

Student Participation in Quality Assurance and Accreditation Processes in Higher Education: Assessing Students' Perspectives

Gökhan ÇALIŞKAN ¹ , İlknur MAYA ²

Abstract

Student participation in quality assurance (QA) and accreditation processes is crucial for higher education institutions (HEIs); however, existing research on this topic remains limited, indicating a need for more comprehensive investigations. This study purposes to explore students' opinions, expectations, and recommendations regarding QA and accreditation processes. This study employed a phenomenological approach. A total of 11 student representatives, who are members of the Student Quality Commission (SQC), participated in the study. Data collection was conducted through interviews. Inductive content analysis was used to analyze the obtained data. Students' definitions of QA and accreditation processes in higher education (HE) aligned with the literature. The findings indicate that students conceptualize quality assurance and accreditation processes in higher education as a stakeholder-based planning, monitoring, and continuous improvement process aimed at enhancing institutional capacity. The results further reveal that students assume three primary roles within these processes, namely the user role, the feedback role, and the decision-making role. In addition, student participation in related activities is shown to have a positive impact on academic performance, peer relationships, and future professional careers. Students also offered constructive recommendations for strengthening and expanding participation in quality-related studies.

Keywords: Accreditation, Quality, Quality Assurance, Student Participation, Higher Education.

Article History:

Received: 22.10.2025
Research Article

Accepted: 31.12. 2025

Recommended Citation:

Çalışkan, G. & Maya, İ. (202X). Quality assurance and accreditation in higher education: assessing students' perspectives, *International Journal on New Trends in Education and Their Implications (IJONTE)*, 16 (2), 64 - 78.

¹ Gökhan ÇALIŞKAN, Dr. Lect., Rectorate, Quality Development and Institutional Monitoring Coordination, Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Türkiye, +905443890806, gokhan.caliskan@comu.edu.tr, ORCID: 0000-0001-8463-6767

² İlknur Maya, Prof. Dr., Faculty of Education, Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Türkiye, mayailknur@comu.edu.tr, +905356460166, ORCID: 0000-0001-9964-1382

Introduction

The century in which we live is marked by constant updates of information and ongoing transformations. To navigate their daily and social life effectively, individuals and societies must adapt to these transformations, allowing them to continue their daily and social activities without any problems. This effort to adapt and gain an advantageous position places societies in a race for globalization and competition at a global scale.

In the race to adapt to ongoing transformations, new areas of research are emerging worldwide, encompassing concepts such as Society 5.0, sustainable development, and green transformation. The increased adaptability of societies in these evolving searches is possible only through the training of individuals with the necessary skills. HEIs play a vital role in equipping individuals with the competencies demanded by today's world. These institutions must adjust rapidly to changing conditions, develop innovative educational models, and ensure that students acquire competencies suitable for contemporary requirements. During this process, QA and accreditation efforts play an important role in ensuring the continuous improvement and adaptation of the governance, education, research, and other activities of HEIs to meet current needs. Through QA and accreditation, the academic qualifications of these institutions, stakeholder expectations, graduates' integration into the workforce, and the social impact of institutional activities can be assessed. QA and accreditation processes involve multi-dimensional monitoring and improvement initiatives that must include the participation of students, faculty, administrative staff, and external stakeholders. Understanding the experiences and expectations of stakeholders is essential for HEIs to evaluate and enhance their QA and accreditation processes (Grayson & Grayson, 2024).

Students, who are among the most fundamental stakeholders of HEIs, are expected to play active roles in QA and accreditation activities. Feedback from students on educational activities is of great importance for the development of HEIs. In this context, improving the quality of educational activities of HEIs is only possible if students become an active part of the process. In the European HE Area (e.g., European Network for QA in HE, ENQA, and European Standards and Guidelines, ESG), student participation in QA and accreditation activities has begun to be taken into account to a large extent (Gvaramadze, 2011). Although policymakers and decision-makers accept that students play a critical role in the development of the HE system, the level of active participation in QA and accreditation processes varies from country to country (Patil, 2007). Student participation is a crucial element of QA and accreditation; however, studies in this area are limited, and further research is needed (Bohlens, 2025; Elassy, 2013; Stensaker & Matear, 2025). In other words, future studies should focus on exploring the role of student participation in QA and accreditation and address the integration of feedback into these processes.

The current study closely examines students' opinions, expectations, and recommendations regarding their participation in QA and accreditation processes in HE. It investigates how students perceive quality assurance, the benefits they derive from engaging in these processes, and their expectations related to these initiatives. This research is particularly valuable as it addresses a gap in understanding student involvement in QA within HE. By emphasizing students' views on quality assurance and accreditation, the study offers meaningful insights that can guide policymakers and higher education administrators.

The Research Purpose

This study purposes to reveal the perspectives, expectations, and recommendations of students regarding QA and accreditation processes in which they participate throughout their educational life. In line with the purpose of the study, the following research questions were identified:

1. How do students define QA and accreditation in HE?
2. How do students define their participation in QA and accreditation processes in HE?
3. What advantages do students believe their participation in QA and accreditation processes in HE provides to their educational life?
4. How do students perceive the effect that their participation in QA and accreditation processes in HE has on their relationships with their peers?

5. What recommendations do students have to increase student participation in QA and accreditation processes in HE?

6. What are students' expectations about the impact of their participation in QA and accreditation processes on their professional life?

QA and Accreditation in HE

QA and accreditation mechanisms for HEIs have become an indispensable element in achieving global HE standards (Jafarov, 2024). Ensuring QA of HEIs is of great importance to provide students with effective and high-quality education and training as required by the age (Kayyali, 2023a). QA in HE is implemented to ensure that academic activities carried out within the institution comply with predetermined standards and ensure continuous improvement (Abouammoh, 2025; Okpa et al., 2020). QA for HEIs is a mechanism that should be implemented to gain prestige for the institution, increase student success, and respond to the expectations (Yildiz et al., 2024). Adopting transparent communication and active stakeholder participation in the evaluation and improvement of governance, education, and research activities, QA makes quality processes an integral part of the basic strategy of HEIs (Mazza & Azzali, 2025). Within the scope of quality assurance, it is aimed to determine the aspects that are open to development in the fields of activity of HEIs and to increase their quality through systematically collected stakeholder feedback (surveys, etc.) and periodic evaluations (Jafarov, 2024; Kayyali, 2023a).

The QA mechanism in HE includes internal and external evaluation processes to evaluate, improve, and standardize the performance of institutional activities (governance, education, research, etc.) (Eaton, 2021; Jafarov, 2024; Mazza & Azzali, 2025). To coordinate relevant internal and external QA mechanisms, countries establish independent administrative unit structures (e.g., Turkish Higher Education Quality Council (THEQC) in Türkiye and ENQA and implementation principles [e.g., ESG] in Europe (Özenç, 2024). HEIs monitor their activities in the fields of governance, education-training, research-development, and social contribution by establishing their internal QA mechanisms (e.g., QA commission) following the relevant institution and implementation principles established, and carry out improvement studies on the areas open to development determined according to the monitoring results. As part of external QA, the activities of HEIs are evaluated by independent official institutions (e.g., THEQC) or authorized accreditation institutions, and the strengths and developmental aspects of the institution are revealed.

Accreditation, one of the external QA mechanisms, plays a vital role in ensuring quality and standardization for HEIs (Mulimani & Naikar, 2024). In this respect, accreditation is accepted and widely applied in HE (Kayyali, 2023b). Accreditation involves the systematic evaluation and recognition of an HEI's or academic program's compliance with national and/or international standards by authorized external agencies (Abouammoh, 2025; Iqbal et al., 2024; Jafarov, 2024; Kayyali, 2025; Kumar et al., 2020; Özenç, 2024; Yıldız et al., 2024). Through accreditation, the reliability and competence of the relevant institutions/units are approved and certified (Erdal & Aydın, 2025).

Accreditation has a crucial role in fostering continuous improvement within HEIs through regular evaluations conducted at specific intervals (Jafarov, 2024). The accreditation process provides an external assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of HEIs or academic programs, helping to identify areas that require improvement (Abouammoh, 2025). The primary goal of accreditation is to ensure the quality of HEIs or the programs they offer (Kumar et al., 2020). Accreditation processes ensure that institutions' activities and facilities, such as infrastructure, faculty qualifications, and curriculum relevance, meet established standards (Jafarov, 2024). Accreditation in HE is generally divided into two main categories: "institutional-level accreditation," which evaluates the overall quality and processes of institutions, and "program accreditation," which delves into the educational activities and outcomes of specific academic programs (Kumar et al., 2020). Institutional accreditation is typically conducted by state agencies responsible for overseeing QA in HE nationally (e.g., THEQC in Türkiye), while program accreditation is carried out by authorized accreditation bodies designated by the relevant state agency.

Accreditation increases overall quality by supporting the efforts of HEIs to improve their research, teaching-learning activities, policies, and processes (Kumar et al., 2020). In addition to contributing to the continuous improvement of HEIs, accreditation processes also provide different advantages (Iqbal et al., 2024). Accreditation processes enable HEIs and academic programs to act more transparently

and accountably to their stakeholders (Abouammoh, 2025). Accreditation adds prestige to HEIs and academic programs, contributes to the provision of new financing opportunities, increases student enrollment rates, and reduces student dropout rates (Subbarayalu & Kamalasanan, 2025). The effective implementation of accreditation processes by HEIs contributes to the development and internalization of the quality culture in the institution (Iqbal et al., 2024). The national and international recognition of HEIs, whose compliance with the standards is verified through the accreditation process, increases (Yildiz et al., 2024). HEIs or academic programs whose reliability and recognition are improved by being accredited may be preferred more by qualified academic staff and students (Jafarov, 2024). Student mobility is facilitated and increased in HEIs with accreditation (Jafarov, 2024; Mulimani & Naikar, 2024). With accreditation processes, the acceptability of the diplomas and certificates given to graduates of HEIs or academic programs by other institutions is guaranteed (Mulimani & Naikar, 2024).

Student Participation in QA and Accreditation Processes in HE

The quality of HEIs can be evaluated by considering the levels of satisfaction of various stakeholders, such as faculty members, students, potential employers, sponsoring institutions, and public institutions regarding the institutional activities (Verma, 2007). To effectively assess the quality of these institutions, it is essential to determine the perspectives and expectations of stakeholders about the institution and its activities (Grayson & Grayson, 2024). In this context, stakeholder opinions serve as a crucial feedback mechanism for evaluating the performance of HEIs. This feedback is vital for improving institutional management and services, enhancing customer satisfaction, and elevating quality (Alhamad, 2023; Marrouchi & Haroon, 2025).

Students, who constitute both the most basic input and the most important output of the education system, are the most important stakeholders in QA and accreditation processes carried out to increase the quality of HEIs (Anandakrishnan, 2007; Dawood, 2007; Elassy, 2013; Patil, 2007; Stensaker & Matear, 2025). Students spend time, energy, and money on their HE to support their personal development and achieve their professional goals (Kayyali, 2023a). Throughout their education, students are the main beneficiaries of the education-training and all other facilities (campus, sports, R&D, etc.) offered by HEIs. The experiences of students, who are the users/beneficiaries of HEIs, regarding the processes provide important feedback for the QA and accreditation processes of the institution (Bohlens, 2025). Student feedback is an effective means of evaluating and enhancing the quality of educational and training activities in HEIs (Harrison et al., 2020). In this context, HEIs need to include students in the evaluation and improvement processes of education and training and accept their feedback as an important source (Patil, 2007). Ensuring the participation of students in QA and accreditation processes increases the validity, reliability, and acceptability of the evaluation/improvement studies carried out (Bohlens, 2025; Elassy, 2013; Shakuntala, 2007).

Students' participation in QA and accreditation processes can take different forms (Altingüzgün & Coşgun, 2020). This participation takes place in the form of participation in the internal quality processes of the HEI, where they study, or in external quality processes where other HEIs and educational programs at the national level are evaluated (Altingüzgün & Coşgun, 2020; Stensaker & Matear, 2025). Students' participation in internal QA processes generally takes the form of active participation in teaching and learning, providing feedback on the processes, and participation in QA mechanisms at the institution where improvement decisions are made (Little & Williams, 2010). Within the scope of internal QA, students can make significant contributions to the evaluation processes of the HEI's current opportunities by participating in satisfaction surveys (course evaluation, faculty evaluation, workload evaluation, etc.), internal stakeholder meetings, and feedback mechanisms. In the evaluation of faculty members' performance, student feedback is an effective internal QA mechanism in the educational activities of the HEI (Lan, 2007). Students can play a critical role in directing the development of the internal QA of HEIs by contributing to the planning processes, such as updating educational programs, creating strategic action plans, etc. (Bohlens, 2025). In addition, they can take on a decision-making role regarding the improvement activities to be carried out at the institutional level by taking part as student representatives in decision-making mechanisms such as commissions, committees, etc. (Bohlens, 2025; Leisyte & Westerheijden, 2014). Students can also participate in the preparation of self-assessment reports of the programs they study within the scope of the QA and accreditation processes of the HEI they study in (Altingüzgün & Coşgun, 2020; Bohlens, 2025; Klemenčič, 2015). Students can share information about their institution by meeting with evaluators during the external evaluation

processes of the HEI they are enrolled. Students play a vital role in the operation of the Plan-Do-Check-Act cycles at the institution/program level by participating in the internal QA and accreditation processes of HEIs. Students' participation in external QA processes is realized through accreditation processes in which other HEIs and educational programs at the national level are evaluated, in addition to the HEI where they study. Students can participate in accreditation processes within the scope of external QA by serving as student representatives in accreditation committees or participating in field evaluations as student evaluators (Klemenčič, 2015). Students contribute to the evaluation process of different HEIs and educational programs through external QA, as well as to the institutional studies of the accreditation institutions they work for. Accreditation agencies include students in QA through methods such as student surveys and student representation on advisory boards (Kayyali, 2025). By participating in these studies of accreditation agencies, students contribute to the establishment of accreditation criteria for educational programs (Klemenčič, 2015).

HEIs should enhance student participation to promote sustainable development through QA and accreditation processes. To accomplish this, institutions should offer students new opportunities to participate in the QA and accreditation process (Shakuntala, 2007). To encourage student involvement in these important studies, feedback mechanisms must be continually updated to ensure inclusivity. Methods such as digital platforms and instant participation should be diversified (Bohlens, 2025). Furthermore, students should be made more aware of their role in decision-making processes related to QA and accreditation. Administrators must be genuine in facilitating this participation (Okpa et al., 2020). Additionally, to boost students' active involvement in QA and accreditation, their confidence in the impact of their feedback must be strengthened. They should be able to see the improvements made as a result of their contributions and be informed about the processes involved (Blair & Valdez Noel, 2014; Isaeva et al., 2020).

The Advantages of Student Participation in QA and Accreditation Processes in HE

The participation of students in QA and accreditation processes provides various advantages for HEIs. The most important of these advantages is the improvement of institutional activities (governance, education, etc.). In addition, the commitment of students who participate in QA and accreditation processes to the HEI they study and the educational processes is strengthened (Anandakrishnan, 2007; Bohlens, 2025; Okpa et al., 2020). Students more easily adopt and support the policies, strategies, or improvements they contribute (Okpa et al., 2020). Students who participate in QA and accreditation processes can gain new perspectives on the enrichment of education (Isaeva et al., 2020). Student participation in quality assurance and accreditation processes positively influences their motivation (Bohlens, 2025).

Active participation in the QA and accreditation provides students with gains in the context of personal and professional development (Anandakrishnan, 2007; Bohlens, 2025; Elassy, 2013; Kumar et al., 2020). Students who actively participate in the evaluation and improvement of HE activities gain a sense of responsibility for their educational life and their professional life in the following years (Anandakrishnan, 2007; Okpa et al., 2020). Students who act with the sense of responsibility they gain in the process can better follow the activities of the HEI and notice problems/deficiencies more easily. Students' participation in QA and accreditation activities allows them to examine the problems they identify and develop improvement suggestions for solutions (Okpa et al., 2020). In other words, students who actively participate in QA and accreditation processes gain academic thinking skills such as analytical thinking, critical thinking, and problem-solving by participating in relevant studies (Bohlens, 2025; Elassy, 2013; Uludağ et al., 2021). Students can undertake individual tasks in quality and accreditation processes both at the HEI where they study and outside the institution where they participate as evaluators, and they also serve in various commissions, committees, and teams. Individual or team work in which students are actively involved within the scope of QA and accreditation processes inside and outside the institution allows them to expand their social circle and develop skills such as organizing, communicating, teamwork, and working in collaboration (Banaszak, 2015; Bohlens, 2025; Elassy, 2013; Uludağ et al., 2021). Students' decision-making and initiative-taking competencies are developed through the commission, committee, and team activities they take part in within the scope of QA and accreditation processes (Banaszak, 2015). Active participation in related studies contributes significantly to students gaining leadership competence (Anandakrishnan, 2007; Banaszak, 2015; Elassy, 2013).

Method

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative research design. The phenomenological design was used to determine the opinions, expectations, and recommendations of the students regarding the QA and accreditation processes they participated in. The phenomenological design assumes that there are certain common points in the individuals' perception and interpretation of similar experiences and tries to explain what these commonalities are (Frankel et al., 2012). In the phenomenological design, situations and experiences encountered in daily life but not fully revealed in depth are considered as phenomena (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018).

This study considers "student participation in QA and accreditation processes in HE" a phenomenon. Although QA and accreditation processes in HE have been carried out for many years, student participation in the process is still not at the desired level. The phenomenon under investigation was explored in-depth within the scope of this study.

Participants

The participants consist of 56 students in different academic units who are members of Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University (ÇOMU) SQC in the 2024-2025 Academic Year. Students who are members of the ÇOMU SQC also hold natural membership in the Departmental QA Commissions of their respective faculties. As part of the study, 11 students (7 female, 4 male; 7 undergraduate, 3 associate degree, and 1 graduate) from the ÇOMU SQC agreed to participate in the data collection process voluntarily. This participant profile reflects diversity in both gender and educational level, contributing to the study's comprehensiveness.

ÇOMU was included in the THEQC Institutional Accreditation Program in 2024 and was entitled to receive full institutional accreditation as a result of the evaluation. The 11 SQC members who participated in the study were actively involved in the relevant process conducted within ÇOMU. In addition, 4 participants of the study had previously participated as student evaluators in program accreditation processes carried out within accreditation institutions/agencies. In this context, all participants in the study have experience in participating in QA and accreditation processes in HE through the phenomenological approach.

Data Collection Tool

In phenomenological studies, interviews are the prominent data collection method used to understand the phenomenon under study (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). In this regard, a semi-structured interview form was employed to gather students' opinions, expectations, and recommendations concerning their participation in QA and accreditation processes. The interview form used in the data collection process was developed by the researchers based on a comprehensive literature review. In the first stage of developing the interview form, following a review of the relevant literature, a draft interview form was created by the researchers, which consisted of 11 questions, including 8 interview items and 3 demographic questions (gender, educational level, and student evaluator status). In the second stage, expert opinions were obtained from three faculty members who are experts in QA in HE to ensure the scope and face validity of the draft data collection tool. In line with the expert feedback, questions that were similar in meaning were combined, and the interview form was finalized to consist of 9 questions.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection process was conducted at ÇOMU during the 2024-2025 academic year. Throughout this process, the interview form was shared online with the participants. The data collected from participants voluntarily were examined using an inductive content analysis approach. Content analysis is a research method that aims to create, interpret, and make theoretical inferences regarding the phenomenon subject to the study by analyzing the data collected from the participants with systematic methods (Cohen et al., 2007). In the content analysis process, codes are developed by the researchers; the codes that meet at a common point are combined under certain themes, and inductive inferences are made (Şahin, 2020). The data were analyzed with an inductive approach, and the findings obtained

were interpreted by supporting them with literature. The direct statements of the participants supported the findings, and to protect their confidentiality, the participants were given code names (PS1, etc.).

Validity and Reliability

To increase the credibility and generalizability of the findings in scientific research, the validity and reliability criteria of the study conducted must be met (Yeşil, 2020; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). As part of the qualitative research, the internal validity of the semi-structured interview form was strengthened by seeking feedback and approval from field experts. The external validity of the study was also supported by the inclusion of students' experience in participation in QA and accreditation processes. To ensure data reliability, the process of identifying codes and themes was carefully examined by the researchers using Miles and Huberman's (1994) reliability formula: $\text{Reliability} = \frac{\text{Consensus}}{\text{Consensus} + \text{Disagreement}} \times 100$. The consistency between codes and themes was determined as 95%. In addition, the member checking method was used to ensure the consistency of the study findings. Through participant confirmation, the accuracy of the findings is examined together with the participants (Başkale, 2016). In this context, a second interview was conducted with the participants to support the accuracy and consistency of the obtained findings.

Findings

Student Perspectives on QA and Accreditation Processes in HE

To determine how students define QA and accreditation processes in HE at a conceptual level, the participants were asked, "How do you explain quality and accreditation processes in universities?". The participants' responses were coded and categorized under the overarching theme of "Quality and Accreditation in HE". The categories and codes for the relevant theme are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Categories and codes related to the quality and accreditation in HE

Theme	Category	Code
Quality and Accreditation in HE	Planning/Monitoring	Planning
	Feedback and Participation	Performance Evaluation
		Internal/External Stakeholders
		Survey
		Meeting
	Improvement	Suggestions and Requests
		Education-Training
		Research Development
		Social Contribution
		Accreditation

According to Table 1, the majority of the participants evaluate the QA and accreditation processes in HE as a planning, monitoring, and improvement process based on stakeholder participation to increase the capacity of institutional activity areas (governance, education, research, etc.). Some students' opinions on this issue are as follows:

"I see quality and accreditation processes at universities as an effort to evaluate and develop education and training processes, research, and contributions to society according to certain standards. This includes both internal and external evaluation processes. For example, student satisfaction surveys, accreditation of academic programs, and strategic planning may be included in these studies" (PS1).

"Accreditation and quality studies at universities are systematic processes carried out to enhance the standards of education-training, administrative, research, and social services. These studies include accreditation programs, stakeholder meetings, student satisfaction surveys, academic performance evaluations, and curriculum development processes. They are supported by suggestions and feedback from the stakeholders of the university, namely students, academicians, and administrative staff. They are implemented with a planned and continuous improvement-oriented approach." (PS6).

"Quality-accreditation processes at universities are monitoring studies carried out to increase the quality of education-training (e.g., elective courses and curricula), research, and social responsibility processes. These studies include stakeholder meetings, satisfaction surveys, performance evaluations, and reporting processes." (PS10).

Student Perspectives on Participation in QA and Accreditation Processes in HE

To determine how students conceptually define their participation in QA and accreditation processes in HE, participants were asked: "How would you describe students' participation in quality and accreditation processes within your university?". The participants' responses were coded and categorized under the overarching theme of "Participation". The categories and codes created for the relevant theme are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Categories and codes for the theme of participation

Theme	Category	Code
Participation	User Role	Service User
	Feedback Role	Satisfaction Surveys
		Opinions and Suggestions
		Authority to Represent
	Decision Maker Role	Solution Developer
		Having a Voice
		Evaluator

According to Table 2, all participants described how student participation in QA and accreditation processes in HE is reflected through the roles they assume during the process. Participants defined the 'User Role' as benefiting from the opportunities provided by their HEIs. The 'Feedback Role' involves providing suggestions or opinions aimed at improving various processes. Finally, the 'Decision Maker Role' refers to students having a voice in decision-making processes by participating in mechanisms that address issues and contribute to decisions regarding accreditation. Here are some students' opinions on this subject:

"When it comes to student participation in quality and accreditation processes at universities, we are also involved in the process as developers and decision-makers. For example, we share our thoughts about courses, participate in surveys, or express our opinions in meetings organized by the school. In this way, we contribute to the school, providing ourselves with a better education. Because we, the students, are the ones who directly experience it, and we are the ones who notice what is missing and what is good. We can also act as evaluators in accreditation associations and have a say in the evaluation of the activities of other universities and the granting of accreditation" (PS3).

"Student participation in quality and accreditation processes means that students actively participate in the improvement processes by giving feedback on the education they have benefited from and campus life. This process allows students to express their own needs and expectations. This participation can take place in various ways, such as taking part in quality committees, participating in surveys, making suggestions, taking part in studies aimed at solving problems, and evaluating other programs as student evaluators." (PS5).

"It comes to my mind that students' opinions should be taken into consideration and included in the improvement processes. After all, we use this university, and our opinions are important. I think we should have a say in everything, from the library to the campus toilets. Also, as student evaluators in accreditation, we understand our friends studying at other universities best and can evaluate them through the eyes of students" (PS11).

Advantages of Participation in QA and Accreditation Processes in Educational Life

To determine the advantages of participation in QA and accreditation processes in HE on students' educational life, the participants were asked, "What kind of benefits do you think your participation in quality and accreditation processes has on your educational process (academic life, social life, campus

life, etc.)?". The participants' responses were coded and categorized under the overarching theme of "Educational Life Advantages". The categories and codes created for the relevant theme are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Categories and codes for the theme of the advantages of educational life

Theme	Category	Code
Educational Life Advantages	Academic Life	Problem-Solving Skills Critical Thinking Skills Sense of Responsibility
	Social Life	Communication Skills Meeting New People Participation in Teamwork Socialization

Table 3 highlights that students' participation in quality and accreditation processes provides various advantages to their academic and social life. According to the interview data of the participants, students think that participation in quality and accreditation processes provides them with a sense of responsibility, problem-solving skills, and critical thinking skills in the context of academic life. In addition, students evaluate the social and campus life advantages that participation in quality and accreditation processes provides them with. Students' participation in quality and accreditation processes provides them with advantages such as developing their communication skills, meeting new people, socializing, and participating in teamwork in the context of social life. Some students' opinions on this subject are as follows:

"Participating in quality and accreditation processes made my academic life more productive and improved my problem-solving and critical thinking skills. For example, thanks to my suggestions for improving university services, I was able to benefit from campus facilities more effectively. In addition, I had the opportunity to develop my teamwork and communication skills by participating in quality studies. These processes also gave me a sense of responsibility and enabled me to be more actively involved in campus life." (PS7).

"The place where a student spends most of their time is inevitably the campus. The responsibility of making the living space livable falls on us. Therefore, taking responsibility may come first. Taking responsibility, evaluating the teaching techniques applied to us, criticizing the social life opportunities offered, and discussing how it could be better contributed to developing new ways of thinking, and constantly seeking improvement. I had the chance to meet students from different universities and departments. This expanded my social circle and strengthened my relationships." (PS9).

Effects of Participation in QA and Accreditation Processes on Peer Relations

To determine the effects of participation in QA and accreditation processes in HE on peer relations, the participants were asked, "To what extent did your active participation in quality and accreditation processes affect your relations with your peers?". The participants' responses were coded and categorized under the overarching theme of "Peer Relations". The categories and codes created for the relevant theme are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Categories and codes for the theme of peer relations

Theme	Category	Code
Peer Relations	Identity	Representative Reliable
	Behavior	Collaboration Strengthening Relationships

According to the interview data, participation in QA and accreditation processes in HE had various effects on peer relations among students. When Table 4 was examined, Participation in QA and accreditation

processes in HE affected peer relations among students in terms of gaining identity and behavior. Some of the participants noted that participation in the relevant studies made them more reliable individuals among their peers and contributed to gaining a representative identity. In addition, almost all of the participants expressed that participation in quality and accreditation processes strengthened peer relations and increased interaction and cooperation among students. Some students' opinions on this subject are as follows:

"My active participation in these processes helped me understand the perspectives of my peers and communicate with them more healthily. I assumed the role of a bridge by conveying the solutions we found for our common problems to our teachers and school administration. As a result of this situation, when some of the problems were solved, my friends started to trust me more." (PS7).

"My active participation in quality and accreditation processes allowed me to establish closer and more meaningful relationships with my peers. I cooperated and exchanged ideas with them. I took on the role of a representative and evaluator and conveyed these to the relevant parties. I learned to develop mutual understanding and increased the sense of trust and solidarity." (PS11).

Recommendations for Increasing Student Participation

To determine recommendations for increasing student participation in QA and accreditation processes in HE, the participants were asked, "What should be done to increase the students' participation in quality and accreditation processes in the university?". The participants' responses were coded and categorized under the overarching theme of "Recommendations". The categories and codes created for the relevant theme are in Table 5.

Table 5

Categories and codes for the theme of recommendations

Theme	Category	Code
Recommendations	Awareness Raising Activity	Seminars
		Training
		Events
		Guidance
	Reflecting Improvements	Concrete Improvement Examples
		Realized Student Requests
		Increasing Visibility
	Feedback Channel	Student Workshop
		Individual Meetings
	Incentive	Rewarding

According to Table 5, the participants made recommendations in the categories of "Awareness Raising Activities", "Reflecting Improvements", "Feedback Channel", and "Incentive" regarding what needs to be done to increase student participation in QA in HE. The majority of the students recommend that awareness-raising activities should be carried out to convey the importance of quality and accreditation to students, to increase student participation in QA and accreditation processes in HE. In addition to awareness-raising activities, students recommend that concrete examples of improvements implemented within QA and accreditation processes should be directly conveyed to them to encourage student participation in relevant studies. Some students suggested that recognizing and rewarding those who participate in QA and accreditation processes could increase students' participation. To increase student participation in quality, in addition to existing feedback mechanisms (meetings, surveys, etc.), the inclusion of more interactive methods, such as student workshops, was an important recommendation. Some students' opinions on this issue are as follows:

"First of all, training should be organized to explain the importance of quality and accreditation processes to students. In addition, student representatives should be more actively involved in the processes, regular feedback should be received, and platforms where students can share their opinions should be increased. Reward systems can also increase motivation." (PS1).

"Students can be made aware by making short introductions in orientation programs or at the beginning of classes. The results of the feedback received can be shared regularly to show that students' ideas are taken into consideration. To increase participation, students can be included in the process not only with surveys but also with more interactive methods. For example, open forums, idea marathons, or student workshops can be organized at certain intervals." (PS4).

"To increase students' participation in quality processes, awareness should first be created about how important these processes are. University administration can develop programs and reward systems that encourage student participation. In addition, informative seminars about quality processes can be organized, and students can be guided in terms of being involved in the processes" (PS8).

Contributions of Participation in QA and Accreditation Processes in HE to Professional Life

To determine students' opinions and expectations about how participation in QA and accreditation processes in HE may provide their professional life, the participants were asked, "What kind of benefits do you think your participation in quality and accreditation processes will provide to you in your future professional life?". The participants' responses were coded and categorized under the overarching theme of "Contribution to Professional Life". The categories and codes created for the relevant theme are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Categories and codes for the theme of contribution to professional life

Theme	Category	Code
Contribution to Professional Life	Thinking Skills	Questioning
		Problem-Solving Skills
	Personal/Management Skills	Sense of Responsibility
		Business/Organizational Ability
		Leadership
		Teamwork
		Openness to Communication

According to Table 6, the participants think that their participation in QA and accreditation processes in HE will make positive contributions to their professional life. The participants think that the questioning and problem-solving skills they acquired during their participation in QA and accreditation processes in HE will also positively affect their professional life. In addition, the participants think that the experiences they gained by participating in the relevant studies provided them with some personal and managerial skills, such as a sense of responsibility, business and organizational skills, leadership behavior, teamwork, and effective communication for their future professional life. Some students' opinions on this subject are as follows:

"Taking part in quality processes will give me process management, organizational skills, attention to detail, and the habit of questioning the existing in my professional life. At the same time, I believe that I will be able to work more harmoniously with my colleagues thanks to my teamwork and communication skills." (PS2)

"Participating in quality processes has greatly contributed to the development of my leadership skills. While increasing my organizational and problem-solving competencies, I have become more conscious of working with a team, making decisions, and assuming responsibility. Thanks to the communication skills I have gained, I have strengthened my ability to bring different ideas together, provide direction, and work in harmony with my teammates towards common goals. This experience has provided me with an important infrastructure to be more effective in leadership roles in the future." (PS6).

"I think taking part in these processes helps me to be a more organized and responsible person in the future. Different perspectives will be needed to solve problems in business life, and the things I learned here will guide me in this regard." (PS9).

Discussion, Conclusion, and Suggestions

This study purposes to explore students' opinions, expectations, and recommendations regarding participation in QA and accreditation processes. According to the findings of the first research question, the students' definition of QA and accreditation processes in HE was similar to the definitions in the literature (Abouammoh, 2025; Jafarov, 2024; Kayyali, 2023a; Kumar et al., 2020; Mazza & Azzali, 2025; Okpa et al., 2020). The findings related to second research question indicate that the students participated in QA and accreditation processes in HE with the "User", "Feedback," and "Decision Maker" role behaviors they displayed throughout the process. The research results are similar to the literature (Bohlens, 2025; Kayyali, 2023a) in the context of the "User Role". Consistent with past studies (Harrison et al., 2020; Lan, 2007; Little & Williams, 2010; Patil, 2007), the findings under "Feedback Role" are similar to the literature. Also, the research findings also align with the literature (Bohlens, 2025; Kayyali, 2025; Klemenčič, 2015; Leisyte & Westerheijden, 2014) on students' "Decision-Maker Role". The findings related to the third research question indicate that participation in QA and accreditation provides various advantages to their academic and social life in the educational life. The research results support the literature (Anandakrishnan, 2007; Bohlens, 2025; Elassy, 2013; Okpa et al., 2020; Uludağ et al., 2021). The findings related to the fourth research question note that participation in QA and accreditation processes in HE affects peer relations among students in terms of gaining identity and behavior. Participation in relevant studies makes students more reliable among their peers and contributes to gaining a representative identity. The findings were similar to the literature (Banaszak, 2015; Bohlens, 2025; Elassy, 2013; Leisyte & Westerheijden, 2014; Uludağ et al., 2021). The findings related to the fifth research question show that students provided constructive recommendations to policymakers regarding increasing participation in QA and accreditation processes in HE. The findings support the literature (Blair & Valdez Noel, 2014; Bohlens, 2025; Isaeva et al., 2020; Okpa et al., 2020). Alongside similar literature recommendations, students' proposal to 'recognize and reward participants' may enhance process effectiveness by boosting engagement. According to the findings of the sixth research question, the students' participation in relevant studies makes positive contributions to their professional life. The research results are similar to the literature (Anandakrishnan, 2007; Banaszak, 2015; Bohlens, 2025; Elassy, 2013; Okpa et al., 2020; Uludağ et al., 2021). Participation in QA studies extends beyond academics, enhancing students' professional competencies.

The study participants are limited to student representatives who are members of the ÇOMU SQC. The study was designed qualitatively to explore students' opinions, expectations, and recommendations. Future studies could expand the participant group to include students from various institutions. Additionally, new research could employ mixed studies to better understand students' perspectives on QA and accreditation. Practitioners and policymakers can develop new strategies to enhance participation in relevant studies by considering the insights gathered in this study. New activities should be planned to raise student awareness. For example, events such as "Quality Days," which aim to promote awareness and help students internalize the quality culture, can make a significant contribution to this process. Also, more effort is needed to inform students about improvements made based on their feedback. To boost student participation, rewards, interactive feedback channels, etc., should be integrated into the process. In addition, students' participation in accreditation processes can be enhanced by encouraging them to attend evaluator training programs organized by independent accreditation agencies. Mechanisms can be developed to support the active participation of student representatives in self-evaluation processes within academic departments. The frequency of meetings where higher education leaders and academic unit administrators exchange ideas with students can also be increased.

Limitations

This study was conducted at ÇOMU SQC in the 2024-2025 Academic Year.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Ethical approval was provided by the ÇOMU Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee with the decision dated September 12, 2024, and numbered 13/14.

Disclosure Statements

Contribution rate statement of the researchers:

Both authors contributed equally to this study.

Conflict of interest statement:

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

CRedit Authorship Contribution Statement

Gökhan Çalışkan, İlknur Maya: Conceptualization, methodology, data collection, data analysis, writing – review & editing.

References

- Abouammoh, B. (2025). Accreditation and quality assurance in traditional and non-traditional education: Challenges, perspectives, and future directions. M. Kayyali (Ed.), *Navigating Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Global Higher Education* (pp.75-100). IGI Global Scientific Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-6915-9.ch004>
- Alhamad, B. (2023). Quality assurance breaking down barriers with external stakeholders: An investigation of current and potential roles of stakeholders. S. T. Saeed and K. H. Sherwani (Eds.), *Quality assurance in higher education in the Middle East: Practices and perspectives* (pp.19-48). Emerald Publishing Limited. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S2055-364120230000054002>
- Altıngüzgün, H. G. K., & Coşgun, D. M. (2020). Peyzaj mimarlığı öğretim programlarının kalite ve akreditasyon süreçlerine öğrenci katılımı. *PEYZAJ, Special Issue*, 1-9.
- Anandakrishnan, M. (2007). Imperatives of student involvement in quality enhancement. V. S. Prasad and J. Patil (Eds.), *International perspectives on student participation in quality enhancement* (pp.1-3). National Assessment and Accreditation Council.
- Banaszak, B. (2015). Student engagement in higher education policy making: A view from the Polish representative in the Bologna Follow-Up Group. M. Klemenčič, S. Bergan and R. Primožič (Eds.), *Student engagement in Europe: Society, higher education and student governance* (pp.283-290). Council of Europe.
- Başkale, H. (2016). Nitel araştırmalarda geçerlik, güvenirlik ve örneklem büyüklüğünün belirlenmesi. *Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi Hemşirelik Fakültesi Elektronik Dergisi*, 9(1), 23-28.
- Blair, E. & Valdez Noel, K. (2014). Improving higher education practice through student evaluation systems: Is the student voice being heard?. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 39(7), 879–94. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2013.875984>
- Bohlens, C. (2025). Enhancing Quality Assurance Through Active Student Participation in Accreditation Processes. M. Kayyali (Ed.), *Navigating Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Global Higher Education* (pp.247-272). IGI Global Scientific Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-6915-9.ch010>
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research Methods in Education* (6th. ed.). Routledge.
- Dawood, S. S. (2007). Student participation in quality enhancement-tools for student empowerment. V. S. Prasad and J. Patil (Eds.), *International perspectives on student participation in quality enhancement* (pp.134-139). National Assessment and Accreditation Council.
- Eaton, J. S. (2021). The role of quality assurance and the values of higher education. H. V. Land, A. Corcoran and D.C. Iancu (Eds.), *The Promise of Higher Education: Essays in Honour of 70 Years of IAU* (pp.181-186), Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-67245-4_28
- Elassy, N. (2013). A model of student involvement in the quality assurance system at institutional level. *Quality Assurance in Education*, 21(2), 162-198. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09684881311310692>
- Erdal, S., & Aydın, H. (2025). Üniversite öğrencilerinin akreditasyon algılarının ölçülmesi ve okur-yazarlık eğitiminin planlanması. *Kalite ve Strateji Yönetimi Dergisi*, 5(1), 1-32. <https://doi.org/10.56682/ksydergi.1445058>

- Grayson, K., & Grayson, J. P. (2024). University quality, British league tables and student stakeholders. *Quality in Higher Education*, 30(2), 257-284. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13538322.2023.2235732>
- Gvaramadze, I. (2011). Student engagement in the Scottish quality enhancement framework. *Quality in Higher Education*, 17(1), 19-36. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13538322.2011.554310>
- Harrison, R., Meyer, L., Rawstorne, P., Razee, H., Chitkara, U., Mears, S., & Balasooriya, C. (2020). Evaluating and enhancing quality in higher education teaching practice: A meta-review. *Studies in Higher Education*, 47(1), 80-96. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2020.1730315>
- Iqbal, S., Taib, C. A. B., & Razalli, M. R. (2024). The effect of accreditation on higher education performance through quality culture mediation: the perceptions of administrative and quality managers. *The TQM Journal*, 36(2), 572-592. <https://doi.org/10.1108/TQM-11-2022-0322>
- Isaeva, R., Eisenschmidt, E., Vanari, K., & Kumpas-Lenk, K. (2020). Students' views on dialogue: improving student engagement in the quality assurance process, *Quality in Higher Education*, 26(1), 80-97. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13538322.2020.1729307>
- Jafarov, S. (2024). Accreditation and quality assurance in world-leading universities. *International Journal of Current Science Research and Review*, 7(12), 9357-9365. <https://doi.org/10.47191/ijcsrr/V7-i12-77>
- Kayyali, M. (2023a). An overview of quality assurance in higher education: Concepts and frameworks. *International Journal of Management, Sciences, Innovation, and Technology*, 4(2), 01-04.
- Kayyali, M. (2023b). Importance of rankings in academia. *International Journal of Management, Sciences, Innovation, and Technology*, 4(1), 01- 03.
- Kayyali, M. (2025). The Evolution of Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Models, Systems, and Frameworks. M. Kayyali (Ed.), *Navigating Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Global Higher Education* (pp.1-26). IGI Global Scientific Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-6915-9.ch001>
- Klemenčič, M. (2015). What is student agency? An ontological exploration in the context of research on student engagement. M. Klemenčič, S. Bergan and R. Primožič (Eds.), *Student engagement in Europe: Society, higher education and student governance* (pp.11-30). Council of Europe.
- Kumar, P., Shukla, B., & Passey, D. (2020). Impact of accreditation on quality and excellence of higher education institutions. *Revista Investigacion Operacional*, 41(2), 151-167.
- Lan, M. T. Q. (2007). Student evaluation at Vietnam National University-Hanoi. V. S. Prasad and J. Patil (Eds.), *International perspectives on student participation in quality enhancement* (pp.67-71), National Assessment and Accreditation Council.
- Leisyte, L., & Westerheijden, D. F. (2014). Stakeholders and quality assurance in higher education. H. Eggins (Ed.), *Drivers and barriers to achieving quality in higher education* (pp.83-97). SensePublishers.
- Little, B., & Williams, R. (2010). Students' roles in maintaining quality and in enhancing learning: is there a tension?. *Quality in Higher Education*, 16(2), 115-127. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13538322.2010.485740>
- Marrouchi, M., & Haroon, H. (2025). Factors Influencing Quality Assurance and Accreditation Systems in Higher Education. M. Kayyali (Ed.), *Navigating Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Global Higher Education* (pp.375-392). IGI Global Scientific Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-6915-9.ch015>
- Mazza, T., & Azzali, S. (2025). Stakeholders' involvement in economics and management programs quality assurance. *Quality Assurance in Education*, 33(1), 47-61. <https://doi.org/10.1108/QAE-11-2023-0193>
- Miles, M. B. & Huberman, M. A. (1994). *An expanded sourcebook qualitative data analysis*. Sage Pub.
- Mulimani, M., & Naikar, S. (2024). The role and significance of accreditation in higher education institutions: A study. B. Holland and K. Sinha (Eds.), *Multidisciplinary approach to information*

- technology in library and information science* (pp.210-230). IGI Global Scientific Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-2841-5.ch012>
- Okpa, O. E., Odigwe, F. N., Emeribe, K. V., & Obule, E. V. (2020). Students' participation in quality assurance management and tertiary institutions effectiveness in Nigeria. *International Education Studies*, 13(12), 41-47. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ies.v13n12p41>
- Özenç, Y. Y. (2024). Yükseköğretimde kalite. *Journal of University Research*, 7(4), 498-509. <https://doi.org/10.32329/uad.1538784>
- Patil, J. (2007). Mapping student participation in India and Asia-Pacific Quality Network. Student Participation In Quality Enhancement. V. S. Prasad and J. Patil (Eds.), *International perspectives on student participation in quality enhancement* (pp.72-81), National Assessment and Accreditation Council.
- Shakuntala, K. (2007). Student participation in quality enhancement-students' perspective. V. S. Prasad and J. Patil (Eds.), *International perspectives on student participation in quality enhancement* (pp.34-41). National Assessment and Accreditation Council.
- Stensaker, B., & Matear, S. (2025). Student involvement in quality assurance: Perspectives and practices towards persistent partnerships. *Quality in Higher Education*, 31(1), 8-22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13538322.2024.2346358>
- Subbarayalu, A. V., & Kamalasanan, A. (2025). Navigating Academic Program Accreditation: Key Insights and Strategies for Achieving Excellence in Saudi Universities. M. Kayyali (Ed.), *Navigating Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Global Higher Education* (pp. 27-48). IGI Global Scientific Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-6915-9.ch002>
- Şahin, Ç. (2020). Verilerin analizi. R. Y. Kincal, (Ed.), *Bilimsel araştırma yöntemleri* (pp.125-182). Nobel Akademik Yayıncılık.
- Uludağ, G., Bora, M., & Çatal, S. (2021). Türk yükseköğretiminde kalite güvencesi sistemi ve öğrenci katılımının önemi. *Kalite ve Strateji Yönetimi Dergisi*, 1(1), 91-111.
- Verma, Y. (2007). Teachers perceptions about ensuring students participation in enhancing quality in higher education. V. S. Prasad and J. Patil (Eds.), *International perspectives on student participation in quality enhancement* (pp.19-33). National Assessment and Accreditation Council.
- Yeşil, R. (2020). Nicel ve nitel araştırma yöntemleri. R. Y. Kincal (Ed.), *Bilimsel araştırma yöntemleri* (pp. 51-98). Nobel Akademik Yayıncılık.
- Yıldırım A., & Şimşek H. (2018). *Sosyal bilimlerde nitel araştırma yöntemleri*. Seçkin Yayıncılık.
- Yıldız, A., Çetiner, E. A., Çetiner, Y., & Çalışkan, A. (2024). Eğitim yönetiminde kalite güvencesi ve akreditasyon süreçleri. *International QMX Journal*, 3(2), 634-639. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10725647>