



Compliance with International Quality Standards: Evaluation of Turkish Higher Education Institutions in Terms of Management Dimensions

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Abstract

This study describes and evaluates the situation of Turkish higher education institutions in terms of European Quality Assurance Standards (ESG). We considered the management processes of goal setting, planning, organizing, resourcing, leading, directing and evaluating, and improving. "Higher Education Evaluation and Quality Assurance Case Reports-EER" constitutes the main data sources of the study, which is carried out with multiple case analysis, one of the qualitative research designs. Content analysis was applied to reports covering 160 higher education institutions whose external evaluation process was completed in the 2016-2019 period. The analysis generated both qualitative and quantitative data. The study detected that a significant part of the ESG standards (.46) was not taken into account in the external evaluation process of Turkish higher education institutions. While the dimension in which Turkish higher education institutions are most successful in meeting international standards in terms of management is goal setting and planning, the managerial dimension experiencing the least success is evaluation and development. The area with the lowest level of maturity is ensuring stakeholder participation. It has been concluded that the vast majority of institutions are not focused on student learning. Furthermore, the centralized management structure of the Turkish higher education system has a limiting effect on the process of applying ESG standards.

Keywords

International quality standards
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Introduction

The main goal of higher education institutions is to improve human capital through researching, generating information and technology, and equipping people with professional specialties. The quality of management in higher education is essential for educating the productive and innovative human capital that can solve problems to foster comprehensive development. In fact, the quality of the management system indicates the quality of management processes such as making decisions, organizing, leading, and evaluating (ENQA, 2015; Şahin, 2019). Applying the international standards, alongside the improvement of management processes, is a multi-dimensional issue including recognition, mobility, and transferring information and technology (Eriçok, 2020; Jang, 2009). Therefore, finding out to what extent higher education institutions apply these standards is the basis of

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initiatives for improvement. The shortcoming in applying international standards and carrying out the relevant initiatives for improvement by Turkish Higher Education Institutions (THEI) is a significant problem in terms of the quality management system (Aba, 2013; Büyükgöze & Özdemir, 2016; Çetinsaya, 2014; Eriçok, 2020; Özdemir, 2015; Taşçı, 2018; Üstünlüoğlu, 2016; Yıldırım & Aslan, 2021). In line with this problem, this study focuses on investigating the extent to which THEI apply the international standards in terms of management processes.

Management is a dynamic and multi-dimensional field (Aydın, 1991; Bursalıoğlu, 2000; Hoy & Miskel, 2013; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2022). In shaping the management field scientifically, Taylor identifies the basic management processes containing scientific job analysis, selection of personnel, management cooperation, and functional supervising. Then, Fayol defines planning, organizing, commanding, coordinating, and controlling. Gullick formulates the basic processes of management as POSDCORB abbreviating planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, organizing, reporting, and budgeting. While leadership enriches the management field in terms of change, innovation, and development, over time, data-based decision-making, strategic management, accountability, governance, and democratic community are reflected in management processes and practices (Aydın, 1991; Bursalıoğlu, 2000; English, 2006; Hoy & Miskel, 2013; Küçükali, 2011; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2022; Mintzberg, 1979; Özdemir, 2000, 2018; Savaş, 2020). Management processes indicated by the literature review can be grouped as a) Defining goals and planning, b) Organizing and sourcing, c) Leading and directing, and d) Assessing and developing (Hoy & Miskel, 2013; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2022).

Although standardization in educational administration is a debatable issue (Anderson, 2001), defining standards has become common. Which standards educational environments should have and which competencies teaching and administrative cadres should have are only some examples of standardization. Defining standards related to the core issues of educational administration such as establishing equity and equality in education, disseminating quality education across schools, and applying accountability creates measurable and comparable responsibilities for educational institutions. Henceforth, educational institutions must improve themselves to have defined aspects. Standard means a level of quality acceptable for a particular situation (Turkish Dictionary, 2021). Agreed-upon issues regarding what we should do and how we should do it, related to management in an organization, function as standards (English, 2006). To reach a judgment on whether the activities addressing the enhancement are successful, standards are considered as criteria. Determining the features that should be developed based on the standards also helps promote objectivity and fair treatment (Anderson, 2001; English, 2006).

Standards in higher education are used as the ground for internationalization. To enhance the mobility between higher education institutions across the globe, some common criteria were established and improved over time (Eriçok, 2020). In the scope of the Bologna Process, starting in 1999, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) was established, and it published Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) to guarantee sustainable development in higher education (European Commission, 2020).

To facilitate mobility, recognition, and sustainable development in a common higher education web, internal and external quality assurance systems and quality assurance agencies were established (ENQA, 2015). In line with this objective, some monitoring and evaluating processes including the external audit, the field visit, internal evaluation, reporting, and feedback are conducted (Dakovic & Gover, 2019). Turkey joined the Bologna Process in 2001 and established similar mechanisms to adapt to this international organization. ESG standards and regulations can be adapted by considering the particular country's historical and cultural features (Alzafari & Ursin, 2019; Stensaker & Leiber, 2015). Within this frame, the Higher Education Quality Board (HEQB) was set up in 2017 as the national independent external evaluation agency (Council of Higher Education [CoHE], 2018). HEQB developed Institutional External Evaluation Criteria (IEEC) for use in institutional evaluation. These criteria, classified in quality assurance, education-instruction, research and development, and the management system, have been used for evaluating higher education institutions. The first version of IEEC had 15

criteria consisting of six education-instruction criteria, four research-development criteria, and five management system criteria. Based on the external evaluations carried out in 2016 and 2017 using the first version of IEEC, External Evaluation Reports (EERs) were published. Figure 1 visualizes this process. HEQB rearranged IEEC and added a new dimension, namely, social contribution, consisting of three criteria. After this arrangement, the 2018 EER and the 2019 EER were published. Academicians and the public can assess the current situation of higher education institutions through published EER within the frame of improving higher education institutions that was proposed by ENQA (2015). In addition, a higher education institution subjected to external evaluation every five years would be certificated (accreditation) (ENQA, 2015; CoHE, 2018). Compatibility between ESG and IEEC also indicates the level of internationalization of the Turkish Higher Education System. Closing the gap between the current situation and the international standards means that higher education institutions have the appropriate international infrastructure.

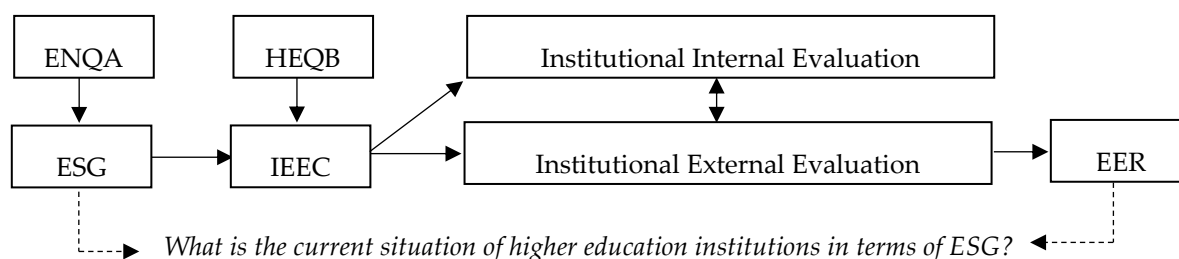


Figure 1. The process of producing EERs in higher education

HEQB announced the basic features of the management system that higher education institutions should have that are subjected to external evaluation. The concept of a management system comprises all constituents of the administration and working of these constituents. Making decisions, organizing, communicating, resourcing, leading, coordinating, and evaluating are among these features. Because management is an abstract concept, its concrete representative is the administration (Şahin, 2019). Independent and objective experts observe and report how the administration manages the organization and how it conducts the management elements, which then creates a foundation for improvement initiatives (Stensaker & Leiber, 2015). External evaluation is performed based on the criteria determined and announced before.

THEI have an argument for internationalization. This argument was declared through participation in the Bologna Process and legal documentation (European Commission, 2020; CoHE, 2019). As per this argument, there is an effort regarding how higher education institutions should be structured and function. Within this scope, the extent to which the management systems of THEI satisfy the international standards must be known. Lacking knowledge about the current situation of the objective that the administration seeks to reach is a serious problem. Jang (2009) found a meaningful positive relationship between the indicators of internationalization and quality management. As the quality of a higher education institution improves, so does its level of internationalization. In the study carried out by Eriçok (2020), the management, academic, and political barriers THEI face in terms of internationalization were identified. According to studies conducted by Yağcı (2010) and Aba (2013), the participation of Turkey in the Bologna Process positively affected international mobility in the THEI. This impact of the Bologna Process was observed particularly in quantitative outcomes and is rather limited in qualitative outcomes (Yalı, 2017). According to Büyükgöze and Özdemir (2016), though the political objectives of the Bologna Process are adopted, there are problems in transferring them into practice. Similarly, Taşçı (2018) concluded that defining policy and strategy in higher education institutions is more systematic compared to other aspects. When we consider the results of prior studies within this scope, we infer that though there is a centrally structured policy in terms of internationalization in THEI, there are also problems in transferring the requirements of this policy into practice in higher education institutions. The identification of situations involving practices of higher education institutions through external evaluations carried out based on the IEEC were published and

declared publicly as EER. To what extent and in which dimension THEI satisfy the ESG standards can be analyzed by considering situations identified in these evaluation reports. Thus, uncovering the situation of policy in the application field can enlighten evidence-based decisions and initiatives for improvement. A mismatch between the quality management practices of THEI and international standards is a significant problem. This study focuses on such a problem. Its main goal is to find the dimensions that must be improved by analyzing the situations reported by EER regarding the extent to which the practices of the management system in THEI comply with international standards. In terms of operational meaning, the main objective of this study is to generate practicable suggestions for improvement by identifying the extent to which the situations of the management systems between 2016 and 2019 in the EER satisfy ESG standards and directions. The sub-objectives of the study are as follows:

- i) To find out the level of matching between the ESG standards and the content of the EERs published in 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019 in terms of management aspects (setting goals and planning, organizing and sourcing, leading and directing, evaluating and improving),
- ii) To find out the improvements in the management aspects of Turkish Higher Education Institutions (THEI) across the years based on the matched content between EER and ESG standards.

Method

Design

This study was carried out in multi-case analysis from qualitative study designs. “The investigator explores multiple cases through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., documents, reports, web pages, electronic documents downloaded through https protocol)” (Merriam, 2016, p. 40). We implemented content analysis because data addressing the study’s objectives were obtained from documents. We generated both qualitative and quantitative data from content analysis of the documents. Research involving higher education in Turkey is carried out mainly through survey and quantitative analysis techniques, whereas documents are rather rich data sources (Aydın, Selvitopu, & Kaya, 2018). The documents utilized as the data sources of this study consisted of ESG standards and directions generated by ENQA and the EER generated by HEQB in Turkey. Figure 2 visualizes the study’s model.

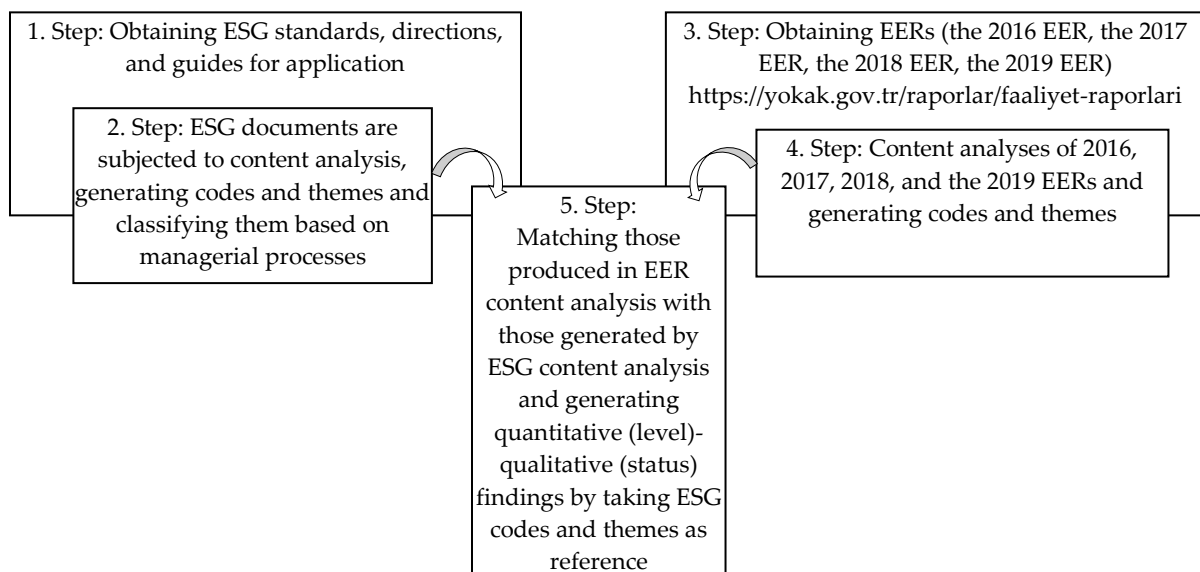


Figure 2. Research model

In the external evaluation schedule, 20 higher education institutions in 2016, 50 in 2017, 45 in 2018, and 45 in 2019 took part, respectively. In total, 160 higher education institutions out of 207 were subjected to the external evaluation. Thus, all higher education institutions that graduated students to that time were subjected to the external evaluation (HEQB, 2020). Each EER is a piled-up report that gathers the external evaluation reports belonging to particular higher education institutions.

Table 1 shows the documents analyzed in this study. In total, four EERs had been published as of the time this study was conducted. EERs were obtained from the official website of HEQB (<http://www.yokak.gov.tr>) on various dates. The 2016 EER was published on 05/31/2017 and had 51 pages. The report contained parts of principles of external evaluation, an overview of internal institutional evaluation reports (IIER), suggestions for improving the evaluation process, feedback from the chairmen of the external evaluation commissions, acquisitions from the external evaluations, and an assessment of feedback from institutions (HEQB, 2017). The 2017 EER, which consisted of 85 pages, was published in October 2018. This report contained the current situation of both research-oriented institutions and regional development-oriented institutions separately besides those parts taken in the previous EER (HEQB, 2018). The 2018 EER, published in July 2019, had 76 pages. This EER contained an extra part, differing from the prior reports, presenting the consistency between IIER and Institutional Feedback Reports (IFR) (HEQB, 2019). The 2019 EER contained 92 pages and emphasized the importance of using common terminology across the reports. The maturity levels of institutions in terms of quality assurance systems were measured using the rubric with five degrees, and scores were transformed into adjectives like strong, weak, and required improvement (HEQB, 2020).

Table 1. Reports analyzed in the study

Year	Document	Source	Number of institutions covered by the report
2016	EER	http://www.yokak.gov.tr	20
2017	EER	http://www.yokak.gov.tr	50
2018	EER	http://www.yokak.gov.tr	45
2019	EER	http://www.yokak.gov.tr	45
2015	ESG 2015	https://enqa.eu/index.php/home/esg/	
2016	ESG 2015 Turkish version	DOI: 10.5961/jhes.2016.149	

Data Analysis

The roles of the researchers in this study, in line with the definitions by Merriam (2016), were to develop the instrument, identify the data, understand, classify, abstract, and interpret. Findings can be organized with descriptive explanations, codes, themes, or classifiers. Documents were analyzed by content in this study. Within this scope, meaningful words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs were treated as informational constituents. The following processes were performed in the content analysis:

- i) Identification of the relevant texts (content of ESG and EER)
- ii) Analytical classification (based on the dimensions of the management system and itemized)
- iii) Coding (finding appropriate words representing the content of the listed items)
- iv) Generating themes (combining codes in regard to common meanings, then naming)
- v) Matching (between codes, themes, and items generated from ESG and EER)

During the content analysis process, we first examined the Turkish version of ESG standards and directions, which was published as an article (Toprak, Us, & Şengül, 2016). In this translated document, 24 standards and directions belonged to these standards under the three topics and guides for practicing them. We observed that the first two topics directly involved the higher education institutions because they have internal and external evaluation standards and directions. However, the third topic was related to "Quality Assurance Agency Standards," which involved HEQB. Therefore, we analyzed, by content, a total of 18 standards and their directions and guides of practice directly related to the higher education institution. The content of standards, directions, and guides of practice

were transferred into a Microsoft Excel worksheet in line with the analytic itemizing. We preferred positively structured expressions in itemizing and generated a total of 113 items. Then, we identified 80 items directly related to the dimensions of the management system among these items. We classified these items in regard to sub-dimensions of the management system. So that the findings could be presented more succinctly and clearly, the management processes were classified under four groups, which are also supported by the literature: *a) Setting goals and planning* (five items), *b) Organizing and sourcing* (26 items), *c) Leading and directing* (17 items), and *d) Evaluating and improving* (32 items). During the classification process, two academicians with PhDs in educational administration first classified independently, then compared the generated classifications; inconsistencies were resolved based on the literature review (Aydın, 1991; Bursalıoğlu, 2000; Hoy & Miskel, 2013; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2022; Özdemir, 2000; Şahin, 2019).

The content of ESG standards classified in terms of management processes were analyzed by generated codes, then themes from these codes. Three levels of abstraction were used in this study, using both deductive and inductive methods. At the beginning of the analysis process, two academicians with PhDs in educational administration discussed the content of the items and performed coding. The coding process was repeated after two weeks. Compliance for the non-compliant codes was satisfied by finding a new code, adding to the existing code, or choosing one of the codes. In this context, while 54 codes remained as they were, nine new codes were generated and 17 codes were renamed. Inter-rater agreement between the coders was very high ($71/80=0.89$) in this phase of the study.

Following the analysis of ESG content by coding and generating themes, a similar process was executed for the EER documents. The same analysis actions were performed for 2016, 2017, 2018, and the 2019 EERs, separately. We identified 50 items related to the management system in the 2016 EER. The numbers of items were 52 in the 2017 EER, 44 in the 2018 EER, and 50 in the 2019 EER, respectively. Then, we coded by finding the abstracted expressions representing the content of the items. In the final step of the content analysis, we matched those produced in EER content analysis with those generated by ESG content analysis and generated quantitative (level)-qualitative (status) findings by taking ESG codes and themes as reference.

During the matching, we first considered the terminology (codes), then compliance in their content. After matching, we observed three different situations. The first situation is related to the matched items of both ESG and EER, the second situation refers to items that existed in ESG but that did not exist in EER, and the third situation indicates items that existed in EER but that did not exist in ESG. Figure 3 depicts these three situations. In total, 43 items related to the management system in the 2016 EER were matched with ESG items. The numbers of matched items were 39 in the 2017 EER, 42 in the 2018 EER, and 48 in the 2019 EER, respectively. Because this study aimed to find out the level that EER to what extent meets the ESG standards, we focused on 'matched items'.

The rate of matching the EER management system content with ESG standards was computed across the years and given in regard to each management dimension in Table 2. Based on the matched content, we obtained both quantitative and qualitative findings. The analysis level for the quantitative findings was codes. For the qualitative findings, the analysis level was "explanations that ... matched [the] content of both ESG and EER, about the current situation of higher education institutions." To overcome the bias in the matching process, two coders with PhDs in educational administration first performed coding independently, then worked together by comparing and discussing the mismatched content.

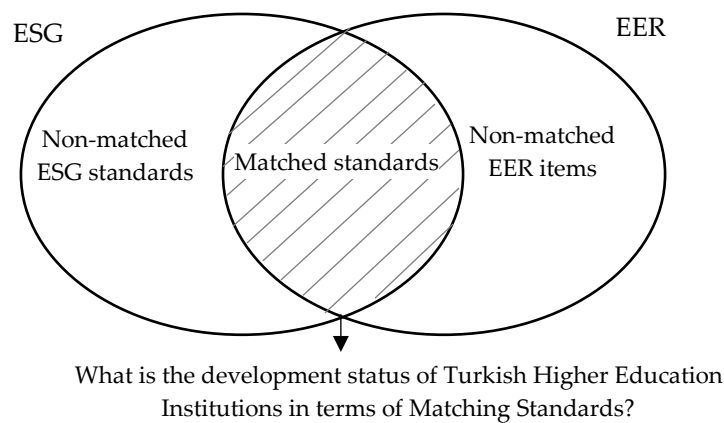


Figure 3. Different matching situations between ESG and EER content

Credibility and Consistency

Data sources of this study can be accessed publicly; Table 1 provides their access addresses. Thus, the public accessibility of data sources for this study supports its credibility. Credibility is supported by taking the field experts' views in all analysis processes, namely, itemizing the content of ESG and EER documents, classifying, coding, abstracting, and, finally, matching the content. Independent coding by field experts lessens the bias effect and checking the compatibility between independently generated codes boosts credibility and consistency. In addition, findings supported by direct quotations boost credibility. Checking inter-coder agreement provides information about consistency. In this context, the coding action was repeated after two weeks. Furthermore, by checking all findings in considering "contradiction-consistency," we tried to satisfy internal consistency. Within this frame, we checked both vertical and horizontal compatibility. In checking vertical compatibility, we controlled the correctness of the classification of items in regard to management dimension in a particular year (e.g., in the 2016 EER). In checking horizontal compatibility, we checked the consistency in matching a particular item with ESG content across the years. In addition, the results of the study were presented to three experts working as quality coordinators at three different universities, so we tried to satisfy external credibility. Experts' views of the results organized under 14 titles were taken through a Likert-type scale (Disagree, Neutral, Agree), and the results verified by the experts are given in Table 3, located in the discussion part. Except for one item (item 8), validity was confirmed.

Results

The results obtained from this study are presented as follows. The results have two dimensions. The first dimension involves matched content with ESG content and the second dimension explains the current situation of higher education institutions. However, a high level of matching between the content of EER and ESG standards does not mean higher education institutions are in a good position in terms of the relevant standards.

While ESG content focuses on students' learning and improvement, EER content focuses on the strategic planning and quality assurance system. EERs can be classified into two sub-groups. In terms of reporting layout, while the 2016 EER and the 2017 EER have a common frame, the 2018 EER and the 2019 EER are compatible with each other. Besides these different reporting layouts, there were differences in terms of scaling and dimensions focused on across the years. Different layouts and focus points made traceability difficult over time. Different scaling in the EERs caused difficulties in describing the situation, as well. In addition, the lack of common terminology made the traceability of data harder over time. To overcome these obstacles, we regarded the particular scaling in the particular EER instead of using common terminology across the reports.

Matching the EER Contents with ESG Standards across Years and Management Dimensions

Table 2 provides the level at which EER content matched ESG standards across years and management dimensions. We computed the lowest score (.49) for the 2017 EER in terms of matching EER content with ESG standards. The highest matching rate is .60 for the 2019 EER. The overall matching rate is .54. These matching rates indicate that nearly half of ESG standards do not match the EER content. We can infer that a considerable number of ESG standards were not regarded in the process of external evaluation of THEI. In addition, these findings indicate that the foundation necessary for the internationalization of THEI has not been fully prepared yet.

The management dimension of setting goals and planning is positively distinguished from other dimensions in terms of matching EER and ESG across management dimensions. While ESG standards are matched with five codes in the dimension of setting goals and planning, there are 10 codes in the relevant dimension of EER. Therefore, it indicates that external evaluation intensifies on what aspects of THEI. On the other hand, the least intensified management dimension is evaluation and improvement (its matching rate is .30). The matching rate of organizing and sourcing is .62, while it is .44 for the management dimension of leading and directing.

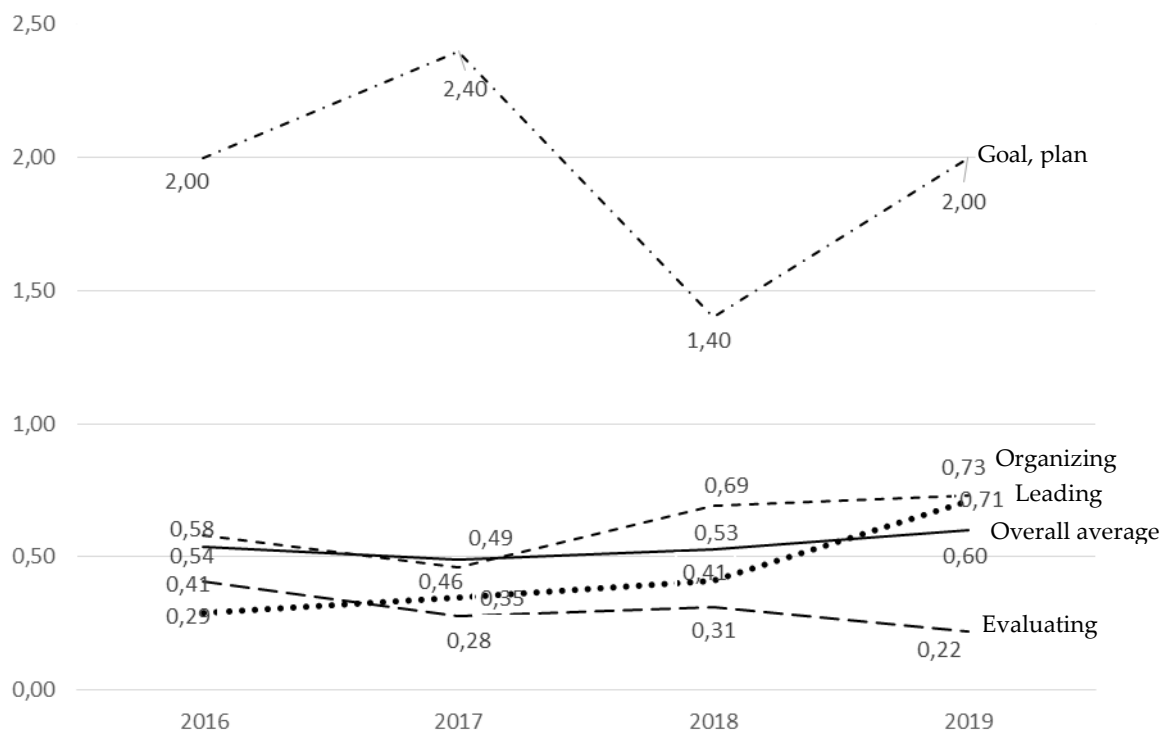
Table 2 contains findings as codes and themes in the management dimensions. Theme of the quality culture in the management dimension of setting goals and planning is matched with two ESG standards, but there are five relevant codes in the 2016 EER, seven relevant codes in the 2017 EER, two relevant codes in the 2018 EER, and three relevant codes in the 2019 EER. One of these codes in ESG, namely, quality culture, contains the item "Policy permeates the quality culture across the institution." This ESG code is matched with the item "38% of THEI has an announced quality culture policy but 40% of them have it partly" in the quality culture theme of the 2017 EER. In the inclusivity theme, ESG has the item "Publicly announced institutional policy encompasses all processes of the institution" in the coverage theme. This item is expressed as the policy coverage code. There are four matched items in the 2019 EER. We detected that "...a considerable number of THEI (49%) have various practices and outcomes of these practices despite the lack of quality policy that encompasses all the fields, yet."

In the management dimension of organizing and sourcing, while ESG has 26 codes, EER has 16 codes. The highest matching rate is computed for 2019 (.73) while the lowest rate (.46) is computed for 2017. Theme with the lowest matching rate in this dimension is "Students' progress and improvement." The highest matching rate (.56) occurs in 2016. One of the relevant items in the ESG is "Learning resources and student support that students need to learn are provided." The item of the 2016 EER that is matched with the relevant ESG item is "37 % of THEI meet the expectations related to the awareness about the student centered instruction and learning." In total, seven items of ESG, within this management dimension, are matched with neither item of EER. Some of these non-matched items are "programs are designed so that they enable smooth student progression," "variety of pedagogical methods are flexibly used," and "Assessors are familiar with existing testing and examination methods."

ESG has 17 codes in the management dimension of leading and directing. The matching rate for this dimension is .44. We observed the highest matching rate (.53) for the "fact based initiation" at the theme level within this dimension. Across the years, the highest rate (.80) among the matched themes within this dimension occurs in 2019. The ESG item "The process and mechanism to obtain reliable data are established" is matched with the 2019 EER item "The weakest criterion compared to other criteria within the management system is the information management system". Also, the item "While 30 % of THEI have immature practices ... 3 % of them have no such practice" is really informative about this theme. Theme of encouragement of innovation has the lowest matching rate (.25). None of the three codes of ESG within this theme are matched with the 2016 EER and the 2017 EER. These ESG items find two items in the 2019 EER. However, the ESG item "The utilization of new teaching and learning methods is encouraged" is not matched with the EERs.

The management dimension of evaluation and improvement has the lowest matching rate (.30). The highest matching rate (.41) in this dimension is observed in the 2016 EER (.19). Across the themes, the lowest matching rates are observed in "satisfying students' progress" (.14) and "recognition of competencies" (.19). The highest matching rate (.44) of "satisfying students' progress" is observed in the 2016 EER. While ESG has nine codes in this management dimension, the 2018 EER and the 2019 EER have no relevant codes. We defined the items in the 2016 EER related to satisfying students' progress. The ESG item "The processes and mechanisms of collecting information about students' progress are defined and working well" is matched with the EER item "26 % of THEI meet the expectations, 26 % of THEI meet the expectation partly, 37 % of them do not meet the expectations and 11 % of THEI have no information related to systematic observing whether students acquire the competencies of relevant program and effort improving initiatives." Within the scope of this theme, the five items in the ESG could not be matched in any of the EER content. Some of them are "Based on the evaluation results, students are given feedback to improve their learning processes," "Students' progress and program completion status are taken into account in updates," and "The quality of the learning environments and the effectiveness of the support services are taken into account in the updates."

In addition to the matched themes, there are themes produced from EER content that cannot be found in ESG standards. Among these themes, the strategic planning theme included two and three items/codes in the 2016 and the 2017 EER reports, respectively. Strategic planning theme items could not be identified in the content of the 2018 and the 2019 EER. A similar situation is true for the themes of "Physical infrastructure, the barrier-free university" and "Management and administrative processes." Particularly for the 2017 report, five items/codes were determined within the scope of management and administrative processes (e.g., "Human resources management being in line with the mission and objectives," "Identification of management and administrative processes," and "Defining workflow processes in administrative services"). The other non-matched theme with ESG standards is the social contribution theme. This theme exists in all EERs except the 2016 EER. Some of the items in this theme are: "Implementation level of social contribution process in higher education institutions" and "Existing performance indicators for the goals of contributing to the region and the country and creating value".



Graphic 1. The tendency of matching EER content with ESG standards across the years and management dimensions

Graphic 1 depicts the tendency of matching EER content with ESG standards across the years and management dimensions. Line 1.00 shows the full overlap between ESG and EER in the graph. A value higher than 1.00 means that the EER content has much more items than the ESG standards in the relevant year and managerial dimension. A value less than 1.00 means that the matching level is low. Based on the changing trends in the managerial dimensions over the years, the leadership and direction dimension attracts attention as a dimension that is constantly gaining importance. Its matching rate, which was .29 in 2016, reached .71 in 2019. On the other hand, the evaluation and improvement dimension tends to decrease. Its matching rate, which was .41 in 2016, decreased to .22 in 2019. The setting goal and planning dimension has the highest variance. While it was 2.40 in 2017, it decreased to 1.40 in 2018. While we observe an increase in the dimension of setting goals and planning in 2017, we observe a decrease in organization and resource management. In 2018, despite the decrease in the prior, an increase is observed in the latter. There is a reverse movement between these two dimensions.

The Situation of THEI in Terms of the Management Dimensions

While the matching status of ESG standards and EER content indicates the quantitative aspect (Table 2), the content of the matched items also provide information about the situation of Turkish higher education institutions in terms of the relevant ESG item and their development over the years. The following lines present the findings based on the items and themes in the managerial dimensions.

The Situation in Terms of Setting Goals and Planning

Encompassing: In the period between 2016 and 2019, the coverage of the policy improved. The 2019 EER reports, "The quality policy has been established and its inclusiveness has increased. In 51% of institutions, the policy covers all areas." However, it can be said that policy inclusiveness continues as a problem area in 49% of institutions. For example, "determination of research strategy and objectives" is stated as a problem area in all reports.

Participation: Stakeholder participation in policymaking is the area with the lowest maturity level in institutions. While 24% of institutions met expectations in 2017 and 2018, this rate decreased to 8% in 2019. Stakeholder participation in policy and decision-making has regressed.

Quality Culture: In terms of the prevalence of quality culture in institutions, it can be said that the problem has continued over the years. For example, while in the 2017 report, "the level of prevalence of quality culture in 62% of institutions does not meet expectations," in the 2019 report, "the spread of quality culture is seen as an area that needs improvement in 62% of institutions."

Accountability: The content of accountability in policymaking is found only in the 2017 report; it is not available in other reports. The 2017 report expresses the situation as follows: "22% of institutions meet expectations".

Although a lot of content matches ESG standards in policy formulation, this content shows that the current situation in institutions in terms of policy formulation does not meet expectations and this area is open to development.

Table 2. Matching between EER and ESG across the years and management dimensions

Management Dimension	Theme	ESG Code	2016		2017		2018		2019		Overall Scores	
			EER Code	EER/ ESG	EER Code	EER/ ESG	EER Code	EER/ ESG	EER Code	EER/ ESG	EER Code	EER/ ESG
Setting Goals and Planning	Coverage	1	3	3.00	2	2.00	3	3.00	4	4.00	3	3.00
	Participation	1	2	2.00	2	2.00	2	2.00	3	3.00	2.25	2.25
	Quality culture	2	5	2.50	7	3.50	2	1.00	3	1.50	4.25	2.13
	Accountability	1	0	0.00	1	1.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.25	0.25
	Strategic planning (<i>Non-matched with ESG</i>)			2		3		0		0		
	The ratio of meeting ESG by the matched EER codes	5	10	2.00	12	2.40	7	1.40	10	2.00	9.75	1.95
Organizing and Sourcing	Programs and competencies	4	2	0.50	5	1.25	4	1.00	5	1.25	4	1.00
	Students' progress and improvement	16	9	0.56	5	0.31	8	0.50	8	0.50	7.5	0.47
	Employee qualities	6	4	0.67	2	0.33	6	1.00	6	1.00	4.5	0.75
	Physical infrastructure, barrier-free university (<i>Non-matched with ESG</i>)			2		2						
	Management and administration (<i>Non-matched with ESG</i>)			3		5						
	The ratio of meeting ESG by the matched EER codes	26	15	0.58	12	0.46	18	0.69	19	0.73	16	0.62
Leading and Direct	Guidance and support	4	1	0.25	1	0.25	2	0.50	2	0.50	1.5	0.38
	Data-based initiatives	10	4	0.40	5	0.50	4	0.40	8	0.80	5.25	0.53
	Encourage innovation	3	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	0.33	2	0.66	0.75	0.25
	The ratio of meeting ESG by the matched EER codes	17	5	0.29	6	0.35	7	0.41	12	0.71	7.5	0.44
Evaluating and Improving	Quality of assessment and assessors	5	8	1.60	4	0.80	3	0.60	2	0.40	4.25	0.85
	Improving the quality of programs	14	1	0.07	3	0.21	6	0.43	4	0.29	3.5	0.25
	Supporting students' progress	9	4	0.44	1	0.11	0	0.00	0	0.00	1.25	0.14
	Recognition of competencies	4	0	0.00	1	0.25	1	0.25	1	0.25	0.75	0.19
	Social contribution (<i>Non-matched with ESG</i>)			0		3		2		2		1.75
	The ratio of meeting ESG by the matched EER codes	32	13	0.41	9	0.28	10	0.31	7	0.22	9.75	0.30
General	The ratio of overlapping with ESG in terms of management system	80	43	0.54	39	0.49	42	0.53	48	0.60	43	0.54

The Situation in Terms of Organizing and Sourcing

Programs and Competencies: Important development has been observed as the years progressed in terms of associating the program outcomes with the Turkish Higher Education Qualifications Framework (THEQ). For example, while 16% of institutions met expectations in 2017 in terms of this situation, the number was 64% in 2019.

In terms of internationalization, progress has been observed over the years. For instance, it needs improvement in approximately 68% of the institutions in 2016, decreased to 38% in 2019.

Only the 2018 and 2019 reports have content in terms of defining processes for the design and approval of programs. Based on these reports, there is an improvement. It is stated as a strong aspect in 80% of institutions in 2018 and 87% of institutions in 2019. In terms of external stakeholder participation in program design, the 2016 report described the situation as "it needs improvement," while the 2017 report stated that "16% of institutions met expectations." Within this scope, the 2018 EER reports a need for improvement in 60% of institutions, while the 2019 EER expressed that it is at an "adequate level in 21% of the institutions."

Some of the ESG standards related to programs containing "acquisition oriented, competencies and contributing to students' development" could not be evaluated because they are not matched with any of the EER content.

Students' Progress and Improvement: It can be said that about 80% of the institutions do not meet expectations in terms of focusing on student learning and practices related to student-centered approaches. There was no significant change in this situation over the years. For example, "Only 16% of institutions meet expectations in 2016." For 2017, this rate dropped to 6%. In 2018, it was reported that "77% of institutions need improvement" and in 2019 "79% of institutions are not mature or inclusive enough".

The ESG content related to "flexible learning," "using [a] variety of pedagogical methods," could not be evaluated because it was not found in any of the EERs.

With regard to on-the-job training, internships, etc., an improvement has been observed over the years in terms of applications. Regarding this area, while "68% of institutions [did] not meet expectations" in 2016, 66% of institutions did not meet expectations in 2017. In 2018, this aspect was indicated as "the need to improve in 60% of the institutions," while in 2019, it was "the strong aspect in 56% of the institutions."

In terms of learning resources, while 47% of the institutions were deemed sufficient in the 2018 report, it was reported that 51% of the institutions should be developed in the 2019 report. In terms of the functionality of the research resources, 26% of the institutions meet the expectations in the 2017 report. In the 2019 report, the presence of research laboratories was stated as a strong aspect in 33% of the institutions. It has been reported that only 14% of institutions met expectations in 2017 in terms of developing students' research skills. Information about this subject was not available in other reports. The failure of the DMAIC (Define-Measure-Assess-Improve-Control) process to operate in terms of R&D activities is one of the highlights (the 2017 EER). In the 2018 report, "Improvement of R&D activities based on performance indicators was determined as the need to be improved in 73% of institutions."

In 2016, it was stated that there were "problems" in defining student workload (ECTS). In 2017, only 14% of institutions met expectations. The 2018 EER expressed that the use of ECTS in international mobility should be improved for 73% of institutions. In 2019, it was emphasized that there were problems in calculating the actual workload without giving the rate.

Regarding the determination of processes for the needs, expectations, and development of students, which are among the ESG standards, the 2018 EER reported that 60% of institutions need development in terms of regulations for students who require a special approach. In 2019, this rate was 76%. However, the 2016 EER and the 2017 EER have no content related to this code.

Employee Qualities: It can be said that there is an improvement in determining the competence status of employees. While this situation did not meet the expectations in 60% of the institutions in the 2016 and 2017 reports, the need for improvement was reported for 14% of the THEI in 2018. In addition, the 2018 EER and the 2019 EER report that while the competence of the instructors is at a high level, academic publication performance must be improved in 31% of the institutions.

Although organizing activities for the professional development of employees improved as the years progressed, it remains a problematic area in a significant segment of institutions. While more than half of the institutions did not meet the expectations in 2016, the statement "14% of the institutions meet the expectations in terms of empowering the employees" was included in 2017. The 2018 EER reported that this issue must be improved for 22% of institutions, while the 2019 EER stated "the strong aspect for 24% of institutions." In this context, in the 2018 and 2019 reports on "training of trainers," "need for improvement" was determined for 40% and 47% of the institutions, respectively.

While the development of assessors within the scope of the evaluation is included in the ESG standards, any EER has no such content. In this framework, ESG standards indicate the need "to gain knowledge and skills regarding test and examination methods, to provide support for measurement and evaluation, and to show sensitivity to the situation of students."

The Situation in Terms of Leading and Directing

Guidance and Support: As the years progress, development is detected in terms of operating the counseling mechanism in guiding students. While the 2016 EER expresses the need for improvement, the 2017 EER states that "30% of the institutions met the expectations." The 2018 EER and the 2019 EER state that it is a strong aspect in 31% and 33% of institutions, respectively. Although ESG standards demand "providing and informing students about student learning and guidance," any relevant explanation could not be reached in the EER reports.

Data-Based Initiatives: There has been development over the years in terms of defining the fields and processes of using the data. While approximately 20% of the institutions met the expectations in 2016 and 2017, the 2019 EER reported the need for improvement in 29% of the institutions. While the use of the information management system, which is considered within the scope of establishing reliable data acquisition processes and mechanisms, met the expectations in 10% of the institutions in 2017, it was reported as a necessary aspect for improvement in 60% of the institutions in 2019.

While only 16% of the institutions met the expectations in 2016 in terms of collecting data on student satisfaction and using them for development purposes, this rate was determined to be 10% in 2017. In 2019, this situation was stated as the need for improvement in 29% of institutions. In addition, it can be said that institutions require improvement in terms of monitoring graduates. While only 11% of institutions met expectations in 2016, the number was 12% in 2017. The 2019 EER emphasized the need for improvement in 38% of institutions.

When informing the public about the processes in the institution is considered an accountability practice, sharing the data obtained in 2016 with the public met the expectations in 21% of the institutions. Meanwhile, this situation was reported as a strong aspect in 27% and 30% of the institutions in 2018 and 2019, respectively.

In terms of obtaining and using data, the topics included in the ESG standards but not included in any of the EERs are related predominantly to students. Detections on the population profile of students, the obtaining and use of data on student success and progress, the use of learning resources, and the utilization of support for students could not be reached in the EERs.

Encourage Innovation: Explanations of the use of new technologies and new education-teaching methods, which are among the ESG standards, could not be accessed in the EERs. The issue of supporting academic activities within this context was included in the 2018 and the 2019 EERs. In the aforementioned reports, the mechanisms of supporting research activities had to be improved in 22% and 42% of the institutions, respectively.

The Situation in Terms of Evaluating and Improving

This administrative dimension, which ESG standards emphasized as the most intense, is the least weighted dimension in EERs. The matching rate of the evaluation and development content in the EERs with the ESG standards is 0.30.

Qualities of Assessors and Assessment: It can be said that there is an improvement in Turkish higher education institutions in defining key performance indicators (KPI), which is an ESG standard, analyzing them, and using the results for improvement. However, this development is limited to "defining indicators." In terms of the definition of KPI, 21% of institutions in 2016 and 16% of institutions in 2017 met the expectations. The 2018 report stated that 29% of the institutions had to be improved, while that number was 36% of the institutions in 2019. Information about data collection related to KPI was detected only in the 2019 EER. Thus, collecting data through KPI had to be improved in 38% of institutions. The following information was available only in the 2018 report on data-driven initiatives based on the KPI: "Improvement of R&D activities based on KPI has been identified as the need for improvement in 73% of institutions."

Information about fair assessment was available in the 2016 and 2017 EERs. According to them, the adoption of an effective, fair, obvious and result-oriented evaluation approach meets the expectations of 26% of institutions in the 2016 EER and 36% of institutions in the 2017 EER.

Information about "pre-announcement of evaluation method and scoring criteria" and "providing evaluation reliability," which are among the ESG standards, could not be accessed in any of the EERs.

In terms of the "use of the internal evaluation process for improvement," which is considered within the scope of the evaluation, only 10% of the institutions met the expectations in 2016. In 2018, "the existence of an internal audit plan" was stated as an area open to improvement in 36% of institutions. In the 2019 EER, "management of internal audit processes" had to be improved in 16% of institutions. In addition, it can be said that the traceability of development in Turkish higher education institutions is weak.

Improving the Qualities of Programs: Within the scope of the regular review and development of programs, 26% of institutions met expectations in 2016, while 30% met expectations in 2017. The 2018 report included the following emphasis on this subject: "One of the weakest areas across institutions is the monitoring and updating programs. In this respect, only 11% of THEI are sufficient." In 2019, only one of the 45 institutions examined was deemed sufficient.

One of the program qualifications is "preparing students for active citizenship" in ESG standards. In this respect, the determination and execution of elective courses are taken as an indicator. In the 2016 report, only 11% of institutions met the expectations in terms of determining and conducting elective courses, while this rate reached 20% in 2017. In the 2018 report, the following determination was made in this regard: "Quality and quantity of elective courses should be improved in 27% of institutions." However, the 2019 EER contained no information about this subject.

Information about the use of external evaluation results was obtained in the 2016 and 2017 reports. While 37% of institutions met expectations in 2016, this rate decreased to 12% in 2017. In this regard, there is a regression.

The issues that are included in the ESG standards in the theme of developing program qualifications but that cannot be accessed in the EER reports are as follows: "Programs contribute to the employment of students, encourage students to do research and produce innovation, and regularly review, evaluate and adapt pedagogical methods and teaching techniques, ensuring stakeholder participation in program review, using research results in program review, and taking into account the changing needs of society in program review."

Ensuring Students' Improvement: ESG standards contain "the functioning of the processes and mechanisms for collecting information about student progress." In line with this ESG standard, EERs took into account "the status of achieving program competencies" as an indicator. In 2016, 26% of institutions met the expectations in terms of "monitoring the attainment of program competencies and efforts to improve," while this rate increased to 40% in 2017. This situation was emphasized as "the need for improvement for 40% of institutions" in the 2018 and 2019 reports.

Any information about the consideration of students' needs, opinions, and satisfaction in the review and improvement of the programs could not be accessed in the EERs. In this context, the ESG standards, about which information cannot be accessed in the EERs, are as follows: In program updates, "student progress and completion of the program," "processes of the evaluation [of] student success," "quality of learning environments," and "providing feedback to improve student learning based on evaluation results."

Recognition of Competencies: ESG standards demand "recognition of previously learned and acquired certificates and fair exemptions (ensure compliance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention and ENIC/NARIC)." In this context, only 14% of the institutions met the expectations in 2017. The 2018 report stated that "recognition of prior learning is the need for improvement across the institutions." The 2019 report emphasized that "recognition of competencies is one of the weakest areas." The issue of "evaluation based on learning outcomes" depicts an opposite trend compared to the 2016 and 2017 reports. While 26% of institutions met expectations in 2016, 14% of institutions met expectations in 2017. No information could be detected in any of the EERs on "the status of the graduation certificate showing the acquired competence" and "announcing the required qualifications to the public."

The EER content, which could not be matched with the ESG standards, was analyzed and classified by years. Three of the 2016 EER and the 2017 EER content items could not be matched. That adds up to eight and nine for the 2018 EER and the 2019 EER, respectively. When we analyzed, by content, the non-matched content in the EERs, we drew two themes and 12 codes: *Institutional features* (history, cooperation between units, mission orientation, existence of administrative units, resource management, board of trustees, quality commissions, creation of an entrepreneurial ecosystem) and *Research* (thematic and priority areas, external funds, patent support, development plan goals).

Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions

We discussed the results and acquisitions obtained through the research process from a layered perspective. In the first layer, we discussed the place and meaning of the results in the literature. In the second layer, we discussed the results in terms of the historical and cultural formation of higher education administration. In terms of transparency, accountability, and development orientation, we discussed the situation of awareness and adoption in Turkish higher education institutions in the third layer.

Table 3 summarizes the results of this study related to THEI in terms of management dimensions. The results are classified as "improved," "need to be improved" and "demands of ESG standards." Thus, we want to point out which problems exist in which management dimension and what must be done in the future.

The most basic result of this study is the identification that a significant part (.46) of ESG standards are not taken into account in the external evaluation process of THEI. We should discuss why nearly half of the ESG standards are unmet by the EER. ESG standards, which cannot be found in EER

content, are related to student learning, assessment, and designing and updating the curriculum. It has been reported in the EER content that approximately 80% of THEI are not focused on student learning. We did not detect flexible learning, different modes of delivery, and the flexible use of a variety of pedagogical methods in the EERs. Similarly, any explanation related to the objectives of the programs, the competencies students should acquire, and the programs' contribution to the individual development of students were not included by the EERs. This situation can be interpreted as indicating a lack of care about the student's learning, development, and qualification. Depending on this inference, from an ontological point of view, it can be asked why higher education institutions exist. The 2019 EER reported the inadequacy of identifying the attainment of program competencies in 40% of institutions. Yıldırım and Aslan (2021) reported that the quality of education in higher education is low. Yılmaz and Memişoğlu (2019) found that "courses are seen as numerical values" and characterize the situation as "the content and quality of education remain in the background". Üstünlüoğlu (2016) emphasizes that "quality of teaching continues as a problem and academicians focus on what is taught rather than how they taught, prefer traditional learning methods and use technology excessively for their benefit". According to Salmi (2010), one of the international characteristics of higher education institutions is to provide students with supportive educational environments and to use methods and techniques to ensure effective learning. These emphasized points are among the requirements of modern education and internationalization that increase the value of education (Patrinos, 2020). While Turkey has risen to the first position in the European higher education network in terms of physical infrastructure and numerical growth (European Commission, 2020), it has low performance in terms of student learning, teaching quality, and employability (Eriçok, 2020; Yalı, 2017; Yıldırım & Aslan, 2021). Considering the positive relationship between quality indicators and internationalization indicators (Jang, 2009), it can be easily recognized that the attempt to improve quality focused on student learning and development is a critical element for the development of the Turkish higher education system. The low performance of the Turkish higher education system in meeting international standards also points to problems with economic and social development dimensions in terms of qualified human resources that Turkish society needs. In addition to incentives such as the selection and development of qualified human resources and rewarding those who are successful in teaching, faculty members in higher education institutions should gain the necessary professional competencies to conduct their courses in accordance with the principles and methods of educational science, and educational accountability should be maintained in higher education institutions. In this framework, as emphasized by Hénard (2010), it should be considered that external evaluation functions to support the development of students as individuals with international cognitive, cultural, and economic skills, by covering ESG standards, and to provide for the creation of curriculum and course processes. The realization of the quality assurance system in terms of meeting the international standards of higher education systems will be a focus in the near future (Hou, Hill, Guo, Tsai, & Castillo, 2020). In this context, the Turkish higher education system must develop a quality assurance system.

While the focus of ESG standards is "student learning and development," EER differs from ESG standards by focusing on the existence of physical units, mechanisms, and human resources and performance indicators such as research, publications, and projects. While ESG is process-oriented, EER evaluations are predominantly input and output-oriented. Meanwhile, ensuring that students acquire program qualifications is emphasized as the most important aspect in the preface of EER (HEQB, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020). This statement of importance contradicts the focused and reported points in the external evaluation of institutions. This situation indicates that the decisions, policies, and plans announced by upper management units are adopted by neither the intermediary units nor the staff. Examining the development trend in Turkish higher education, Çetinsaya (2014) predicted that the numerical growth stage would be followed by quality orientation and internationalization. It has been emphasized that there is a top-down motivation in this development trend. Akar and Babadoğan (2018) explain this situation as indicating that managerial awareness has not yet been reflected in students and academics. Similar results were reported by Büyükgöze and Özdemir (2016) and Yalı (2017). Despite the passage of years, the problem persists of transferring the decisions at the political level into practice.

This suggests that practitioners do not take an active part in decision processes. Trying to implement top-down decisions is criticized in the field of educational administration because it weakens the applicability of decisions (Hoy & Miskel, 2013; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2022; Özdemir, 2000). Another result closely aligned with this situation is related to the prevalence of quality culture.

Quality culture is oriented toward continuous improvement. System components in multi-directional interaction operate the DMAIC (Define-Measure-Assess-Improve-Control) cycle to develop processes that can meet fast and constantly changing needs with a supply-demand understanding. The strategic thinking and organizational learning that accompany the quality culture aim to develop all stakeholders and maximize their contribution (Özdemir, 2000). The fact that there has been a very limited change in the Turkish higher education system over the years in terms of the spread of quality culture shows that the measures taken in this area are not effective. This result can be considered an omission caused by the rapid physical and numerical growth of the Turkish higher education system. The formation of the academic culture, which is implicitly transferred from academicians to students, takes years (Zilwa, 2007). The establishment of a quality culture in many Turkish higher education institutions in the first twenty years requires intense conscious and long-term effort. In addition to this situation, the centralized management structure of Turkish higher education is incompatible with the natural aspects of the quality culture, such as autonomous, accountable, stakeholder participation in decision-making, and implementation. Based on this premise, the establishment of quality culture is carried to the future as a problem area (Kılıç, 2013).

Table 3. Results of the situation of THEI in terms of management dimensions

Dimension	Theme	Improved	Need to be improved	Demands by ESG
Goal and Plan	Coverage	Coverage of the policy	Defining research strategies and objectives	
	Participation		Stakeholders' participation in constructing the policy	
	Quality Culture Accountability		Permeating of quality culture Functional accountability	
Organizing and Sourcing	The qualities of programs	Connections between THCF and programs, process of designing and approving the programs	Considering external stakeholders' views in designing the programs	Designing programs based on the acquisitions, contributing to students' individual development
	Students' progress and improvement	Training on the job, physical structure, and learning sources	Focusing on students' learning, effective usage of research sources, computing actual workload for ECTS	"Flexible learning," "using variety of pedagogical methods"
	Qualities of employees	Competencies of employees	Performance of academic publishing, improving the competencies of employees, training of trainers	Developing assessors in terms of measurement and evaluation, being sensitive to students' conditions
Leading and Directing	Guidance Data-driven initiative	Counseling service The process and mechanisms of collecting and using the data, informing the public about processes and mechanisms	Utilizing an information management system, following graduates, and using their feedback	Help and guidance for student learning, Profiles of students, utilizing the learning sources and utilizing the information about students' success
	Encourage innovation		Utilizing new technologies and supporting academic activities	Using the new teaching techniques

Table 3. Continued

	The qualities of assessors and assessment	Operating the internal audit mechanism, defining key performance indicators	Controlling and measuring in the DMAIC cycle; effective, fair, clear, learning outcomes-oriented assessment, improving R&D activities based on performance indicators	
Evaluating and Improving	Improving the qualities of programs	Elective courses	Updating the programs regularly, utilizing the feedback of external evaluation	Contributing to employability, encouraging research and innovation, revising and adapting teaching methods and techniques, participation of stakeholders in revising the programs, taking into account research results and the changing needs of society, when designing the programs, considering students' needs, expectations, opinions, and success
	Ensuring individual development Recognition competencies	Acquiring the program competencies	Recognizing the prior learning, assessment based on learning outcomes	

The rate of meeting international standards in leadership and direction, which is one of the management dimensions identified in EER content, was 0.29 in 2016 and 0.71 in 2019. Despite the increasing trend in meeting the standards, especially obtaining and using information, following the graduates and benefiting from their feedback have been identified as aspects that must be improved in THEI. Theme with the lowest match rate (.25) with the ESG standards of the leadership and direction dimension is to encourage innovation. In addition, the ESG standards to ensure the use of new teaching methods, support and guidance for student learning, and use of student achievement data were not considered in the EERs (Table 3). It can be said that quantitative improvement in the leadership and directing dimensions is not accompanied by improvement in the qualitative situation. In other words, rhetoric and practice do not overlap. Although leadership and direction are important in the effective management of institutions and in accessing international standards (Salmi, 2010), evaluation for institutional development and, as a result, the operation of development processes and ensuring their continuity are indispensable processes for the continuity and the fulfillment of the functions of higher education institutions. One of the remarkable results is that the importance given to the evaluation and development dimension has decreased over the years. It is seen that this result is compatible with the result of Aydın et al. (2018). Because evaluation is a prerequisite for development (Hoy & Miskel, 2013), assigning importance to the evaluation process for the development of the Turkish higher education system appears to be a key area. Another dimension of evaluation is updating. One of the weakest aspects of Turkish higher education institutions, which requires improvement, is the regular review and updating of the programs. The situation is so bad that only one of the 45 institutions audited in 2019 was deemed sufficient in this regard.

It can be said that higher education institutions experience a role ambiguity between the tradition of implementing the programs driven by the central government and the autonomous but accountable managerial functioning required by international standards and quality culture. Unlike the customary practitioner role, higher education institutions face a demand for structuring in a way that ensures continuous development, taking into account their unique needs and conditions, due to the quality culture. Establishing a structure of setting goals and policies with a participatory approach, planning, implementing, and ensuring development by controlling and taking measures, can mean "self-management." In this context, dominating an administrative process that constantly renews, updates, and develops itself actually contradicts the Council of Higher Education (CoHE) structure in which higher education institutions are centrally directed. On the one hand are the demands to comply with the standards imposed by the international organizations and interactions, while on the other hand, the patterns created by the centralized management practices can be described as a situation that higher education institutions have not been able to resolve in real terms. For this reason, the managerial understanding emphasized "on paper" in the senior management units is limited in the process of being transferred into practice. One of the indicators of this situation is the problems in the adoption and implementation of the strategic management approach. Higher education institutions have different objectives in their strategic plans and quality assurance systems (HEQB, 2019). Meanwhile, strategic management encompasses the determination and realization of change in all objectives, processes, and products (Yenipinar & Akgün, 2017). Another indicator of the incompatibility between the standards and the administrative structure in terms of evaluation and development is the demand that the program update be made by the institutions. For example, ESG standards "taking into account the students' needs, opinions and conditions in updating the programs" were not included in the reports. Because the programs are determined centrally, updating can also be done centrally. Similarly, stakeholder participation in policy formulation has the lowest maturity level in institutions. Participatory management can bring autonomy to the fore and weaken the central structure. As the years progressed, a decline was observed in stakeholder participation for Turkish higher education institutions in policy and decision-making. Uludağ, Bora, and Çatal (2021), in their literature review study, concluded that Turkish higher education institutions assign importance to ensuring student participation in administrative processes that HEQB demands. However, problems and deficiencies have been reported in ensuring student participation in practice (Avcı, 2018; Yaman & Özdemir, 2016).

In terms of the development of third-generation universities (Wissema, 2009), interaction with external stakeholders must be strengthened to effectively direct internal dynamics. With the emphasis on "the stakeholder-centered university," Kılıç (2013) explains the importance of linking the training function of the university with the practice field and creating commercial value through producing knowledge and technology. At this point, the quality and contribution of external stakeholders should be emphasized so that they can make a positive contribution to the higher education institution. At least, external stakeholder participation should not have a negative impact on higher education institutions' attainment of international standards.

The content on promoting accountability in policy-making is available only in the 2017 report. It can be said that the vast majority of institutions (78%) do not attach importance to accountability. Accountability is stated to be a problematic issue in the Turkish public administration and education system. (Acar, 2013; Yıldırım & Yenipinar, 2019). The problem of accountability in the Turkish higher education system has been described by Doğan and Aypay (2016) as follows: "a viable accountability structure has not been established." A similar result was emphasized by Kurt, Gür, and Çelik (2017). The prerequisite for higher education institutions using public resources to be accountable to the public depends on making accountability a culture in their internal processes. Making accountability functional is also one of the leading international quality indicators (European Commission, 2020; Salmi, 2010). In the historical development of higher education institutions, especially in the western world, student funding might be a reason for the adoption of the culture of accountability (Wissema, 2009). In the Middle East, and especially in Turkish states, higher education institutions (madrasah-darülfünun) were financed by the state and foundations until the last quarter of the twentieth century. The demand for higher education has developed differently from that of the western world (Akyüz, 2015). This situation has settled in terms of understanding the accountability of higher education institutions in the form of being accountable not to the public and students, but to top managers. The new public administration approach defines students and the public, as the parties to accountability, as internal and external stakeholders (Kaymakçı & Çakır, 2008).

At the end of the study, we concluded that there was an implicit conflict between the demands of international standards and the centralized administrative functioning of the Turkish higher education system based on historical and cultural roots. While international standards demand administrative autonomy, stakeholder participation in decision-making, accountability, and process development, the administrative structure of the Turkish higher education system demands the implementation of top-down decisions, commitment to the center, achievement of successful outcomes, and accountability to superiors. In this implicit conflict process, HEQB has started the accreditation process of higher education institutions by making an agreement with independent accreditation agencies (HEQB, 2021). We estimate that the prominent problem areas that might arise from the implicit conflict will be the internalization of quality culture, policymaking with internal-external stakeholder participation, implementation of these policies, and determining and updating programs.

This study is limited to ESG standards and the content of external evaluation reports generated by HEQB. In the study, it is assumed that the real situation in higher education institutions is reflected in the external evaluation reports. Because ESG standards focus on quality assurance to improve student learning in higher education, administrative elements are limited to the scope of these standards. Furthermore, since the external evaluation process considers the self-evaluation report (IIER) generated by a particular institution, the independence of the external evaluation is naturally limited. Given that the EERs are generated by consolidating the views and findings of the external evaluators, the views and findings are concentrated on mid positions and the average scores dominate differences. As this might result in the loss of outliers, it creates a limitation with regard to EER data in the first stage, and then with regard to secondary analyses. Therefore, the present study presents the average situation because of the aforementioned limitations.

On the other hand, consistency in the YDR reporting format and terminology should be ensured in terms of traceability. In line with the establishment of the quality culture and ENQA demand, importance should be given to transparency and reflecting the real situation in the content of the EER. In addition, criticism from the public and researchers can serve the development of the higher education system. As another point, EERs do not allow traceability. The data presented on a subject in a particular year's report are not included in another year's report. This means that information about the development of a particular situation cannot be obtained or that long-term improvement activity is not pursued. While ESG standards guide more measurable and specific points, EER includes more general and interpretational evaluation criteria. For example, while "stakeholder participation" is generally expressed in EERs, ESG details it such as stakeholder participation in policy setting, stakeholder engagement in designing programs, and stakeholder participation in reviews. However, in the EER of 2019, there is a statement that "...institutions should create their policies related to their basic functions and share them with the public." It can be said that although institutions are asked to carry out detailed actions on this issue, no examination has been made of this situation, and if it has been done, it has not been reflected in the EERs. In addition, it is recommended that stakeholder participation be ensured at every stage of the quality processes and that emphasis should be placed on taking into account stakeholder views to ensure that the quality activities carried out "on paper" for practice are truly implemented.

For researchers, studies focused on determining and relating the opinions of academic and administrative staff about the activities directed by the senior management units within the framework of internal-external evaluation and quality assurance systems in higher education institutions, the level of approval of applications, and the contribution of these activities to the development of the higher education system are recommended. In addition, we suggest researchers examine the EER documents published in 2020 and later, as they contain rich data sources.

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