

Good Practice Examples in Quality Assurance Activities: A Qualitative Research on the Times Higher Education Ranking Universities¹

Nida Bayhan / Ph.D. Student 

Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal University, Institute of Graduate Education, Department of Horticulture
snidaaksoy@gmail.com

İsa Bayhan* / Asst. Prof. Dr. 

Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal University, Tourism Faculty, Department of Tourism Guidance
isabayhan@ibu.edu.tr

*Corresponding Author

Abstract

Higher education is a critical stage of education that contributes to societal progress by enhancing individuals' knowledge and skills. This study was conducted to investigate, evaluate, and contribute to the literature on good practices related to quality assurance activities of the top 50 universities listed in The Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings. Within this scope, qualitative research methods were employed to analyze the data, statements, and activities on the websites of the top 50 universities in THE rankings. The obtained data were categorized and classified according to the content analysis method, grouped into categories based on their relevance to the research problem, and descriptively expressed as themes. The study revealed that the universities under investigation have established coordination units, particularly in the areas of

community service, sustainability, and online learning; organized student- and community-oriented events and training programs; and provided diverse working environments to enhance 21st-century skills among all stakeholders through the formation of teams and collaborative activities. Regarding equity, diversity, and inclusion, it was identified that these universities have developed specific mechanisms based on cultural and social values to support their diverse staff and student populations. The findings were discussed providing recommendations for higher education institutions.

Keywords: Quality, THE Ranking System, Higher Education and Quality.

JEL Codes: I23, I29

¹This article is derived from a study originally presented at the IX. ASC 2025 Spring Congress (May 15–18, 2025), hosted by İstanbul Gedik University in İstanbul, Türkiye, and has been substantially revised to meet the academic and editorial standards required for publication.

Citation: Bayhan, N., & Bayhan, İ. (2025). Good Practice Examples in Quality Assurance Activities: A Qualitative Research on the Times Higher Education Ranking Universities. *Researches on Multidisciplinary Approaches (Romaya Journal)*, 5(SI-IXASC2025): 21-31.

1. Introduction

Higher education institutions are regarded as the central actors in social, economic, political, legal, and societal development, as well as in enhancing living standards at the international level. Universities, which undertake the most critical responsibilities on the path to becoming knowledge-based societies, strive to achieve their strategic objectives in education, research, and community service activities, along with cultivating qualified individuals (Günay & Günay, 2017; Özdağoğlu et al., 2020). While countries expect universities to contribute to the enhancement of national wealth on a global scale, they perceive these institutions as both scientific and social investments. Quality assurance plays an effective role in monitoring this investment for societal development and scientific progress, as well as in implementing improvement efforts based on feedback (Koyuncuoğlu, 2020). In this context, tracking the qualified work and good practices of universities operating at national and international levels and establishing collaborations contribute to disseminating scientific and social development across different regions and geographies.

Quality assurance in higher education is typically framed within a systematic and planned approach. The need for robust mechanisms to evaluate educational outcomes and achievements has been acknowledged in academic studies, and the challenges related to measuring transformations in student competencies have been widely discussed. It has been determined that effective quality assurance evaluations require access to fundamental and reliable data (Nabaho & Turyasingura, 2019). In this regard, Chen (2016) advocates systematic activities aligned with institutional objectives, emphasizing the importance of a structured approach to quality assurance. The systematic perspective on quality assurance in higher education, along with both internal and external mechanisms such as accreditation and self-assessment, has been identified as fundamental components of quality assurance frameworks (Hamutoğlu, 2020; Koyuncuoğlu, 2020; Nasim et al., 2019). The development of quality systems in the education sector has increasingly been associated with accelerating globalization and rising competition among higher education institutions (Nasim et al., 2019). Quality assurance efforts in higher education contribute to raising academic standards, producing qualified graduates, improving employment profiles, and reshaping community service processes. In this context, investigating and evaluating good practice examples regarding the quality assurance criteria of the universities included in the sample will support the identification of issues that can be considered with the universities' goals, objectives, plans, and processes.

1.1. The Concept of Quality and Quality Processes in Higher Education

When defining the concept of quality in higher education, it is essential to consider that educational processes possess a heterogeneous and abstract structure, necessitating a unique definition. Unlike quality in businesses, where the output is a final product, the quality of services provided by educational institutions must be determined (Hamutoğlu et al., 2020). Consequently, the conceptual aspects of quality processes in higher education have been addressed along with their distinctive features and outcomes. Elken and Stensaker (2018) emphasize the continuity between improvement and accountability within quality assurance discussions, while Sarrico et al. (2010) highlight the need to bridge the gap between quality assessment and performance evaluation. Researchers frequently underscore that a comprehensive understanding of these processes is crucial for enhancing quality assurance practices (Camilleri, 2021; Macheridis and Paulsson, 2021). Similarly, students' perspectives play a vital role in shaping discourse on quality. Jungblut et al. (2015) reveal that students perceive quality through multiple lenses, such as transformation and development, indicating that the relationship between educational experiences and perceived quality should not be overlooked.

The development and proliferation of quality practices in higher education have been nourished by the evolution of quality culture across different bodies of literature. Analyzing the relevant conceptual foundations and historical processes reveals that quality and standardization trace back to the Code of Hammurabi and the measurements performed by Aztec inspectors in ancient Egypt and Central America. During the Seljuk and Ottoman periods, various institutions set standards to ensure product quality, enacting legal regulations for quality assurance (Ergülen & Atcı, 2020). By the mid-18th and 19th centuries, systems for modern industry began to emerge, bringing advancements in productivity, quality, and system approaches. W. Edwards Deming (1900–1993) introduced the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle, providing a systematic approach to quality processes (Anastasiadou, 2015). Joseph Moses Juran conveyed the "quality trilogy" to businesses seeking to enhance global competitiveness and deliver high-quality products and services (Gülner, 2021). The core idea of the quality trilogy revolves around the notion that effective quality management is built upon three fundamental processes: quality planning, quality control, and quality improvement (Juran, 2005). Philip B. Crosby, a contemporary of Deming and Juran, defined quality as conformance to requirements (Güzel & Kurşunel, 2015). Kaoru Ishikawa implemented "quality circles" in 1962, in-

volving small voluntary groups responsible for investigating, solving, and reporting the root causes of workplace problems while emphasizing teamwork, manager-employee relationships, and volunteerism (Demirci, 2017). The quality concept began to take root in the 1960s with the “quality assurance” approach, evolving into “quality management” during the 1980s.

Higher education institutions, in addition to their primary mission of generating and disseminating scientific knowledge, have assumed responsibilities such as developing activities to meet employers’ and students’ expectations. Universities are expected to produce qualified graduates equipped with various skills to enhance their employment prospects during their educational journey (Özden, 2015). The competitive nature of the global world has prompted universities to recruit more successful students, employ high-potential faculty members, and foster diverse collaborations (Uslu et al., 2020). Studies on quality processes in higher education emphasize the necessity of cooperation and communication between higher education institutions, regional organizations, and stakeholders to enhance educational, research, and societal interaction activities (Dulupçu & Sungur, 2018). The role of leadership in promoting quality culture is another recurring theme in research. According to Chineze and Olele (2012), transformative quality is achieved through effective leadership that aligns institutional vision with service delivery. This concept is supported by Vaganova et al. (2020), who propose a model for managing educational activities that highlights collaborative efforts among stakeholders to meet educational needs. The integration of stakeholder perspectives, including students, educators, and employers, is critical for developing a holistic understanding of quality in higher education (Kinash et al., 2017). Moreover, the evolution of quality assessment methodologies to address contemporary challenges is strongly advocated in literature. Nenadál (2015) endorses the EFQM Excellence Model as a comprehensive tool for quality assessment, while Tanik and Şen (2023) emphasize the importance of aligning educational programs with the Bologna Process to enhance quality assurance. The integration of data-driven approaches, as discussed by Xiao-Bing (2018), highlights the need to leverage technology to improve quality monitoring and evaluation practices in higher education. Research on quality in higher education underscores the role of systematic approaches, stakeholder perspectives, and evolving methodologies in quality activities. Emphasizing institutional leadership, student participation in processes, and data-driven practices highlights the necessity of developing and disseminating good practices within a comprehensive and

adaptable quality assurance framework capable of responding to the dynamic nature of higher education.

Quality processes in the context of higher education encompass a number of elements, including the personal qualities of graduates, the learning process, student feedback, self-assessment and peer assessment processes, and a multifaceted approach including students’ teaching portfolios, the learning environment, learning processes, equity in education and student outcomes (Dicker et al., 2019; Leiber, 2019; Harrison et al., 2022; Sarrico, 2022; Özenç, 2024). In light of this, it is imperative that educational institutions adopt a holistic approach to improve the quality of teaching and learning (Barbato et al., 2022). Institutions are responsible for maintaining academic freedom, social contribution activities and institutional vision (Tight, 2020). However, a systematic review of both their theoretical research and practical applications in quality assurance activities will ensure quality (Eaton, 2021). In order to effectively attain quality assurance standards in higher education, institutions must ensure the sufficiency of their physical infrastructure, technological capacities, innovation potential, and human resources. Moreover, the continuous revision and enhancement of educational program curricula is imperative to meet evolving academic and societal demands (Asiyai, 2022).

1.2. Scope and Examples of Good Practices in Higher Education

Good practices in higher education encompass efforts to enhance the quality of education, improve student engagement, and create an environment conducive to learning. Research identifies key good practices such as technology integration, innovative teaching methods, faculty development, and the promotion of student engagement as critical components contributing to effective educational processes (Drummond et al., 1998; Fernandez et al., 2009; Chen & Yeager, 2011; Menon & Suresh, 2022; Aydoğdu, 2023).

One of the most significant aspects of good practices in higher education is the judicious use of technology to enhance learning experiences. Studies indicate that incorporating multimedia, educational games, and innovative pedagogical strategies can significantly influence self-directed and autonomous learning among students (Menon & Suresh, 2022). Furthermore, technology can facilitate collaborative peer learning, which enhances communication skills, critical thinking, and intrinsic motivation among students (Altınay-Gazi & Altınay-Aksal, 2017). Such integration not only enriches the learning environ-

ment but also prepares students for the demands of the modern workforce.

Faculty development is a cornerstone of good practices in higher education. Institutions that invest in the professional development of faculty members tend to witness improvements in teaching quality and student outcomes. Effective faculty development programs that focus on innovative teaching approaches and collaborative practices can enhance educators' confidence and competence (St-Amand et al., 2022). Moreover, fostering a culture of continuous improvement through regular feedback and evaluation of teaching practices is crucial for maintaining high educational standards (Chen & Yeager, 2011). This emphasis on faculty development benefits not only educators but also positively impacts students' learning experiences.

Assessment practices represent another critical area where good practices can be applied. The literature emphasizes the need for diverse and flexible assessment methods that cater to the evolving needs of students. Allowing students to choose the format of their assessments can increase their engagement and ownership of the learning process (Irwin & Hepplestone, 2012). Additionally, competency-based assessments are increasingly adopted to ensure that students acquire the necessary skills and knowledge relevant to their fields (Bergsmann et al., 2015). Promoting student engagement is another focal point of good practices in higher education. Student engagement and inclusivity are vital for creating a dynamic and responsive educational environment. Involving students in learning processes can lead to improved academic performance and satisfaction (Coates, 2005). Many researchers highlight the importance of active learning, collaboration, and responsiveness to student feedback as good practices in higher education. Institutions that prioritize student engagement often implement strategies that encourage participation and foster a sense of belonging among students, which is essential for their overall success. Overall, good practices in higher education not only enhance the quality of education but also contribute to the overall success and sustainability of higher education institutions.

2. Method

This study, which aims to reveal the good practices of the top-ranked universities in the Times Higher Education (THE) ranking in academic, social, and cultural fields, was conducted using qualitative research methods. Qualitative research methods enable the successful addressing of research problems in comprehensive and multidimensional study topics and facilitate the interpretation of original data. To obtain data, the study utilized the content analysis method, which can be used both qualitatively and quantitatively in studies systematically examining written documents (Krippendorff, 2004: 21-27; White & Marsh, 2006: 22 et al.). In content analysis, data obtained from various sources such as books, forum writings, emails, or websites are classified according to the research problem, and themes and conceptual categories are derived. Descriptive content analysis was preferred in the study. In this method, data related to a research topic are examined and organized, and general descriptive features and trends are revealed (Ültay et al., 2021: 190). Within the scope of the research, the websites, quality policies, and examples of good practices included on the websites of the top 50 universities in the Times Higher Education (THE) ranking in 2023 were examined. After classifying and organizing the obtained data, the categories on which the content focused were analyzed according to the European Commission's "European Education Area" focus topics (European Commission European Education Area, 2024) and the Higher Education Quality Council's criteria, including micro-credentials and online learning, equality, diversity and inclusion, sustainability, and community service. Relevant themes were explained with examples of good practices.

3. Findings

Table 1 presents data on the countries, regions, female-to-male ratios, and the average number of students per faculty member of the top 50 universities in THE 2023 ranking.

Table 1. Some Average Data of the Top 50 Universities in THE 2023 Ranking

Region and Countries	Universities in the Sample	Number of Universities	Number of Students per Faculty Member (Average)
Europe: Germany, Belgium, United Kingdom, Sweden, Switzerland	U1-U3A-U10-U11B-U22-U29-U30-U33U35-U37-U41-U42-U43-U47-U49	15	17.0
North America: USA, Canada	U2-U3B-U5-U6-U7-U8-U9-U11A-U13-U14-U15-U18-U20-U21-U23-U24-U25-U26A-U26B-U28-U32-U38-U40-U46-U48- U50	26	11.2

Good Practice Examples in Quality Assurance Activities: A Qualitative Research on the Times Higher Education Ranking Universities

Asia: China, Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore	U16-U17-U19-U31-U36-U39-U45	7	14.9
Oceania: Australia	U34-U44	2	33.2

Source: THE World University Rankings 2023.

According to Table 1, it is observed that gender parity is largely maintained in Europe, North America, and Asia. When analyzed by region, the average number of students per faculty member is 11.2 in North America, 14.9 in Asia, 17.0 in Europe, and 33.2 in Oceania. These data suggest that North American institutions provide a more favorable student-to-faculty ratio compared to other regions, which may have implications for the quality of student-teacher interactions and academic support.

3.1. Micro-Credentials and Online Learning

Micro-credentials are the achievements acquired at the end of an assessment and evaluation process

following a short course or training module (TYYÇ, 2024). Activities aimed at providing micro-credentials are mostly carried out through online or distance education methods, and certificates or digital diplomas can be awarded at the end of the course. Therefore, these activities are largely associated with digital platforms. The educational topics for micro-credentials that universities aim to provide to individuals are presented in Table 2. This section excludes online undergraduate and graduate programs, focusing solely on prominent educational topics offered by universities.

Table 2. Prominent Educational Topics in Micro-Credential Courses at Universities

Topics	Universities with Micro-Credential Courses	f	(%)
Data and Computer Science/ Mathematics	U1-U2-U3A-U3B-U5-U6-U7-U8-U10-U11B-U13-U14-U15-U16-U17-U18-U19-U20-U23-U24-U25-U26B-U28-U29-U32-U33-U34-U35-U36-U37-U38-U40-U41-U45-U47-U48-U49-U50	38	%76
Health and Medicine	U1-U2-U3B-U5-U6-U7-U8-U9-U10-U11A-U11B-U13-U14-U15-U16-U17-U19-U20-U21-U22-U23-U24-U25-U26A-U29-U31-U32-U33-U34-U35-U39-U40-U42-U44-U45-U46-U49	37	%74
Natural/Space/Engineering and Basic Sciences	U1-U2-U3A-U3B-U5-U6-U7-U11A-U11B-U14-U15-U16-U19-U20-U22-U23-U25-U26A-U28-U30-U31-U32-U33-U35-U36-U38-U39-U40-U41-U42-U43-U46	32	%64
Technology/Programming/Artificial Intelligence	U1-U2-U5-U7-U8-U10-U11B-U14-U15-U17-U20-U21-U22-U23-U24-U25-U26A-U26B-U28-U29-U30-U34-U36-U37-U38-U39-U40-U41-U42-U45-U50	31	%62
History/Art/Architecture/Design	U1-U2-U3A-U3B-U7-U8-U14-U15-U16-U17-U19-U21-U22-U23-U24-U25-U26A-U29-U31-U32-U33-U34-U35-U39-U40-U41-U42-U45-U47-U48	30	%60
Business and Management	U1-U2-U3B-U5-U7-U8-U9-U14-U15-U17-U18-U20-U21-U22-U23-U25-U26A-U29-U32-U33-U35-U36-U37-U40-U43-U45-U48-U50	28	%56
Environment/Energy Sustainability	U1-U2-U3A-U5-U8-U10-U11B-U15-U16-U17-U19-U20-U21-U22-U23-U24-U25-U29-U30-U32-U34-U39-U40-U41-U42-U47-U48	27	%54
Economy/Finance/Accounting	U1-U2-U3A-U5-U6-U10-U11B-U13-U14-U15-U16-U17-U18-U20-U21-U24-U25-U26A-U30-U31-U36-U37-U40-U47-U48-U50	26	%52
Cultural Studies/Languages/ Religions	U1-U2-U3A-U5-U9-U11B-U14-U15-U16-U17-U19-U21-U22-U23-U24-U26A-U26B-U29-U34-U35-U38-U42-U43-U45-U47	25	%50
Educational Science/Social Sciences	U1-U2-U3B-U8-U10-U14-U15-U16-U21-U22-U23-U25-U26A-U29-U31-U32-U34-U38-U39-U40-U46-U47-U48-U50	24	%48

Communication and Leadership	U1-U2-U5-U8-U11A-U13-U14-U15-U18-U19-U20-U22-U23-U24-U-26A-U26B-U30-U31-U34-U37-U38-U40-U48	23	%46
Law/Diplomacy/Politics	U1-U2-U7-U9-U11B-U14-U16-U19-U20-U21-U22-U24-U25-U26A-U29-U34-U35-U37-U39-U42	20	%40
Literature/Creative Writing/Music	U1-U2-U8-U17-U19-U21-U24-U26A-U32-U33-U39-U40-U42-U45-U47	15	%30
Psychology and Counseling	U1-U2-U3A-U9-U16-U24-U35-U40-U42-U44-U45	11	%22
Philosophy	U1-U2-U5-U7-U16-U19-U26A-U42	8	%16
Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion	U2-U11B-U15-U20-U31-U37	6	%12
Critical and Analytical Thinking	U2-U3A-U5-U43-U44	5	%10

The selected universities carry out their online courses through certain distance education platforms, which include EdX, Coursera, Kadenze, Canvas, GetSmarter, Emeritus, ClassCentral, and FutureLearn. These platforms allow university stakeholders to effectively, efficiently, and systematically improve their micro-credentials. Moreover, many universities grant additional credits to students completing these courses, which are reflected on their transcripts.

A review of the educational topics offered by universities shows that data and computer science courses dominate with a 76% rate, followed by health and medicine (74%), natural sciences and engineering (64%), technology and artificial intelligence (62%), and art and design (60%). The provision of social science courses alongside technological and scientific topics highlights universities' commitment to enhancing 21st-century skills among their stakeholders. It is observed that universities offer online education programs aimed at enhancing the diverse knowledge and skills of their stakeholders, enabling them to address global challenges in a changing world and gain competence in digital transformation. Among these programs, courses in mathematics, data science, and computer science are the most frequently offered, accounting for 76% of the total. These are followed by health and medical courses, which make up 74% of the offers. This indicates a focus on addressing fundamental societal issues (e.g., vaccine development, nutrition, pandemics, patient care, etc.). Natural and space sciences, engineering, and basic sciences rank as the next most frequently offered courses, with a 64% share, while technology, programming, and artificial intelligence-related courses are provided by universities at a rate of 62%.

These are followed by courses in history, art, architecture, and design (60%), business and management (56%), environment, sustainability, and energy (54%), and economics, finance, and accounting (52%).

An analysis of the courses offered by universities reveals that, alongside technology, economics, basic sciences, engineering, and sustainability, they also aim to equip their stakeholders with competencies in social sciences. In this regard, it is noteworthy that universities provide educational activities enabling stakeholders to gain cultural enrichment, with 50% of courses focusing on cultural studies, languages, and religions. The inclusion of topics such as educational and social sciences, communication and leadership, law, diplomacy and politics, literature, creative writing and music, psychology and counseling, philosophy, equality, diversity and inclusion, and critical and analytical thinking contributes to enhancing and developing students' competencies within the framework of 21st-century skills. The diversity of topics offered on online learning platforms is considered a good practice example for this category.

3.2. Sustainability

Within the scope of the research, it has been observed that the projects and studies conducted by universities primarily focus on environment, food/agriculture, and energy, often integrated with education and technology. Universities carry out these activities through relevant offices, coordination centers, or related units, adopting a multidisciplinary and collaborative approach. They have also established action plans and strategies, ensuring that these activities are open to stakeholder par-

Good Practice Examples in Quality Assurance Activities: A Qualitative Research on the Times Higher Education Ranking Universities

ticipation, planned, systematic, measurable, and improvable. Among the sustainability initiatives in environment, food/agriculture, and energy, universities aim to achieve zero carbon emissions, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, design energy-efficient buildings, promote conscious water usage, encourage the use of public transportation, implement sustainable agriculture/food practices, and introduce award-winning applications in construction and other university operations.

Environment: Within the sustainability theme, environmental initiatives stand out. The following examples are provided:

U21: A water purification system using reverse osmosis and ultrafiltration has been developed to meet freshwater needs in impoverished countries and produce mineralized water from gray water on naval vessels. This system has also been implemented internally, reducing water and recycling costs.

U23: Goats are used for lawn maintenance on campus, providing organic fertilizer and eliminating the need for chemical fertilizers. A local wildflower garden has also been created to support pollinators such as bees and butterflies.

U32: A forest fire monitoring program has been launched in collaboration with three universities. Thermal cameras monitor forests in 12 regions, enabling immediate response to fires. Local communities are also informed and provided access to the monitoring map.

Food and agriculture: Another sub-theme within sustainability is food/agriculture practices. The following examples are highlighted:

U23: Students, academic staff, and administrative personnel jointly operate a farm in the university's botanical gardens. Students develop leadership skills, receive hands-on training, and gain volunteer and research opportunities. The farm also produces approximately \$100,000 worth of food annually for campus dining halls.

U46: The university engages in agricultural activities to grow vegetables and fruits for student dormitories, retain financial resources within the institution, provide employment for students and technicians, and minimize its carbon footprint. This supports students' academic work, utilizes available land, and contributes to sustainability efforts.

Energy: Energy-related initiatives are another key aspect of sustainability. The following examples are provided:

U23: The campus features bicycle rental areas, and public transportation consists of hybrid buses running on 30% biodiesel fuel.

U34: In collaboration with the public sector, the university has implemented a "neighborhood batteries" project, creating an energy network using solar panels and energy-storing batteries for small businesses.

U41: The university meets 97% of its energy needs through hydroelectric power and 3% through photovoltaic energy, sourced from local electricity producers. LED lighting is used for all outdoor lighting, achieving a 55% reduction in energy consumption.

Education and technology: Within the sustainability theme, the education and technology sub-theme highlights stakeholder engagement and societal contribution. The following examples illustrate this:

U11: The university gathers real-time feedback through an online platform on what actions should be taken regarding sustainability issues, incorporating these into its action plans. This is regarded as a good practice example of university-stakeholder collaboration.

U30: The university utilizes student project and thesis outcomes to develop initiatives for villages in Africa facing energy, water, and food challenges. This enables villagers to improve agricultural practices, create employment, and generate income.

3.3. Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

An examination of universities within this context reveals that coordination centers, offices, or commissions have been established to systematically implement equality, diversity, and inclusion activities. Below are some examples of good practices carried out by these units:

Individuals with special needs and disadvantaged groups: As a sub-theme of equality, diversity, and inclusion, the following example focuses on individuals with special needs or those from disadvantaged groups:

U50: A specially designed map has been created to facilitate campus accessibility for individuals with disabilities. Captioning options are available in digital environments for the hearing impaired, and specialized technological tools are provided for the visually impaired.

Education and project support: Another sub-theme of equality, diversity, and inclusion is education and project support. The following examples highlight this:

U3B: The university has launched a scholarship and employment program for doctoral students, providing financial and career support. It also offers mentorship, courses, and workshops. 77 percent of the students who benefited from this program are currently working as academics.

U7: Grants ranging from 1,000 TL to 10,000 TL are given to students who propose activities on the themes of equality and inclusivity chosen by the university. These events aim to explore complex social issues, examine how multiple aspects of identity influence interactions on and off campus, and provide opportunities to learn about others' experiences and perspectives.

U8: The university's Educational Opportunity Program provides low-income and underrepresented students with the guidance and resources necessary for success. These include academic and career counselling, access to basic needs, academic achievement awards, annual bicycle memberships for transportation, financial planning support, and a graduation gown lending initiative.

Combating discrimination based on race, language, religion, and gender: Another sub-theme of equality, diversity, and inclusion involves initiatives to combat discrimination based on race, language, religion, and gender. The following examples illustrate this:

U3B: The university's Center for Equity and Leadership hosts programs supporting Asian-American, Native American, and Black students, as well as a women's community program.

U11B: Students are permitted to miss classes or exams for religious holidays without academic penalty, provided they notify instructors at the beginning of the semester. Students and instructors can then arrange alternative times for missed coursework or exams.

U43: The university appoints an administrator to provide counselling to non-academic female staff with administrative roles, ensuring equal opportunities in career and education. This administrator also helps women balance work and family life, adjust working hours, and offers training on combating workplace harassment and ensuring job security.

Parenting, childcare, and elder care: Another sub-theme of equality, diversity, and inclusion focuses on parenting, childcare, and elder care. The following example highlights this:

U11: Recognizing that some students and staff may have young children, elderly or sick relatives to care for, or may be engaged in professional sports or dealing with serious illnesses, the university provides various forms of support. These include parental leave, insurance coverage, childcare assistance, and flexible working conditions. For employees aged 50 and above, the university offers mentorship programs addressing health, personal issues, legal and financial support, and retirement planning.

3.4. Community Service

Higher education institutions engage in activities that integrate individuals into society by instilling respect for societal norms, values, and culture, while also equipping them to adapt to changing global conditions, address global challenges, and acquire the knowledge and experience necessary to compete. These efforts contribute to societal development.

An examination of universities within the scope of this research reveals that community service processes

are approached through research centers, various offices, and community engagement initiatives. Furthermore, activities in sustainability, equality, diversity, inclusion, and online education categories are largely associated with community service.

Health, social, cultural, and volunteering support:

As a sub-theme of community service, initiatives focusing on health, social, cultural, and volunteering support have emerged. The following examples illustrate this:

U9: The university has established various collaborations outside its campus to promote learning and benefit society. Through these projects, students can conduct field research on a voluntary basis. For example, students in forestry programs are taken on tours of the country's forested areas. Public health program students collaborate with designated hospitals to research community and environmental health issues. Students in environmental studies travel to different countries to investigate air quality, urban transportation, and water-related issues. Similarly, international program students engage with ambassadors in their home countries to collaborate on economic and financial projects.

U31: A university research center identified a correlation between local media coverage of suicide incidents and subsequent suicide rates, prompting a campaign to discuss the media's pivotal role in influencing suicide rates. The campaign provides journalists with recommendations on their social responsibility and how to report such incidents more appropriately. Monitoring the campaign's outcomes revealed a reduction in regional suicide rates by over 30%.

U44: The university launched a program to combat the yellow fever mosquito, a threat to public health. As part of this initiative, a naturally occurring bacterium found in the eggs of certain environmentally and human-safe insects was introduced to infect yellow fever mosquitoes. This approach has significantly reduced the transmission of diseases such as yellow fever and dengue.

Education, project, and technology support: Another sub-theme of community service involves initiatives focused on education, project, and technology support. The following examples highlight this:

U3: The university has designed a mobile-based game to help young students improve their English skills. The application offers daily fun activities to develop the four language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Additionally, a mobile-based English learning set is available for adults seeking to enhance their English proficiency.

U3B: Four programs have been established to help students develop their knowledge and experience while contributing to society. These programs include full-time public service experiences that integrate academic learning with field practice; courses

in education, engineering, environment, health, and human rights; specialized programs integrating collaboration and leadership into public services; and opportunities to participate in post-graduation public institution scholarships, workshops, and activities.

U3B: The university's digital infrastructure and technology unit provides students with access to necessary software and digital design tools. This unit also offers support throughout the installation and technical training processes and provides computers to students who lack them.

U11: Through vocational training programs, the university prepares young people for professional and working life, contributing to the development of skilled personnel who meet the demands of the job market. Practical training is provided in 15 different professional fields, and successful graduates can apply for job postings at the university.

U14: A reward mechanism has been established to encourage student innovation and entrepreneurship. Final-year students whose technology-based commercial projects with societal and social impact are approved receive a \$100,000 award and an annual salary.

4. Results and Discussion

This research, conducted to examine the good practices in quality assurance activities of universities ranked highly in the Times Higher Education rankings, reveals that these institutions have undertaken a wide range of initiatives to prepare their students, graduates, academic and administrative staff, and national and global citizens for new global conditions. These initiatives aim to equip individuals with new skills, enhance their talents, and foster adaptability. Universities have established coordination centers or offices to ensure the systematic implementation of their initiatives and activities, facilitate stakeholder engagement, and integrate feedback into their quality systems. Campaigns, events, programs, and community activities are planned, implemented, and shared with the public in collaboration with these units. In addition to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), universities also focus on developing skills in social sciences, life sciences, arts, design, architecture, history, and culture.

Digitalization in higher education has made it easier for individuals of all age groups to participate in educational activities. This has led to changes in both the profile of learners and educational processes. Students from different age groups now expect high-quality, equitable services from universities, as they are more connected to social media, adept with technological tools, and actively engaged in career development (Fernandez et al., 2009; Taşkıran, 2017, et al.). Efforts towards digital transforma-

tion processes in higher education have a long historical background on a global scale. However, the Covid-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on higher education institutions worldwide and has led to a radical transformation of traditional education models. The extraordinary conditions created by the pandemic have left higher education institutions facing a serious test; in this context, the digitalization process has come to the fore as a critical element for the sustainability of education (Babaoğlu and Kulaç, 2021). Universities have made significant progress towards digitalization in an effort to integrate online and hybrid education models. The restrictions and social distancing requirements that emerged during the Covid-19 pandemic have resulted in the interruption of face-to-face education, making it necessary to rapidly strengthen digital infrastructures and make widespread use of online learning platforms. Educational institutions have begun to make intensive use of digital tools and distance education technologies in order to prevent disruptions in students' learning processes. In this context, the restructuring of digitalization strategies in higher education institutions has become essential, and it has been observed that the digital transformation processes, which were relatively slow in the previous period, have gained momentum. This challenging process has enabled digitalization to go beyond being just an alternative approach in higher education and become an integral and indispensable component of the system (Özek and Sincer, 2024). In this context, the universities in the sample have digitalized their educational processes to equip students, graduates, professionals, and the broader community with various competencies and skills. Video content, podcasts, mobile applications, games, and online education platforms are among the most frequently used digital tools. The flexibility offered by these tools has not only benefited students but also enabled professionals and the public to participate in educational activities.

Sustainability in higher education involves maintaining activities at local, regional, or global levels while minimizing problems related to the environment, nature, economy, society, and public health. This is achieved through education, research and development, and collaboration (Bergsmann et al., 2015; Bilgili & Topal, 2021; Aydoğdu, 2023, et al.). Menon and Suresh (2021), who conducted one of the most comprehensive studies on sustainability in higher education in recent times, identified ten factors that make sustainability in higher education possible. These are; integration of the curriculum with sustainability courses, pedagogical approach, skills and competencies of the instructor, collaborations, research, sustainability of leadership, media, organizational commitment, accreditation processes and government policies. Most of the universities examined implement various practices for many of these

factors. Universities have taken responsibility in this area and are encouraging their stakeholders to do the same. Research centers, programs, and institutes work alongside sustainability offices to address challenges both in their regions and globally, adopting a solution-oriented approach.

The creation of campus culture and the fight against global challenges have aligned higher education with the principle of inclusivity. Universities have recognized the diverse needs of their stakeholders and have developed learning environments that consider these differences. Factors such as race, language, religion, gender, and age, as well as educational background, family life, special circumstances, and financial resources, have been considered to foster an inclusive campus culture. Initiatives by the institutions in the sample are largely driven by the needs of students and society, with a focus on student-centered approaches, diversification of learning resources for qualified graduate competencies, and the establishment of national and international development goals in sustainability and community service. These efforts are closely linked to quality assurance processes in higher education.

In the context of the research, it can be stated that the findings related to micro-credentials in the selected universities are particularly associated with online learning activities. Universities conduct their online courses through distance education platforms such as EdX and Coursera. Among these courses, the highest proportion (76%) is in mathematics/data and computer science, while the lowest proportion (10%) is in critical and analytical thinking. Additionally, a wide variety of topics is offered across different fields such as education, social sciences, law, technology, medicine, engineering, and literature. Regarding sustainability, it is observed that universities focus more on areas such as environment, food/agriculture, and energy. Projects and studies in these areas include strategies that are open to stakeholder participation, systematic, and improvable. Coordination centers/offices have been established for equality, diversity, and inclusion activities. Various initiatives are in place for individuals with special needs and disadvantaged groups, while also addressing efforts to combat discrimination based on race, language, religion, and gender, as well as activities related to parenting, childcare, and elder care.

According to the Higher Education Quality Council (YÖKAK) Status Report (2023), similar initiatives are observed in Turkish higher education institutions. However, a key area for improvement is the lack of implementation of the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle, particularly in community service activities. In this regard, it is essential for activities and events to be managed by dedicated units, offices, or centers to close the PDCA cycle effectively. Additionally, integrating processes with digital platforms can ensu-

re successful planning, monitoring, and evaluation of quality assurance processes. Initiatives aimed at developing micro-credentials through distance education platforms and offering open-access courses to the public are known to contribute to both the quality of graduates and the development of an informed society. These efforts will enable systematic feedback collection for improving educational activities and achieving desired graduate competencies. In this context, it would be beneficial for higher education institutions in Turkey and other countries to identify regional, environmental, and national needs and incorporate them into their action plans. This can be achieved by creating more multidisciplinary working environments and workshops addressing global challenges, leveraging digital tools for global integration and competitiveness, and increasing online course offerings for micro-credentials. Future studies could explore other criteria recognized in higher education quality assurance, compare the outcomes of top-ranked universities in different ranking systems, and examine good practices of locally accredited universities at regional and national levels.

References

- Altınay-Gazi, Z., & Altınay-Aksal, F. (2017). Technology as mediation tool for improving teaching profession in higher education practices. *EURASIA Journal of Mathematics, Science and Technology Education*, 13 (3), 803-813. <https://doi.org/10.12973/eurasia.2017.00644a>
- Altunoğlu, A. (2020). A discussion on the applicability of inclusivity in higher education. *OPUS International Journal of Society Researches*, 16(27), 672-699. <https://doi.org/10.26466/opus.755015>
- Anastasiadou, S. D. (2015). The roadmaps of total quality management in the Greek education system according to Deming, Juran and Crosby in light of the EFQM model. *Procedia Economics and Finance*, 33, 562-572. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2212-5671\(15\)01738-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2212-5671(15)01738-4)
- Asiyai, R. I. (2022). Best practices for quality assurance in higher education: implications for educational administration. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 25(5), 843-854. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2019.1710569>
- Aydoğdu, M. (2023). Quality assurance system: Good practices at Trakya University. *Journal of Quality and Strategy Management*, 3(1), 47-60. <https://doi.org/10.56682/ksydergi.1243209>
- Babaoğlu, C., & Kulaç, O. (2021). Salgın döneminde dijitalleşme politikaları ve yükseköğretim sistemine yansımalar. *Eskişehir Osmangazi Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 22(2), 417-425. <https://doi.org/10.17494/ogusbd.1040772>
- Barbato, G., Bugaj, J., Campbell, D. F., Cerbino, R., Ciesielski, P., Feliks-Długosz, A., ... & Pausits, A. (2022). Performance indicators in higher education quality management of learning and teaching: lessons from a benchmarking exercise of six European universities. *Quality in Higher Education*, 28(1), 82-105. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13538322.2021.1951456>
- Bergsmann, E., Schultes, M. T., Winter, P., Schober, B., & Spiel, C. (2015). Evaluation of competence-based teaching in higher education: From theory to practice. *Evaluation and program planning*, 52, 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2015.03.001>
- Bilgili, M. Y., & Topal, A. (2021). The role and importance of the Talloires Declaration in establishing sustainable higher education institutions. *Journal of Higher Education and Science*, 11(2), 417-424. <https://doi.org/10.5961/jhes.2021.462>
- Camilleri, M. A. (2021). Using the balanced scorecard as a perfor-

Good Practice Examples in Quality Assurance Activities: A Qualitative Research on the Times Higher Education Ranking Universities

- mance management tool in higher education. *Management in Education*, 35(1), 10-21. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0892020620921412>
- Chen, Q., & Yeager, J. L. (2011). Comparative study of faculty evaluation of teaching practice between Chinese and US institutions of higher education. *Frontiers of Education in China*, 6 (2), 200-226. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11516-011-0129-z>
- Chen, Y. (2016). Theoretical research of high quality teaching for higher education. 6th International Conference on Electronic, Mechanical, Information and Management (EMIM 2016 April), 1321-1324. <https://doi.org/10.2991/emim-16.2016.269>
- Chineze, U. and Olele, C. O. (2011). Academic accountability, quality and assessment of higher education in Nigeria. *Makerere Journal of Higher Education*, 3(1), 1-23. <https://doi.org/10.4314/majohe.v3i2.1>
- Coates, H. (2005). The value of student engagement for higher education quality assurance. *Quality in higher education*, 11(1), 25-36. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13538320500074915>
- Dicker, R., Garcia, M., Kelly, A., & Mulrooney, H. (2019). What does 'quality' in higher education mean? Perceptions of staff, students and employers. *Studies in Higher Education*, 44(8), 1425-1441. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2018.1445987>
- Drummond, I., Nixon, I. and Wiltshire, J. (1998). Personal transferable skills in higher education: the problems of implementing good practice. *Quality Assurance in Education*, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 19-27. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09684889810200359>
- Dulupçu, M. A., & Sungur, O. (2018). Mission differentiation of universities: Rethinking regional development. *Journal of Higher Education*, 7, 11-16.
- Eaton, J. S. (2021). The role of quality assurance and the values of higher education. *The Promise of Higher Education: Essays in Honour of 70 Years of IAU*, 181-186. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-67245-4_28
- Elken, M. and Stensaker, B. (2018). Conceptualising 'quality work' in higher education. *Quality in Higher Education*, 24(3), 189-202. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13538322.2018.1554782>
- Ergülen, A., & Atci, F. (2020). Total quality, environment, and zero waste management: Approaches, gains, and criticisms. *Çukurova University Journal of the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences*, 24(2), 299-328.
- European Commission, European Education Area. Retrieved June 1, 2024, from <https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics>
- Fernandez, V., Simo, P., & Sallan, J. M. (2009). Podcasting: A new technological tool to facilitate good practice in higher education. *Computers & Education*, 53(2), 385-392. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2009.02.014>
- Gülner, Ü. (2021). The name of modern management: Total quality management. *Selçuk University Journal of Social and Technical Research*, 19, 62-74.
- Günay, D., & Günay, A. (2017). Historical development and current state of higher education in Turkey. *Journal of Higher Education*, 7(3), 156-178. <https://doi.org/10.2399/yod.17.024>
- Güzel, F., & Kuşunel, F. (2015). Quality costs and data quality. *Journal of Social and Economic Research*, 15(29), 282-301. <https://doi.org/10.30976/susead.302199>
- Hamutoğlu, N. B., Ünveren-Bilgiç, E. N., & Elmas, M. (2020). Quality processes in higher education: A comparative analysis of countries based on the Human Development Index reports. *Journal of Higher Education*, 10(1), 112-124. <https://doi.org/10.2399/yod.19.521343>
- Harrison, R., Meyer, L., Rawstorne, P., Razee, H., Chitkara, U., Meers, S., & Balasooriya, C. (2022). 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>
- Higher Education Quality Council (YÖKAK-Council of Higher Education Quality Assurance-YÖKAK). (2023). Higher Education Quality Council Status Report. Retrieved May 1, 2025, from https://www.yokak.gov.tr/documents/StatusReports/Durum_Raporu_2023.pdf
- Irwin, B., & Hepplestone, S. (2012). Examining increased flexibility in assessment formats. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 37(7), 773-785. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2011.573842>
- Jiang, X. (2018, June). Teaching quality monitoring of higher education based on data mining. *Proceedings of the 2018 International Conference on Sports, Arts, Education and Management Engineering (SAEME 2018)*, 498-505. <https://doi.org/10.2991/saeme-18.2018.93>
- Jungblut, J., Vukasovic, M., and Stensaker, B. (2015). Student perspectives on quality in higher education. *European Journal of Higher Education*, 5(2), 157-180. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568235.2014.998693>
- Juran, J. M. (2005). The quality trilogy. Joseph M. Juran: critical evaluations in business and management, 19, 54.
- Kinash, S., McGillivray, L., and Crane, L. (2017). Do university students, alumni, educators and employers link assessment and graduate employability?. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 37(2), 301-315. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2017.1370439>
- Koyuncuoğlu, Ö. (2020). Quality culture in higher education. *International Journal of Disciplines Economics & Administrative Sciences Studies*, 6(18), 348-355.
- Krippendorff, K. (2004). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology*. Sage Publications.
- Leiber, T. (2019). A general theory of learning and teaching and a related comprehensive set of performance indicators for higher education institutions. *Quality in Higher Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13538322.2019.1594030>
- Macheridis, N., & Paulsson, A. (2021). Tracing accountability in higher education. *Research in education*, 110(1), 78-97. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0034523721993143>
- Menon, S., & Suresh, M. (2021). Modelling the enablers of sustainability in higher education institutions. *Journal of Modelling in Management. Erken görünüm*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JM2-07-2019-0169>
- Menon, S., & Suresh, M. (2022). Enablers of technology agility in higher education. *The International Journal of Information and Learning Technology*, 39(2), 166-196. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ijilt-07-2021-0107>
- Nabaho, L. and Turyasingura, W. (2019). An exploration of the 'African (union commission's) perspective' of quality and quality assurance in higher education: Latent voices in the african quality rating mechanism (AQRM). *Tuning Journal for Higher Education*, 6(2), 73-95. [https://doi.org/10.18543/tjhe-6\(2\)-2019pp73-95](https://doi.org/10.18543/tjhe-6(2)-2019pp73-95)
- Nasim, K., Sikander, A. and Tian, X. (2019). Twenty years of research on total quality management in Higher Education: A systematic literature review. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 74(1), 75-97. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hequ.12227>
- Nenadál, J. (2015). Comprehensive quality assessment of Czech higher education institutions. *International Journal of Quality and Service Sciences*, 7(2/3), 138-151. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ijqss-03-2015-0037>
- Özdağoğlu, G., Damar, M., Özdağoğlu, A., Damar, H. T., & Bilik, Ö. (2020). Quality studies in higher education from the 1980s to the present: A bibliometric perspective on a global scale. *Kastamonu Education Journal*, 28(1), 482-493. <https://doi.org/10.24106/kef-dergi.3684>
- Özden, M. C. (2015). Objectives and activities of career centers within the framework of university regulations. *Black Sea Journal of Social Sciences*, 7(12), 146-170.
- Özek, B. Y., & Sincer, S. (2024). Yükseköğretimde Dijital Dönüşüm: Çevrimiçi ve Hibrit Uygulamaların Geleneksel Eğitim Sistemine Entegrasyonu. *Korkut Ata Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, (14), 1170-1193. <https://doi.org/10.51531/korkutataturkiyat.1426337>
- Özenç, Y. Y. (2024). Yükseköğretimde Kalite. *Journal of University Research*, 7(4), 498-509. <https://doi.org/10.32329/uad.1538784>
- Sarrico, C. S., Rosa, M. J., Teixeira, P. N., and Cardoso, M. F. (2010). Assessing quality and evaluating performance in higher education.

on: Worlds apart or complementary views?. *Minerva: A Review of Science, Learning and Policy*, 48, 35-54. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11024-010-9142-2>

Sarrico, C. S. (2022). Quality management, performance measurement and indicators in higher education institutions: between burden, inspiration and innovation. *Quality in Higher Education*, 28(1), 11-28. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13538322.2021.1951445>

St-Amand, J., Rasmy, A., Nabil, A., & Courdi, C. (2022). Improving the effectiveness of teacher assessment in higher education: A case study of professors' perceptions in Morocco. *Discover Education*, 1 (21), 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44217-022-00021-y>

Tanik, M. and Şen, A. (2023). An evaluation of the program objectives and outcomes of the business administration departments at fifteen Turkish universities and their compliance with the bologna process. *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies*, 38(3), 58-74. <https://doi.org/10.9734/ajess/2023/v38i3828>

Taşkıran, A. (2017). Higher education in the digital age. *Journal of Open Education Practices and Research*, 3(1), 96–109.

The Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2023. Retrieved June 1, 2024, from <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/2023/world-ranking>

Tight, M. (2020). Research into quality assurance and quality management in higher education. In *Theory and Method in Higher Education Research* (Vol. 6, pp. 185-202). Emerald Publishing Limited. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S2056-375220200000006012>

Turkish Higher Education Qualifications Framework (TYYÇ) Dictionary. Retrieved June 1, 2024, from <https://www.tyc.gov.tr/sozluk/mikro-yeterlilik-micro-credential-i89.html>

Ültay, E., Akyurt, H., & Ültay, N. (2021). Descriptive content analysis in social sciences. *IBAD Journal of Social Sciences*, 10, 188–201. <https://doi.org/10.21733/ibad.871703>

Uslu, B., Çalikoğlu, A., Seggie, F. N. ve Seggie, S. H. (2020). Evaluating the criteria of TUBITAK entrepreneurial and innovative university index in terms of the prominent operations of the entrepreneurial university. *Yükseköğretim Dergisi*, 10(1), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.2399/yod.19.011>

Vaganova, O., Gilyazova, O., Gileva, A., Yarygina, N., and Bekirova, E. (2020). Quality management of educational activities in higher education. *Revista Amazonia Investiga*, 9(28), 74-82. <https://doi.org/10.34069/ai/2020.28.04.9>

White, M.D., & Marsh, E.E. (2006). Content analysis: A flexible methodology. *Library Trends* 55(1), 22-45 doi: 10.1353/lib.2006.0053