

# Assessment of the Quality Management Models in Higher Education

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Received: February 23, 2016

Accepted: March 21, 2016

Online Published: May 10, 2016

doi:10.5539/jel.v5n3p107

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/jel.v5n3p107>

## Abstract

This study involves the assessment of the quality management models in Higher Education by explaining the importance of quality in higher education and by examining the higher education quality assurance system practices in other countries. The qualitative study was carried out with the members of the Higher Education Planning, Evaluation, Accreditation and Coordination Council and Director of Higher Education and External Affairs Unit of the Ministry of National Education. Purposive sampling and snowball/chain sampling was done due to low number. The semi-structured interview form was designed in light of the theoretical framework as the data collection tool. The data was analysed through content analysis. The results of the study showed that higher education authorities are not able to perform their responsibilities with the current bureaucratic structure and major duties fall onto the higher education institutions in terms of quality management.

**Keywords:** higher education, quality, quality assurance, quality in higher education

## 1. Introduction

Very significant changes are being experienced in the higher education system in the developing world. The constant change and increasing competitiveness resulting from globalization in the 21<sup>st</sup> century lead to new demands in higher education and thus, made it inevitable to question the quality at universities (Özer, Gür, & Küçükcan, 2010). In today's world, there are important responsibilities of the higher education institutions in terms of quality that represents value to people and continuous development.

In regards to the function of higher education, United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organization (UNESCO) stated in their declaration in 1996 that universities are institutions that function in social development, financial growth, supporting the production of competitive goods and services, shaping and maintaining cultural identity, protecting social relations, fighting against poverty and supporting peace culture (Demirsoy, 2011).

Even though, there is no clear definition of quality in higher education, there is a general pattern and model on how to measure quality in higher education. This model is based on the understanding and culture coming from within higher education, along with peer review that does not harm the autonomy and freedom of scientific thinking and expression of the university (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009).

In general terms, quality assurance, the term that earned an important place in higher education institutions in recent years, can be defined as systematically monitoring and assessing various dimensions of a project/service/institution in order to determine whether it meets the quality standards (Özer et al., 2010). Quality assurance system is organized in a way that it will involve the administration, all facilities and stakeholders of the organization and provides an inner control mechanism in relation to the quality of education and all other activities of higher education institutions. The important point here is that the quality assurance should firstly be accepted, embraced and turned into an organizational culture within the body of the institutions, its internal structure and working system (Özer et al., 2010).

Despite the general consensus on the need for quality higher education, the steps taken towards quality assurance should be careful as the issue of quality assurance is closely related to issues such as university autonomy, national culture and university behaving according to the local conditions (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009). Quality assurance in higher education is seen as the monitoring, assessment and review activities of the stakeholders who benefit from higher education in terms of meeting their views and expectations at minimum requirements (Skolnik, 2010).

In a general review, it can be seen that there are significant differences among countries from the ways quality assurance system is perceived to how it is practiced. In other words, the national target/target point to be reached is an important dimension in quality assurance practices in higher education; and this dimension determines all other factors from which procedures to follow for quality assurance to the place of agencies, their function and composition. For example, the state universities in Austria do not practice accreditation but private universities are asked to be accredited. Similarly, in Sweden, National Higher Education Agency, cares about accreditation, focuses on the internal quality assurance systems of higher education institutions and practices a system that emphasizes mutual interaction with higher education institutions. While in some countries, external supervision does not have any effects; the supervision results, in some countries, can affect the giving degree right and/or the financial support to be received from the government of the higher education institutions. When the country examples are reviewed comparatively, the result shows that the quality assurance mechanisms to be implemented should be in parallelism with the higher education policies of the country and its higher education system. For example, everyone who wishes so can launch a higher education institution in America or England. There is no need for approval from superior institutions in these countries.

In such systems, in which free market is the determining factor, it is important to be accredited because there is no other supervision mechanism. However, in Turkey, the processes from opening a higher education institution to launching programs are bound to strict regulations and under no condition education can be provided unless approval from the relevant institutions is received. In such a higher education system that requires a large bureaucratic structure, implementing accreditation on top of all other arrangements will only increase the higher education bureaucracy more (Özer, 2010).

As a result of gaining awareness on quality, it became compulsory for the university administration to improve the education process constantly, establish a participatory administration understanding, become an expert in the field on management and provide opportunities for the staff to ensure their success rates. In other words, education institutions should question their mission again and constantly, consider their duties and responsibilities towards the individuals and the society; simple, they have to face themselves. Higher education institutions that want to start working on quality improvement should clearly define their purpose, what they want to do; their targets, function, internal and external stakeholders and share them with the society (Tekin & Gül, 2007). In addition to these, they should also put forward the methods which will help them to reach their target and achieve their goals. At his point, higher education institution managers should start searching for the most appropriate quality system for their school. The individual receiving the education wants to the institution to prepare himself for the highest quality of life. In order to achieve these, it is inevitable to form the most appropriate quality in education system.

The main question of this research is formulated as: “what are the most suitable quality management model(s) for Higher Education in TRNC?”

The main question in this research targets the assessment of the quality management model(s) that could be implemented in higher education in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Answers for the following sub-problems will be looked for in the process of finding an answer to the main problem:

- Investigating concept of quality in education
- Examining the quality factors in higher education
- Addressing the negative factors that influence quality in higher education
- Examining the duties of university administrations in terms of the quality of higher education institutions
- Addressing the positive and negative dimensions of the quality state of the higher education institutions in TRNC
- Examining the dimensions and goals of the higher education institutions in TRNC in regards to quality management
- Investigating the responsibilities of YÖDAK and MoE and university administrations in terms of quality management
- Investigating how quality assessment process should be in the higher education institutions in TRNC; what should be done and who should be involved in these processes
- Examining the need for independent accreditation organizations in TRNC higher education

Assessing the most suitable quality management models for TRNC higher education as a result of these investigations is the main goal of this study.

## 2. Method

### 2.1 Research Design

This study benefitted from the semi-structured interview method as one of the methods for qualitative research. It was aimed to determine the meanings emerging from participants' experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

In Denzin and Lincoln's (1994, as cited in Ekiz, 2003) definition, qualitative research is the researcher's effort to study the topic of investigation in its natural setting and to interpret the concept by combining the meanings brought in by the participants. In the semi-structures interview technique, the researcher pre-plans the interview protocol he is thinking of asking. The interview questions may change according to the flow of the interview or sub-questions may arise and change the flow. The semi-structured interview technique is more suitable for education and science studies due to its standards and flexible nature (Ekiz, 2003). The most important benefit of semi-structure interview technique for the researcher is that it is more systematic and offers comparable data as it is pre-planned (Yıldırım, 1999; Şimşek, 2013).

Cross-sectional method was implemented in reviewing the higher education quality management review of world countries. According to Karasar (2008), cross-sectional method is one of techniques of surveying and in this approach, the results are determined through simultaneous observations of separate groups that are considered as representatives of various developmental stages. Thus, the gathers results are interpreted as taken from the same group and are accepted as reflecting the sustainability of development. Cross-sectional studies are usually adopted when the sample is large and has many different characteristics (Büyüköztürk, Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz, & Demirel, 2009). This qualitative study also involves literature review and analysis of the documents available on the Internet.

### 2.2 Research Sample

The study used purposeful sampling. The sample size is small in qualitative studies in order to investigate the sample more in-depth. Hence, purposeful sampling is preferred instead of random sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In this type of sampling, the factors seen as significant of choosing the sample are determined and then the sample chosen based on these factors are taken as the representative of the population with all its characteristics. Snowball/chain sampling was used as purposeful sampling. This approach is effective for the researcher in determining the individuals or the situations that can be a rich source of information relevant to the research problem. The process starts with a simple question: "Who can have the most information about this issue? Who would you suggest me to see in relation to this issue?". As the process continues, the names or institutions will continue to grow like a snowball and later on, certain names will be on the foreground and the number of individuals to meet or situations to analyse will start to decrease (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). The sample group consists of the Director of Higher Education and External Affairs of the TRNC Ministry of National Education and 3 members from YÖDAK (Higher Education Planning, Evaluation, Accreditation and Coordination Council). The names of the participants have not been used within the ethical framework of the research. Therefore, the participating teachers have been names with the following codes: P1, P2, P3 and P4.

Table 1. Features of participants

Participants	Work Experience (years)	Title	Duty	Gender
P1	26	Prof. Dr.	YÖDAK Member	Male
P2	14	Dr.	Director	Male
P3	22	Prof. Dr.	YÖDAK Member	Male
P4	15	Prof. Dr.	YÖDAK Member	Male

### 2.3 Data Collection Tool

Face-to-face Semi-structured and non-guiding interview method was used as the data collection tool for this study. During the interviews, pre-set questions for the participants by the researchers were asked. This semi-structured interview technique is advantageous in the sense that it allows asking in-depth question and

additional questions for clarification when the answer is not clear (Çepni, 2007). The interviews, conducted by one of the researchers with the participants, were voice-recorded with the permission of the participants. The interviews lasted for approximately 35-45 minutes. Standard questions have been asked and while some participants provided short answers; the others provided longer answers. Hence, the duration of the interviews varied.

The recorded interviews were then transcribed. Later, the transcriptions were given to the participants to confirm that they are not incomplete or wrong ensuring the reliability. The interviews were conducted in accordance with the Interview Form (Appendix-1) prepared by the researchers.

**Validity and Reliability Measures:** the validity and reliability measures taken in the study based on the suggestions of Miles and Huberman are as follows: (a) The foundational information about quality were considered while preparing the interview form (internal validity); (b) The data for the study were gathered through semi-structured interviews considering the mechanisms of TRNC higher education management mechanisms (internal validity and internal reliability); (c) Expert opinion was asked for the interview form (internal validity); (d) The data collection and analysis process of the study were tried to be described as detailed as possible in order to make it comparable to other studies (external validity and external reliability); (e) A list of codes was formed for the analysis of all data (internal reliability).

#### 2.4 Data Analysis

Content analysis was used in order to analyse the collected data. Content analysis is defined as a systematic, replicable technique in which a text is summarized in smaller content units than of its words through codings with certain principles (Büyüköztürk et al., 2008). The recorded interviews were transcribed upon finalizing the interviews. During transcriptions, each conversation was transcribed as they were heard, without any correction in the order of the interviewees and interviews. Each interviewee was given one of the codes of P1, P2, P3, P4 during the interviews. This study utilized content analysis from qualitative research methods. The aim of content analysis in qualitative studies is to put together themes containing similar data from the responses to the semi-structured interview questions and organize them in a reader-friendly manner. In order to achieve this, the following steps are followed: coding the data; determining themes; organizing and defining the codes based on themes; and interpreting the findings.

The questions asked in the first interviewed have been considered in forming the categories. For example, “positive” and “negative” categories have been formed for the possible responses to the question on “the quality status of TRNC higher education institutions”. Later on, themes were formed based on these categories. Opinions from three associate professors and one post-graduate student were asked during the formation of code lists and themes and the codings under different themes were reviewed. The main themes which will have interview data codes under them were mostly based on interview questions and the available literature.

### 3. Results

In this section of the study which aimed to evaluate the quality management models in TRNC higher education, the findings gathered from the data analysis and their interpretations are presented. The presentation of the findings and their interpretation follow the order of the questions needing to be answered for the goal of this study.

#### 3.1 Quality Perception in Education

The responses of the participants regarding “Quality Perception in Education” are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Analysis results of participants’ responses towards Perception of Quality in Education

Participants	Categories
P1	• Quality education
P2	• Quality education • Physical equipment
P3	• Quality education
P4	• Quality education

When Table 2 is reviewed, it can be seen that the participants' responses are grouped under two headings. These are: Quality Education and physical equipment. All participants especially emphasize graduating with good education in regards to quality in education perception. It is emphasized that for quality education, quality in education should be taken as a whole with its other components such as its university, its students, its academic staff, its curricula, its projects, its services for the community and its infrastructure. This analysis shows us that quality academic staff is not sufficient and it is also needed to have the appropriate physical equipment for necessary works.

A participant (P3) said the following in relation to this issue:

*"When you say quality in education, an institution provides a quality education then the students initially accepted into its programs (either undergraduate or post-graduate) graduate by learning the teaching outcomes".*

Another participant (P3) stated:

*"When you want quality in higher education, the universities should be as a whole with its students, teaching staff, curriculum, graduates, projects, theses and its services for the community. The necessary infrastructure is needed to achieve this".*

### 3.2 Quality Factors in Higher Education

The responses of participants regarding "Quality Factors in Higher Education" are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Analysis results of participants' responses towards Quality Factors in Higher Education

Participants	Categories
P1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International accreditations</li> <li>• Academic staff</li> <li>• Physical infrastructure</li> <li>• Community service</li> <li>• Transparency</li> </ul>
P2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic staff</li> </ul>
P3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic staff</li> </ul>
P4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic staff</li> <li>• Community service</li> </ul>

When Table 3 is reviewed, it is seen that all participants' responses focus on academic staff. Having physical infrastructure, steps taken for the community, transparency and international accreditations earned as institutions in an unrecognized country are seen that quality factors. These responses highlight the significance of qualified academic staff. Another important factor is to what extent the university provides services for the society.

A participant (P3) said the following regarding this issue:

*"To me, teaching staff is the most important factor. Their standards, levels, having Ph.D. degrees, the institutions they completed their Ph.D. degrees, how much experience they have, level of research, project works, their attendance to symposium and seminars, their use of foreign language in course instruction, in other words, their achievement are very crucial".*

Another participant (P4) said the following:

*"A university should equip the students; show them the approaches to being a good citizen; the ways they can choose in their lives and how they can hold onto that life with their attitudes".*

### 3.3 Negative Factors That Influence Quality in Higher Education

The responses of participants regarding the "Negative Factors Influencing Quality in Higher Education" are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Analysis results of participants' responses towards Negative Factors that influence on Quality in Higher Education

Participants	Categories
P1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High workload of teaching staff</li> <li>• Motivation of administrative staff</li> </ul>
P2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of state universities</li> </ul>
P3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management's attitude</li> </ul>
P4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic staff</li> </ul>

When Table 4 is reviewed, it is seen that participants suggest that the heavy workload of the teaching staff reduces their effectiveness which, in turn, negatively influences the quality of education. Again, it is also mentioned that the lack of a fully state university in TRNC also affects quality. It is mentioned that administration of higher education institutions should motivate all its employees for quality and the motivation of administrative staff also affect quality. In the direction of these responses, administration has a big responsibility. Administration should show sufficient care for both the academic staff and its employees, and it is seen as a necessity for quality education to help the teaching staff relax at the point of heavy workload.

One participant (P3) said the following on this issue:

*"The ideas of the people in the administrative team are very important. The desired outcome cannot be reached through force and imposing if the practitioner does not believe in it. You should want quality and work towards it. It is a frame and if the pieces do not form a whole, you cannot see the overall picture".*

#### 3.4 Duties of the Administration in the Quality of the Higher Education Institution

The responses of participants in regards to "Duties of Administration in Quality in Higher Education" are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Analysis results of participants' responses towards the Duties of Management in Quality of the Institution

Participants	Categories
P1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparing strategic plan</li> </ul>
P2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forming the quality unit</li> </ul>
P3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish quality awareness</li> </ul>
P4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choosing qualified teaching staff</li> </ul>

When Table 5 is reviewed, the responses of the participants revolve around having a strategic plan, establishing a quality unit, forming quality awareness and choosing quality academic staff. In parallel to these findings, the institution should first make a strategic plan; establish quality awareness in all units; choose well-qualified academic staff and form a quality unit to ensure the sustainability of quality awareness.

One participant (P1) said the following regarding this issue:

*"I look at whether the institution has mission, vision or a strategic plan. It is very difficult to achieve quality without a strategic plan".*

Another participant (P3) said:

*"Establishing quality awareness. Acknowledging this by everyone. A good team work can be achieved if the benefits and outcomes of this are clear. It is also important to make it sustainable".*

#### 3.5 Quality Status of the Higher Education Institutions in TRNC

The responses of participants regarding the "Quality Status of TRNC Higher Education Institutions" are given in Table 6.

Table 6. Analysis results of participants' responses towards the status of Quality in TRNC Higher Education Institutions

Participants	Categories Negative	Positive
P1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infrastructure status is good</li> <li>• International accreditations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student profile</li> <li>• Workload of teaching staff</li> <li>• Unsatisfactory salary</li> </ul>
P2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infrastructure status is good</li> <li>• Qualified scientists</li> <li>• International accreditations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students' graduating with ease</li> </ul>
P3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International accreditations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not sufficient</li> </ul>
P4	-----	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not sufficient</li> </ul>

When Table 6 is reviewed it can be seen that the international accreditations earned by institutions are seen as the most positive development in TRNC higher education. Again, having qualified scientists and universities with good infrastructure are seen as positive developments. However, it is also stated that the desired level in quality is not reached yet and the profile of students coming to TRNC with low university entrance scores, the heavy workload of the teaching staff and not getting sufficient salary for such heavy workloads and students graduating easily are seen as negative views.

A participant (P1) said the following in this regard:

*"The student profile in all universities are in a very bad condition. The workload of the teaching staff in private universities are very heavy. They work without a contract in most universities. I don't believe that they are satisfied with their salaries. So, they work according to the salary they get. Quality cannot be expected in such situations".*

Another participant (P3) said the following:

*"When we look at our 35-year university establishment process, our universities are not at the desired level. It is a different thing that universities do these only by the external accreditations they earn. They need to move forward by their teaching staff, employee satisfaction, enabling student satisfaction and earning a place in society and their project".*

### 3.6 Dimensions and Goals of Higher Education in Quality Management

The responses of participants regarding the "Dimensions and Goals of Higher Education in Quality Management" are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Analysis results of participants' responses towards the Dimensions and Goals of Quality Management in Higher Education

Participants	Categories Dimensions	Goals
P1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutionalization</li> <li>• Accountability</li> <li>• Community service</li> <li>• Physical equipment</li> <li>• Sufficient academic staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paying equal attention to all fields</li> </ul>
P2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Related departments of government becoming functional</li> <li>• Institutionalization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing Ministries for Higher Education</li> </ul>
P3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human factor</li> <li>• Physical equipment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raising skilled graduates for the country</li> </ul>
P4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality awareness</li> <li>• Sufficiency of academic staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raising skilled graduates for the country</li> </ul>

When Table 7 is reviewed, the responses of the participants focused on institutionalization and sufficient academic staff. The inadequacy of governmental units is also emphasized. The significance of establishing a separate ministry for higher education to contribute to forming quality awareness is also emphasized. The importance of transparency, including physical equipment, serving the society and accountability is also highlighted. The goal of achieving adequacy in all fields and raising qualified graduates for the country is underlined.

One of the participants (P3) said the following:

*“For example, a case of Harvard, the pride of the local people and the graduate of Harvard feels. Graduates achieving good places. Communication with the alumni is also important. The region where Harvard University is located, also benefits from this”.*

Another participant (P1) said:

*“The supervision mechanisms in TRNC are very weak. The Ministry of Education and YODAK lacks this function. Thus, the administrative structure of the government should be reviewed and a separate higher education ministry should be established and this ministry should practice by feeling the government authority”.*

### 3.7 Duties of YÖDAK, MoE and University Administrations in TRNC Higher Education

The responses of participants regarding the “Duties of YODAK, MoE, and University Administrations in TRNC Higher Education” are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Analysis results of participants’ responses towards the responsibilities of YODAK, Ministry of Education and University Administrations in TRNC Higher Education

Participants	Categories YÖDAK-MoE	University Administrations
P1	• YODAK and MoE must change their structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transparency</li> <li>• Quality of academic staff</li> <li>• Central exams</li> </ul>
P2	• YODAK and MoE must change their structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality of academic staff</li> </ul>
P3	• YODAK and MoE must change their structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing quality awareness</li> </ul>
P4	• YODAK and MoE must change their structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality of academic staff</li> </ul>

When Table 8 is reviewed, all participants find YODAK and MoE very weak in terms of quality management. The importance of choosing quality academic staff is mentioned when it comes to the duties of university administrations. Again, establishing quality awareness and transparent administration is emphasized as important.

One participant (P1) said the following in this regard:

*“YODAK cannot do this with its current structure. Firstly, the TRNC higher education regulation should be re-organized. After YODAK becomes more powerful, it can have more saying over the universities”.*

Another participant (P2) said:

*“The supervision mechanisms in TRNC are very weak. The Ministry of Education and YODAK lacks this function. Thus, the administrative structure of the government should be reviewed and a separate higher education ministry should be established and this ministry should practice by feeling the government authority”.*

### 3.8 Quality Assessment Process in TRNC Higher Education

The participants’ responses regarding the “Quality Assessment Process in TRNC Higher Education” are presented in Table 9.



Table 9. Analysis results of participants' responses towards the Quality Assessment Process in TRNC Higher Education

Participants	How it should be	What should be done	Who should take part
P1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• YODAK and MoE should be re-structured</li> <li>• Self-evaluation reports for universities should be prepared</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• YODAK and MoE should be capable of inspecting higher education</li> <li>• University administration should behave according to the self-evaluation reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University Administrations</li> </ul>
P2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• YODAK and MoE should be structured</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry of Higher Education should be established</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• YÖK and YODAK should establish boards</li> </ul>
P3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• YODAK and MoE should be structured</li> <li>• Self-evaluation reports for universities should be prepared</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• YODAK and MoE should be capable of inspecting higher education</li> <li>• University administration should behave according to the self-evaluation reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University administrations</li> </ul>
P4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• YODAK and MoE should be structured</li> <li>• Attention should be given to recruitment of academic staff to universities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• YODAK and MoE should be capable of inspecting higher education</li> <li>• Adequacy of universities' quality academic staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expert Academics</li> </ul>

When Table 9 is reviewed, it is seen that all participants agree that YODAK and MoE should be re-structured and the current system can, in no way, help to reach the desired level. University administrations should pay attention to choosing quality academic staff. It is also emphasized that university administrators and good academic staff should be involved in quality management process. According to one participant (P2), a council should be formed in collaboration between HEC and YODAK.

A participant (P2) said the following on this issue:

*“YÖDAK dimension, HEC dimension and MoE dimension. Right now, there is a mutual recognition agreement between TRNC and Turkey. In one article of this agreement, a council should be formed based on views of TRNC Ministry of National Education and Turkish Ministry of National Education involving 3 members from HEC and 3 professors from YODAK. HEC is our window opening to the rest of the world but we should have our own supervision mechanism”.*

Another participant (P3) said:

*“Each university should be asked to write its own self-evaluation report. Such a report involving strengths and weaknesses will shed a light to future”.*

### 3.8 The Need for Independent Quality Institutions in TRNC Higher Education

The responses of participants regarding the “Need for Independent Accreditation Organizations in TRNC” are presented in Table 10.

Table 10. Analysis results of participants' responses towards the Need for Independent Accreditation Organizations in TRNC Higher Education

Participants	Categories
P1	• YODAK should be independent
P2	• Fully-independent institutions are essential
P3	• YODAK should be acknowledged as an internal quality supervision agency
P4	• Independent institutions are necessary

When Table 10 is reviewed, it is seen that two participants (P1 and P3) agree that YODAK should be enabled to fulfil its duties by re-organized laws and regulations and the other two participants (P2 and P4) believe in the need for independent accreditation organizations.

A participant (P1) said the following regarding this issue:

*"YÖDAK cannot be considered as independent. General secretary is appointed with 3-vote enactment and two of the members are appointed via parliament decision. The appointment of the president and the budget is related to the Presidency. Perhaps this is why, what is desired couldn't have achieved until today. Independent accreditations should be wisely decided after thorough thinking. It should be shown that YODAK is an internal supervision mechanism".*

Another participant (P2) said:

*"We experienced a Bologna process back in 1999. We entered a process under the name European higher education coordination within this Bologna process. Turkey and Southern Greek Side entered this process in 2001 and Turkey was blocked from this process due to political obstacles. Independent organizations are very important in the world. Our country is going through a process and independent organizations are crucial in this process".*

#### 4. Discussions and Conclusion

In the conducted study all participants give the same response of quality education in regards to quality perception in education. The significance of quality academic staff is emphasized within the concept of quality education. It is shown that quality is education, for quality education, should be as a whole with its components such as the university, its students, its academic staff, its curricula, its projects, its services to the community and its infrastructure.

It is seen that the most important factor in quality in higher education is academic staff. The effectiveness of the academic staff is believed to be affected by the physical infrastructure as well. The type of services provided for the community should also be questioned. The international accreditations earned by the institutions in an unrecognized university are considered as solid steps towards quality.

In regards to the negative factor influencing quality in higher education, it is suggested that the heavy workload reduces the effectiveness of the academic staff and affects the teaching quality. It is thought that higher education institutions should motivate all its employees towards quality and that the motivation of administrative should also affects quality.

It can be suggested that a higher education institution should firstly, establish a strategic plan; form quality awareness in all its units; choose quality academic staff and establish a quality unit to ensure the sustainability of the quality awareness.

The international accreditations earned by the institutions are seen as the most positive improvement in TRNC higher education. Also, quality scientists, and universities with good infrastructures are also seen as positive developments. The students profile coming to TRNC with low university entrance scores have a negative influence on the education quality. The heavy workload of the teaching staff; not receiving the salary they deserve for such heavy workloads and the easy graduation of students can be shown as negative opinions.

Regarding the results on the dimensions and goals of quality management in higher education, institutionalizing and sufficient academic staff became the most important dimensions. The inadequacy of governmental units is highlighted. It can be said that establishing a separate ministry for higher education can have major contributions in higher education.

YODAK and the MoE are found very insufficient in TRNC higher education. The importance of quality academic staff is underlined in university administrations. Also, it is emphasized that establishing quality awareness and transparent administration is also significant.

It is emphasized that YODAK and MoE should be re-structured in the quality management process in TRNC higher education due to the fact that the current system is not helping to move forward. The importance of quality academic staff in university administrations is again emphasized. It is also shown that both university administrations and good academic staff should be involved in the quality assessment process.

In regards to the need for independent accreditation organizations in TRNC higher education, it is referred that although YODAK can be re-organized through modified laws and regulations and reaches the capacity to do this job, independent organizations are still needed.

It is seen that quality education is the most important factor in the perception of quality in education. It was also seen that academic staff is the crucial element in quality education. According to the study in UNESCO (2012), the need for quality academic staff is an important worldwide problem starting with the developing countries. Many national and international organizations are pursuing comprehensive works in this regard and it is seen that as the quality and success of the teacher increases the quality and the success of the educational system directly increases as well. The success of the countries in all fields is directly related to the educational quality and the latter is directly related to the quality of the teacher. The main common feature of the educational system in countries where student performance is high is identified as qualified teachers (Barber & Mourshed, 2007). The quality of the teacher is supported by the theories on its relation to teacher education. It is also mentioned that the physical infrastructure and equipment available for the teachers to develop themselves are also important. It is emphasized that in addition to the availability of physical characteristics such as appropriate setting and necessary equipment, they should also be up-to-date and theory should be supported with practice and should be based on collaboration (Avalos, 2011; Desimone, 2009). It was mentioned that the heavy workload of teachers negatively influences the quality of education and this shows similarity with YOK's report (2007) where it was stated that 73% of the academic staff are worn out under heavy workload and this both reduces education quality and prevents personal development of the academic staff. Another effect of the crowded classes and heavy workload is that teaching-learning services become a priority and the teaching staff don't get sufficient time for academic works or services for the community. This, certainly, means compromising quality education. Such variables that contradict with the increasing demand on becoming an effective educator, is in line with the findings on the negative influences on the performance of the teaching staff.

The findings regarding the creation of a strategic plan, establishing quality awareness in all units and forming a quality unit to ensure the sustainability of quality awareness by the administration of the higher education institution, according to Welch and Jackson (2007), is related to the fact that the success of quality development works need the support and leadership of the administrators. Thus, all employees will develop sense of collaboration, team work and trust in themselves and their group. Additionally, interaction between administration and employees will increase and sense of institutional belonging will be improved.

The international accreditations earned by the institutions in TRNC higher education are considered as the most positive improvement. Again, having quality scientists and universities with good infrastructures are also positive improvements. However, the student profile coming to TRNC with low university entrance scores have been indicated as negative influence on the quality of education. The inadequacy of the governmental units has been emphasized. It is also mentioned that re-structuring of YODAK and MoE is a necessity and the current system can, in no way, help to reach the desired level. The findings related to the negative opinions such as the heavy workload of the teaching staff and not getting the salary for such heavy workloads and easy graduation of students are in parallel with the results of the council report of TRNC Higher Education (Appendix-2). Additionally, according to Çağlar and Reis (2007), the comments on the need for institutionalizing academic approaches in education planning that goes beyond the traditional political and bureaucratic practices that are being practiced in TRNC is one of the main factors to be considered is in parallel with that as well.

In the comments regarding the necessity for independent accreditation organizations in TRNC higher education, it is mentioned that although YODAK is re-structured with modified laws and regulations and reaches the level to fulfil this duty, there will still be a need for independent organizations. Fully independent assessment organizations are widely seen in world countries. The most significant component in ensuring the independence of the organization is to base on a legal text as much as possible within the hierarchy of norms of the organization. Hence, the first condition for the independence of the organization is the existence of a regulation that will function as the basis of the organization (Stewart, 2004). Also, having a legal code in the constitutional

law stating that the organization will be an independent authority is seen as another security factor (Stewart, 2004). Another component that will ensure the independent of the assessment organization is having financial resources. Being dependent on another institution's or organization's budget will shadow the independence of that specific organization (Civelek, 2011). On the contrary, having its own budget will contribute to the independence of the organization. Hence, having its own budget is frequently mentioned as a criterion for independence acknowledged in academic circles (Stewart, 2004; Kuner, 2007; Georges, 2009; Greenleaf, 2012) and these comments explain the need for the framework of the independence dimension.

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