing	Ç1, Ç2, Ç3, Ç4, Ç5,	5
	Collaborations	Ç1, Ç2, Ç3, Ç4, Ç5,	5
	Interdisciplinary work	Ç1, Ç2, Ç4, Ç5,	4
VUB	Academic Sharing	V1, V2, V3, V4, V5,	5
	Collaborations	V1, V2, V4, V5	4
	Interdisciplinary work	V1, V3, V4, V5	4

According to the findings presented in Table 3, the most frequently highlighted codes both in ÇOMÜ and VUB include academic knowledge sharing and the development of national and international collaborations. In this sense, collaboration is perceived as an essential component of academic citizenship that contributes to both individual scholarly development and the broader academic community. Furthermore, participants mentioned that, in fostering interdisciplinary development, they follow certain strategies or roadmaps.

Almost all participants emphasized teamwork or communicating with peers in improving academic collaboration;

‘Attending Workshop (V1), Join research workshops, communicate with peers (V2), 1. join the academic conference; 2. through social media; 3. Thanks to my promotor’s network (V4). ‘Any kind of academic sharing and support can be an improvement. Academic meetings, congresses, jury membership, collaborations for scientific studies (books, project studies, etc.). (Ç1). I take care to get the opinions of my colleagues in the management of academic articles and theses. Especially the support of my colleagues from different disciplines in this regard has

always yielded positive results. We care about interdisciplinary studies and we have the opportunity to learn from each other by publishing together in this house. (Ç5).

As for the road map, participants from ÇOMU answered;

'During the process of determining the subject of the study, I create common platforms (Drive, Mendeley, etc.) by doing separate reading studies with my colleagues. We proceed according to the calendar we have determined. Before the start of the work, we share the tasks in terms of competence and field expertise. In projects, although the process is more complex, there are stages such as creating goals, determining the work schedule, distributing tasks, and monitoring where we are at with regular meetings. In the meetings, the status of achieving the goals is reviewed and what needs to be done in the next process is determined (according to the calendar). There may be feedback (corrections) from time to time or possible delays in the calendar when there is a workload (such as classes, administrative tasks). In such cases, we update the calendar and update the completion date of the work. (Ç3), I value professional academic collaboration in their field. I pay attention to the purpose of our collaboration first. (Ç1). I try to work on projects with academics from different disciplines and I develop collaborations for multidisciplinary work. (Ç4).

There were participants who didn't prefer interdisciplinary work;

I prefer individual work rather than interdisciplinary work (Ç2).

The participant from VUB emphasized on combining two not preferring one to another;

Personal development combined with collaborative teamwork. (V3). Some participants were not sure about the road map; 'To be honest, I'm not sure about the road map. But I think I could do it from the problem definition. Then it could be the literature review. After that, I will find the members to build a team to do the study. (V1). 'There is no such road map that I can share with you, it's more going with the flow. (V2).

3. Academic Diversity and Inclusion Attitudes of the Participants

In the third part of the interview, the participants were asked about ways to improve diversity and inclusion in universities and the most important obstacles to inclusive education in universities. The following two questions were addressed;

RQ 5.What can be done to improve diversity and inclusion at the university and thereby enrich the learning experience?

RQ 6.What do you think are the most important obstacles to inclusive education in universities?

Table 4.
Findings Regarding Academic Diversity and Inclusion Attitudes

Group	Code	Participants	f
ÇOMU	Cultural Awareness	Ç1, Ç2, Ç3, Ç4, Ç5,	5
	Creating respectful environment	Ç1, Ç2, Ç3, Ç4,	4
	Media Awareness	Ç3, Ç4, Ç5,	3
	Inclusive Lessons	Ç2, Ç3, Ç4, Ç5,	4
VUB	Cultural Awareness	V1, V2, V3, V4, V5,	5
	Creating respectful environment	V1, V2, V3, V5,	4
	Media Awareness	V1, V2, V3, V4,	4
	Inclusive Lessons	V1, V2, V4,V5	4

According to the findings presented in Table 4, the statements of academics from ÇOMÜ and VUB regarding academic diversity and inclusion reveal several prominent themes. The most frequently emphasized codes include raising cultural awareness, creating a tolerant and respectful academic environment, organizing training programs focused on diversity, and increasing media awareness. The findings suggest that participants from both institutions perceive diversity and inclusivity as important components of academic citizenship and emphasize the role of awareness. However, the participants also identified several barriers to inclusive education. At ÇOMÜ, the major obstacles reported include political differences, low levels of motivation, prejudice and traditional perspectives. Participants from VUB highlighted challenges, particularly insufficient training among faculty members and cultural and social resistance.

The participants answered as follows;

‘Create inclusive curricula that reflect diverse perspectives and encourage cross cultural interactions. (V1), ‘Create more opportunities to meet peers with the same interests or have capacities with different research methodologies. (V2), ‘Build the campus culture. and make sure of the diversity of recruitment. (V5), ‘Institutional culture can be worked on. Academicians’ workload outside of research is quite high and they even cannot find time for research, and each unit has different work distribution and workload. (Ç2), ‘Instead of projects or studies that everyone does, different and original projects should be tried to be done. The philosophy of lifelong learning should not be abandoned. (Ç1), ‘Incentives should be provided. In particular, financial incentives should be increased. ’ (Ç5), ‘Cultural tolerance, the naturalness of differences and the necessity of diversity should be instilled from an early age. There are strict rules and practices. Family, school and environment are effective in this regard. International and intercity cultural, social and sports activities can be developed. Short and interesting media visuals can be popularized. It is possible for universities to employ personnel from a wider area instead of a specific city and region. (Ç3), ‘Academics who are very experienced in their fields can be brought together with academicians who are at the beginning of the path and work on common topics. (Ç4).

As the important obstacles to inclusive education in universities, participants see;

‘Lack of faculty training and cultural and social resistance. (V1) ‘Policies are way behind practice and are quite slow to change (V2), ‘Insufficient support for diverse learners. such as the language learning resources and support. (V4). ‘Appointment criteria, administrative policies, competitive approach, political views (Ç1) ‘Low motivation (Ç2), ‘Overcoming the template-based procedure is the most important obstacle. In addition, prejudice and traditional perspectives are also obstacles. (Ç3). Students identified for inclusive education may have psychological problems in their adaptation processes (Ç4). ‘First of all, the teaching staff and the majority of students have prejudices. Studies should be carried out to gradually eliminate this. Another issue is course materials. The materials used should be up-to-date and inclusive. Physical environments (building, room, desk, lighting, etc.) should also be adapted to this situation. (Ç5).

4. Academic Research Attitudes of the Participants

In the fourth part of the interview, the participants were asked about the most important factors that slow down or hinder their research and how they access new, changing and developing techniques of methods and analysis. The following two questions were addressed;

RQ 7. In academic research, what are the most important factors that slow down or hinder your research? Can you suggest solutions?

RQ 8. How do you access new methods and analysis techniques that change and develop?

Table 5.
Findings Regarding Academic Research Attitudes

Group	Code	Participants	f
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ÇOMU	Scientific Research		
	Information Exchange	Ç1, Ç2, Ç3, Ç4, Ç5,	5
	Staying up-to-date with	Ç1, Ç2, Ç3, Ç4, Ç5,	5
	Innovations	Ç1, Ç3, Ç4, Ç5,	4
VUB	Scientific Research		
	Information Exchange	V1, V2, V3, V4, V5,	5
	Staying up-to-date with	V1, V3, V4, V5	4
	Innovations	V1, V2, V3, V4, V5	5

According to the findings presented in Table 5, in both ÇOMU and VUB, the most frequently emphasized codes include conducting scientific studies, using online information platforms, exchanging knowledge with experts and keeping up with new developments in the field. These findings suggest that academicians actively utilize both formal and informal learning opportunities to remain informed about emerging research methods and innovations, thereby strengthening their research capacity and academic productivity.

The majority of the participants see time as the most important factors that slow down or hinder their research;

Time constraints. Learn time management skills (V1), 'Difficult to manage time by myself, no clear guidance on research (V2), 'I think the biggest problem is to balance the administrative work and the research work. Sometimes, when I do the research and write the paper, the administrative tasks are pretty disturbing. I need to balance the different tasks. (V4). 'My personal administrative duties. (Ç4), 'Completing ethics committee application processes and tiring application procedures slows down the research process. (Ç1), 'In field work, especially in qualitative research, correct answers may not be obtained during the interview stages. The solution is to reach more people and reach a sufficient number scientifically. (Ç2), 'Intensive education and training activities outside of research. Difficulties in obtaining data. It is difficult for the burden or obstacle to remain unless the number of students decreases. (Ç5).

Participants access new, changing and developing techniques of methods and analysis by;

Participating in training programs and webinars (V1), from the literature, from the online knowledge platform, from the experts in the university and community and from the workshops and seminars. (V3). 'I read articles on these subjects and exchange views with my colleagues. (Ç1), 'It is important to be able to master and use qualitative and quantitative statistics programs. It is necessary to follow new statistics programs.. It is necessary to be open to learning.. (Ç2). 'By researching on the internet, getting to know the approaches used by some institutions, attending some seminars and conferences. (Ç3). 'I attend online training given by academicians who are experts in their fields. (Ç5).

The findings reveal a strong convergence in the ways ÇOMU and VUB academics conceptualize academic citizenship in higher education. Across both institutional contexts, participants consistently foreground practices such as attending research seminars, engaging with and reviewing academic literature, participating in workshops, collaborating with colleagues and developing academic networks. From a qualitative standpoint, these shared narratives reflect a common understanding of academic citizenship as an active, relational and ongoing process grounded in scholarly engagement and collective knowledge production. However, these outcomes are derived from a relatively small number of academicians and should therefore be interpreted as context-bound and illustrative rather than generalizable. Accordingly, the findings remain limited to the perspectives of the participants included in this study and should be understood within the scope of its qualitative design.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study provide insights into how academics at Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University (ÇOMU) and Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) conceptualize and practice academic citizenship within higher education institutions. Overall, the results indicate that academics from both universities share similar perspectives regarding the responsibilities and practices that constitute academic citizenship. These perspectives are reflected in four main areas: academic service, collaboration, diversity and inclusion and research engagement.

First, regarding academic service attitudes, participants emphasized activities aimed at continuous professional development such as attending research seminars, participating in workshops, reviewing academic literature, and engaging in peer learning. These practices demonstrate that academics perceive academic citizenship as fulfilling formal institutional responsibilities and also as actively improving their scholarly competencies. Continuous professional development has been widely highlighted as an essential component of academic professionalism and quality teaching in higher education (Lee Shulman, 2005; Ernest L. Boyer, 1990). The findings therefore suggest that academics consider scholarly engagement and lifelong learning as integral elements of contributing to the academic community. However, participants also pointed out that heavy teaching loads and administrative duties limit the time available for academic development, which is consistent with studies indicating that increasing managerial and administrative responsibilities can constrain academics' scholarly work (Trowler, 2001).

The findings related to academic collaboration attitudes reveal that academics view collaboration and networking as central elements of academic citizenship. Participants frequently referred to conferences, workshops, and professional networks as spaces where academic cooperation and knowledge exchange take place. Collaboration in higher education has been widely recognized as a driver of research productivity and innovation (Braxton et al., 2000; Becher, 2001). The emphasis placed by participants on teamwork and communication with peers suggests that academic citizenship involves relational engagement within scholarly communities. At the same time, the presence of academics who prefer individual research practices indicates that disciplinary traditions, institutional culture, and personal research styles may influence collaboration patterns.

The findings concerning academic diversity and inclusion highlight the importance of inclusive curricula, intercultural interaction, and institutional culture. Participants emphasized the need for universities to create environments where diverse perspectives are valued and supported. These findings align with literature suggesting that inclusive higher education requires institutional policies, supportive learning environments and culturally responsive pedagogies (Ainscow, 2020; Bathmaker et al., 2010; Gale & Miles, 2013). Participants also identified barriers such as limited resources, institutional regulations and social prejudices. These structural and cultural obstacles have been similarly identified in studies on inclusive education in universities, which emphasize that diversity initiatives must be supported by institutional leadership and systemic change.

Finally, regarding academic research attitudes, participants identified time constraints, administrative workload, and bureaucratic procedures as the most significant factors hindering research productivity. Despite these challenges, participants demonstrated strong motivation to improve their methodological knowledge through literature reviews, training programs, workshops, and academic networks. This finding reflects the broader understanding that academic professionals engage in continuous learning to keep up with evolving research methods and tools (Evans, 2015; Whisker, 2012).

4.1. Conclusion

This study explored academics' perceptions of academic citizenship at Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University and Vrije Universiteit Brussel through qualitative interviews, focusing on four key dimensions; academic service, collaboration, diversity and inclusion and academic research. The findings

indicate that academics from both universities share a broadly similar understanding of academic citizenship. Based on the participants' responses, it is demonstrated that academic citizenship is closely connected to the values of lifelong learning, knowledge sharing and collective scholarly contribution within the academic community.

At the same time, the study highlights several structural and institutional challenges that may limit the effective realization of academic citizenship practices. Heavy workloads, administrative responsibilities, bureaucratic procedures, and limited time for research were frequently identified as barriers that influence academics' ability to fully engage in collaborative and research-oriented activities. These findings underline the importance of institutional support mechanisms that promote professional development, interdisciplinary collaboration, and inclusive academic environments. Universities that foster supportive research cultures, reduce unnecessary administrative burdens and encourage inclusive and collaborative practices may strengthen academic citizenship and contribute to more sustainable and productive higher education systems.

Given the qualitative design and the relatively small number of participants, the findings should be interpreted within the specific institutional contexts of this study. Future research could extend this work by examining academic citizenship across a larger number of universities and countries. Comparative and mixed-method studies may provide a deeper understanding of how academic citizenship practices are shaped by institutional structures, disciplinary cultures and national higher education systems.

4.2. Suggestions

Academic citizenship develops differently depending on the country, institution, and cultural context. Therefore, this comparative study involving two different countries is expected to contribute significantly to the research field. Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

Providing academic citizenship training within universities would support the effective management of academic staff. Accordingly, comprehensive activities and training programs can be organized to clarify the meaning and definition of academic citizenship. Such initiatives would play a critical role in guiding the research and teaching activities of academic citizens. Mentorship programs may also enable experienced scholars to provide guidance to less experienced faculty members.

To enhance the efficiency and richness of academic research, collaboration among scholars from different disciplines should be encouraged. Establishing interdisciplinary projects and joint research groups would foster knowledge sharing and generate innovative solutions. Strengthening international collaborations would not only advance scientific progress but also raise awareness of academic citizenship.

Academics should be encouraged to adopt innovative teaching methods and digital learning materials. The integration of online learning platforms, open educational resources and approaches suitable for diverse learning styles can enrich the educational experience.

Ethical Declaration

During the writing process of the study “Academic Citizenship; An Analytic Cross-Cultural Study of ÇOMU and VUB Academic Perceptions” scientific rules, ethical and citation rules were followed. No falsification was made on the collected data and this study was not sent to any other academic publication medium for evaluation.

Statement of Contribution Rate of Researchers

The contribution rates of the authors in the study are equal.

Declaration of conflict

There is no potential conflict of interest in the study.

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