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### Contents

Editorial: The administrative workforce in higher education	i-i
<i>Yasar Kondakci</i>	
Article Type: Editorial	
Digital Inequalities and Their Impact on Distance Education: The case of Ibn Zohr University students - Morocco	1-17
<i>Mohamed Arhal</i>	
Article Type: Research Article	
EFL Instructors' Orientations and Workplace Learning: Schools of Languages at Turkish State and Foundation Universities	18-36
<i>Kezban Altuntaş-Özben, Fatma Nevra Seggie, Bengü Börkan, &amp; Kenan Dikilitaş</i>	
Article Type: Research Article	
Barriers to Establishing Partnerships in Terms of Internationalization of Higher Education: The Example of Türkiye - UK Case	37-51
<i>Armağan Erdoğan &amp; Betül Bulut Şahin</i>	
Article Type: Research Article	
Revenues, Ultimate Sovereigns and Resource Allocation At Finnish, Swedish, UK and US Universities	52-71
<i>Janne Holmén</i>	
Article Type: Research Article	

**Editorial: The administrative workforce in higher education**

Although the core practice at higher education institutions is academic, the success of academic practice relies on possessing effective, professionalized back-office workers and professionals, who undertake various administrative functions at universities. In many country contexts, back-office workers of the universities are categorized as administrative personnel and they are differentiated from faculty staff members or academic personnel. However, the effectiveness of these staff members depends on several different characteristics which are located both at system and institutional levels. Investigating the role of these factors in facilitating the work of administrative staff members is necessary to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of higher education organizations. This issue of HEGP presents articles that either focus on the administrative staff members or indicate the role of these staff members anecdotally in other academic or administrative processes.

In this issue of HEGP, we present four articles that are based on studies conducted in different countries. First, theorizing and discussing the inequalities in higher education Arhal argued that Covid-19 deepened the digital divide among different groups of students. Arhal problematized the role of digital education on student outcomes or the degree of benefit from distance education. A survey study with a sample of 59 students at the Ibn-i Zohr University revealed that access to the Internet, quality of technology infrastructure, and availability of financial support play a role in the effectiveness of distance education. Highlighting the need for Professional development of instructors in higher education institutions, the second article by Altuntaş-Özben, Seggie, Börkan, and Dikilitaş investigated the English language instructors' values and professional learning practices. The mixed method study showed that workplace dynamics are closely related to the continuous professional development activities of the instructors in both identifying the valuable professional development activities and determining the factors supporting or hindering professional development intentions and efforts of the instructors. The authors concluded that the type of university in terms of financial and governance mode is a factor in the professional development orientation of the instructors. Instructors in public universities develop an externally oriented professional development understanding and seek professional development activities outside of their institutions while instructors in foundation universities develop internally oriented professional development understanding and seek professional development activities available inside of their institution. The third study by Bulut Şahin and Erdoğan investigated the models of the relationship between higher education institutions in Türkiye and the United Kingdom. The authors conducted semi-structured interviews with policy-makers, academic leaders, and academics. The authors concluded that the relationship at the institutional level between Türkiye and the United Kingdom has been weakening because of both structural and attitudinal barriers in the two countries. In the final article of this issue, Holmén explored the relationship between funding, governance modes, and resource allocation. Using the balance between faculty and other personnel as an indicator, the author constructed scatterplots on the relationship between other personnel per faculty and revenue per faculty in the UK, the US, Sweden, and Finland. The findings suggest that an abundance of resources leads to dominance of the workforce by nonfaculty. Holmén stated that resource allocation is not independent of the governance model. Theorizing on the politics of bureaucracy the author concluded that loyalty to the sovereign, which elects the university board determines the funding scheme at a university.

We hope that the articles in this issue of HEGP will inspire its readers.

Yasar Kondakci  
Editor

## Digital inequalities and their impact on distance education: The case of Ibn Zohr University students - Morocco

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### Abstract

The period of quarantine, which was due to the global health crisis caused by the Covid 19 virus, constituted a laboratory to form, strengthen, and deepen the degree of digital inequality. This situation dictated the need to move from adopting the face-to-face education pattern to "digital education". For this purpose, we proceeded by asking the following question: Do digital inequalities affect the degree of benefit from distance education? In this context, we assume that the level of digital inequalities affects the benefits of distance education that will be obtained by university students. We start with a sample of Ibn Zohr University students (59). In short, the research findings allow us to conclude that the degree of benefit from distance education (distance lectures) is affected positively by four main variables. The results indicate that the place of residence of students is affected by the degree of Internet access, and subsequently the degree of access to distance education. Furthermore, the availability of scholarships has an impact on the degree of access to distance education. Also, Internet weakness often causes technical problems, which affects the degree of benefit from distance education.

**Keywords:** Digital inequalities, Distance education, Digital skills, 21st century skills, Covid-19

### Introduction

The quarantine period caused by COVID-19 has been a laboratory for deepening the degree of inequality that exists in global society. After this virus led to the elimination of a significant proportion of people, the world then experienced a turbulent transformation in many dimensions (economic, social, and cultural), and the educational dimension cannot be excluded from this situation (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2023; Papadopoulos & Cleveland, 2023). The majority of universities in the world have found themselves forced to close their doors, abandon the face-to-face form of education, and replace it with distance education (Strielkowski, 2020). In order to run their services, most countries and institutions will turn to technology as a solution to their problems. As a result, society will show signs of "liquidity" (Bordoni, 2016; Palese, 2013; Van de Oudeweetering & Voogt, 2018) and then network society (Castels, 2006).

The transition from face-to-face services to the form of distant services (the case of distance education), with the help of the possibilities provided by technology (Haleem et al., 2022), is not an easy process but poses many challenges. Before elaborating on this, we should point out that the field of education is gone and is still the one in which social inequalities are clearly visible (Aiston & Walraven, 2024). The educational outcomes were seen to have a very close relationship with the sociodemographic background of the students. Therefore, the inequalities that occur in the university and in the learning process in general are due to the social and economic status of the learners (Brooks, 2015). In March 2020, Morocco, like other countries, adopted the distance education model, which is in line with the education model compatible with emergency situations such as wars, epidemics, and conflicts (Hodges et al., 2020). However, it should be noted that distance education is very different from emergency remote education. Ibn Zohr University worked to record and present distant lectures at the beginning of the quarantine. This is in full respect of the quarantine measures that dictated the need to abandon the

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pattern of in-person education. Furthermore, the Faculty of Arts and Humanities worked to establish its own channel called "Kolliya TV," which was the first of its kind in Morocco. In addition, this channel is interested in recording lectures and then all the scientific and pedagogical activities of the institution. To this extent, the university has offered a distance education program. In this paper, we argue that any distance education, in the case of Morocco, is affected by the level of digital inequalities that exist in this category affects any distance education in Morocco. We consider distance education as a variable that enables us to measure the third dimension of digital inequalities, "benefit" (van de Werfhorst et al., 2022). However, it should be noted that this dimension is only possible to understand with the help of the first dimension "access" and then the second dimension "use" (Büchi et al., 2016) of this type of complex digital and dynamic inequalities (van Dijk & Hacker, 2003; van Laar et al., 2019; Iñiguez-Berrozpe & Boeren, 2020).

It seems possible to classify studies on distance education, as the analytical concept of this study, into two categories. The first category of studies focuses on two groups of analytical units, students and then professors at the same time (Elfirdoussi et al., 2020; Ndibalema, 2022). The second type of study only examines the category of students who are interested in benefiting from this type of education (Unger & Meiran, 2020). This paper belongs to the latter type of study, where we focus on the student category. Some researchers link the variation in the benefit of distance education to purely technical factors such as ICT infrastructure, technological literacy, and the skills necessary to use technology (Ndibalema, 2022). Other researchers argue that it is the financial cost of the internet and devices that reduce this degree (Tulinayo et al., 2018). Another study found that some lecturers' digital competence is one of the factors that reduce opportunities to benefit from distance education (Ndibalema, 2020).

The paper is organized as follows: The second section provides the theoretical framework of the study, which focuses on two main concepts: There are digital divides between university students and distance education. In this study, we focus on the students at Ibn Zohr University, the latter of which attracts three types of students who differ in the geographical origin to which they belong: rural, semi-urban, and urban. The third section describes the method used in the data collection process, as well as a summary of the measurement method for data analysis. The fourth section includes the study's results, in which we tried to determine the relationship between some variables (student residency, availability of scholarships, Internet weakness) and the benefit of distance education. The final section concludes with a discussion of how the proposed variables interact in determining the degree to which university students' benefit from distance education.

### **Research Questions**

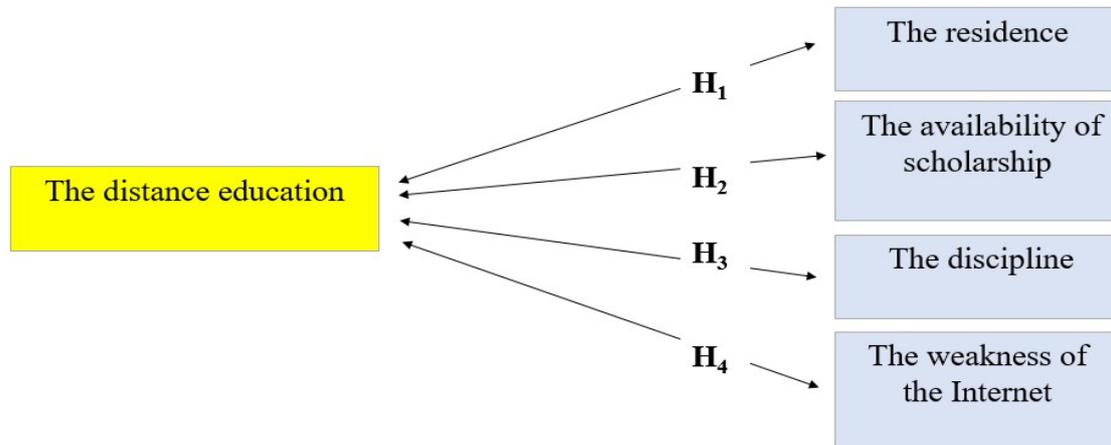
Therefore, digital inequalities are one of the challenges of distance education. To illustrate these challenges, this paper asks the following research questions:

1. Does the place of residence affect the degree of benefit from distance education (distance lectures)?
2. Does the availability of the scholarship have an effect on the degree of benefit from distance education?
3. Does the nature of the specialization (scientific / literature) that individuals study affect the degree of benefit from distance education?
4. Is there a relationship between the weakness of the Internet and the preferred style of education (face-to-face or distance)?

### **Statistical hypotheses**

- 1<sup>st</sup> hypothesis (H1): There is a statistically significant relationship between the place of residence and the degree of access to distance education (distance lectures).
- 2<sup>nd</sup> hypothesis (H2): There is a significant impact of the availability of the scholarship on the degree of access to distance education.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> hypothesis (H3): There is statistically significant relationship between the nature of the specialization studied by individuals (scientific / literature) in the degree of access to distance education.
- 4<sup>th</sup> hypothesis (H4): There is a statistically significant relationship between the weakness of the Internet and the preferred pattern of education (face-to-face or distance).

Figure 1. Proposed statistical hypotheses



### Theoretical Framework

To answer the research questions, we will begin this section by explaining digital inequalities as an essential characteristic of societies where the Internet holds significant influence. In the second part of this section, we will direct our attention towards distance education as a viable substitute for traditional in-person education.

### Digital social inequalities

The concept of "digital inequalities" emerged in the 1990s (Mutsvairo & Ragnedda, 2019). The primary use of this concept was associated with policy makers discourse (Ball-Rokeach, & Jung, 2010). This use is relatively very broad and is predominantly misunderstood, as the inequality in access to ICT (information and communication technology) means was meant by lack of access to the Internet (Srinuan & Bohlin, 2011). In addition, the first use was not by the same designation but by the use of the "digital divide" to refer to digital inequalities (Srinuan & Bohlin, 2011).

Scholars and experts endeavored to establish a precise and comprehensive definition of the digital divide in the aftermath of the 1990s. One of the results of these attempts is to offset the "digital divide" with "digital inequalities" (Gunkel, 2003). One of the difficulties in defining digital inequalities is their complexity (a multidimensional phenomenon) and dynamic nature (van Dijk & Hacker, 2003; Billon et al., 2009; Várallyai et al., 2015). Focusing on the determinants of Internet access, digital inequalities were defined as the gap between the haves and the have-nots (van Dijk, 2006).

Digital inequalities are characterized, at least, by two analytical levels. The first one concerns the one-dimensional analytical level. This level often focuses on defining digital inequalities across a single cause or variable. To illustrate this, digital disparities are defined as the difference in Internet access. This level can be described as a narrow definition of digital disparities. Unlike the previous level, the second level focuses on defining digital inequalities by adopting more than one dimension: national/international, rural/urban, individual/family (Andrés et al., 2010) and more than one variable (Calderón Gómez, 2022). This level is called multidimensional analysis of digital inequalities (Bonfadelli, 2002).

Hargittai (2021) defines digital inequalities as the effect of the social status of individuals on the access to the digital content, the required skills, the type of use and the learning achievements from a digital participation. This definition includes, at least, two very important issues. The first one is the social basis of digital inequalities. In other words, the social background in the study of digital phenomena is necessary because all users have social and demographic characteristics, which may be beneficial or not to access and use the technical means. The second issue focuses on the intersection between the three dimensions of digital inequalities: access, use, and benefits.

Another definition of digital inequalities was reported by Alexander Stengel which based on the differences between individuals in the access to means of communication and information as well as digital data (2015). These differences can occur in several levels, including the geographic location (rural, urban and semi-urban), age, gender and social class. These social characteristics may have a direct impact on the degree of access of individuals to the means of communication and information. Despite the importance of this approach, the definition given by Stengel remains fragmented because the access alone is not sufficient to understand this phenomenon.

Hilbert (2015) viewed digital inequalities as a model of inequalities, but this model occurs in access to, utilization of, and benefits from digital ICT (information and communication technology). These inequalities represent a social challenge more than a technical one (Hilbert, 2015). Hilbert noticed that the inequalities in their digital form are not limited to digital means, but rather goes beyond this consideration.

The use of digital media and digital content results in social benefits, leading to social differentiation between individuals. This social differentiation is a result of the interaction of the social, cultural and economic capitals of the social actors with the digital media. This allows creating a digital capital, which ultimately leads the individual to be in a position of digital inequality (Park, 2017). The digital inequalities certainly seem to be characterized by three features that are almost distinguishing them from other types of inequalities. The first one is the complex interactions with several dimensions such as social, economic, politic and cultural. These dimensions combine the objective and subjective factors. The second characteristic is the systematic and structural nature, which makes it possess a multilevel character. This intersection necessitates even being in the epistemological sense of the study (interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary) (Parti & Szigeti, 2021). The third characteristic shows that digital inequality transcends opportunities to outcomes, which would deepen digital inequality and make it influential in social life of individuals. In this regard, the issue of resisting digital inequality requires a collective consciousness, and then does it become a societal phenomenon.

### **Distance education**

The Covid-19 pandemic period was a crucial period in the educational field at all levels around the world. It was necessary for educational institutions to adopt a new style of education based on digitalization, which is an alternative to education based on face-to-face interaction (Rof et al. 2022). Thinking about ways to employ and benefit from digital technology can be considered the first moment for applying this technology in the educational field. Nowadays, the world seems to be more dependent on the digital technology owing to the technological advances and health crisis (Romli et al., 2022).

E-learning is defined as learning that is fully or partially online (Means et al., 2009). The integration of technology in education leads to a significant change in the characteristics of traditional learning. As a consequence of this change, the place of learning has moved from school (physical) to the digital domain (virtual). Moreover, the learning is no longer limited to a specific time, but rather it has become defined by the learners. We also do not forget the change in nature of the devices used for learning.

In the digital or electronic learning process, the individual character of the e-learning style is clearly evident (Horvath et Steinberg, 2023). The latter is a relatively new tool with the potential to radically improve participation and achievement rates in education. The benefits include the flexibility of place and time. Thus, the digital learning offers a potential opportunity for learners to obtain appropriate and high-quality training and education (Orton-Johnson et al., 2013).

The participation opportunity using digital technology is not available to everyone, which causes some social groups to fall into the so-called digital inequalities. The feature of technology in the educational field is the ability of the learner and the educational actor to choose the digital educational content. Therefore, the importance of the sociology of education, in its relationship to technology, is raised in order to understand the most important dynamics of education in the school institutions (Brooks, 2015).

Finally, we can say that the e-learning is an important modern education mode, owing to the opportunities provided for both teachers and learners. One of these opportunities provided to teachers is the ability to deal with a large number of learners without attending at the same time and in the same place. The learners also have the possibility of meeting teachers other than those in their educational institutions (Means et al., 2009).

The identity of the learner can be determined through two completely different perspectives (Berg-Sørensen et al., 2010). The first one is represented by essentialism, which considers that identity is made up of natural elements in the individual. These elements are entrusted with determining his identity, as a human, and through these elements the difference emerges between people. According to essentialism, these elements are not affected by change, because they remain inherent to the individual. In contrast to this first perspective, the social constructivist perspective considers identity of the learners, as not being natural in individuals. This is justified in the fact that the social context, interactions and social institutions (e.g. family and school) are the most important factors that control the identity of individuals. Therefore, the constructivist perspective considers that identity is a social and not a natural construct. Regarding the increase in the importance of technology in school life, it is no longer possible to assimilate the forms of identity presented through technology, depending only on the previous perspectives (constructivist and essentialism). Georges distinguishes three forms of identity in the digital domain (Georges, 2011). An individual can establish a digital identity for themselves by using an email, as it is a necessary requirement in the process of constructing a digital identity. The first form is called "declarative or authorized identity", which absolutely depends on the real indicators used during the creation of the account/identity (name, age, gender, educational level, family status, etc.). The second form named "representational identity" is related to the various activities performed by users in digital media, such as virtual friendship. The last form is the "calculated identity." In this form, the number of people in the friend list is calculated, followed by the number of groups to which the user belongs. This last form depends on purely quantitative variables, which allow for calculating the identity of users (Fanny, 2011).

### **Method**

Since the aim of the study is to test the relationship between digital inequalities and distance education, this paper will adopt the quantitative method, on a sample of students who are required to be following their studies at Ibn Zohr University. This method is the one that will benefit us the most, because it relies on statistical data, and helps in determining the statistical relationships between independent and dependent variables (Muijs, 2011).

### **Sample and procedure**

Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the sample, which is constituted of 59 individuals/students categorized into 26 male and 33 female. The age of participants ranged from 20 to 28 years. The place of residence was divided into three places; urban (59.32%), semi-urban (23.72%), and rural (16.94%). For the specialization of the sample members, we distinguished between two types: scientific (Faculty of science) and literary (Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences).

### **Data collection**

In this study, a digital questionnaire was used for data collection during the period from 6 October to 15 November 2022. The undergraduate students (not exceeding the level of the bachelor) at Ibn Zohr University (Morocco) constitute the sample for this study taking into account a set of criteria. The selection of the students was performed randomly. I draw attention to the issue of representative of the sample, which requires that its number exceeds 30 individuals or more, which is found in the studied sample (Muijs, 2011). In addition, we are interested in benefiting from distance education during the closure of Moroccan universities owing to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The model form in this study consists of various questions, which are divided into four themes. The first one deals with specific questions about the nature of the social and demographic data of the sample members. The second theme is related to the access to the Internet as the first dimension of digital inequalities. The third topic is concerned with the dimension of the Internet use, by adopting questions

that contain skills. The fourth theme reports the questions about the benefits from the Internet, especially distance education. In presenting the results, we will focus on those that have been shown by tests to be statistically significant ( $P \leq 0.05$ ). Results greater than this value will not be indicated.

**Table 1.** Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Sample.

Variables	Value	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	26	44.06
	Female	33	55.93
Age	20	4	6.77
	21	12	20.33
	22	16	27.11
	23	9	15.25
	24	6	10.16
	25	9	15.25
	27	1	1.69
	28	2	3.38
Residence	Rural	10	16.94
	Semi-urban	14	23.72
	Urban	35	59.32
Discipline	Literature	41	69.49
	Scientific	18	30.50

### Data analysis and Measurement

To analyze the data extracted through a digital questionnaire, we used IBM [SPSS](#) package version 26. In the current study, the Chi-square test was used to verify the validity of the hypotheses adopted in interpreting the statistical relationship between the independent variable (digital inequality) and the dependent variable (access to distance education). This test is a nonparametric test and serves to determine the possibility of a statistically significant effect between two variables (McHugh, 2013).

### Results

#### The effect of place of residence on the degree of benefit from distance education

We tried to link each of the geographical variables (place of residence) with other variables such as creating digital content, degree of availability of Internet, and degree of benefit from

Table 2. Chi-square test for the relationship between independent variable (place of residence) and the dependent variables (creating digital content, degree of availability of internet, and degree of benefit from distance lectures)

How much do you benefit from digital lectures during the quarantine period?							
		Very weak	Weak	Good	Very good	Total	<i>P</i>
Residence	Rural	-	8	2	-	10	<b>0.004</b>
	Semi-urban	-	9	5	-	14	
	Urban	-	10	25	-	35	
<b>Total</b>		-	27	32	-	59	
Find out how to create digital content (video, photo and advertising)							
		Very weak	Weak	Good	Very good	Total	<i>P</i>
Residential	Rural	-	9	1	-	10	<b>0.009</b>
	Semi-urban	-	10	1	3	14	
	Urban	-	35	-	-	35	
<b>Total</b>		-	54	1	3	59	
Available Internet Score							

		3G	4G	WIFI common	WIFI private	Total	<i>P</i>
Residential	Rural	-	8	1	1	10	<b>0.016</b>
	Semi-urban	-	9	1	4	14	
	Urban	1	9	1	24	35	
<b>Total</b>		1	26	3	29	59	

distance lectures. From Table 2, it turns out that the individuals participating in this study are predominantly located at the urban zone. We note that the majority of students living in the rural area (more than half) benefited from distant lectures, while only two cases of students living in the rural area benefited well. As for students living in the semi-urban zone, the majority of them 15.2% had a low degree of benefit from lectures ( $n = 9$ ), while only 8.4% benefited well from the lectures ( $n = 5$ ). In contrast, the major percentage of participants (42.2%) living in the urban area benefited from digital lectures to a good degree ( $n = 25$ ). Looking towards the statistical significance, it was found that the  $p$ -value is 0.004 (less than 0.05). This suggests that there is a statistically significant relationship between the place of residence and the degree of benefit from the lectures during the quarantine period.

The effect of the same independent variable (place of residence) was studied as a function of the ability to create a digital content. Table 2 shows that 90% of students from rural areas had a low capability to create digital content, while only 10% were able to create digital content. In addition, we found that all respondents located at the urban area had a weak degree of empowerment for creating a digital content. The level of statistical significance was equal to 0.009 and the chi-square value was equal to 13.594.

The same table contains the relationship between the place of residence and the degree of Internet availability. The obtained results revealed that the majority of the respondents from the rural area have access to Internet with fourth generation (4G) technology. However, 20% of the participants from rural area used the private and shared Wi-Fi networks. Statistically, the level of significance was found to be 0.016, while the value of the Chi-square test was 15.533.

### **The relationship of obtaining a scholarship and benefiting from distance education.**

Table 3 shows the Chi-square test between the availability of the scholarship and the following variables: the degree of knowledge of programming languages, the degree of benefit from digital lectures, and the ability to create digital content. As shown in the table, only (24%) of scholarship-earning students have a good/or very good knowledge of programming languages. While, one-third (34%) of this group with a grant has a degree of knowledge of programming languages between weak/very weak. Similarly, the majority (27%) of participants who do not have the grant, their degree of knowledge of programming language is between weak or very weak. However, the category with a good/or very good level of knowledge of programming languages does not exceed (15%). Thus, it seems clear from the chi-square test that there is no statistically significant link between the availability of a grant and knowledge of programming languages ( $P = 0.320$ ).

Table 3. Chi-square test for the independent variable (Availability of scholarship) and the dependent variables (access and use of the Internet, degree of mastery of programming languages, benefit from distance lectures and creation of digital content)

		<b>Degree of knowledge of programming languages</b>				total	<i>P</i>
		Very weak	Weak	Good	Very good		
<b>Availability of scholarship</b>	yes	4	16	10	4	34	0.320
	no	7	9	8	1	25	
<b>Total</b>		11	25	18	5	59	
		<b>How much do you benefit from digital lectures during the quarantine period?</b>				total	<i>P</i>
		Very weak	Weak	Good	Very good		

<b>Availability of scholarship</b>	yes	-	22	12	-	34	0.001
	no	-	5	20	-	25	
<i>Continued</i>							
<b>Total</b>		-	25	32	-	59	
<b>Find out how to create digital content (video, photo and advertising)</b>							
		Very weak	Weak	Good	Very good	total	P
<b>Availability of scholarship</b>	yes	24	1	3	6	34	0.031
	no	25	-	-	-	25	
<b>Total</b>		49	1	3	6	59	

The variable of the degree of benefit from digital lectures is affected by the availability of the scholarship. We found that almost a third of scholarship individuals said that the degree of benefit from digital lectures is good. In contrast, we find that the two third of scholarship participants reported lower levels of benefit from digital lectures. 80% of students who do not have a grant are benefited with a good degree, while 20% of them have declared a low level of satisfaction in terms of benefiting from distance courses. The significance level and chi-square test values were found to be 0.001 and 11.601, respectively. Thus, the test showed that there is a statistically significant relationship between the availability of the scholarship and the degree of benefit from the digital lectures.

The degree of mastery of how to create digital content can be affected by the availability of a grant. The participants who received a scholarship are 34 students, the majority of them have a low/very low ability to create digital content. However, 9 out of 34 students had a good/very good capability of creating digital content. For the category of students who did not receive a scholarship, it appears that all participants had low ability in terms of creating digital content. The significance level is 0.031, while the chi-square test value is 8.854. Therefore, we can conclude that there is a statistically significant relationship between the availability of the scholarship and the students' ability to create digital content.

### **The impact of the weakness of the Internet on the preferred style of education**

In Table 4, we analyze the effect of the technical problems on the preferred learning style, in order to test the statistical significance between these variables. Based on this test, we found that students who do not have technical problems related to the Internet (almost half of the participants) prefer distance education. However, the other half of the students who have technical problems prefer face-to-face education. The degree of statistical significance has been reached 0.000, which clearly shows the existence of a significant relationship between the technical problems and the preferred style of education. Therefore, it can be concluded that the technical problems lead students to choose the face-to-face education method instead of distance education, which was approved during the quarantine period.

Table 4. Chi-square test for the independent variable (technical problems) and the dependent variable (preferred learning style)

		<b>Preferred education mode</b>			<b>Total</b>	<b>P</b>
<b>Do you have technical problems related to the weakness of Internet?</b>		<b>Face-to-face education</b>	<b>Distance education</b>			
		No	-	28	28	0.000
	Yes	31	-	31		
<b>Total</b>		31	28	59		

### **The correlation of the nature of the specialization of students and the degree of benefit from distance education**

The chi-square test of the university specialization of students was studied as a function of two dependent variables: the ability to create digital content and the degree of benefit from distance lectures. The obtained data are presented in Table 5. As a result, we note that the students of literature (around two thirds of participants) had a very weak ability to create digital content. There is only one student of literature who had a good degree of ability to create digital content. In contrast, we find that the students learn science (around one third of participant) differ in their degree of the ability to create digital content. From Table 5, it is evident that around half of the students learn science were able to create digital content with good or very good degrees, whereas the other part of science students have a weakness (ranged from weak to very weak) in the creation of digital contents. Based on the P-values (less than 0.05), the relationship between specialization and the degree of benefit from distance lectures is statistically significant. From Table 5, we note that there is a weak or good degree of benefit from distance lectures, whether literary or scientific alike. The majority of science students (two thirds) benefit little from the digital lectures during the period of quarantine restrictions of COVID-19.

Table 5. Chi-square test for the independent variable (Discipline) and the dependent variables (creating digital content and degree of use)

		<b>Find out how to create digital content (video, photo, advertising)</b>				Total	P
		Very weak	Weak	Good	Very good		
<b>Discipline</b>	Literature	40	-	1	-	41	0.000
	Scientific	9	1	2	6	18	
<b>Total</b>		49	1	3	6	59	
		<b>How much do you benefit from digital lectures during the quarantine period?</b>				Total	P
		Very weak	Weak	Good	Very good		
<b>Discipline</b>	Literature	-	15	26	-	41	0.033
	Scientific	-	12	6	-	18	
<b>Total</b>		-	27	32	-	59	

However, a large proportion of the students of literature (63.4%) benefited from distance lectures with a good degree. The P-value of this test is 0.033, suggesting that the relationship between the specialty of the students and the degree of benefit from distance courses is statistically significant.

### Discussion

By virtue of the fact that the individual exists in a specific geographical area, in which the socialization process takes place through social interactions. However, this geographical space or place of residence has an influential impact on many of the individuals' practices. As shown in Table 1, it was found that the place of residence affects the individuals' ability to access and use of Internet. It also affects the degree of ability to create digital content as well as the degree of benefit from distance lectures during the quarantine period. This can be explained by adopting three main dimensions. The first dimension is that the place of residence affects the degree of the Internet that an individual can access, which is called 'Internet access' (Petersen et al., 2020).

Some studies show that the insufficient Internet access creates digital inequalities of the first level (van Deursen & van Dijk, 2019; Gonzales, 2016). This dimension constitutes the subject of the first studies on digital inequalities. This phenomenon is regarded as the disparity between the people who have access and those who do not have access to the Internet. However, the recent advances in digital technologies contributed to bringing an interest in another dimension in digital inequalities of the second degree, which is based on use. Despite the degree of the Individuals' Internet access, there is no unified use. The latter can result in a hierarchy between users because the use of the Internet required special skills (Van Deursen et al., 2014).

The use of the Internet and its benefit, especially in the educational field, is mainly related to the possession of digital skills for the twenty-first century (van Laar et al., 2019). The latter consist of six

types of skills. The first one is “Information digital skills”, which refers to the ability to search, evaluate and manage the information (Ala-Mutka, 2008). The second type is called “Collaboration digital skills”, which relate to information transfer via the Internet by providing information to as many users as possible (Schulze et al., 2016). The third type is “Digital collaboration skills”, which is the ability to work effectively within teams in order to achieve a common goal (Noss, 2012). The fourth type is “Critical-thinking digital skills”, representing the ability to make and build distinct judgments about information and communication based on reflective thinking with sufficient arguments (Higgins, 2014). The fifth type of digital skills named “Creative digital skills” refers to the appropriate use of online tools to create online digital content (Oldham & Da Silva, 2015). Finally, the last type is “Problem-solving digital skills”, which is related to the use of ICT to analyze a problem situation and disseminate knowledge in finding a solution for it (Neubert et al., 2015). In the same context, we can consider that the specialization of respondents had a statistically significant relationship with the degree of mastery of some digital skills such as the creation of specific digital content and benefit from distance education. This suggestion was confirmed by statistical data given in Table 5. The nature of the specialization in which students study interferes with the degree to which they can use ICT skills (van Deursen & van Dijk, 2009; Oliveira et al., 2015). Linking digital skills to distance education, the latter requires a high degree of skill quality in order to benefit from this type of education (Asher 2021). The annual report on the use of technology by Moroccan families indicated that one out of every ten Moroccan families is connected to the Internet (National Telecommunications Regulatory Agency 2020). The percentage of urban households connected to the Internet increased from 80.4 % in 2018 to 90.2 % in 2020. In the rural areas, the percentage of households connected to the Internet was increased from 56.8 % in 2018 to 71.9 % in 2020 (National Telecommunications Regulatory Agency 2020). It can be said that access to the Internet, does not mean that its use will be good, and it is benefited because it requires specific skills.

Some studies confirm that the connection between technological access and educational choices is not readily apparent (Yanguas, 2020). However, this paper has shown us this, whenever there are technical problems, such as poor access to the Internet, students choose the in-person education pattern, but if the Internet score is good, students choose distance education.

The Availability of scholarship is one of the variables that can also be adopted in analyzing the relationship between distance education and digital inequalities (Chytrý et al., 2022; Göksu et al., 2021). It can be said that the availability of scholarship or not can affect the tools used to access the Internet. It can also affect the degree of benefit from distance education. The students who received a scholarship always benefit from distance education more than those who did not receive a scholarship. Therefore, we conclude that the economic aspect is of prime importance in studying digital inequalities and their impact on distance education (Burbules et al., 2020). The features that distance education enjoys in European and American countries find their opposite in other countries (Mathrani et al. 2021). In the present study, we find that the Internet is available in rural areas, despite its scarcity, as evidenced in Table 1. Therefore, if the rural areas of the country that do not belong to the context of the study live in digital exclusion, then, according to the aforementioned report, they only know digital inequalities, and this also applies to developing countries (Mathrani et al., 2021).

### **Conclusion**

The COVID-19 health crisis has forced the majority of teachers to completely reconsider the tools adopted in the teaching process. Students have also adapted to the new education mode in terms of geographical distance. In the current study, we have reached three main results. The first conclusion is that the place of residence of students is of great importance on the degree of the Internet access, and subsequently the degree of access to distance education. This finding shows that there is an interaction between digital inequalities and other patterns of inequalities such as geography (van de Werfhorst et al., 2022). Therefore, Contexts are just as crucial in the examination of digital acts (Warschauer, 2002). The second finding suggests that the availability of economic support (the availability of scholarship) has an impact on the degree of access to distance education. The latter can be explained by the fact that the devices for accessing educational content have a significant relationship with the economic status of learners and their families (Scherer & Siddiq, 2019; Vitral Rezende, 2023). The third finding is that the

Internet's weakness often causes technical problems, which affects the degree of benefit from distance education (distance lectures), It also affects the preferred mode of education. The latter conclusion is that the disciplines taught by university students have an influential effect on the degree of access to distance education. This is the case, to diminish the degree of inequalities between undergraduate students, it is necessary to include digital skills in all university disciplines, which will provide a quality education (Haleem et al., 2022).

The use of technology in the context of university education poses challenges that vary in quality and degree (Greenhow et al., 2023). The first one of these challenges is the method and type of assessment by which a score will be tested that enables students to lecture presented. This challenge relates to the digital skills of professors and students. The study concluded that not all students are able to benefit from distance education (Asher, 2021). The second challenge is related to teaching methods, as the traditional pedagogy adopted in teaching is no longer able to keep pace with the specificity of digital education (Nehring et al., 2019). This challenge forced the transition from face-to-face interaction pedagogy to digital one (Bećirović, 2023). This shift in the pedagogical pattern had three basic elements: pedagogical orientation, pedagogical practices, and digital pedagogical competencies (Vääätäjä & Ruokamo, 2021).

In brief, the distance education needs more empirical studies, in order to evaluate the outcomes of this education mode. The majority of university students prefer face-to-face education instead of distance education. This could be explained by the disability of the students to use the Internet for learning. Thus, it is important to perform comparative studies between the university students and other categories of learners, in terms of benefiting from distance education (van de Werfhorst et al., 2022). Finally, we recommend that the Moroccan government, as well as educational institutions, implement a policy to provide free internet and digital devices to all students. This initiative aims to promote online learning and ensure that individuals are engaged and safe during the pandemic (Jena, 2020; Akhasbi et al., 2022).

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## EFL Instructors' Orientations and Workplace Learning: Schools of Languages at Turkish State and Foundation Universities

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### Abstract

Teacher professional development is universally acknowledged as crucial for academic success and educational progress. However, the efficacy of conventional continuous professional development (CPD) programs has been frequently questioned, with reports suggesting their ineffectiveness in fostering substantial teacher growth. The shortcomings of these programs range from overlooking school characteristics such as constitutions and politics to employing fixed goals and top-down approaches. The quality of professional development opportunities for instructors can be improved by promoting expansive learning environments as it is not possible to develop educators without considering their interaction with school environment and culture. Combining survey quantitative data and semi-structured interview results, this mixed-method study analyzed EFL instructors' values and professional learning practices by comparing the schools of languages of state schools and foundation schools, as two different workplace settings. The study encompassed 300 EFL instructors in the quantitative phase, drawn from state and foundation universities in İstanbul and Ankara, Türkiye. In a subsequent qualitative phase, 14 volunteers from this cohort participated in one-on-one interviews. It was observed that workplace environment influences instructors' orientations to learning in terms of (i) which CPD activities instructors value and practice, and (ii) which factors they perceive as either influencing, supporting, or hindering their learning. The findings suggest that EFL instructors in state universities predominantly rely on external experts and exhibit external focuses in their professional learning. In contrast, instructors in foundation universities are more inclined to operate as a community of practice, utilizing internal resources, and engaging in collaborative efforts with their colleagues.

**Keywords:** Workplace learning, Expansive learning environments, Continuous professional development, Turkish Higher Education, EFL Instructors

### Introduction

Scholars have asserted their concerns regarding the ineffectiveness of traditional professional development (PD) activities (Rousseau, 2004; Warfield, Wood & Lehman, 2005) as numerous educational reform movements have not yielded changes in teachers' habits and routines. Altering the day-to-day practices of teachers was reported to be an ongoing challenge (Webel & Platt, 2015) and most PD for teachers is criticized and defined as *one-size-fits-all* and *disjointed* (Borko, 2004), ignoring teachers' previous knowledge and needs (Wei et al., 2010).

This is why a major step in reframing teacher PD is now considered to be highlighting learning in teachers' immediate environment rather than disjoint development (Webster-Wright, 2009). In this, PD has mostly been holistic and "shaped through a combination of reciprocity between the context of the particular school setting, and an individual teacher's interest and disposition to learn about practice" (Wilson & Demetriou 2007, p. 214). Therefore, teachers' workplace learning is seen as a substantial factor in their professional growth (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2005), and professional learning

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opportunities need to be contextualized in teachers' classrooms or schools, embodying their classroom environment to promote active and collegial involvement (Garet et al., 2001).

Within this understanding, this study analyzes “teachers’ orientation to learning” – defined as “beliefs, practices and experiences about learning and its relationship to teacher learning and change” by Opfer, Pedder, & Lavicza (2011, p. 444)- in relation to contextual factors and conditions which affect how teachers participate in learning via five research questions:

1. *Is there a relationship between instructors’ attributed-values to and perceived-practices of professional learning activities?*
2. *How well do the school type and instructors’ attributed-values predict their practice score of professional learning activities? How much variance in total practice scores can be explained by these two variables?*
3. *Which variable is the best predictor of total practice of professional learning activities: instructors’ attributed-values or school type?*
4. *Does the school type moderate the relationship between instructors’ attributed-values to and practice of professional learning activities?*
5. *What are the emerging contextual factors that influence the instructors' understanding and actual practice of PD activities?*

### ***Significance of the Study***

Given the limited success of previous professional development efforts in changing teachers' instructional practices (OECD, 2009), research aiming to improve this process is crucial. Opfer et al. (2011) conducted a significant study on teacher learning orientation and change, finding that teachers' orientation to professional learning significantly influences whether they adopt new practices. Feeney (2016) further explored this concept, confirming its importance in a different context. However, this research has not been applied to studies conducted in Türkiye within the last decade, particularly regarding the continuous professional development of English instructors in Turkish state and foundation universities. This gap is significant considering English's prominence in language teaching and Türkiye's educational reforms (Kirkgoz, 2007). Incorporating teachers' learning orientation into training programs could enhance their effectiveness, aligning with their daily activities and workplace practices.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Situated learning theory***

Lave and Wenger (1991) introduced a situated view of learning as a response to criticisms of conventional learning theory's neglect of nonformal and informal training events in educational institutions (Fuller & Unwin, 2004). This perspective emphasizes learning through daily experiences and social interaction, where learning outcomes are socially constructed (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In communities of practice, members develop shared identity and mutual enterprise (Lave & Wenger, 1991), collaborating to develop new knowledge and resources (Hildreth & Kimble, 2008). Co-participation fosters mutual learning processes, allowing teachers to engage actively and construct their identities within their communities (Kearney, 2015). An expansive learning environment offers diverse learning opportunities both within and outside the workplace (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2005), influencing teachers' workplace learning and situational learning processes (Fuller et al., 2007). Understanding teachers' interactions and collaborations in expansive learning settings is crucial for identifying factors that affect workplace learning.

### ***Workplace learning***

It is argued that when individuals take part in goal-directed activities, which are social in nature, their learning is facilitated through reinforcement or refinement of what they already know (Billet, 2002) since “workplace learning has features which may distinguish it from other forms of professional learning; it is task-focused, it is collaborative, and it often grows out of experience or problem” (Retallick, 1999, p. 34). Kwakman (2003) set the basis for an empirical model for teacher workplace

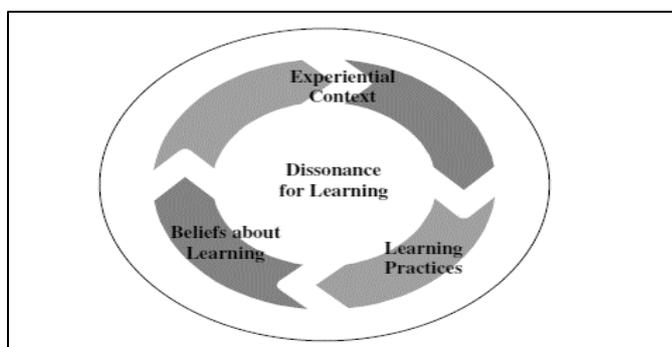
learning and conceptualized factors affecting teachers' participation in professional learning in the workplace under three main domains: "personal factors, task factors and work environment factors" (p. 158). In other, related studies (e.g., Lohman & Woolf, 2001; Van Eekelen, Boshuizen, & Vermunt, 2005), five general categories of learning activities which support the importance of workplace learning activities for teachers were identified: "1) doing; 2) experimentation; 3) reflection on experiences; 4) learning from others without interaction; and 5) learning from others with interaction" (Meirink et al., 2009, p. 210).

Billett (2002) proposes that "considerations of learning, learning in workplaces and the development of a workplace pedagogy need conceptualizing in terms of participatory practices" (p. 56). That is, learning activities which encourage teachers to cooperate in teams are mostly anticipated to promote a very powerful and expansive learning environment (Fuller et al., 2007). Therefore, it can be proposed that teachers' CPD needs to be situated in the workplace, providing opportunities for varied learning activities (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009).

### ***Continuing professional development (CPD) and Teachers' orientation to learning***

Several terms, including professional development, lifelong learning, and continuing education, refer to teachers' continuing professional development (CPD) (Bolan & McMahon, 2004). Guskey (2002) frames CPD programs as "systematic efforts to bring about change in the classroom practices of teachers, in their attitudes and beliefs, and in the learning outcomes of students" (p. 381). CPD is a career-long, job-embedded, and learner-focused process, emphasizing specific content areas like subject matter and pedagogical knowledge (Vries et al., 2013; Park & Oliver, 2008). CPD activities typically involve updating knowledge and skills, reflective thinking, and collaboration with colleagues (Vries et al., 2013). Learner-centered CPD methods, taking individual and contextual differences into account, are often considered more promising (Timperley et al., 2007).

Opfer and his colleagues (2011) defined teachers' orientation to learning as "an integrated set of attitudes, beliefs, and practices as well as the alignment of oneself and one's ideas to circumstances" and proposed that teachers' orientation to learning significantly affects whether they change their professional practices (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Teacher orientation to learning (Opfer et al., 2011, p. 445).

The process of teacher learning is shaped by a dynamic interaction between the environment of the school and the unique interests and attitudes of individual teachers (Wilson & Demetriou, 2007). Consequently, this study highlights the significance of teachers' approaches to learning, as delineated by Opfer et al. (2011) into categories such as "internal orientation to learning," "external orientation to learning," "research orientation," and "collaborative orientation". These orientations encompass whether teachers prioritize "internal (reflective) or external (seeking) value belief" in their learning endeavors (p. 450). Understanding the interplay between these orientations and the school context is crucial for examining the dynamics of teacher learning.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design and Rationale**

This study was based on a mixed-method research design to understand teachers' practice and learning orientation in the workplace. The mixed method design "provides understanding and description of people's personal experiences of phenomena (i.e., the "emic" or insider's viewpoint)" as it is "responsive to local situations, conditions, and stakeholders' needs" (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 20). The data mixed for "development (i.e., using the findings from one method to inform the other method) and expansion (i.e., seeking to expand the breadth and range of research by using different methods for different inquiry components)" (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 22). That is, qualitative data was mainly used to support, clarify, elaborate, and expand on the results obtained from quantitative data.

### **Context**

This study focuses on language schools within state and foundation universities in Türkiye, where English serves as the medium of instruction. These schools, also called English preparatory schools, aim to enhance students' English proficiency before they commence their studies in respective departments or programs.

Higher education institutions (HEIs) in Türkiye comprise state and foundation universities, each with unique characteristics. State universities receive government funding, while foundation universities, established by private foundations, rely on tuition fees and donations. This leads to variations in salary structures and employment status among faculty members.

Faculty at state universities typically hold tenured positions as "civil servants," offering government employment benefits and job security. Conversely, faculty at foundation universities may have diverse employment arrangements, impacting job security and career advancement. State universities adhere to standardized government regulations for promotion, while criteria at foundation universities may vary. Moreover, foundation universities enjoy more autonomy in internal management and external collaboration, potentially providing more professional development opportunities.

Furthermore, student demographics differ between state and foundation universities. State universities admit students based on national placement exams, while foundation universities have their own admission criteria, often offering scholarships. Consequently, students at foundation universities exhibit greater diversity in academic ability and socio-economic background. Understanding these institutional disparities is crucial for assessing their influence on the work environment and teaching methodologies of English instructors in both types of language schools.

### **Participants**

Quantitative data was collected from a total of 300 English language instructors who were employed at language schools within both state universities and foundation universities in Istanbul and Ankara, Türkiye, with 23% male and 76% female representation. The average age was 38, and their experience ranged from 2 to 42 years, with most holding graduate degrees—58.33% with master's and 16% with doctoral degrees.

In the qualitative phase, fourteen instructors participated in one-on-one interviews, selected through convenience sampling (Patton, 1990) to represent both state and foundation universities. Seven interviewees each came from state and foundation universities, categorized by establishment dates: "pre-1992," "1992-2005," and "post-2005," following the framework suggested by Uslu (2016). The instructors, approximately half of whom were female, ranged in age from 28 to 55 years. Their educational backgrounds closely mirrored the broader survey sample, with a mix of bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees. An overview of the demographic background of these 14 research participants is presented in Table 1 below.

### **Data collection**

Data collection commenced following research ethics approval. Two distinct methods were employed. Quantitative data was gathered through an online questionnaire, while qualitative data was obtained via semi-structured interviews. Pilot studies, conducted separately for both quantitative and qualitative

instruments (Porta, 2008), preceded their implementation to identify potential issues and deficiencies in the instruments and research protocol.

**Table 1.**  
Interviewee Demographics

Participant No	Gender	Age	Years of Experience	Level of Education	Type of Institution	Establishment Dates of University
1	Female	28	5	MA	State	Pre-1992
2	Female	39	15	MA	Foundation	Pre-1992
3	Female	36	14	PhD	Foundation	Pre-1992
4	Male	37	15	PhD	State	Pre-1992
5	Female	38	13	PhD	State	Pre-1992
6	Male	31	12	BA	State	Pre-1992
7	Female	55	30	BA	Foundation	Pre-1992
8	Female	38	14	MA	Foundation	1992-2005
9	Male	33	9	MA	Foundation	1992-2005
10	Gay Male	33	10	MA	Foundation	1992-2005
11	Male	33	10	MA	Foundation	1992-2005
12	Male	31	7	MA	State	Pre-1992
13	Female	42	20	PhD	State	Pre-1992
14	Female	34	6	MA	State	Post-2005

### Quantitative measures

The questionnaire of this study consisted of various parts. Part A collected demographic details, while Part B analyzed teachers' values and practices in professional learning, assessing their orientation to learning. Part C allowed participants to identify primary influences, critical factors, and significant barriers to their professional development. This survey was conducted comprehensively online using Google Forms.

Part B of the questionnaire included a teacher learning self-evaluation survey, comprising twenty-nine items, which was previously utilized in Feeney's PhD study (2011). It originated from research within the Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP), a major educational inquiry initiative in the UK (James et al., 2006). It delved into various learning activities across five sections (A-E) and categorized them into four types of teachers' orientation to learning: internal, external, research, and collaborative orientations (Opfer et al., 2011). Participants rated both the importance and occurrence of each activity using a scale ranging from "1 = Unimportant" to "5 = Very Important." Prior to the study, a pilot study was conducted to provide evidence about the reliability and validity of the scores measured (Stern, 2010, p. 353) from the teachers' value and practice of professional learning scale and to verify the study's appropriateness with participants. One hundred and thirteen instructors completed the questionnaire. However, due to missing data, we were able to utilize responses from one hundred (75 female, 25 male) instructors for analysis.

Factor analysis was used to test the internal structure of the teacher learning self-evaluation survey and Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for internal consistency (hereafter, Cronbach's  $\alpha$ ) (Cronbach, 1951) was used to evaluate the internal consistency of the scale scores. Since the sample size is limited, one factor structure was tested separately for each factor in the scale. The results of KMO and Barlett's Sphericity tests showed that the measured characteristics were multivariate in the universe parameter and that the sample size was sufficient for factorability analysis (Stern, 2010, p. 365). Principle Component Analysis confirmed five pre-determined factors of the survey for our participants, as given below in Table 2.

### Qualitative measures

In the second step of the data collection process, one-on-one interviewing was conducted to “ask questions and record answers from only one participant in the study at a time” (Creswell, 2012, p. 218). Seidman suggested that “at the heart of interviewing research is an interest in other individuals’ stories” (2013, p. 9). While interview questions should help participants gradually unfold their stories, they should serve the purpose of the research. For this reason, to develop a qualitative research instrument aligning with research questions and appropriate for the participants (Jones, Torres & Arminio, 2014), it is critical to “get feedback from others on how they think the questions (and the interview guide as a whole) will work” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 101). In this study, to complete the piloting of interview questions, three main steps were taken: (1) consulting subject matter experts, (2) getting feedback on the wording of the questions, and (3) conducting pilot interviews, all of which provided valuable feedback to refine and finalize the interview questions prior to the use of the instrument as given below.

1. Can you describe your professional learning this year?
2. What did you learn in terms of practical knowledge and theoretical aspects?
3. What factors influenced your professional learning?

**Table 2.**  
Summary of factor analysis

Factor name	KMO	$\chi^2$ Bartlett test	<i>p</i>	Cronbach’s $\alpha$
Learning in relation to instructional practice	.84	327.480	0.00*	.88
Sharing collaborative activity	.86	312.453	0.00*	.89
Talking about and valuing learning	.90	352.801	0.00*	.91
Exploring teacher’s role in the learning process	.84	208.399	0.00*	.86
Consulting different sources of knowledge	.83	166.895	0.00*	.80

The semi-structured interviews lasted approximately half an hour and were recorded via a digital recording device and saved electronically. The credibility of the data was ensured with member checking; more precisely, interview transcripts were sent to interviewees for final approval and/or possible revisions.

### Data Analysis and Results

Given the two-phase-sequential-explanatory-research design, analyzing the quantitative data was prioritized, and qualitative data collection only began after the first phase had ended. Later, both types of data were integrated and mixed to enhance the significance of the study by “facilitating thickness and richness of data; augmenting interpretation and usefulness of findings” (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 54). The following section details the analysis of quantitative data and its corresponding results, serving as a foundation for the subsequent discussions on qualitative data analysis and results.

#### *Quantitative analysis and results*

Quantitative data analysis was conducted using SPSS 20. For Part B survey data, bivariate correlation analysis and simultaneous and hierarchical multiple regression analysis were utilized. These analyses aimed to explore the relationship between instructors’ attributed values and perceived practices of professional learning activities and to investigate whether this relationship varied depending on the school environment.

For Part C survey data, each item of the multiple response sets was coded as dichotomies (IBM, 2019). This coding allowed for the creation of separate variables for each item, with frequencies subsequently computed. Results were then sorted from the most frequently cited to the least for influences, supports, and barriers to professional learning. Cross-tabulation tables were employed to compare split responses, categorizing instructors into two groups based on the type of school they worked in.

Before conducting the multiple regression analysis, various assumptions were assessed, including linearity, outliers, normality of residuals, multicollinearity, and singularity (Pallant, 2010, p. 151). The correlation analysis indicated a weak correlation ( $r = .094$ ) between school type and attributed values, suggesting no high multicollinearity issues (Cohen, 1988). The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) value, measuring multicollinearity, was found to be 1.009, well below the commonly accepted threshold of 10 (Hair et al., 1995). Similarly, the tolerance value for each variable was .991, indicating no violation of the multicollinearity assumption.

To further validate the assumptions of normality of residuals and linearity (Field, 2013), we inspected the normal probability plot (P-P) of the regression standardized residual (Chart 1) and the scatterplot (Chart 2).

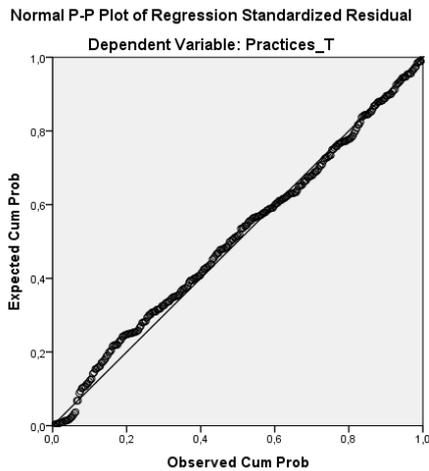


Chart 1: Normal P-P plot.

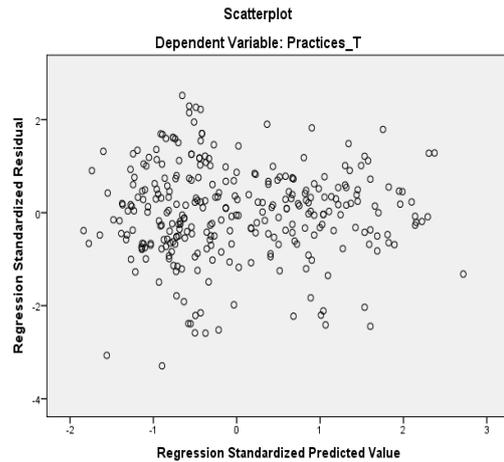


Chart 2: Scatterplot.

The normal P-P Plot showed a straight line from bottom left to top right, indicating no violation of *linearity* assumptions (Pallant, 2010, p. 151). Similarly, the scatterplot displayed most scores clustered within a centralized rectangle, suggesting no significant deviations from *normality*. Outliers were assessed using *Mahalanobis distances* and standardized residuals. According to Tabachnick & Fidell (2007), standardized residual values exceeding  $\pm 3.3$  are considered outliers. In our data, the maximum *Mahalanobis* distance was 9.269, well below the suggested critical value of 13.82 for two independent variables (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). None of the standardized values exceeded  $\pm 3.3$ . These results affirmed that no assumptions of multiple regression were violated. Subsequently, the quantitative analysis results are discussed in detail, addressing each research question individually.

Question 1: *Is there a relationship between instructors' attributed-values to and perceived-practices of professional learning activities?*

To determine if there is a relationship between instructors' attributed-values to and perceived-practices of PD learning activities, a bivariate correlation analysis was carried out and Pearson's  $r$  values (the correlation coefficient) were calculated (Stern, 2010, p. 151). The correlation coefficients were separately calculated for each school type and are presented in Table 3. The results suggested that the predicting power of attributed-values on the perceived-practices of professional learning of instructors was greater in foundation schools ( $r = .53^{**}$ ). That is, compared to the instructors working at state schools ( $r = .19^*$ ), in foundation schools, the more instructors value a certain type of orientation to learning, the more they are likely to practice it, or equally, the more they practice a certain type of orientation to learning, the more they are likely to value it.

Question 2: *How well do the school type and instructors' attributed-values predict their practice score of professional learning activities? How much variance in total practice scores can be explained by these two variables?*

To decide how much variance in the total practice score of professional learning activities was explained by school type and instructors' attributed-values, simultaneous multiple regression analysis was run. School type and instructors' attributed-values together explained 25% of the variance in the total practice score of professional learning activities  $F(2, 297) = 49.75, p < .001$ .

**Table 3.**

Summary of Intercorrelations, Means and Standard Deviations for Value and Practice Scores: Schools Compared.

		1	2	M	SD
State School	1. Values Total	-		3.95	.47
	2. Practices Total	.19*	-	3.09	.66
Foundation School	1. Values Total	-		4.03	.41
	2. Practices Total	.53**	-	3.60	.55

\* $p \leq 0.05$   
\*\*  $p \leq 0.01$

Question 3: *Which variable is the best predictor of total practice of professional learning activities: instructors' attributed-values or school type?*

To observe how much unique variance in the total practice score of professional learning activities each variable explained, *coefficients* were examined. Based on standardized regression coefficients ( $\beta$ ), school type ( $\beta = .36, p < .001$ ) statistically and significantly predicted the instructors' total practice score of professional activities better than their attributed-values ( $\beta = .31, p < .001$ ).

Question 4: *Does the school type moderate the relationship between instructors' attributed-values to and practice of professional learning activities?*

To determine if the school type moderates the relationship between instructors' attributed-values to and practice of professional learning activities, moderation (hierarchical multiple regression) analysis developed by Hayes (2019) was initiated using SPSS PROCESS Version 3.4. In the first step, two variables were included in the analysis: school type and instructors' attributed-values. In model 1 without the interaction term, school type and instructors' attributed-values explained 25% of the variance in the total practice score of professional learning activities  $F(2, 297) = 49.75, p < .001$ . The variables were centered to avoid multicollinearity problem (Aiken & West, 1991).

In the second step, the interaction term between school type and instructors' attributed-values was added to the regression model. Model 2,  $F(3, 296) = 36.90, p < .001$ , with the interaction term between school type and instructors' attributed-values, accounted for 27% of the total practice of professional learning activities,  $\Delta R^2 = .02, \Delta F(1, 296) = 9.66, p = .001, b = .436, t(296) = 2.94, p < .01$ . The  $\Delta F$  value indicates that school type moderates the relationship between instructors' attributed-values to and perceived-practices of professional learning activities. While the 95% confidence interval for the simple slope for state schools is between [.04, .50], it is between [.53, .88] for foundation schools as given in chart 3 below.

The non-overlapping confidence intervals for the slopes indicate that school type serves as a moderator variable in this relationship. The predictive strength of instructors' attributed values on practices of professional learning was notably stronger in foundation schools. This suggests a relationship between instructors' attributed values and perceived practices of professional learning activities, which varies depending on the school type. In foundation schools, instructors who value a certain orientation to learning are more likely to practice it, and vice versa, compared to those in state schools. This relationship may be influenced by contextual factors described by participants as significant enhancers of their professional development.

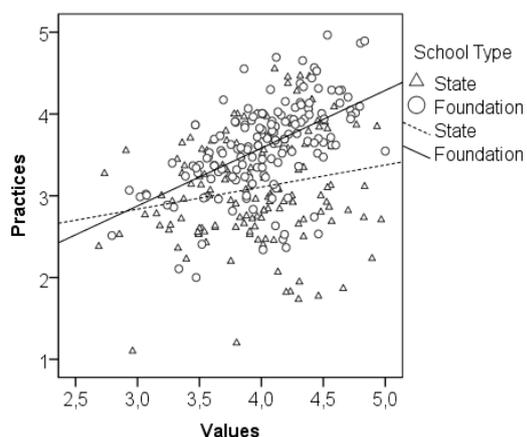
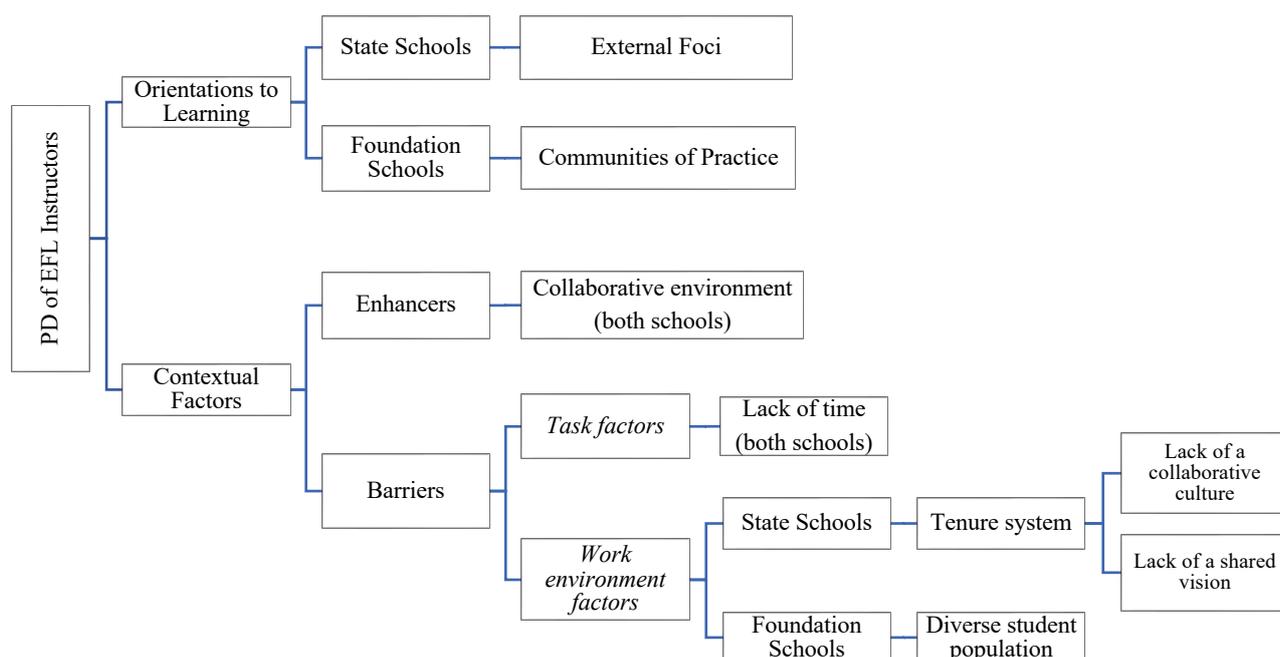


Chart 3: Simple slopes.

### ***Qualitative analysis and results***

Data from interviews is used to elaborate, and explain, the second and fourth research questions and also explore the fifth research question. Qualitative data were analyzed using “a constant comparative approach,” which is defined as one “comparing one segment of data with one found in the same or another data set for the purpose of identifying possible patterns and categories that may lead to theory formulation” (Merriam, 2009, p. 142).

The first author conducted all the interviews. These were digitally recorded and then transcribed verbatim. As for the quotations, modest editing such as correction of grammar mistakes was done. The analysis of the qualitative data was done through NVivo 12 software. Initially, the first and second authors detected codes separately and then compared and contrasted them among themselves to ensure inter-coder reliability. Finally, they both agreed to have 12 codes. These codes were then merged into 4 main categories, which were later grouped into 2 central themes: a) instructors' orientations to professional learning activities and b) contextual factors that influenced these orientations, which included two sub-themes: (a) enhancers and (b) barriers as detailed in the data tree below:



The analysis of qualitative data highlights two main themes: how instructors understand and practice professional development activities, and the factors in their environment that either help or hinder their professional growth.

**(1) Instructors’ orientations towards PD activities**

The qualitative interview data corroborated and expanded upon the findings from the quantitative survey results regarding research question 2. Quantitative analysis indicated that school type and instructors’ attributed values collectively accounted for 25% of the variance in the total practice score of professional learning activities. This finding was further supported by qualitative insights, revealing specific activities valued and practiced by instructors based on their attributed values and school type. Table 4 highlights the top three professional development activities by school type, showing participants' interest in both internal (e.g., observation) and external resources (e.g., seminars, conferences, literature reading) for their professional development.

**Table 4.**  
Qualitative Results: Top Three Professional Development Activity

Qualitative - Top Three PD Activities	Total	Type of School Employed			
		State		Foundation	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Classroom observations of and by colleagues	7	2	29%	5	71%
Attending seminars and conferences	6	4	57%	2	29%
Reading literature	6	4	57%	2	29%
Collaborating with colleagues	5	1	14%	4	57%
Getting internationally recognized certificates/diplomas	4	3	43%	1	14%
Talking about teaching and learning	4	1	14%	3	43%
Personal experience of teaching	4	2	29%	2	29%
Following online courses and-or webinars	3	3	43%	0	0%
Graduate study	3	2	29%	1	14%
Total (unique)	14	7		7	

The qualitative data suggested a potential link, with instructors in foundation school contexts predominantly reporting observation (5/7), while those in state school environments favored attending seminars and conferences (4/7) and reading professional literature (4/7) as primary professional development strategies. State school instructors also mentioned seeking internationally recognized certificates or diplomas (3/7) and engaging in online courses/webinars (3/7). These activities indicate external dependence and reliance on top-down knowledge rather than creating contextual knowledge within the classroom or through collaboration with colleagues.

In state schools, bottom-up and internally developed learning strategies are not preferred by instructors. Participant 6, for example, explains that he values external sources and authorities as a form of support over that of his colleagues:

Workshops are very interesting because, again, that's a higher authority; somebody coming in from another university or institution who says, "Look! This is what we do for reading—try it out." As a result, I think higher-authority-led workshops would definitely be effective ... I guess, to learn that I should go to a CELTA course [Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages offered by Cambridge Assessment] or something like that.

Participant 4 (state school), also reported that despite valuing her colleagues as a potential source of learning, such interactions are typically hindered by a lack of cooperation:

My colleagues also play a role in my professional learning. [...] Basically, I can say that there is not much close cooperation among the staff members here, so I think this is upsetting for us. Maybe we need to think about how we can increase cooperation among ourselves, among the lecturers who give English classes here.

On the other hand, participants who work in foundation schools preferred bottom-up, constructive, and collaborative development activities, which featured observations (5/7), collaboration with their colleagues, (4/7) and discussion of teaching and learning (3/7). These instructors appear to value and practice internal resources within their schools in collaboration with their colleagues, which participant 3 below clearly expresses:

I prefer team-teaching or peer observation because I know the person and we are close. I know that they would be very honest with me. They wouldn't be looking for mistakes and react with a "S/he did this mistake. No! This cannot happen" attitude or behavior. You need to have this kind of bonding between two people.

As indicated earlier, congruent with the quantitative bivariate correlation analysis results, instructors in the state schools differed from those in the foundation schools in terms of PD activities they valued and actually practiced.

## **(2) Contextual Factors**

Instructors' reflection on interview questions also revealed the factors which facilitated or hindered their professional learning, aligning with the findings of research questions 4 and 5, as detailed in the following discussion.

### **(a) Enhancers**

Regardless of their school type, ten out of fourteen instructors mentioned "collaborative environment" as a key factor in their PD. Four instructors working in state schools believe that working in a school where their co-workers are open to cooperation contributes to their professional learning, as asserted by Participant 2 (state school):

Collaboration... Hearing their experiences or ideas ... intellectual discussions. Here in the office, I have a native-speaker colleague from Canada and her being here really helps me in terms of personal development, professional development, and general knowledge. We share ideas and we talk about different things, so I can look at things from a different perspective as a result of our interaction.

Six instructors in the foundation school group think in the same way as Participant 2. Co-participation plays an important role in their motivation to engage in PD activities, as stated by Participant 8:

Colleagues maybe ... it would be another source of motivation. I am now currently surrounded by a lot of colleagues who are trying to improve themselves because I think it is a common feature of all of us in the school; we always try to change what we have been doing. Even if you are experienced, you want to change. I think colleagues are very important. They should support and inspire you.

These results suggest that a collaborative environment, irrespective of the school type, facilitates instructors' decisions to engage in PD and, therefore, influences their learning. Such factors highlight the importance of social and collegial interactions in a school context for professional learning.

### **(b) Restrictive barriers**

In the overall qualitative data, nine instructors out of fourteen from both school types highlighted “lack of time” as a common barrier to their professional learning. This is an example of *task factors* (Kwakman, 2003, p. 158) affecting teachers' professional learning in the workplace. Five instructors believe that their teaching load in a week limits their participation in PD activities:

I think the teaching time...if you have a lot of hours of up-front teaching every week— if it is too much, how can you improve yourself? How can you find the time to do some research and discover yourself? Right now, it is around 20-25 hours, and it is too much because you need to prepare before and you need to do a lot of paperwork afterwards: marking, preparing exams, keeping track of everything, too many documents to fill in and follow (attendance, grade sheets, etc). (Participant 9)

Four instructors also think that even if they participated in PD activities and learned about new techniques, they could not implement such techniques in their classes due to time constraints. Participant 14 for example indicated they could not practice such activities in class because they did not have time as the schedule was too loaded. These views are in line with Wei et al (2010, p. vi), who asserts that what might aggravate the difficulties of teachers' workplace learning is that “the current structures (e.g., work schedules) rarely allow for deep engagement in joint efforts to improve instruction and learning”. Although “time” emerged as a common barrier to professional learning in both state and foundation schools, the results also showed that different schools imposed different barriers to instructors' professional learning as they reported different *work environment factors* (Kwakman, 2003, p. 158) blocking their PD. Four instructors working in state universities reported “lack of collaborative culture” and “lack of a shared vision and values” as obstacles in their PD, attributing these challenges to the tenure system, as Participant 5 explains:

Here, it is a state school and people have habits. Every new thing is like an extra burden on them ... Being a contract-based instructor and being a “*kadrolu*” [tenured] is really different because here nobody can do anything to me or to another instructor because they are already “*devlet memuru*” [civil servants], and it is really hard to make them do something to improve themselves or the institution. They don't have any concerns about job security, so they don't care about sharing or collaborating.

The comments from this participant suggest that colleagues who have habits set in stone, who show resistance to novelty, and who do not cooperate or help each other are a major barrier to the PD of those working in state schools.

On the other hand, 4 instructors working in foundation universities are confronted by a “diverse challenging student population” regarding their PD and day-to-day practices:

You are limited in your choice of different strategies and methods because they do not appeal to the students. Even if the institution supports you, sometimes students don't want to do such “stupid” things in the classes because they just want to pass the proficiency exam. In that sense, those professional courses, conferences, and symposiums just stay there. (Participant 7)

Another instructor echoed a similar sentiment:

Obviously, I learn a lot from my students, but ... one sad thing is that I found that Turkish students are so exam oriented. I mean, as they say in Turkish “sınav çözmek,” they want to complete the exam and they want to solve these questions and that is very odd from a European point of view. But for Turkish students, that’s not the concept. I mean, with all these “dersane” [private teaching institution] and things like this, the focus is you pass the exam. The exam is not a means; it is the end. (Participant 10)

The study found that EFL instructors at both state and foundation universities faced challenges related to “lack of time” for professional learning. However, different workplace settings presented distinct barriers: state school instructors struggled with a “lack of collaborative culture,” while foundation school instructors encountered difficulties due to a “diverse student population.” This suggests that the school type may have a greater impact on professional activities than instructors' personal values. These findings support the idea that learning orientations can vary depending on the context in which teachers work, as suggested by Opfer and colleagues (2001).

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

This mixed-method study investigated "teachers' orientation to learning" (Opfer, Pedder, & Lavicza, 2011, p. 444) concerning contextual factors affecting instructors' engagement in PD activities. The study revealed various discussion points that resonate with previous research, suggesting that workplace dynamics significantly impact instructors' learning orientations and practices (Wilson & Demetriou, 2007).

By integrating both qualitative and quantitative findings, it can be argued that while EFL instructors working in state schools have some external foci of professional learning and tend to depend mostly on outside experts, EFL instructors working in foundation schools are more likely to function as a community of practice, exploiting internal resources within their schools, collaborating with their coworkers, and engaging in a “set of relationships over time” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 98). Such an outcome supports the findings of previous research in the sense that “teacher learning is shaped through a combination of reciprocity between the context of the particular school setting, and an individual teacher’s interest and disposition to learn about practice” (Wilson & Demetriou, 2007, p. 214).

The triangulation of quantitative and qualitative results points to a second salient outcome; there is a relationship between instructors’ attributed-values and perceived-practices of professional learning activities, and this relationship changes depending on the school type that teachers work in. Such a finding corresponds with the findings of earlier studies related to teacher learning, individual, and workplace activities as Fuller and Unwin (2004) proposed that organizations, as learning environments, are different in nature in terms of how they create and manage learning. Quantitative analysis showed that compared to the instructors working at state schools, in foundation schools, the more instructors value a certain type of orientation to learning, the more they are likely to practice it, or equally, the more they practice a certain type of orientation to learning, the more they are likely to value it. Similarly, the qualitative data showed that instructors were able to identify specific factors that either supported or hindered their professional learning. While a “collaborative environment” was accepted as the main supportive factor, “lack of time” was regarded as the most common restrictive barrier by most of the instructors working both at state and foundation schools. However, while the first group was challenged by a “lack of collaborative culture” and “lack of a shared vision and values,” the latter group reported a “diverse/challenging student population” as the main challenge to their professional learning. Therefore, the results indicated that not only individual but also contextual factors contributed to the expansive nature of the learning environment, as previously stated by Fuller et al. (2007) and Kwakman (2003). The findings of this study confirm that the availability of learning structures (e.g., time in the day, learning groups, or other tools) in the workplace, in addition to a prevailing culture of trust and collegial support, reinforce the expansive nature of learning in the workplace (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009).

Our results also indicated that job security, incidental to being tenured, plays an important role in Turkish EFL instructors’ orientation to learning and participation in PD activities. EFL instructors working in state schools reported that the tenure system offered in such schools in Türkiye somewhat removes

incentives for instructors to put in more than the minimum effort in their involvement in PD, including collaboration with their colleagues. This finding is congruent with the findings of earlier research (Knight, Tait & Yorke, 2006; Qualters, 2009), which highlight the role of employment type on supporting teacher learning. To achieve collaborative inquiry among teachers for them to implement change for the betterment of the students or schools, it is crucial for administrators to consider institutional dynamics such as quality assurance standards, fiscal resources, employment type (tenured and others like contracted, substitute, assigned), and reward structures for promotion and tenure.

In Türkiye, instructors at foundation schools face the challenge of teaching a diverse student population, stemming from the country's university admission policies. State universities typically admit students based on a fixed cut-score in the national entrance exam, whereas foundation universities offer varying scholarship opportunities, ranging from partial grants to full coverage of tuition and living expenses. According to 2020 statistics from the Turkish Council of Higher Education (YÖK, 2020), full scholarship students comprised an average of approximately 13% across 72 foundation universities in Türkiye, with percentages ranging from 100% to 10%. Consequently, compared to Turkish state universities, foundation universities generally enroll a more heterogeneous student body. In other words, contextual factors, including the student profile, contributed to the expansive or restrictive nature of the learning environment in terms of instructors' professional learning process.

Our findings indicate that different school types may entail different *enhancers* and *barriers*, such as “workplace hierarchies, group affiliations, personal relations, workplace cliques, and cultural practices” (Billet, 2002, p.2), which determine the opportunities for instructors' professional learning. Based on this premise and the outcomes of this particular study, a general conclusion can be drawn that in addition to teachers' individual needs and orientations towards professional learning, contextual factors should be taken into consideration when designing professional development programs. A related issue would be identifying and eliminating institutional barriers, while reinforcing enhancers, to restructure how instructors engage in their own learning and development process in their immediate work environment. This could be best achieved by fostering expansive features and creating opportunities for learning in the workplace since such environments not only foster learning but also facilitate “the integration of individual and organizational improvement.” (Fuller et al., 2007, p. 744)

The results presented in this article are snapshots of the current reality in schools of languages at Turkish state and foundation universities. Even though these findings cannot be generalized to the entire higher education sector in the country, they still highlight important characteristics about the professional learning of instructors in the HEIs not only in Türkiye but also for other international contexts. The important point to note for both national and international policy makers and administrators is that the organizational structures and dynamics that come with these contexts have the potential to influence how instructors engage in professional learning more than instructors' own values and beliefs. From this perspective, policy makers and administrators should work on their organizational structures in such a way that would allow for a supportive environment for instructors, a place where PD activities can be encouraged and taken up in a fruitful and productive way that will better contribute to instructors' professional development and academic careers.

#### **Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Future Research**

While insightful, this study on EFL instructors in Turkish higher education has limitations. Firstly, its sample is confined to Istanbul and Ankara, limiting generalizability. Future research should broaden the geographical scope to include diverse regions of Türkiye. Secondly, it lacks insight into instructors' individual values and traits, hindering a comprehensive understanding of their engagement with professional development. Qualitative methods like interviews or surveys could address this gap.

Additionally, the study overlooks how entry conditions affect merit and competence among educators. Future research should explore recruitment processes, institutional policies, and support for new hires to understand their impact on professional development. Addressing these limitations through further research will enhance our understanding of educators' learning practices and aid in the design of more effective support strategies in various educational settings.



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## Barriers to Establishing Partnerships in terms of Internationalization of Higher Education: The example of Türkiye - UK case

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### Abstract

Internationalization has become an increasingly important global target and process for the higher education sector. Higher education stakeholders aim to enlarge their benefits from this phenomenon, and policies and practices usually address the issue of quantity and visible tools such as numbers on student mobility. The growing interest in internationalization highlighted the importance of cooperation between countries at the national level. This study examined models, relationship, and ties between higher education institutions (HEIs) in Türkiye and the UK, focusing on the barriers to an effective partnership. Within the scope of the study, qualitative research methods were used to conduct semi-structured interviews with national policymakers and decision-makers in both countries, senior representatives of HEIs, and several focus groups with different groups of academics in the UK and Türkiye. In this article, we aim to present the primary analysis gathered from the intensive research conducted in 2021. This article identified the main challenges that have slowed the development of relations between the two countries. According to the results, the main barriers to partnerships are the structural and attitudinal barriers between the HEIs of the two countries. Recommendations for policy reform from the extensive research are shared at the end of the article.

**Keywords:** Internationalization of higher education, Türkiye, the UK, international partnerships in higher education, challenges

### Introduction

#### Introduction

Internationalization in universities has been affecting higher education systems in all world countries since the 1990s. As a result of the increasing influence of this concept, it is possible to encounter a wide variety of internationalization practices in universities. Internationalization has become one of the most important strategic priorities for national authorities, higher education institutions (HEIs), and individual stakeholders. It is a broad term covering different approaches, tools, and rationales. The internationalization of higher education (IHE) is an increasingly important topic on the agenda of countries at national, institutional, and individual levels. Over the last few decades 30 years, the IHE has evolved from ad-hoc and marginal activity to a central component of higher education policy and an integral part of university strategies (De Wit & Hunter, 2014).

IHE is presented in various forms, such as internationalization at home, internationalization of research, internationalization of teaching and learning, joint degree programs, and branch campuses. Nevertheless, student mobility is the most well-known and mostly referred practice of internationalization (Van Damme, 2001). According to the OECD (2021), international student mobility has steadily expanded over the last 20 years. In 2019, 6.1 million higher education students traveled to another country to study, more than double the number of mobility students in 2007. In other words, the

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number of international students in higher education increased by an average of 5.5 percent annually between 1998 and 2019.

Yang (2002) defines internationalization as the awareness and implementation of intra- and intercultural interactions through education, research, and community service functions, with the main goal of developing mutual understanding across cultural boundaries, and this definition is widely used. The most commonly used definition of IHE is ‘the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions, or delivery of higher education’ (Knight, 2003, p. 2). However, this definition was reviewed recently to make the concept more inclusive, purposeful, and integrated to society, in line with the philosophy of internationalization:

“The intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, function, and delivery of post-secondary education and research for all students and staff and to make a meaningful contribution to society” (de Wit et al., 2015, p.29).

With this revision, IHE is seen as a deliberate process that should guide HEIs' policy and practice by ensuring that all students, regardless of background, gain from internationalization efforts rather than only emphasizing mobility. This renewal in the definition led scholars to be more critical of the concept of internationalization. Inclusiveness is a hot topic in strengthening equal opportunity in internationalization discussions as well as in social policies. Although student mobility seems to be widespread in all universities around the world, it is not possible to say that student mobility is equally inclusive for all countries, universities, and indeed all students from different backgrounds, as stated in studies on inclusive internationalization (Bulut-Sahin & Brooks, 2023; De Wit & Jones, 2018; Janebová & Johnstone, 2020; Van Mol & Perez-Encinas, 2022). Accordingly, De Wit and Jones (2018) state that 99 percent of the world's student population does not participate in physical mobility. Therefore, despite regional and international grant programs, international mobility is elitist (De Wit, 2020) and only accessible to a minority of students.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the main focus of IHE was on mobility and education abroad (De Wit, 2020); because of the limited number of students and staff who can move in this way. However, in the later decades, it became necessary to enlarge the definition beyond physical mobility. Although physical movement still receives the most attention within internationalization policy and practice, it is not inclusive and excludes most students worldwide (De Wit & Jones, 2018). As a result, alternative and more inclusive concepts have been developed, including ‘internationalization at home’ (Beelen & Jones, 2015), ‘internationalization of the curriculum’ (Leask, 2015), and ‘virtual internationalization’ (Lawton, 2015). The concept of ‘comprehensive internationalization,’ developed by Hudzic (2011), refers to embracing internationalization by the whole institution and its use as an institutional imperative rather than only a desired possibility.

The rationales driving HE internationalization can be academic, economic, political, and socio-cultural (Knight, 2004). However, economic rationales have received considerably more attention than others (Van der Wende, 2001; Jiang, 2008; Brandenburg & De Wit, 2011). When the focus is only on economic benefits, only a small and elite subset of students and institutions tend to benefit from internationalization (De Wit & Altbach, 2020). The mobile student population worldwide is typically not diverse regarding social characteristics such as income, ethnicity, and disability. Thus, the employment advantages that often accrue to those who are physically mobile tend to reinforce social inequalities (Brooks & Waters, 2011).

Along with the aforementioned remarks regarding the significance of characterizing internationalization in more inclusive terms, some scholars have suggested that the sociocultural justification should have greater weight than the economic imperatives (Brandenburg et al., 2019). The majority of countries in the globe now prioritize internationalization policies for higher education, and numerous national governments, HEIs, and other stakeholders are creating and putting these policies into practice. These groups are categorized by Helms, Brajickovic, and Rumbley (2016) as national government entities, quasi-governmental and autonomous organizations, regional university associations, and other influencers like the EU and other regional government bodies. Consequently, and in line with the above

points about the importance of defining internationalization in more inclusive terms, various scholars have argued that more emphasis should be placed on the socio-cultural rationale and less on economic imperatives (Brandenburg et al., 2019).

Internationalization policies for higher education have become a priority for most nations worldwide, with many national governments, individuals, HEIs, and other stakeholders developing and implementing procedures in this area. Although internationalization is a priority for institutions and individuals, relations and dynamics between countries also play a very important role in the IHE. Facilitating practices or conflicts between countries directly impacts the processes of cooperation between HEIs. This paper, therefore, focuses on the relationship between the UK and Türkiye, two countries with a significant history of higher education partnerships. In the first part, information is provided on the Turkish and British higher education systems along with national priorities, and the method and results sections are followed by a conclusion and implications.

### **Higher Education System in Türkiye**

Türkiye boasts a sizable higher education market and a centrally organized educational system. Both individual universities and the Council of Higher Education (CoHE), as the regulating body, have been paying increasing attention to IHE. There are 208 HEIs, 129 public universities, 75 foundation universities, and four foundation vocational schools. Türkiye has the highest student population in the European Higher Education Area, with 6.952.142 (nearly half of them are enrolled in open universities) enrolled in the universities. Approximately 40 percent of universities are in Istanbul and Ankara, the country's two most populous cities (CoHE, 2024).

In public universities, the tuition fee is exempted for the national students; for the international students, the fees are defined by the Cabinet annually. The Turkish higher education system is coordinated in line with the Constitution and the associated Law (Erdogan & Toprak, 2012). The CoHE is responsible for the strategic planning, coordination, supervision, and monitoring of higher education and for establishing and maintaining quality assurance mechanisms in Türkiye (CoHE, 2019b). To facilitate access and increase system capacity, the higher education sector has rapidly massified and expanded during the past 20 years, as required by the National Development Plans and the Constitution (Erdogan & Toprak, 2012). Most Turkish universities are newly established:

- between 1991 and 2000, 43 universities were founded
- between 2001 and 2010, 77 universities were founded
- between 2011 and 2020, 58 universities were founded
- 

### **Higher Education System in the UK**

There are 165 institutions, slightly under 440,000 employees, and 2.52 million students in the UK's higher education system (HESA, 2021; UUK, 2021a). Hazelkorn (2015) notes that the sector is more vertically differentiated than in many other countries, with divisions usually made between

- larger, older, "research-intensive" universities (generally belonging to the "Russell Group" mission group)
- smaller, research-focused universities that were granted university status before 1992
- more contemporary, frequently teaching-focused institutions that were granted university status in 1992 or later

Every student in the UK is required to pay tuition to pursue higher education. However, the cost varies depending on the country, the level of study (undergraduate or postgraduate), and whether the students are classified as "home" or "international." Undergraduate tuition in England is restricted at £9,250 for "home" students; however, costs for overseas students are uncapped and can sometimes exceed three times the amount for "home" students.

Postgraduate tuition is unlimited for both domestic and foreign students; however, the sums each group pays are usually somewhat different. International students and postgraduates must pay fees comparable to those in England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. However, Northern Irish students studying

in Northern Ireland are limited to £4,395 at the undergraduate level, while Scottish students studying in Scotland are not charged any fees (UCAS, 2021).

### **Türkiye's National Priorities in terms of Internationalization of Higher Education**

Several official documents outline Türkiye's national priorities for the internationalization of higher education. The 12<sup>th</sup> Development Plan of Türkiye (2024-2028) includes various strategic aims to increase the attraction of Turkish universities for international students (SBB, 2023). The strategic aims to develop the internationalization of higher education are defined in the following ways (p. 164):

Article 685: The level of internationalization of higher education will be increased, and Türkiye will be made a center of attraction for qualified international students and academicians.

- 685.1. The quality of foreign language education programs will be increased.
- 685.2. The number of qualified international students will increase.
- 685.3. International cooperation among HEIs will be increased.
- 685.4. International recognition of the higher education system will be ensured through international graduates and effective promotional activities.
- 685.5. Efforts will be made to encourage and facilitate the employment of qualified foreign doctoral researchers and academicians.
- 686.2. Universities will be encouraged to open joint doctoral programs with competent universities abroad.

Published in 2018, the "Internationalization Strategy Document" (YÖK, 2018) covers 2018–2022. In this plan, two main strategies have been defined for higher education. The first primary strategy for internationalization is Türkiye's increasing attractiveness to international students. For the first strategy, some example sub-strategies are as follows:

- Policies to attract international students and staff,
- Increasing the visibility of Turkish higher education in the international arena,
- Development of international partnerships with partner universities and other states,
- Improving academic services for international students (e.g., courses offered in English, improving the English teaching capacity of academic staff),
- Improving support services for international students (e.g., accommodation).

The second key strategy is to improve the institutional capacity of universities. Some of the sub-objectives identified for the second objective to improve internationalization are as follows:

- Providing qualified human resources for internationalization in universities,
- Formation of official sections for internationalization,
- More cooperation among Turkish universities to follow internationalization trends,
- Sending representative faculty members to target countries.

### **UK's National Priorities in terms of Internationalization of Higher Education**

The UK's 2019 International Education Strategy and its most recent update, released in February 2021 by the Departments of Education and International Trade, provide an effective summary of the country's current priorities for the internationalization of the higher education sector. The government's commitment to achieving the two primary goals outlined in the 2019 strategy is reaffirmed in the strategy update:

- raising the value of education exports, which include foreign students studying in the UK, to £35 billion annually (from £23.3 billion in 2018—the most recent data available)
- raising the number of international students studying in the UK to 600,000 annually (compared to just under 560,000 in 2019–20).

The revised plan also specifies a few steps that can be used to boost both the quantity of international students and the value of education exports.

- One is increasing the number of nations and areas from which international students are recruited. To achieve this, several "priority" nations and regions—India, Indonesia, Saudi

Arabia, Vietnam, and Nigeria—as well as "other important regional markets"—Brazil, Mexico, Pakistan, Europe, China, and Hong Kong—are identified for focused action

- creating enduring international partnerships in and beyond the priority mentioned above
- enhancing the experiences of overseas students from the time they apply for a UK degree to the time they start working
- launching a new international teaching credential to draw in students from all over the world who want to become teachers.

### **Cooperation between Türkiye and the UK in higher education**

Türkiye and the United Kingdom have had long-standing cooperation based on various historical, cultural, and economic ties. On March 12, 1956, an intergovernmental agreement on cooperation for education and culture was signed, formalizing the two nations' partnerships. This agreement covers a wide range of subjects and activities and is still in effect. More recently, in the last ten years, several initiatives have been aimed at fortifying Türkiye-UK higher education alliances. 2011 saw the signing of the UK-Türkiye Knowledge Partnership, an intergovernmental agreement. The UK-Türkiye Higher Education and Industry Partnership Program, a cooperation treaty, was subsequently signed in 2012 by the Universities UK (UUK) and the Council of Higher Education (CoHE) presidents.

To forge closer ties and increase levels of bilateral cooperation in higher education, the British Council and the Council of Higher Education signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in 2019. Following this agreement, five universities from Türkiye (Hacettepe University, İstanbul University, İstanbul University Cerrahpaşa, Middle East Technical University, İzmir Institute of Technology, Ankara University) have initiated partnership agreements with UK higher education institutions to deepen and expand collaboration. The British Council also reported on the use of English in higher education in Türkiye and collaborated with the CoHE to create qualifications and quality criteria for English in Turkish higher education (British Council, 2015).

Wider regional collaboration initiatives, like the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), which has improved the comparability and transparency of higher education degrees and qualifications across member countries; the Erasmus+ mobility program; the European Research Area (ERA); and framework programs like Horizon 2020, have strengthened ties between the two countries. Furthermore, since its founding in 2015, the Turkish Higher Education Quality Council (THEQC) have worked in close cooperation with the British Council in constructing a national quality assurance system similar to its foreign equivalents in terms of structure and function. Additionally, certain HEIs have created bilateral partnerships or collaborations for research, training, and education. Creating new partnerships is crucial for Türkiye and the UK, as the former intends to strengthen its research base, boost institutional cooperation and internationalization, gain from peer learning, and assist the many students who come to study in the UK every year.

All the above national level cooperation initiatives have led several bilateral agreements between the HEIs in different countries. Some of these bilateral agreements were signed as Memorandum of Understanding agreements (MoU) to establish general cooperation with student and staff exchange. However, most of these MoU agreements do not include any funding schemas for mobility and they had limited impact for further cooperation. The other type of agreements was signed under the Erasmus Program. However, the number of Erasmus agreements between the UK and Türkiye stay limited; Turkish HEIs concluded most of their Erasmus agreements with Poland and Germany (European Commission, 2022).

The research presented in this article seeks two main outcomes: one is to examine the current situation and challenges to develop long-term partnerships concerning teaching and research activities, and the other is to shed light on what has been accomplished thus far and what may be accomplished in the future for the benefits of both countries, thereby laying a solid foundation for such high-quality, long-lasting, and mutually beneficial advances for the partnerships with the other countries as well.

### **Method**

This study is designed as a qualitative study. Unlike quantitative researchers, who strive for more significant numbers of context-stripped cases and seek statistical significance, qualitative researchers typically work with small samples of people, nested in their context, and investigated in depth (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

### Research Questions:

This article presents the findings from a research project funded by the British Council of Türkiye. The following three research questions were used in this project. This article only presents basic findings on the barriers to establishing higher education cooperation between the two countries.

- What do key stakeholders (national-level organizations, HEIs (HEIs), and individual academics and students) consider priority areas for UK-Türkiye HE institutional partnerships, and what form should these partnerships take?
- What are some of the current barriers to establishing UK-Türkiye partnerships?
- How can the conditions necessary for establishing institutional partnerships be improved, and how can the identified barriers be overcome?

### Data Collection

The data was collected in Türkiye and the UK from November 2020 to February 2021. Due to Covid-19 pandemic, online semi-structured interviews were conducted with national and institutional authorities' representatives—semi-structured interviews developed by the researchers. One-on-one semi-structured interviews are arguably the most widely used qualitative method and have practically become the "gold standard," according to Barbour (2008). Compared to other qualitative methodologies, the quality of the data collected through interviews is higher, making it more convenient for the researcher.

Furthermore, online focus groups were conducted with academics and students who benefited from the partnership tools in both countries. All groups were conducted online, included between four and six participants, lasted approximately 90 minutes, and were recorded (with the permission of those taking part). Participants were asked about their experience in a higher education partnership between Türkiye and the UK and/or moving between the two countries for teaching and/or research. After each focus group, descriptive and analytic notes were taken by the researcher who conducted the group.

### Research Participants:

As with most qualitative investigations, the purposeful sampling method was employed. According to Patton (2012), purposeful sampling yields a thorough understanding by choosing cases with a wealth of information. Maximum variation sampling is one of several sampling techniques that fall under the broad category of purposeful sampling. This sampling technique identifies and characterizes a phenomenon's key themes, essential aspects, and shared experiences (Patton 2012).

In this study, participants were recruited through social media advertisements placed by the British Council and the research team; some were also nominated by the HEIs participating in the study. There were three groups of participants in this research, both in Türkiye and the UK.

The represented organizations and the details of the focus groups are provided in Table 1:

Table 1. *The research participants and the represented organizations (alphabetically order)*

	National Organizations (Nos)	HEIs	Individual academics / students – Focus Groups
The UK	British Universities' International Liaison Association	Abertay University	two focus groups with Turkish students who had moved to the UK for the whole or part of their higher education
	Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	Cardiff University	one focus group with Turkish academics who had moved to the UK for work

	Department for Education	Cranfield University	two focus groups with UK-based academics who had been involved in research or education partnerships with Türkiye
	Department for International Trade	Keele University	
	Quality Assurance Agency Russell Group	Lancaster University Leeds Beckett University	
	University Alliance	Queen's University, Belfast	
	Universities UK International	Stirling University University of Edinburgh University of Liverpool University of Reading University of Sheffield University of South Wales University of Surrey	
	Ministry of National Education	Abdullah Gül University	two focus groups with Turkish senior academics who had collaborations with the UK.
	Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Directorate of EU Affairs	Altınbaş University	two focus groups with UK academics working in Turkish universities.
	Turkish Scientific Research Institution (TUBİTAK)	Anadolu University	
	Turkish Higher Education Quality Council (THEQC)	Atatürk University	
	Turkish National Agency	İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University	
	Turkish Education Attaché in London	Gebze Technical University	
Türkiye	British Embassy Chevening Program	Hacettepe University	
	British Council Türkiye	İzmir Institute of Technology Karabük University Karadeniz Technical University Koç University Middle East Technical University Ostim Technical University Sabancı University TOBB ETÜ University of Economics & Technology	

*Continued*

## Results

This section of the article presents the main barriers or obstacles described by the research participants concerning establishing and/or sustaining HE partnerships between the two countries. The findings indicate various country-specific obstacles and some common barriers the interviewees identified on both sides. The main barriers presented in the article have been classified as structural (regulatory, academic, financial) and attitudinal (relating, for example, to cultural differences and views of the other country).

*Structural barriers:*

The first structural barrier is related to the regulatory frameworks. In Türkiye, due to the centralized system, CoHE plays an important role in international partnerships at the national level. On the other hand, in the UK, individual HEIs are autonomous in their decisions regarding internationalization. Some Turkish interviewees stated that having a national responsible body such as the CoHE and a central system can help universities coordinate and function more easily, but others said that if internationalization policies are too broad and regulations prevent varied and adaptable implementation, this could become a hindrance. (TR-Focus Group-2).

Moreover, the Turkish HE sector has grown over the past decade; therefore, there is variation among the universities in terms of experience, capacity, resources, priorities, and quality assurance issues. In this research, we have found that such differences are also reflected in the barriers identified by the interviewees. Respondents from Türkiye's more established universities pointed out that general obstacles to fostering international collaborations arise from the environment and ecosystem of higher education. They held the opinion that creative means/tools of internationalization are not allowed or not clearly defined by national legislation (such as branch campuses and some other forms of TNE) (TR-HEI-5,9, TR Focus Group-2). For this reason, in most cases, most universities have implemented similar and traditional internationalization models. For instance, participants discussed the imposition of recruitment targets for international students without establishing the prerequisites to guarantee sustainability and high-quality education without a long-term and concrete strategy. This issue was expressed as follows:

*Let the number be more is not a sustainable and realistic strategy. This should be in line with the immigration policy for the selection of international students. Why do we want them to stay in our country as human resources, to go to another country, or to go back home? We need to specify our needs and goals consistently. (TR-HEI-9)*

*It is not important to be praised only for the number of students without knowing the quality. Therefore, culture is very important, and secondly, it is necessary to adopt the tools very well. There is a problem with the internalization dimension. We need these tools, especially for a transparent and reliable education system. (TR-Focus Group-2)*

Another barrier was explained as the bureaucratic procedures in establishing joint degree programs. In Türkiye, joint degree programs were considered one of the most essential instruments for building a lasting and mutually beneficial relationship with the UK. When asked about their intentions to develop a joint degree program with a UK HEI, all Turkish HEIs expressed bureaucratic, legislative, and regulatory issues were the leading causes of the barriers that they consistently faced in this field. The majority of higher education officials surveyed stated that the USA was more adaptable and realistic when forming these kinds of alliances; nevertheless, because of disparities in academic standards and legal frameworks between the two nations, these alliances were not always recognized as best practices. The CoHE in Türkiye must approve the curricula of joint and double degree programs. While Türkiye has been implementing the Anglo-Saxon model of higher education and was able to easily establish a three-cycle system (bachelor, master, and doctorate) as part of the Bologna Process, there are differences between the UK and Türkiye in terms of program duration, type, structure, and administration. A prominent professor provided the following summary of the regulatory challenges associated with establishing a joint program:

*We started a collaboration with a university that is suitable for our size so that it can work comfortably. We have developed many different models of cooperation: Exchange programs, joint project applications, joint programs, and top-up programs. It is not easy to harmonize*

*different education models for three years and four years. In addition, the UK has a large number of seminars where students are more active than lectures. When you look at the evaluation of the exams, there is an external examiner, there is no such application in Türkiye. They have very established, written, and habitual models. As such, you will either follow it, which creates problems locally as a hegemonic structure emerges. It is also a long-term problem. It is difficult to overcome the rules brought by CoHE. It has no legal framework. The only framework of CoHE was State University of New York SUNY [State University of New York], a model they started with the USA universities. (TR-Focus Group-2).*

The same discussion was also expressed from the perspective of the UK. The perceived complexity of Türkiye's regulatory environment about Transnational Education (TNE) collaborations, was cited as a significant barrier by three of the eight UK national organization interviewees (UK-NOs-3,4,5). They explained that the centralized structure in place and the time required to receive clearance for initiatives from central organizations had made doing business with Türkiye challenging. One respondent recounted the story of a UK HEI that, after two years of waiting for central approval, had given up on its ambitions to establish a TNE program with a Turkish university.

Interviewees also thought UK HEIs were discouraged from pursuing TNE cooperation because of Türkiye's unclear regulations and quality assurance situation. In establishing joint degrees (and other kinds of higher education partnerships) with the UK, most Turkish HEI interviewees and several from national institutions stated that the quality assurance environment was a crucial consideration (alongside place in international rankings). Furthermore, many people thought that program accreditation promoted international collaborations; however, there are distinctions between Türkiye's old and new universities. The Bologna Process and the foundation of the Turkish Higher Education Quality Council have made quality assurance more significant for the sector as a whole. Still, it has taken longer for the newer universities to institutionalize. This, combined with their generally lower international rankings, has made it more difficult for them to collaborate internationally. In summary, leaders of HEIs in both nations acknowledge that certain limitations imposed by the legislative framework, combined with a lack of adaptability, transparency, and information, hinder educational cooperation.

Academic participation is another structural obstacle, primarily with research collaborations. In both nations, research collaborations were typically viewed as the purview of individual academics rather than necessarily the institution. The research was usually included in internationalization goals in the UK, but in Türkiye, medium-sized or recently established universities prioritize international student recruitment and exchange programs. Therefore, this was not often explicitly stated. According to several interviewees, applications that do not align with Türkiye's specific development needs may not be funded, even in cases where the scientific excellence of the initiatives is relatively high (TR-NOs-1). Furthermore, a few Turkish respondents were perplexed about the UK's research management system. The various guidelines for these UK funding agencies perplexed Turkish research offices and researchers, who said that "every project is like a different program that we have to learn from the beginning for each application" (TR-Focus Group-1). Furthermore, as mentioned by one respondent, when UK colleges are solicited to be partners, they often don't know anything about the program in Türkiye (TR-HEI-8).

The last structural obstacle is financial. The respondents from UK national organizations discussed the disparity in pricing between public HEIs in Türkiye and the UK. In fact, individuals employed by UK HEIs particularly emphasized the value of financial incentives to interact with Türkiye—especially given the abundance of other nations eager to cooperate with them and the fact that national funding programs frequently encouraged cooperation with other countries instead. One interviewee specifically mentioned research when they said, "It is difficult to engage academics without funding as they have so many other priorities" (UK-HEI-4).

Financial difficulties were also seen as a deterrent to cooperation by the Turkish side. Despite being one of the top three destinations for Turkish students pursuing a degree on the go, exorbitant tuition costs were considered a major obstacle to collaboration. Turkish government offers merit-based scholarships

for postgraduate study overseas; nevertheless, other nations and areas have gained popularity over the UK for undergraduate study due to high tuition costs and currency rate fluctuations in recent years. A national institution representative emphasized that "our students pay the highest tuition fees, which are differentiated according to the regions. Although we attempt to work out exceptional arrangements for our students, these attempts are not always approved" (TR-NOs-8). Turkish participants also mentioned finances as a deterrent to joint/ degree programs. An example of this can be found in the following quotation: "We waive our tuition for joint degree programs, but UK universities still charge full tuition fees." (TR-HEI-4).

Last but not least, the strict visa regulations enforced by the UK were perceived as impeding Turkish nationals' ability to travel to the UK and negatively impacting collaborations in research and education.

#### Attitudinal barriers:

HEIs and individuals delineated a range of cultural or attitudinal variables that may impede collaborative efforts. A prevalent motif among the interviewees from the UK was their limited understanding of the Turkish higher education system and its potential to impede cooperative efforts. This was mainly because relatively few HEIs in the UK had previously collaborated with Türkiye. Additionally, these opinions were expressed at the institutional level. As was mentioned, several interviewees explained that they relied on the information supplied by central agencies because they lacked the time or resources to look into possible new partners (for instance, when governments were especially proactive and made their regulatory information readily available). The quotations that follow are typical:

*We are responsive to moves made by others; we don't have resources to do data gathering ourselves. We don't know how to get a program approved in Türkiye. (UK-HEI-13)*

*I don't know about the regulatory regime and fee levels in Türkiye – whether it would make financial sense for us. (UK-HEI-1)*

*We lack knowledge about what Turkish universities actually want, and there are a lot of potential partner countries – we can only do a limited amount with resources we have. (UK-HEI-11)*

*I know very little about Türkiye as a market as we do so little there. (UK-HEI-14)*

A few interviewees from the UK believed they knew a fair amount about Türkiye, but many students and professionals did not feel the same way. Those who had Erasmus+ partnerships with Turkish universities, in fact, usually talked about how hard it was to get UK personnel and especially students interested in them. Some blamed this on ignorance of the Turkish higher education system and educational standards or on the false belief that the Erasmus+ program only extended to EU member states.

Turkish students studying in the UK also remarked how hard it was to discover information about Ph.D. prospects and select a supervisor, mainly since education consultants frequently had limited knowledge of this field of study. Participants at the staff level noted that it was challenging to learn about work opportunities and immigration procedures in Türkiye. Regarding their Turkish colleagues, they also stated how challenging it was sometimes to locate a UK colleague who was also interested in the same research area and to learn about funding options for collaboration (particularly in the country's more recent universities).

A few scholars have mentioned a dearth of information regarding funds explicitly intended to support collaborations between Türkiye and the UK, such as the Newton-Kâtip Çelebi Fund. The interviews that were done in Türkiye mostly confirmed these ideas. Certain Turkish participants believed that UK staff either lacked adequate knowledge about Turkish universities or were swayed by false or biased news reports about Türkiye in the UK media. Several interviewees expressed optimism that this ignorance would be overcome:

*When we start collaboration, they don't know about the education and research quality of Turkish universities, when our partnership develops, they appreciate it. (TR-HEI-11).*

*Their attitude is distant to us, because they don't know how hospitable we are. We need to give them the opportunity to get acquainted, we also have prejudices. Some had prejudices about Türkiye, however, they were very satisfied after they came here and we received re-applications from the same university (TR-HEI-14).*

However, some individuals did not think that anything would change and instead chose to contact other regions and countries that have a positive attitude toward Türkiye:

*We had experienced attitudinal problems with the UK universities. British universities have prejudices towards Turkish universities. Therefore, we started to approach to other countries. (TR-HEI-8,10).*

*It is really difficult to contact a university in the UK. They do not reply, they forward from one office to the other. Demand is always from our side and most of the cases one-sided, at least they make you feel it that way. We can contact American universities easily. (TR-HEI-12)*

*We approach the best universities in the UK on our scale. When we first approach them, none of them are welcome in the first insight. The network between faculty members is so important. (TR-HEI-4)*

### **Conclusion**

This paper examines the existing status of higher education collaborations between Türkiye and the UK, as well as the potential for future development of these linkages, based on extensive qualitative research conducted in both countries.

A few of these were structural, namely having to do with financial and regulatory issues as well as immigration processes. Turkish respondents, for instance, talked about how their national laws frequently hampered international activity, forcing HEIs to prioritize student mobility over other types of partnerships and making it challenging to create collaborative programs with the UK. Similar opinions were seen in the UK data, where several participants voiced concerns about what they saw as a lack of information accessibility and openness regarding Türkiye's regulatory environment. Financial obstacles included the hefty tuition costs levied by UK HEIs and the comparatively meager funding allocated, especially for bilateral research collaboration between Türkiye and the UK.

There was also an explanation of several more cultural and attitudinal elements. These included a lack of awareness of higher education in the other nation (which UK interviewees mentioned more frequently) and a perception of a notable disparity in the two nations' experiences with and priorities for internationalization. These could cause issues with establishing a partnership and maintaining equal, respectful relationships.

### **Discussion and Implementation for the Future**

Although research participants recognized numerous prospects for future cooperation working between Türkiye and the UK, they also identified certain specific impediments. For an effective and sustainable higher education partnership between Türkiye and the UK, the following suggestions were developed for national organizations and HEIs arose from the research questions to investigate national, institutional, and individual levels of international partnerships:

*For research partnerships:* It is recommended that national-level organizations maintain and, if feasible, expand funds allocated for Türkiye-UK partnerships, encompassing a wide range of subject areas; include doctoral students in funding schemes to enhance their ability to collaborate internationally; and

create a database of academics eager to collaborate with peers in other nations to expedite communication.

*For education partnerships:* It is suggested that national-level organizations consider whether the *Turing*\* and *Mevlana*\*\* schemes can be used in tandem to promote reciprocal short-term mobility, ensure that national qualification frameworks in both countries articulate well with each other, provide seed funding to stimulate new educational partnerships and increase the number of scholarships and tuition fee waivers for study abroad. Furthermore, we suggest that educational partnerships between the two countries be widely publicized as examples of successful partnerships, that easily accessible information about education in the other country be made available to those interested in exploring potential future partnerships, that "match-making" activities be conducted for groups of institutions, bringing together staff members working at similar levels within HEIs. Participants also suggested that new forms of collaboration be developed, such as joint postgraduate programs, open universities, partnerships for lifelong learning, and more diverse forms of short-term staff and student mobility; that online learning be integrated into education programs to facilitate contributions from both countries; and that HEIs in the UK be more fully involved in English language teaching.

It should be noted that while some of these initiatives can be completed in the short term and are referred to as "quick wins," others will need more sustained effort and time. Action on both fronts is equally essential. One of the longer-term goals is to address the major obstacles identified. The "quick wins" will help to build momentum in this area and demonstrate that key stakeholders take this seriously.

\*Turing scheme is developed by the UK government for supporting outgoing mobility due to the UK's withdrawal from the Erasmus Program

\*\*Mevlana is an exchange program scheme developed by the Turkish government to support incoming and outgoing student and staff mobility

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## Revenues, ultimate sovereigns and resource allocation at Finnish, Swedish, UK and US universities

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### Abstract

This article explores how the level of funding and the governance model at universities are related to their resource allocation, measured as the balance between faculty and other personnel. Data from 2019 are used to construct scatterplots of the relationship between other personnel per faculty and revenue per faculty in the UK, the US, Sweden, and Finland. The study indicates that the more financial resources a university has, the more the workforce will be dominated by nonfaculty. This is explained by Bowen's revenue theory of cost: universities raise all the money they can and spend all they raise. Institutions that limits their growth in order to maintain exclusivity are particularly prone to amass large economic resource and attain a high nonfaculty to faculty ratio. However, resource allocation can also be affected by the governance model. Where faculty elect the university board, faculty also comprise a larger share of the personnel. This might be explained by Tullock's theory of the politics of bureaucracy: middle management is loyal to the ultimate sovereign, which elects the university board, and if this sovereign is the faculty, middle management will allocate resources to what it believes is in the interest of faculty, such as teaching and research. For example, Oxford and Cambridge, where the ultimate sovereign is a large collegial body consisting of almost all teachers and researchers, achieve positions in international university rankings comparable to those of the top US universities at a fraction of the cost.

**Keywords:** revenue theory of cost, politics of bureaucracy, university governance

### Introduction

Governments and private donors are investing large amounts of resources in the university sector. These external stakeholders also have an interest in influencing universities since they are considered to be vital for technological, economic, and social development. However, particularly among established universities, there is a strong belief in the ideals of academic freedom and university autonomy, although the definitions of these concepts vary considerably. While some universities rely heavily on private donations, public funding is important almost everywhere. The amount of funding available also differs greatly between institutions. The degree to which universities are controlled by internal or external stakeholders, such as faculty, political governments, or alumni, varies within both public and private universities.

By combining a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the university systems in the Nordic countries Finland and Sweden and the Anglo-Saxon nations United Kingdom and the United States, this article explores how levels of funding and forms of governance were related to resource allocation at universities in 2019. The revenue theory of cost (Bowen, 1980) predicts that the more resources an institution acquires, the larger the share of the resources will be allocated to things other than the core functions of education and research. These findings are consistent with those of earlier more limited studies (Holmén, 2023). However, Tullock's (1987) theories would also indicate that governance, particularly "ultimate sovereigns"—the actors who wield the power to appoint the university board—can also affect resource allocation.

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### ***The University Systems of Two Anglo-Saxon and Two Nordic Countries***

The university systems of Britain, the United States, Sweden, and Finland have their roots in a common European university tradition. The links between the British and US universities, as well as between the Swedish and Finnish, are further strengthened by the fact that they were initially formed within the same realms. The first universities in today's United States and Finland were founded in the 1600s, although politically, these areas were subject to the kings of England and Sweden until US independence in 1776 and Russia's conquest of Finland in 1809. This common historical origin means that the similarities within each pair of countries make it easier to discern the effects of the differing variables under investigation. However, the similarities between Sweden and Finland are stronger than those between Britain and the US. The forerunner of the University of Helsinki, the Academy of Turku, was, like other Swedish universities in the 1600s, founded by the state based on the model of the older Uppsala university and primarily catered to the demand for priests in the state church. In contrast, most early universities in the American colonies were private initiatives founded in opposition to Oxford and Cambridge, providing a spiritual alternative for religious refugees. As a consequence, their governance structures became different from those of old English universities, with less faculty influence (Alleman et al., 2017).

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, German research universities became the model for institutions of higher education across the globe, and this also led to an increase in the influence of faculty at American universities (Alleman et al., 2017). Early British influence on the American system of colleges came from Scotland rather than from Oxford and Cambridge. However, the Oxbridge universities became ideological models for the 19<sup>th</sup>-century development of US colleges into universities, although their autonomous governance systems were not copied (Thelin, 2011). In the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, influence was also exerted in the other direction, as Britain has attempted to move closer to the financial model of US universities, looking for other sources of revenue in addition to government funding (Anderson, 2006).

US higher education displays considerable diversity in terms of how the board is selected. A common denominator is, however, that faculty has less formal power than at most European universities. It has been claimed that faculty at US universities might be more influential in practice than formally (Smelser, 2010). However, the ultimate sovereign, which middle management is attempting to please according to the theory of politics of bureaucracy, is not faculty.

Both the US and British systems have universities with self-perpetuating boards, where a majority or a large part of new members are elected by the existing board. However, the British system also has substantial faculty representation. While all British universities are predominantly publicly funded, the US system consists of private and public institutions. Also among public universities, direct government funding provides only a minority of the revenues. In some states, the governor appoints the regents, but in, for example, the University of California system, this is balanced by safeguards for autonomy in the state constitution (University of California, 2016). However, this strong, formal autonomy is regularly challenged by de facto political interference (Smelser, 2010). In the US, only military academies are controlled by the federal government, and the political influence over state universities is dispersed among the governments of the 50 states.

In contrast, the Swedish system of higher education is subject to centralized government control. In his classic international comparison of higher education systems from 1983, Burton R. Clark described the Swedish higher education system as the second most authoritarian government in the world after the Soviet Union. Since then, government control of higher education has remained strong and has, in some respects, been strengthened further. For example, external representatives on university boards were first introduced in 1977, and their influence has gradually been increased in each bout of new university legislation since. Although these external representatives are supposed to represent stakeholders, such as industry and the labor market, they are directly appointed by the government. (Holmén, 2022).

The so-called Autonomy Reform of 2011 allowed Swedish universities to organize their internal decision-making freely, removing the demand for collegial bodies. This enabled several universities to

transform into top-down organizations inspired by business management, with a reduced influence for collegial bodies at faculty or department level (Ahlbäck Öberg & Boberg, 2023). Paradoxically, this “autonomy” reform therefore meant that the government allowed university boards, where the majority were elected by the government, to abolish all governing bodies within the university not dominated by government appointees (Holmén, 2022). This means that the national government is more unchallenged as sovereign over Swedish universities than in most other countries in the world—more so now than earlier in Swedish history.

The Finnish system of higher education is also quite homogeneous, government funded, and regulated by a single law. However, Finnish universities are more autonomous than their Swedish counterparts. After the tumultuous years following Finland’s independence from Russia in 1917, which included a civil war, the constitution of 1919 shielded Helsinki University from party politics. Helsinki was the country’s only full university at that time, but the new constitution from the year 2000 safeguards the freedom of science, art, and higher education and guarantees autonomy for all universities. These constitutional guarantees have had a tangible influence on legislation in the field of higher education. For example, the constitution outlines that the majority of university boards be elected by faculty (Holmén, 2022). Thus, the ultimate sovereign at Finnish universities is the faculty.

It might be argued that studying the effects of governance on resource allocation by comparing European and US universities is misleading since the latter define their mission more broadly, for example, by allocating resources to college sports, while European universities are more focused on teaching and research. However, it can also be claimed that this difference in mission has developed over centuries under the influence of different governance models, as the ultimate sovereign in the US has often been religious communities or private donors. In addition, most “sideshow” of US college culture were in their introduction justified by their beneficial effect on the core academic mission of the universities. For example, in the late 1800s, proponents of intercollegiate athletics claimed that a winning football team could bring many benefits to new universities (Thelin, 2011). The ambition of being an institution responsible for the total moral upbringing of students has led to the incorporation of student initiatives in the official structures of US universities. In Europe, similar activities have remained under student control or have withered away. However, this is not merely a cultural difference but rather one governed by the revenue theory of cost: European universities could simply not afford as broad a mission as US universities, while US universities need a broader mission to spend their revenues. Thus, the different missions of US and European universities are not distortions that complicate our comparison but rather are part of the main variable that we are exploring.

### ***The Revenue Theory of Cost and the Politics of Bureaucracy***

Universities are older than either government agencies or private companies. Sometimes they are treated as anomalies that should be forced into one of these models (Holmén & Ringarp, 2023). Although universities share some characteristics with both companies and public agencies, they differ from them in other respects. As government agencies, universities can exercise public authority, such as certifying the qualifications of professional groups, and are often dependent on public funding. Unlike most government agencies, but similar to commercial companies, they operate in a highly competitive environment. This has been the case since the Middle Ages, and today thousands of higher education institutions compete on an international market.

However, university competition differs from competition between for-profit companies in one important respect. Companies minimize cost to create profit for their owners, whereas even private universities are generally nonprofits without formal owners. Therefore, surpluses need to be consumed within the organization, which means that, over the long run, revenues and costs will mirror each other. In this close-knit relationship, revenues are the leader and costs the follower. According to Howard R. Bowen’s (1980) revenue theory of cost, at a university, “cost is determined by hard dollars of revenue and only indirectly and remotely by considerations of need, technology, efficiency, and market wages and prices” (p. 17). Bowen saw the quest for academic excellence as the main driver behind the cost increases in higher education. Chasing elusive excellence, universities raise all the money they can and spend all they raise.

Of course, some universities use surpluses for expansion. However, elite institutions are often unwilling to do so since their status depends on their exclusivity, which could be threatened by growing enrollment. High student fees and contributions from alumni make elite universities financially well off. Charles Clotfelter (1996) convincingly demonstrated that US elite universities were able to raise their tuition in the 1980s since the wealth of affluent families increased.

This quest for excellence might have benefited administration rather than faculty. In the US, the term “administrative bloat” describes how administrators grow in absolute numbers and relative to faculty. This is related to increased costs of university education, even though resources for instruction are reduced. Williamson et al. (2018) suggested that this is a result of the faculty’s loss of power to administrators in university governance. Administrative growth has been greater at private colleges, which Ginsberg (2011) attributes to their better financial situation, as public colleges cannot afford to expand their administration beyond a certain limit. However, Comrie (2021) claims that the proportions of faculty and administrators have remained fairly stable at US universities during recent decades. The best interpretation of the available statistics is that the ratio stabilized in the first decade of the twenty-first century after several decades of fast administrative bloat. Comparisons between the US and other countries can contextualize whether the new stable level should be considered high or low.

Several other explanations have been given regarding why bureaucracy tends to expand. In 1968, Niskanen claimed that bureaucrats strive to maximize the total budget of their bureaus since they benefit from working in growing organizations. However, as studies showed only a weak correlation between a bureau’s budget and individual salaries, in 1994, he suggested that bureaucrats maximize the “discretionary budget”, the difference between the bureau’s budget and the minimum cost sufficient to perform its function. This discretionary budget is similar to the profit of a company. However, in nonprofits, it must be absorbed internally, for example, by hiring additional staff involved in noncore activities.

Tullock (1987) described the strategies employed by middle management in public and private organizations as politics of bureaucracy. Mid-level bureaucrats attempt to please their superiors in exchange for favors such as career advancement. In particular, they ensure that their actions align with the interests of the ultimate sovereign. At universities, the ultimate sovereign is the actor that appoints the board, which might be the political government, alumni, the collegium of faculty, or, in self-perpetuating systems, the board itself. Holmén (2023) suggested that the nature of the ultimate sovereign affects the balance between faculty and other categories of personnel. However, his study was based on a small number of universities and was limited to Sweden and Finland. In this article, the validity of this hypothesis is tested on a broader set of countries and institutions.

Investigating the relationship between university board characteristics and institutional performance, Harris (2011) found that female and minority board representation is positively correlated with both the retention rate of females and minorities and university rank. She also found a correlation between the financial expertise of board members and the total revenues of the institution. Board members employed in higher education were associated with higher total contributions and higher student retention rates. Larger boards were also associated with better performance, which has also been observed in other nonprofits but not in for-profit companies. Harris also observed an inverse relationship between organizational efficiency and the number of employees on the board.

Some of Harris’s results can be explained by the differences between universities and for-profit companies. While board members in companies are usually paid, it is common that university board members donate to the university. Taking that into account, it is not surprising that large boards can collect more money or that boards with representatives from the financial industry, often wealthy individuals, are more successful at fundraising through their own donations and those of their networks. Harris’s last claim, about the relationship between employees on boards and efficiency, is central to the question of this study, and we will return to it in the conclusion.

### Method

By analyzing the relationship between the share of faculty among personnel and revenues per faculty at universities in Finland, Sweden, the US, and the UK, this study explores how levels of funding and forms of governance are related to resource allocation at universities.

University systems of culturally, economically, and politically similar countries are compared, matching Sweden with Finland and the United States with Britain, looking for the variable that explains the differences we can find within these pairs. We also compare universities that display similarities despite being from countries with different systems, such as Sweden and the US, while looking for the common variables that can explain these similarities. However, it should be kept in mind that the Nordic pair is more homogeneous than the Anglo-Saxon pair. Although the US and the UK systems share features such as the prevalence of top-ranked universities with large endowments and student fees, the UK is more similar to the Nordic countries in terms of total levels of funding and the importance of public funding. As measured by revenues per faculty, Sweden and the UK are the two most similar systems with respect to their funding levels. Therefore, we can investigate whether differences in governance can explain why these countries experience differences in outcomes despite similar levels of funding.

The university systems within each of the two pairs of countries studied, the Nordic and the Anglo-Saxon, have common origins and strong recent interactions. The differentiating variable studied within the Nordic pair is the ultimate sovereign—in Sweden, the government, and in Finland, the faculty. In the Anglo-Saxon pair, the variables are greater economic resources at US universities and greater autonomy and faculty governance, particularly for some leading British universities. The differences between the systems in the two Nordic countries and particularly in the United States are also great, which allows us to explore what factors unite Princeton University and the Stockholm School of Economics (SSE), which are the most well-funded and administration-rich institutions in the Swedish and US systems.

The quantitative analysis in this article is not aimed at providing statistical proof for either Tullock's or Bowen's theories. Instead, descriptive statistics and data visualization are used to identify general patterns and outliers that are suitable candidates for qualitative exploration.

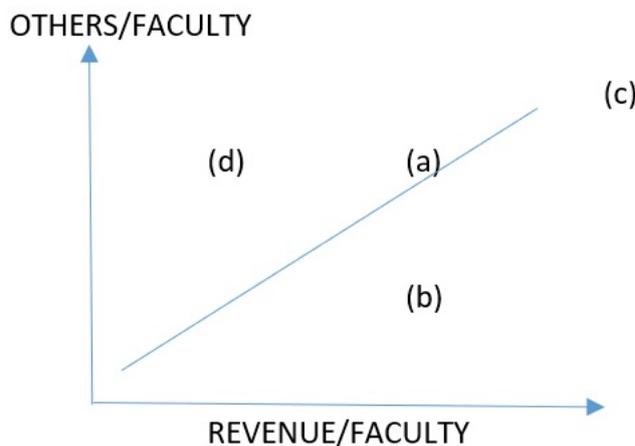
To quantitatively explore and visualize the effects of Bowen's revenue theory of cost—the more resources an institution acquires, the greater the share of resources allocated to noncore activities—it is necessary to define metrics of the resource richness of an institution, as well as of its resource allocation. Furthermore, the comparison of resource allocation across countries requires metrics fundamental enough to be found in different databases. The US data are found in the IPEDS database, and the European data in the ETER.

It is possible to describe the balance between resources allocated to core (teaching and research) and other functions as the full-time equivalents (FTE) of other staff per FTE of academic staff, teachers and researchers. Both of these groups are distinct categories in the IPEDS and ETER datasets. Of course, resources are allocated to things other than personnel. However, the balance of personnel is also indicative of other costs. For example, many administrators mean that a large part of the costs of office space will also be channelled toward that group. Overall, the balance between teachers/researchers and other personnel is likely the best metric we can construct using commonly available and internationally comparable statistical variables. In the following, we call this metric OTHERS/FACULTY. With faculty, we mean all personnel classified as teachers or researchers in the IPEDS and ETER, regardless of tenure status, etc., and with others, we mean all other nonhospital personnel.

The resource richness of an institution can be measured by its revenues, which, in nonprofit organizations, converge with expenditures. Although the sources of revenue vary between different types of universities, total revenues is a category in the ETER and IPEDS datasets. These total revenues include all sources of income (from government, donors, students, etc.) except hospital revenues at

university hospitals. These revenues must be adjusted according to the size of the institution. Dividing revenues by the number of students is unsuitable since it does not account for the fact that some institutions are more research intensive than others with fewer students per faculty. A better denominator is therefore the number of faculty, teachers and researchers since it facilitates comparisons between institutions with different balances between research and instruction. Thus, the metric for wealth of the institution used in this article is revenue divided by the FTE of academic staff (REVENUE/FACULTY). In ETER, revenues are provided in euros, and in IPEDS, in USD. To make mental conversions easy for the reader, an exchange rate of 1 is used in the scatterplots. Since the currencies are of roughly equal value but there is considerable volatility in their exchange rates, this is preferable to converting them using them using the rate at the time of writing.

Scatterplots are used to analyze the relationship between two variables across a large number of data points. Together, the data points form a cloud, the shape of which reveals hints about correlations and other qualities of the dataset. In this investigation, we expect that the more REVENUE/FACULTY there is at an institution, the more OTHERS/FACULTY we will find. In a scatterplot with REVENUE/FACULTY on the X-axis and OTHERS/FACULTY on the Y-axis, we would therefore expect a rising trendline such as (a) in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Schema for analysis of the scatterplots.

While we expect most institutions to arrange around axis *a*, as the revenue theory of cost stipulates that money not spent on faculty will instead be spent on nonfaculty, we also strive to identify and analyze the outliers. Universities that do not follow the pattern that more REVENUE/FACULTY leads to an increase in OTHERS/FACULTY are found below the trendline in position (b). Among them, we can expect to find confirmation of the second hypothesis of this article: the governance model of the institution affects its resource allocation. Since institutions in location (b) have effective resource allocation in the sense that they channel a large share of their resources to the core missions of teaching and research, determining which common traits in their governance facilitate this allocation is valuable.

Another category of universities relevant for a closer qualitative analysis is found at location (c), far up to the right on line (a). These institutions have much resources per faculty and an extremely small share of faculty among the personnel. It could be expected that most institutions would bunch together at roughly the same point along line (a). As an institution grows its revenues, which pushes it to the right in the diagram, it can also afford more teachers and researchers, which functions as a counteracting force to the left. However, institutions in location (c) have, for some reason, decided not to grow their faculty even though they have the means to do so but have instead hired more other personnel.

By transforming the numerical data into a diagrammatic form, we can visually compare the relationships and shapes of hundreds of datapoints, which is extremely difficult if not impossible with other methods.

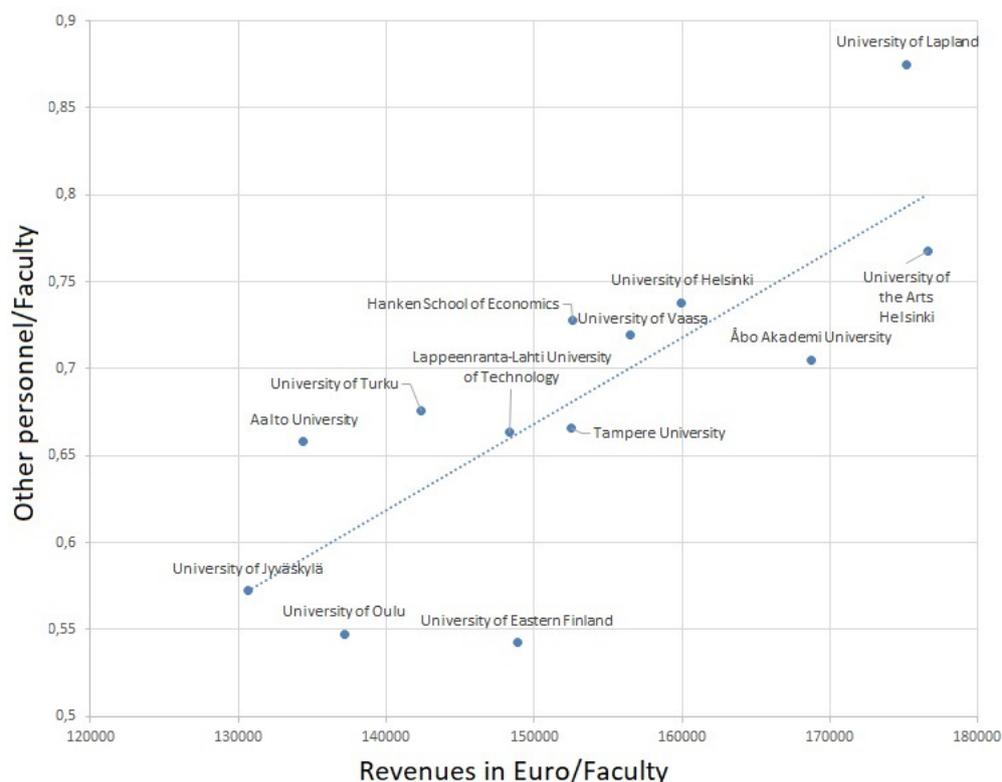
In the words of the graphic analyst Mary Eleanor Spear (1952), charts not only reveal hidden facts not obvious from the original data but also identify mistakes in statistical compilations that would otherwise have been overlooked. In this study, Spear's second observation applies to universities in location (d) in the diagram. These institutions have low revenues per faculty and high numbers of other personnel per faculty. This means that their total headcount is extremely high in relation to their revenues. In fact, this group cannot possibly exist in real life since their revenues cannot sustain salaries for the personnel, let alone all the other costs associated with a university. The prevalence of institutions in this location seems to indicate inconsistencies in the data. According to the raw data from the US, a small number of universities could be found close to location (d), but this can be compensated for since it is mainly caused by variations in the accounting of healthcare personnel. Among European countries, most institutions in location (d) are found in Germany. Neither Germany nor any other country with a substantial number of institutions in location (d) has been included in the study, since it indicates that the data are not comparable.

Finally, the governance models of the outliers identified through diagrammatic analysis are subject to closer examination. This is done with the help of the bylaws of the universities, as well as through a study of the research literature on the historical development of these universities and the national systems in which they have developed. This analysis is also aided by theories on administrative growth and university governance, particularly Bowen's revenue theory of cost and Tullock's politics of bureaucracy. Expressed in a simplified manner, the revenue theory of cost contributes to the correlation in the scatterplot, while the effect of the ultimate sovereign contributes to the variance. The iron law that all revenue has to be translated into costs drives institutions with greater revenue per faculty to spend more on other personnel. However, it is possible that the nature of the ultimate sovereign affects the extent to which this tendency is carried through since the ultimate sovereign likely favors channeling resources toward its own interest group.

The empirical investigation in the following section first examines the countries one by one—Finland, Sweden, the United States, and then the UK—followed by a cross-country comparison. The comparative section also studies the relationship between economic resources and position in the Times Higher Education (THE) World University ranking. Although crude, the THE ranking allows us to discuss how the factors analyzed in this article are related to value for money.

### ***Finland: A Homogeneous System***

The Finnish system of higher education comprises universities and universities of applied sciences. Here, we analyze only the universities. As shown in Figure 2, there is a strong correlation (0.79) between the resources per faculty and the ratio of other personnel to faculty. All Finnish institutions have less than one other personnel per faculty, which means that faculty everywhere comprises the majority of the personnel. There are no real outliers in the system. The Finnish constitution and university law grant the same autonomy to all Finnish universities, which makes faculty the ultimate sovereign (Holmén, 2022). Two universities, Aalto and Tampere, are organized as foundations, while the rest are organized as associations under public law (Holmén & Ringarp, 2023). However, judging from Figure 2, this difference in organization does not seem to have any relevance to the quantity of resources they have access to or how they allocate them. The variation in size from Helsinki, with 7,255 total personnel, to Hanken School of Economics, with 265, does not seem to affect the variables we are investigating since smaller and larger institutions are mixed in the diagram.

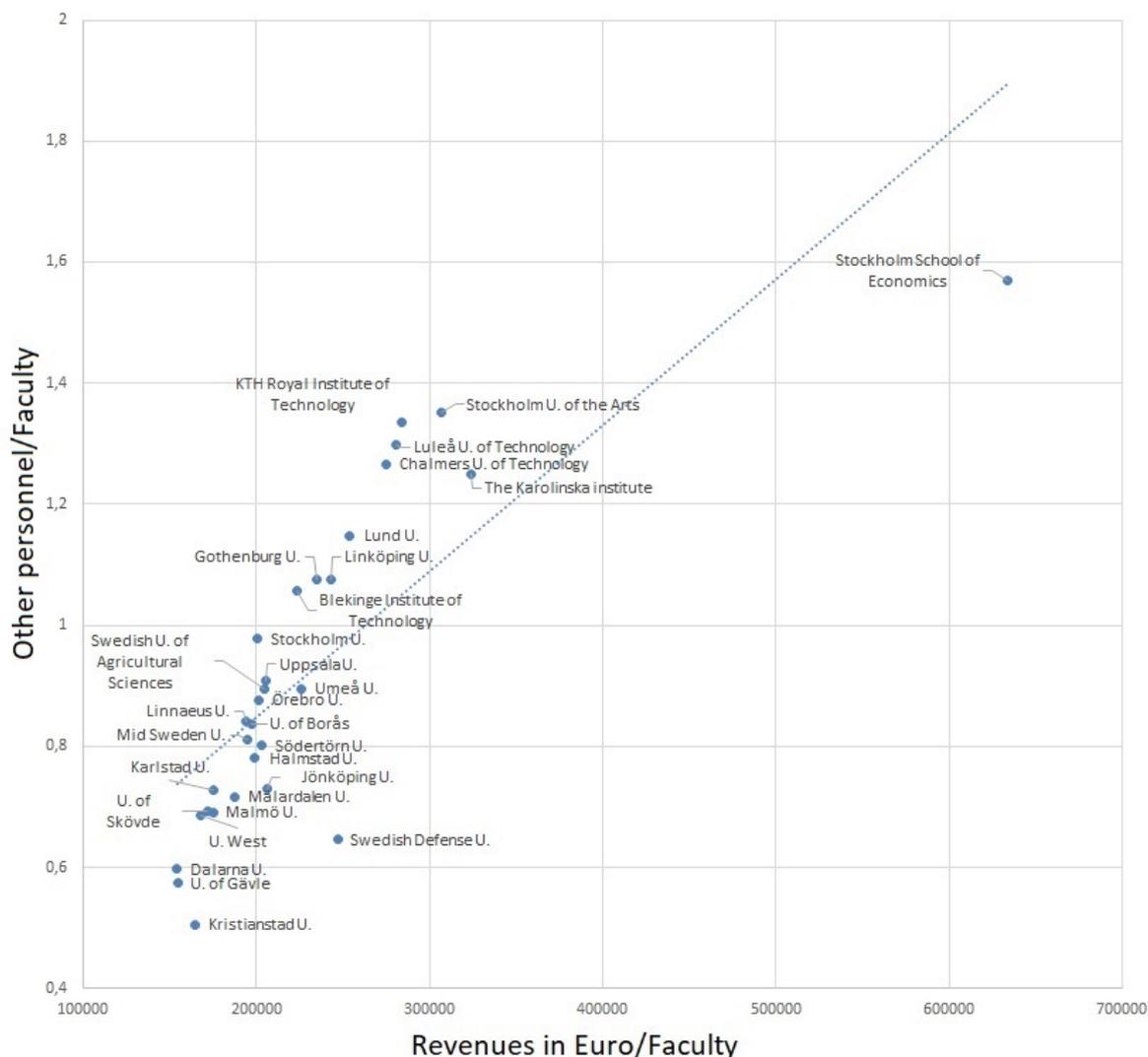


**Figure 2.** Scatterplot of all Finnish universities in 2019. Source: ETER.

To contextualize the share of researchers and teachers at Finnish universities, we need to compare our findings to those of other systems, such as neighboring Sweden.

***Sweden: Extremely Homogeneous with One Outlier***

The Swedish system of higher education comprises universities and university colleges. The difference between these two categories is not as clear as the difference in the Finnish system, and institutions with more than 200 total personnel are included in Figure 3, regardless of which category they belong to. This means that we include institutions of varying size and type. However, the large research universities in Stockholm, Uppsala, Lund, Gothenburg, Umeå, Linköping, and Örebro are all found in the middle of the distribution, while smaller and more specialized institutions are found on both edges of the scale. Thus, we do not observe any clear correlation between the size of the institution and the variables we are investigating.



**Figure 3.** Swedish universities and university colleges with over 200 total employees in 2019. Source: ETER.

In Sweden, the correlation (0.80) between revenues per faculty and other personnel per faculty is even stronger than that in Finland. In fact, if we exclude the outliers SSE and the Swedish Defense University, the correlation reaches 0.95. In comparison with Finland, such an exclusion is warranted since the Finnish National Defense University is not recognized as a full university and thus is not included in Figure 2. The SSE is also a rare institution with mainly private funding and no counterpart in Finland.

The fact that the correlation is greater in Sweden than in Finland might be due to the stronger element of central control in Sweden. This might lead universities to spend revenues and report financials uniformly, which makes them appear as a string of pearls in Figure 3. Finnish university autonomy gives each institution more leeway for individual priorities than is the case in Sweden. However, both systems have a high degree of internal homogeneity and are also very similar to each other. Swedish institutions are slightly more well off financially than their Finnish counterparts are, and as our hypothesis predicts, they thereby have more other personnel per faculty.

The greatest outlier among these two Nordic countries is the SSE, with twice the revenue per faculty of the second wealthiest institution, the Karolinska Institute, and more other personnel per faculty than anyone else. However, in this respect the gap is not as large, and the SSE is placed firmly below the trendline.

Holmén (2023) found that SSE's large cash pile was the result of successful private funding drives in combination with its ethos of exclusivity, which limited the expansion of institution size. However, that study left open whether SSE's high share of administrators was the result of the revenue theory of cost or the institution's ultimate sovereign. SSEs position under the trendline in Figure 3 indicates that the high share of non-faculty among the personnel is primarily a result of the large funds available, and that this situation is not aggravated by the governance model of the institution. However, it can be argued that the relationship between the variables is slightly logarithmic rather than linear since there are diminishing returns to the discretionary budget value of hiring administrators and other nonfaculty. A resource-starved institution recovering from cut-backs might use a large share of additional resources to hire more administrators. However, a rich institution, such as SSE, might, after becoming well endowed with other personnel, channel more of the discretionary budget into other noncore expenses, such as art.

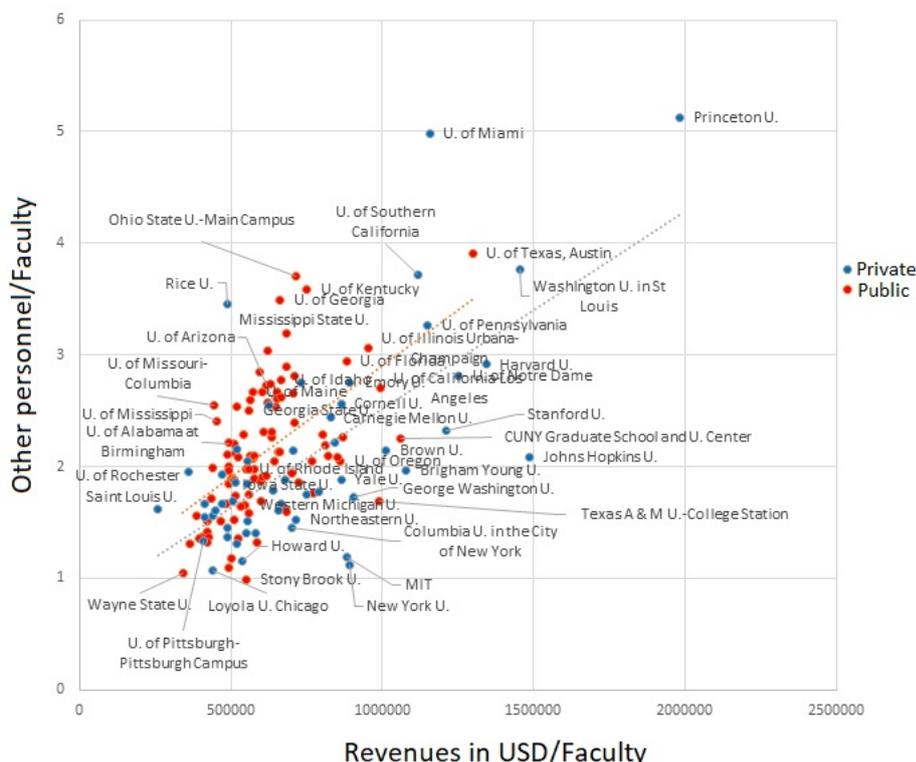
The fact that Holmén (2023) gave an even bleaker picture of administrative bloat at the SSE than did the present study might partially be explained by methodology: that study focused on administrators, while this combines all other personnel into one category. Holmén revealed that SSEs cut down on other personnel, such as technicians and librarians, but hired administrators. While the high number of other personnel is primarily dictated by the SSE's large budget, the hiring of communicators rather than librarians might be influenced by the fact that the national economic elite is the ultimate sovereign.

### ***US R1 Universities: High Levels of Funding***

In the US, more than 6,000 institutions are available in the IPEDS database of higher education. This analysis is limited to the 150 most research-intensive universities, R1 in the Carnegie classification. In the US, OTHERS was calculated by subtracting the number of healthcare personnel (SFTEHLTH) from the total. The universities seem to follow different practices regarding what to include in this category. For example, Ohio State University's main campus has more than 7,000 people in this category, indicating that they might have included the university hospital. Other universities with medical schools of similar size are more restrictive regarding who to include.

Other variables might also be accounted for differently. Some universities have thousands of employees in the public service category, while most have few to none. Some tasks carried out by persons labeled as public service at one university might be performed by instructors at another, such as open lectures or online courses. Since it is unclear what public service personnel do, the problem cannot be avoided by excluding it, as with healthcare, because of the possible overlap with instructors. Since there are relatively few public service personnel at most universities, I have simply left them in the data, although this can affect the positions of some universities. For example, the high ratio of other personnel to faculty at the University of Miami would be drastically reduced if a substantial portion of its 1,057 public service personnel were added to its 1,545 instructors. Since the data for universities with high numbers of public service personnel are difficult to interpret, they are left out of the qualitative analysis.

In the IPEDS database, part-time employees are converted to FTEs by dividing their total by three. A university with many part-time workers who work significantly less than a third of full time would seem to have a larger number of FTEs than is the case. However, the differences between the share of nonfaculty in the US and European university systems are so large that they cannot be explained by this accounting principle.



**Figure 4.** American 2019 R1 institutions: universities with the highest research activity. Source: IPEDS.

Figure 4 of 150 US institutions classified as R1 displays a relatively high correlation between others per faculty and revenue per faculty (0.59), although not quite as high as in Sweden and Finland. Public and private universities follow similar trendlines, although there are fewer public universities among the most financially well-off institutions. The extreme position of Princeton on the top right can be explained by its exclusivity. Princeton is one of fewer than ten of the 150 research-intensive universities of size 3 (5,000–9,999 students) or lower. The majority in the category are size 5, with over 20,000 students. According to the opening sentence in W. B. Leslie’s book celebrating the university’s 275-year anniversary in 2022, “Princeton prides itself on being small and intimate enough to be a community” (p. 4). This reflects that Princeton has been more reluctant than other old American colleges to become a large research university. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Princeton presidents James McCosh and Woodrow Wilson promoted a transformation on the basis of the model of German research universities, while Francis Patton, who was president between them, described Princeton as the East Coast’s “best country club” (p. 97). Princeton was also last among leading US universities to admit new groups, such as blacks or women. While institutions such as Harvard used the influx of veterans to expand in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, Princeton’s regents decided to put a cap on the university’s growth.

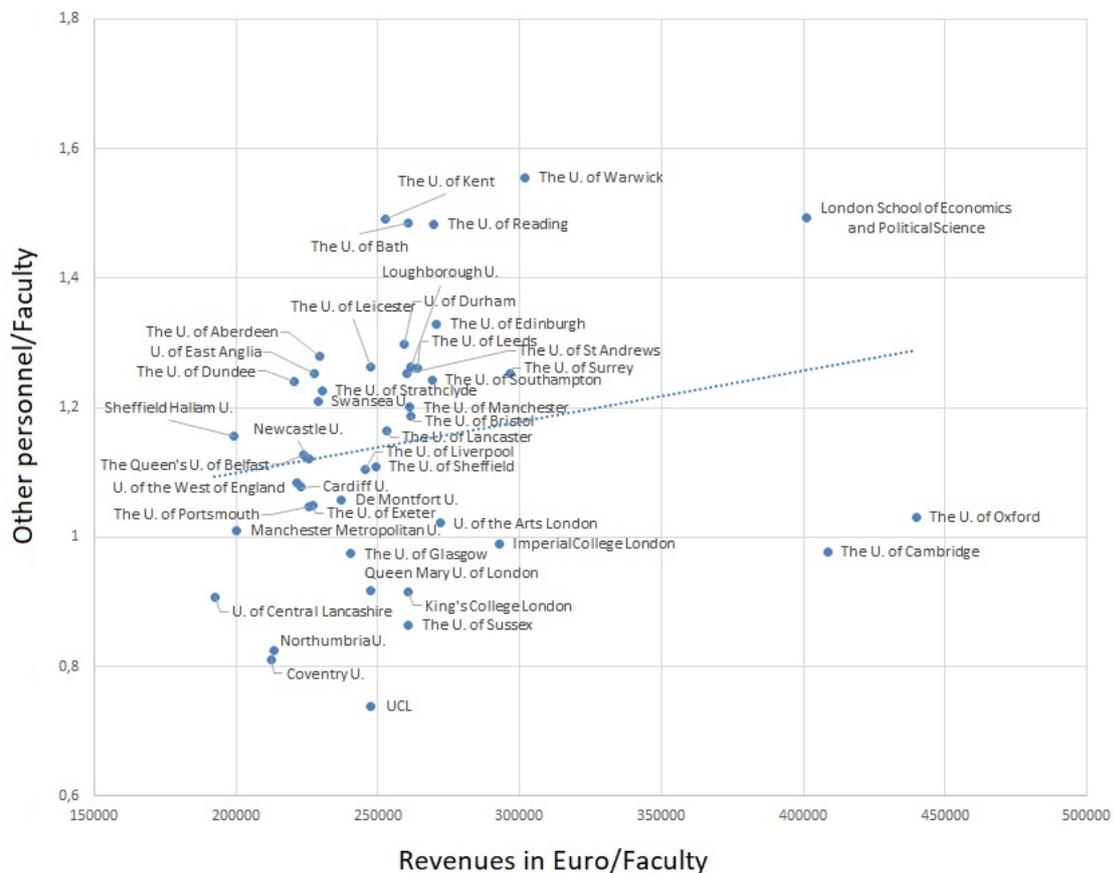
Axtell (2006) claims that even Wilson did not want to transform Princeton into an ordinary US university; instead, he wanted create a unique and distinctive institution. Still today, Princeton is distinguished by its small size and high teacher-to-student ratio. According to Axtell’s sources, this creates a need for large amounts of economic resources since the Princeton method is “damned expensive” (p. 597). Approximately 60% of Princeton alumni donate to the university, the highest in the country, as is the endowment per. In 2021, Princeton had 4.7 million USD in endowments per FTE student, compared with 2 million at Harvard (IPEDS).

The self-image of Princeton faculty conveyed through Axtell’s work is partly confirmed by this study but also partly contradicted. Indeed, Princeton is relatively small, exclusive, and expensive. However, for the approximately 8,000 students at Princeton, there are more than 1,000 FTE faculty, but more than 5,500 FTE other staff. Thus, it is oversimplified to claim that the Princeton model of instruction requires large financial resources. Rather, the Princeton model of financing outpaces the demands of the

Princeton model of education. Therefore, it requires a large nonfaculty staff to balance its budget, as predicted by the revenue theory of cost. The Princeton example, similar to the SSE in Sweden, confirms that institutions with a policy of promoting exclusivity end up resource rich and with a high degree of nonfaculty among their employees.

**The UK: Efficient Outliers**

Figure 5 displays British universities with more than 2,500 total personnel. It confirms that the more resources a university has, the greater the share of nonfaculty will be among the staff, although the correlation is much lower (0.21) than that in Finland and Sweden. However, if we remove the outliers Oxford, Cambridge, and University College London (UCL), the correlation is strengthened to 0.51. These three top universities are well below the trend line, with a comparatively small share of nonfaculty.



**Figure 5.** Universities in Britain with more than 2,500 total personnel in 2019. Source: ETER.

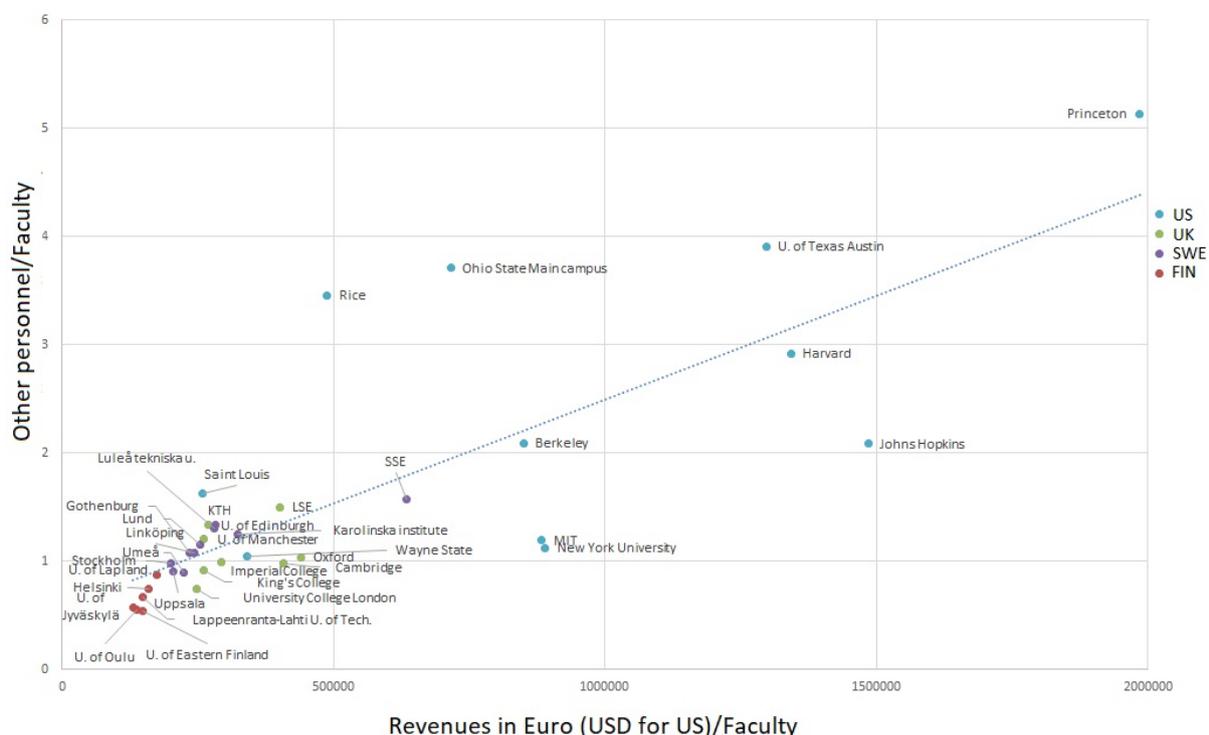
Oxford and Cambridge are by far the oldest universities in England, and, founded in 1826, the UCL ranks third, although the Scottish universities in Glasgow and Edinburgh are older than the English ones, with the exception of Oxford and Cambridge. However, there is one aspect of the Medieval governance system of Oxford and Cambridge which the UCL, but no other British universities, has adopted and retained. Moodie and Eustace (1974), who view medieval faculty autonomy as an invented or at least lost tradition, claim that it was in fact first (re)established with the foundation of an academic senate at the UCL in 1832, while it was not introduced until the midcentury in Oxbridge.

British universities have a council similar to the US board of regents. However, Oxford and Cambridge also have other bodies encompassing almost all teachers and researchers and some other personnel. At the University of Oxford (n.d.a), the highest governing body is the congregation with 5,500 members, and at the University of Cambridge (n.d.a), it is the regents house with 7,200 members. Cambridge also

has an even larger senate, comprising everyone within the university possessing a master’s degree or higher. Until 1926, the senate was the highest governing body, but today, its main function is to elect the chancellor. This governance tradition is also found in the UCL (n.d.a.). Its academic board comprises all professors at the university as well as many elected representatives of the nonprofessorial faculty and other staff. At other British universities, the senates are generally limited in size to hundreds, or even just dozens, of elected representatives.

At the University of Cambridge (n.d.b.), different categories of faculty comprise most of the council. There are several external members, but they are selected by a committee with members from the regents’ house and the senate. At the University of Oxford (n.d.b.), the thousand-headed congregation dominates the council and approves its external members. At the UCL (n.d.b.), there are three ex officio members, eleven appointed members, and six members elected among the professors on the academic board. Academic board members are not the majority but can influence appointed members through the board’s elected members in the council. Therefore, it might be argued that the faculty is the ultimate sovereign in all these universities.

The University of Edinburgh has a general council that is represented on its board, which is called the university court. However, the Edinburgh General Council is not a faculty body but also comprises alumni. The University of Edinburgh’s (n.d.a; n.d.b.) senate has a much smaller representation in the council than the representations found in the UCL, Oxford, and Cambridge. At other British universities, the councils are generally self-perpetuating and strongly influenced by lay or external members, as at many US universities. Comparing Oxford, Cambridge, and the UCL to the rest of the British universities, large collegial bodies seem to encourage the allocation of resources toward education and research.



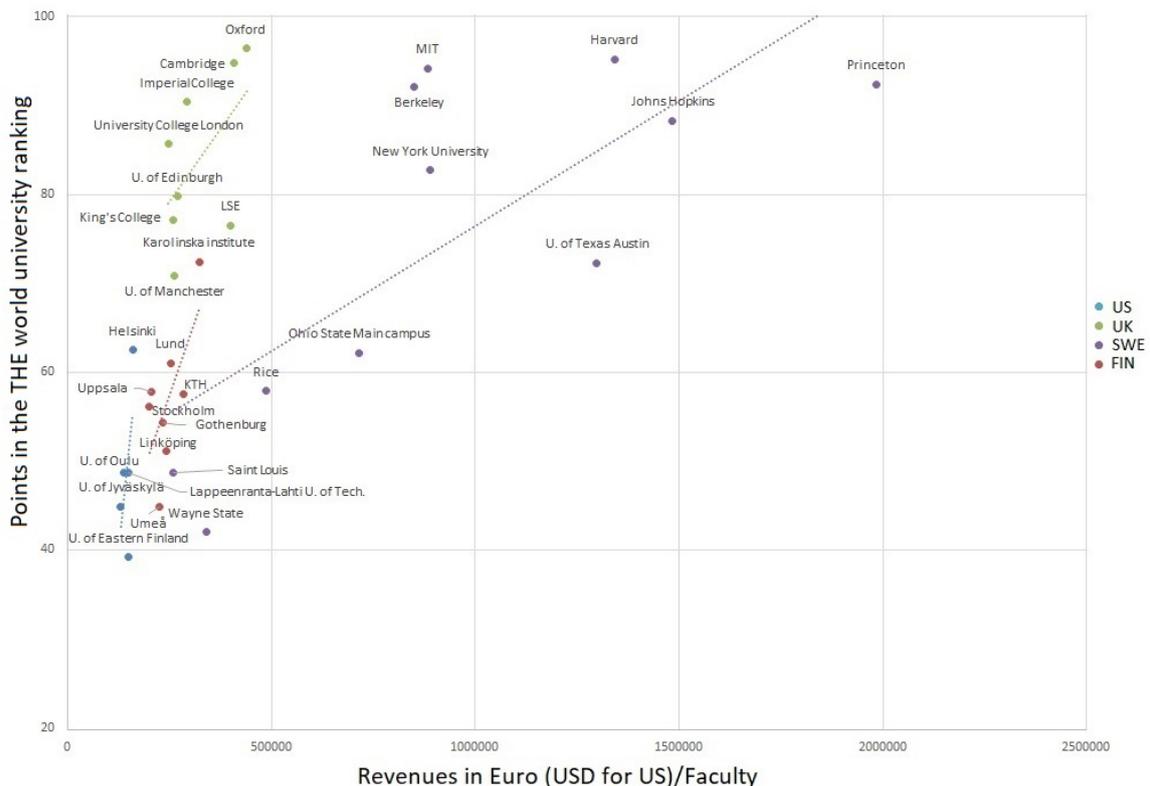
**Figure 6.** Comparison of the university systems in Sweden, Finland, the United States, and the UK. Sources. IPEDS, ETER 2019.

### Cross-Country Comparisons

Figure 6 compares a selection of institutions from all four countries. From Sweden, Finland, and the UK, the largest institutions were selected (measured in the number of FTE personnel), in order to provide comparability with US R1 institutions. Because of its special characteristics, the SSE was included despite its small size. The US selection includes institutions on the edges of the cloud in Figure 4 and some from the middle.

Swedish and Finnish institutions are on the same trendline, with Swedish institutions being slightly better funded and having a larger share of nonfaculty. The top UK institutions are better funded than the Swedish institutions are, but this does not result in a higher share of nonfaculty, which indicates that they are able to access their resources for other uses.

While the Finnish, Swedish, and British institutions are closely spaced, there is enormous diversity in the US. Saint Louis and Wayne State are mixed with British universities, with relatively limited resources and a moderate non-faculty-to-faculty ratio. MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) and New York University manage to keep the share of nonfaculty down despite having larger resources than European universities. However, the bulk of US universities have far greater economic resources and a much greater non-faculty-to-faculty ratio than European universities. Princeton has the same top right position in the US system as does the SSE in Swedish, with rich economic resources and a high ratio of other personnel to faculty. The common factor is the conscious strategy of maintaining exclusivity by avoiding expansion.



**Figure 7.** Relationships between rankings in THE 2023 and revenues per faculty 2019 (US: USD; others Euro). Source: THE, IPEDS, ETER.

Figure 7 investigates the relationship between revenue per faculty and ranking points for institutions from Figure 6 included in the THE 2023 World University ranking. The trendlines of the four countries

indicate that richer institutions tend to score higher on the ranking. These trendlines are based on the universities in the diagram and not on the entire system. However, they are good approximations since the selected universities reflect the general shapes of the clouds of all universities.

The trendline is steepest in Finland, the country with the poorest universities. The richer the university system is, the less steep the trendline becomes. This indicates that there are diminishing returns for investments in higher education. In part, this is explained by a maximum score in the rankings—100. However, because no university achieves maximum points, regardless of resources, and that Oxford is closest with 96.4 points, indicates that the additional funding of top US universities does little to improve their academic quality. These diminishing returns are not difficult to explain. For example, a money-starved Finnish university can easily find use for additional funds that increase the quality of instruction and research, while this is less true for extremely rich institutions such as Princeton.

Comparing Swedish and British universities, we notice that most UK universities have similar revenues per faculty as Swedish universities but still rank substantially higher in the THE. One explanation might be that UK universities are freer at managing their resources than are their Swedish counterparts. Although public funding is important in both countries, government control is stricter in Sweden, where universities are government agencies. Unlike autonomous British universities, they are not independent legal subjects. For example, Swedish universities do not own their buildings but rent most of them from another government agency, Akademiska hus, which, out of its 6.95 billion SEK revenue in 2022, channelled an operating income of 5.14 billion SEK back into the government budget. This limits the resources available for teaching and research.

The recent history of UK university financing might also explain the system's frugality. Due to financial difficulties and the ideology of the Thatcher years, British universities suffered a period of austerity from the 1970s to 1997, during which expenditures per student decreased 40% (Anderson 2006). The British universities might thus still be recovering after a period of starvation.

The differences in rankings between similarly funded Swedish and British universities could also be explained by bias favoring Anglophone institutions. However, these findings cannot explain the differences between British and US universities. Why British top universities use their money more efficiently than their US counterparts is instead explained by the revenue theory of cost. British universities have limited revenues, imposed, for example, by the 9,250 GBP cap on student fees (UCAS n.d.). US universities can and will earn more revenue and therefore have to spend more money to balance their budgets.

### Conclusions

This study confirms that, in general, the more resources a university has available, the smaller the share of researchers and teachers will be among the institution's total personnel. Teachers and researchers are involved in the core mission of the university, and even poor universities must maintain them. When a university gets richer, these "must haves" can be supplemented with "good to haves." According to the revenue theory of cost, this shifted focus is not only an option but also a necessity: when all the essentials are paid for, nonprofit organizations can only balance their budgets by increasing other expenses.

This study also indicates that the tendency to channel resources into nonfaculty staff can be affected by a university's model of governance. For example, Oxford and Cambridge, two of the richest universities in Britain, have far fewer nonfaculty in their staff than could be expected based upon their wealth, and UCL is also well below the national trendline. These three institutions have faculty-dominated governing bodies comprising thousands of people, which elect the university board in Britain called the council. Contrary to Harris' (2011) claim that employees on university boards lowers efficiency, these thousand-headed bodies seem to be efficient at allocating resources to the core mission of the university, teaching and research. According to Tullock's theory of the politics of bureaucracy, middle management is loyal to the ultimate sovereign, and if this sovereign is the faculty, middle management will allocate resources to what it believes is in the interest of faculty.

In contrast, US university boards are often dominated by the corporate world, particularly the financial industry. Harris (2011) indicated that a representation of financial expertise on university boards leads to increased funding. However, the financial industry has also been criticized for being bloated with “bullshit jobs” (Graeber 2018). When the ultimate sovereign industry is the financial industry, the political game of bureaucracy played by middle management might create an administrative apparatus reminiscent of that sector.

In addition to creating financial leeway for administrative bloats, a funding model based on private fees and donations might also directly require a larger nonfaculty workforce. For example, large donations are often earmarked for particular purposes. By the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the role of donors had changed in the US. Instead of replying to requests for purposes specified by the university president, donors began to specify how the funds should be utilized (Hofstadter & Metzger 1955). Catering to the wishes of donors inflates employment outside of research and teaching. In addition, fundraising drives and competition for student tuition create administration.

Privately funded systems also tend to create inequities, such as easier admissions for students who are able to pay full price or who are related to alumni or large donors. A large bureaucracy is needed to counteract these tendencies, for example, through affirmative action and complex application processes. In this respect, Sweden is the other extreme where an automated process distributes students among universities based on their choices, grades, and results on the Swedish Scholastic Aptitude Test (Studera.nu n.d.), which requires minimal administration.

Although the purpose of this article is not to provide policy recommendations, a few words can be said about each system. In Finland, the university system is underfunded, and additional resources would probably result in higher quality education and research. The Swedish system has more resources than the Finnish system but is hindered by a lack of autonomy. A transformation in the Finnish direction, where the universities are autonomous associations under public law that own their own buildings, would probably lead to more efficient use of available resources. The British system seems to function quite efficiently, at least according to the parameters used in this study. However, the situation has not been investigated for individual teachers or researchers. It is also possible that the British situation described here is a snapshot in time and is being undermined by, for example, the effects of Brexit and changes in internal organization and research funding. However, there are still lessons to be learned from the governance models of Oxford, Cambridge, and the UCL.

Finally, the US system has experienced increasing costs, although they seem to have reached a ceiling in recent decades. By combining high costs of tuition with different forms of scholarships for most students, universities ensure that most families are paying close to the limits of their abilities. In combination with the US universities’ character as total institutions, these practices create loyalties and feelings of indebtedness toward one’s college that, in Nordic welfare societies, are instead directed toward society at large. This might explain why the willingness to donate to universities exceeds the willingness to pay taxes, while the reverse is true in Nordic countries. However, it seems that tax-financed higher education makes more efficient use of total resources. Primarily, this is because the public resources are smaller, which results in less waste according to the revenue theory of cost. That differences are so small between US public and private universities is likely because the differences between their funding models are actually quite small (Comrie 2021).

Top British universities produce results similar to those of the top US universities, with lower total costs. In the frugal Finnish university system, Helsinki University is more highly ranked than many US R1 institutions are, with a fraction of their budget. Universities and their funding systems are extremely complex and difficult to reform. However, given the problem of rising college costs, there might be room for institutions in the US that, as in other countries, provide low-cost, high-quality education. Furthermore, it is possible that the mechanisms discussed here could also help explain the extremely high costs in other sectors of US society in an international comparison, such as healthcare, which includes a similar public–private mix of providers and revenue streams.

Based on this study, a general recommendation can be given to funders of non-profit institutions who want to safeguard that their resources are used efficiently. Firstly, identify the core functions of the institution that you are funding. Secondly, identify actors within the organization that benefit from resources being allocated to the core functions. Thirdly, adopt a governance model where these actors are made ultimate sovereigns of the institution.

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**Ethical Clearance:** This study was conducted with an open data set, which did not require consent from individual human subjects; thereby, no requirement for ethical approval process.

**Author Contributions:** The authors contributed to this study equally.

**Declaration of Conflicting Interests:** The author has no potential conflict of interest regarding research, authorship, or publication of this article.