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Original Article

Examination of the Quality Assurance System and Accreditation Certifications of Higher Education Institutions: The Case of Faculty of Sports Sciences and School of Physical Education and Sports

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What is already known on this topic?

- *It is well established that higher education institutions implement quality assurance processes across multiple dimensions, including strategic planning, student satisfaction, the quality of teaching and learning, and the professional development of academic staff.*
- *Faculties of Sports Sciences and Schools of Physical Education and Sports are supported through both internal evaluation mechanisms and external review systems.*
- *Departments of Sports Sciences are known to be subject to evaluation particularly in terms of practice-oriented education, curriculum alignment, and graduate competencies.*
- *Within the framework of the quality assurance system, educational and instructional activities are evaluated by national and international external reviewers, and certification is granted in accordance with the established criteria.*

Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine the quality assurance system operations of Faculties of Sports Sciences and Schools of Physical Education and Sports within higher education institutions, as well as the certification processes obtained from various independent organizations. The research population consists of 208 universities in Türkiye, while the sample group includes 90 Faculties of Sports Sciences and 12 Schools of Physical Education and Sports. The quality assurance management systems of universities have been analyzed, including university quality reports, efforts to establish standards in educational processes, accreditation certificates obtained from independent organizations, and quality certifications within the scope of quality management systems. The services provided by faculties and schools have been monitored by quality commissions, which oversee workflow processes and the operational content of the quality management system. This research was conducted using the case study method, supported by qualitative research techniques such as the analysis of written documents and archival records, as well as the examination of exploratory information documents.

In conclusion, it has been determined that the implementation processes of quality assurance and management systems in higher education institutions are shared transparently with the public in accordance with the principle of transparency. It was identified that 20 Faculties of Sports Sciences have been accredited by Sports Sciences Accreditation Board (SPORAK), while one School and one Faculty have obtained ISO 9001:2015 and ISO 10002:2018 certifications. Additionally, one school has received Agency for Quality Assurance international accreditation, and one Faculty of Sports Sciences has adopted the ERQM (European Foundation for Quality Management) Model. It has been observed that universities and faculties aim to provide a high-quality and measurable education service by ensuring that their vision, mission, goals, and strategic plans are in place, along with step-by-step development and improvement processes. Communication channels with prospective and active students, including websites, student information systems, and personnel information system integrations, have been effectively utilized. Quality assurance systems and accreditation processes in higher education not only enhance the academic performance of institutions but also contribute to their societal impact.

Keywords: Accreditation, certification, higher education, quality management system, sports sciences

Introduction

The twenty-first century enables the construction of systems that record, measure, develop, and ensure the sustainability of production and innovation in line with scientific and technological advancements that affect society, organizations, and individuals.

Institutions have begun to reference certain standards to interpret measurable, quantitative data, take actions, and strive for zero defects in production or service.

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What this study adds to this topic?

- *It provides data aimed at evaluating the practices of higher education institutions delivering education and training in the field of Sports Sciences within the framework of quality assurance system standards.*
- *It enables a comparison between the practical implementation of quality assurance systems in higher education and their underlying theoretical framework.*
- *It contributes to the limited body of literature on quality and accreditation in sports education.*
- *Emphasizing the significance of conducting quality assurance system studies in the field of Sports Sciences within higher education, this research aims to identify institutions accredited by national and international independent bodies and to serve as a guiding framework for other institutions seeking certification.*

Competition and benchmarking policies, advancements in information technologies, similarities, differences, and current situation analyses are now being examined transparently and shared with the public. With globalization, best practice examples from around the world are being used as references, and efforts to sustain these practices in sector-specific areas continue. This rapid change in the production and service sectors has also shifted the focus from a production-oriented approach to one centered on customer satisfaction by altering consumer and client demands and needs. This transformation has led to the emergence of new businesses, new products and services, different markets, and various professions in the employment sector.

Within the context of global transformation, this process of change has not remained confined to the service and production sectors; it has also directly affected education systems—particularly higher education institutions—which assume the responsibility of cultivating qualified human capital. Shifting market structures, the emergence of new professional fields, and an increasingly competitive environment have necessitated the restructuring of universities beyond their traditional roles as institutions that generate and disseminate knowledge and respond to societal needs. Instead, universities are now required to operate as quality-oriented, accountable, and sustainable systems aligned with contemporary institutional and global standards.

In this context, higher education institutions have increasingly drawn upon quality management approaches prevalent in the broader sector, adopting an educational model grounded in student, graduate, and stakeholder satisfaction, measurable outcomes, and a commitment to continuous improvement. Quality in education has thus evolved beyond the notion of academic achievement alone and has become a central imperative of higher education—one that enhances graduate employability, strengthens societal contribution, and fosters international competitiveness.

Under the influence of innovation, technological advancement, intensified competition, and knowledge-based transformation, higher education institutions have developed various quality standards to ensure the attainment of expected learning outcomes. In this process, they have introduced significant regulatory frameworks and institutional practices aimed at effectively implementing these standards, embedding them within organizational culture, and operationalizing robust monitoring and control mechanisms. For this reason, the quality assurance processes of Faculties of Sports Sciences and Schools of Physical Education and Sports—which educate qualified professionals in response to the human resource demands of public and private sector organizations planning and delivering sports services—have emerged as a significant area of inquiry. Within higher education, these processes are regarded as a critical component of an outcome-based education paradigm.

This study was conducted through a three-phase process with the aim of comprehensively examining the current status of quality assurance and accreditation processes in higher education institutions within the field of Sports Sciences. In the first phase, a conceptual and theoretical framework was established through an extensive review of the literature, addressing the purpose and significance of the research, the principles of total quality management, the understanding of quality in higher education institutions, the functioning of quality assurance systems, accreditation practices, and certification processes carried out by independent auditing bodies. In the second phase, the quality assurance activities, accreditation initiatives, and certification efforts of Faculties of Sports Sciences and Schools of Physical Education and Sports were evaluated through a current status analysis. In the third and final phase, discussions, conclusions, and recommendations regarding quality assurance systems in the field of Sports Sciences were presented based on the findings obtained.

The Concept of Quality in Higher Education Institutions

The concept of quality is formed by the combination of multiple variables. Quality refers to planned and systematic practices aimed at providing a safe environment to meet needs in accordance with predetermined standards (Skolnik, 2010). The main topics covered in total quality management include a people-first approach, employee participation, zero defects, continuous improvement, and leadership behavior from top management (Güleş & Bülbül, 2004).

The quality process in education is examined in three aspects: quality in design, quality in process management, and quality of outcomes. In the design phase, the aim is to achieve the desired outputs by structuring processes such as curricula, academic staff competencies, and physical infrastructure according to standards. This is accomplished by utilizing the "plan-do-check-act" cycle in process management (Yazıcı et al., 2023).

The accelerated changes of the twenty-first century have encouraged institutions and individuals to follow and adapt to this process. These transformations have affected every sector, including higher

education institutions, leading to changes in educational services, university management styles, decision-making processes, and teaching and learning models. Emerging technologies and the rapid accessibility of information have compelled universities to renew their visions and adopt different measurement tools and new management models to train qualified individuals who will meet the future needs of countries and the employment demands of various sectors.

With increasing competition, it is necessary to enhance the quality of everything that is offered. Quality initiatives that prioritize consumer satisfaction, encourage development, support employee participation, promote collaboration, and align with the university's management vision will improve institutional efficiency (Serin & Aytekin, 2009).

Quality assurance involves all processes that higher education institutions effectively use in both teaching and other areas such as research, scientific publications, activities, academic achievement, and projects (ENQA, 2008).

With the increase in the number of higher education institutions, the growth of stakeholders such as students, academics, and administrative units, along with the expansion of program diversity in line with international mobility and sector demands, has led to the emergence of quality-related issues. All these developments have fostered a competitive environment among higher education institutions (Özer et al., 2010).

In Europe, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education are responsible for regulating and advancing quality process requirements. The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), prepared through the collaboration of the European Students' Union (ESU), the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), the European University Association (EUA), and ENQA, were developed in 2005 and came into effect the same year. It was later approved by ministers responsible for higher education in 2015. The European Higher Education Standards Directive is implemented as a guiding framework in cooperation with independent auditing institutions (Derdiyok, 2019).

In 1998, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization emphasized the importance of establishing quality standards within the framework of higher education operations. The decision highlighted the significance of both internal and external evaluations in universities. While setting the targeted standards in teaching and learning processes, the importance of local, regional, and international institutional structures was underscored. Additionally, quality standards were noted to play a crucial role in the selection of academic staff, educational techniques, and advancements in information technology (Rehber, 2007).

To establish the principles of quality practices, the Council of Higher Education Qualifications, Quality Assurance, and Accreditation Commission (YÖKAK) was founded in 2014. The primary mission of the YÖKAK Commission is to work on model development in areas such as compliance, quality assurance, accreditation, independent quality organizations, and the quality management system of Türkiye's higher education area (Yükseköğretim Diploma Programlarının Kalite Güvence Rehberi, 2020).

The quality management system applied in higher education institutions is not only implemented in educational and instructional processes but also in the stages of scientific research. As part of the Bologna Process, YÖKAK obtained registration from the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR), which is a significant step. On March 3, 2023, YÖKAK's ongoing activities were approved for EQAR registration under the ESG. With this registration, the institutional external evaluations and accreditation reports prepared by YÖKAK, the authorized quality assurance body in Türkiye, are recognized on this international platform (Yükseköğretim Değerlendirme ve Kalite Güvencesi Raporu, 2023; Bologna Uzmanları Ulusal Takımı, 2008). According to Özer et al. (2011), areas where quality management should be applied in universities include physical infrastructure development for academic and administrative staff, the improvement and management of universities, the construction of physical spaces, and the planning of recreational areas for students. Efforts to develop curricula and determine learning outcomes, as well as the effective execution of human resource planning and recruitment processes, ensure the sustainable management of academic and administrative staff. Organizing organizational charts and clarifying job descriptions contribute to more efficient internal operations, while preparing a quality handbook and engaging in strategic planning serve as guides to achieving long-term goals.

Universities and Quality Assurance System Practices

The concept of quality assurance is defined as the process of evaluating, controlling, providing evidence, and recording procedures based on established criteria and standards (Señal et al., 2008). Quality assurance practices in higher education are particularly important to ensure that students receive a high-quality education, establish reliable standards throughout teaching processes, and support their academic and professional development.

The most important practices in higher education services involve identifying stakeholder expectations through consultations and ensuring trust in the quality of higher education through auditing, evaluation, and review activities. Quality assurance activities in higher education institutions include planned preparations and written assessments, providing information about the current state of the institution's internal auditing system (Karahan & Kuzu, 2014; Özenç, 2024; Skolnik, 2010).

"The Higher Education Quality Council of Türkiye (YÖKAK)" reorganized the provisions of Additional Article 35, which was added to the Higher Education Law No. 2547 through the Law No. 7033 on "Amending Certain Laws and Decrees for the Purpose of Developing Industry and Supporting Production" dated July 1, 2017. These changes were implemented following the publication of the Higher Education Quality Assurance Regulation in the Official Gazette (YÖKAK, 2024).

Quality initiatives in higher education in Türkiye began in the 1980s and accelerated significantly in the 2000s. This process has been shaped by efforts to develop quality standards in higher education at both national and international levels.

In the 1990s, under the influence of globalization, Turkish higher education institutions began striving to align with international standards. Concepts such as student-centered education, learning outcomes, and program qualifications—core principles of the Bologna Process—started to be discussed. In 2001, Türkiye took a significant step in higher education quality assurance by joining the Bologna

Process. With this, quality tools such as the Diploma Supplement, the European Credit Transfer System, and the National Qualifications Framework became widespread. In 2015, the YÖKAK was officially established to evaluate the quality assurance systems of higher education institutions and manage accreditation processes. The Turkish Qualifications Framework (TYÇ) has since been used as a guiding tool for structuring programs and conducting quality evaluations in higher education. Institutional Accreditation Programs have enabled universities to manage their quality processes more effectively. The inclusion of internal and external stakeholders, communication with accreditation agencies, and efforts to meet quality standards in higher education now actively support a culture of quality within universities, leading to better teaching, learning, and qualified outputs (Güler & Soyer, 2021; İstanbul Üniversitesi, 2024; Süngü & Bayrakçı, 2010; Yavuzcan, 2008; YÖK, 2007).

The YÖKAK is an institution with administrative and financial autonomy, possessing public legal personality and a special budget. Its responsibilities include measuring the education, training, and research services of universities in line with their founding purposes and according to international university standards. YÖKAK oversees internal and external quality audits, accreditation periods, and the assignment of independent external auditing organizations without any affiliations (YÖKAK, 2024).

Among the primary duties of the YÖKAK are conducting independent evaluations of universities, establishing the assignment and recognition periods of accreditation institutions, and promoting a culture of quality within universities.

In Türkiye, within the scope of Additional Article 35 of Law No. 2547, the Higher Education Quality Assurance System encompasses the quality systems organized by universities through their research and development, educational activities, and academic and administrative units. It also includes accreditation processes and the responsibility procedures of external evaluation organizations (Derdiyok, 2019).

In the total quality management system applied in higher education, students coming from high schools and equivalent institutions represent the raw material (input). During the transformation process, they undergo academic programs, curricula, and the expertise of faculty members, resulting in graduates as the final product (output). Both processes are interconnected with the sector, system, and feedback mechanisms, ensuring a continuous cycle within the ecosystem (Kalaycı, 2008).

The monitoring and evaluation of the criteria established in higher education processes focus on the content of educational programs, teaching methods, assessment and evaluation processes, efficient use of resources, and student satisfaction (YÖKAK, 2024).

The implementation of quality assurance systems in universities is maintained under the leadership of the university's senior management through quality boards, quality commissions, internal audits, stakeholder collaborations, independent auditing organizations, regulations, directives, policies, and strategic planning efforts. The quality assurance management activities of universities include:

- Continuing educational and instructional processes in line with their vision, mission, and objectives,
- Managing resources with transparency and accountability in process management,
- Ensuring the participation of internal and external stakeholders in processes,
- Presenting the distribution of institutional indicators over the years through reports,
- Implementing community contribution projects,
- Preparing and submitting academic and unit internal evaluation reports,
- Strengthening external stakeholder and industry collaborations,
- Establishing document management systems and setting standards,
- Identifying and improving internal corrective and preventive actions while effectively utilizing the PUKÖ (PDCA—Plan-Do-Check-Act) Cycle,
- Developing risk plans and minimizing potential risks.

The Functioning of Universities' Accreditation and Quality Assurance Systems: The Case of the Faculty of Sports Sciences and Schools of Physical Education and Sports

In Türkiye, the highest authority responsible for the quality assurance management of higher education institutions is the Higher Education Quality Council (YKK). The Council of Higher Education (YÖK) is a constitutional body established based on the fundamental principles of the higher education system as defined by the 1982 Constitution of the Republic of Türkiye. Higher education in Türkiye underwent academic, institutional, and administrative updates with the enactment of Law No. 2547 on Higher Education in 1981. Since then, all higher education institutions in the country have been organized under the Council of Higher Education (YÖKAK, 2024).

In the quality assurance process in higher education, evaluation activities conducted either internally or through external bodies are grounded in the monitoring of compliance with established quality standards and in the principle of continuous improvement (ENQA, 2008). For quality assurance systems in higher education to function effectively, institutions are required to obtain accreditation from national or international independent accreditation agencies and to secure quality certification from relevant public or private organizations (Bakioğlu & Baltacı, 2010).

The word accreditation is derived from its literal meaning, which can be explained as "to authorize, to ensure, or to be accepted." The concept of accreditation is defined as "a quality infrastructure established to confirm the reliability and validity of studies conducted by independent evaluation organizations and the documents that receive compliance approval as a result of these studies" (TÜRKAK, 2024). According to the YÖK, accreditation refers to an evaluation and external quality assurance system that measures the extent to which a higher education program or institution meets academic and field-specific criteria.

The benefits of accreditation activities (Sarp, 2014) are listed below:

- Enhances the quality of services provided by institutions and officially certifies them,
- Creates awareness in the competitive environment between institutions,
- Enables customers to be informed about products or services,
- Strengthens internal and external communication within the institution,
- Allows institutions to analyze their current status and develop strategic plans for the future,
- Accelerates potential improvement efforts within the institution.

Accreditation initiatives are an important administrative process carried out in accordance with legal regulations and national-international standards. Periodic audits are conducted, and based on the results of independent evaluation organizations, institutions that receive accreditation must maintain and improve their standards to sustain their accreditation status.

In Türkiye, national and international accreditation organizations serve as independent evaluators, conducting accreditation and quality certification activities for universities. Among the leading national institutions conducting accreditation activities are the Turkish Accreditation Agency (TÜRKAK) under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye, and the Turkish Standards Institution (TSE) under the Ministry of Industry and Technology of the Republic of Türkiye. Additionally, within the Higher Education Institutional Accreditation Program, there are 25 field-specific accreditation organizations.

The Institutional Accreditation Program (KAP) is an external evaluation method conducted by quality assessment teams to assess higher education institutions' quality assurance, education and training, research and development, social contribution, and quality management system processes. This evaluation follows the PDCA cycle (KAP, 2024).

Under the Institutional Accreditation Program implemented by the YÖKAK, institutions subject to evaluation receive accreditation decisions as follows: full accreditation is granted for five years; conditional accreditation is granted for two years. If the conditions are not met, the institution receives a rejection decision.

Within the scope of the quality assurance system, the evaluation criteria consist of examining the following elements: program educational objectives, program outcomes, continuous improvement, teaching and learning plans, curriculum and course content, academic staff and their competencies, infrastructure, institutional support and financial resources, top management and leadership processes, decision-making processes, transparency and openness, internal and external stakeholder collaboration, internationalization, teaching competencies and development, societal contribution, and evidence of all processes (Özçiçek & Karaca, 2019).

When preparing the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (KİDR), universities compile this report based on several sources. Initially, Unit Internal Evaluation Reports (BİDR) are requested from departments. Following this, Faculty/School/Vocational School/Institute Academic Internal Evaluation Reports (ABİDR) are prepared, which together form the KİDR report.

The objectives of the accreditation system in educational institutions include:

- Enhancing the quality of educational programs and processes,
- Ensuring production and management in research and development,
- Improving the quality of community engagement activities and service-learning applications,
- Increasing the quality of program learning outcomes and curricula while aligning outputs with institutional goals,
- Ensuring the alignment of course learning outcomes with program outcomes,
- Enhancing student and staff satisfaction while improving performance metrics,
- Expanding institutional internal and external stakeholder policies and maintaining records,

Ensuring transparency and accountability by documenting information and making top management decisions publicly accessible.

Material and Methods

Research Model

This study was conducted using a qualitative research method. The research data was collected through document analysis, which is one of the qualitative research techniques. Document analysis is a technique that involves the use of pre-existing or generated data (Scott & Marlene, 2005). To comprehensively understand the various dimensions of the current situation, the researcher should present alternative perspectives and identify diverse indicators related to the phenomenon under investigation (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018; Karasar, 2005). Using the qualitative research method, the study examined the total quality management practices, quality management systems, internationalization, accreditation, and certification efforts of universities with Faculties of Sports Sciences and Schools of Physical Education and Sports. The data was obtained from YÖKAK Reports, Academic Internal Evaluation Reports, Unit Internal Evaluation Reports, strategic plans, web-based reports, and publicly available documents on university websites, which were analyzed and evaluated transparently.

Drawing upon a qualitative research approach, the study examined the total quality management practices, quality management systems, internationalization efforts, accreditation initiatives, and certification processes of universities with Faculties of Sports Sciences and Schools of Physical Education and Sports. The analysis was based on data obtained from publicly accessible documents, including YÖKAK Reports, Institutional Self-Evaluation Reports, Unit Self-Evaluation Reports, strategic plans, web-based reports, and official institutional websites. Throughout the data collection and analysis process, the researchers systematically reviewed the documents within a predetermined framework of criteria, categorizing, comparing, and interpreting the findings accordingly.

Universe and Sample

According to the statistics from the Higher Education Institution, the study identified that there are 75 Faculties of Sports Sciences at state (public) universities and 15 at foundation universities across Türkiye. Additionally, there are 10 Schools of Physical Education and Sports at state universities and two at foundation universities. For the analysis, a total of 90 Faculties of Sports Sciences and 12 Schools of Physical Education and Sports were included in the sample. The quality, accreditation, and certification sections of publicly accessible websites of the institutions in the sample—comprising 88 state universities and 17 foundation universities—were examined.

Limitations of the Research

This study is limited to universities that have Faculties of Sports Sciences and Schools of Physical Education and Sports. Within the scope of the quality assurance system, the document review process was conducted in accordance with the principle of impartiality. The analysis was further confined to the information available in the examined documents, as well as to their accessibility and currency at the time of data collection.

Ethical Statement

This study was approved by the Ethics Committee of İstanbul Gelişim University (Approval No.: 2024-20-17; Date: December 19, 2024).

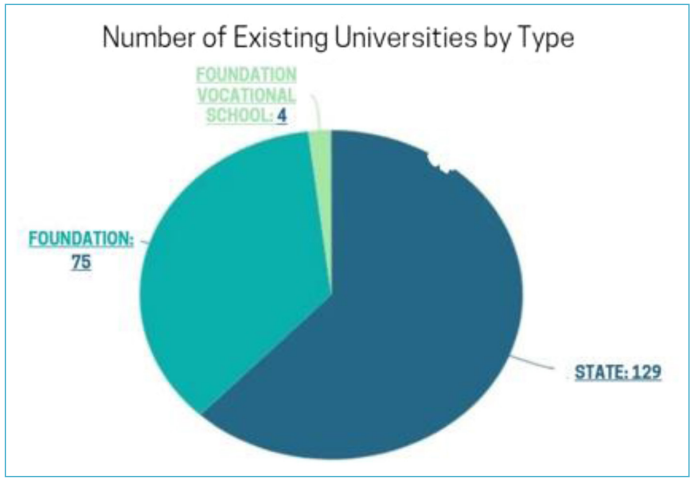


Figure 1.
Number of Existing Universities by Type.(Yükseköğretim Kurumu Atlas, 2025)

Data Analysis
In this study, data were obtained through document analysis, a qualitative research method involving the systematic examination of written, visual, and digital materials. Within this scope, documents published by the Higher Education Quality Council, Institutional Accreditation Reports, Institutional Self-Evaluation Reports, universities' strategic plans, publicly accessible web-based reports, and official institutional websites were utilized as primary data sources.

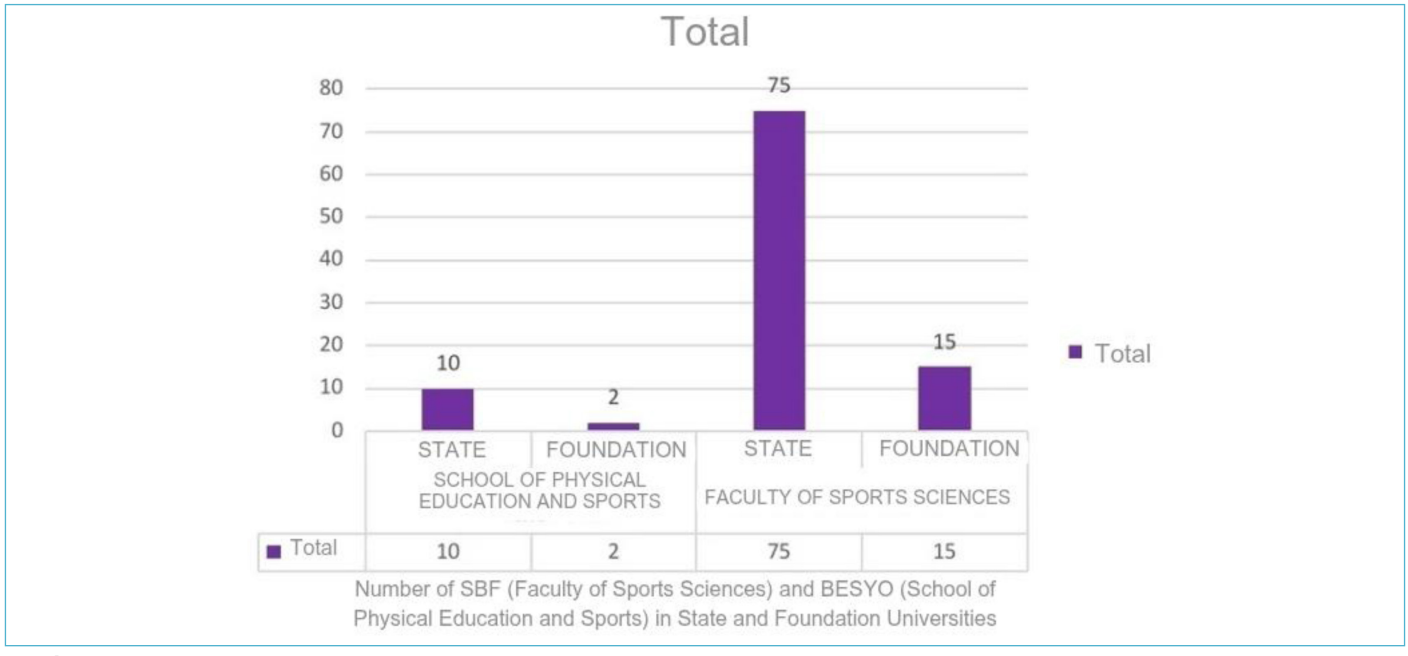
During the current status analysis, classification and situational assessment procedures were conducted. Following a comprehensive review of documents related to the quality assurance systems of the Faculties and Schools, the collected data were organized into tabular form, interpreted through numerical representations, and comparatively analyzed. Within the framework of the quality assurance system, data were collected by examining national and international certification status, strategic plans, the publication of institutional activities on official websites in accordance with the principle of transparency, and stakeholder engagement policies. The findings were subsequently organized into tables, interpreted through quantitative representations, and comparatively evaluated.

During the analysis process, numerical indicators were employed to present the current situation more clearly and to strengthen inter-institutional comparisons. In this context, interpretations were conducted in line with the qualitative research approach, focusing on the meaningful examination of data derived from documents and on a comprehensive evaluation of the existing level of quality assurance systems in the field of Sports Sciences.

Findings
According to the statistics from the Higher Education Institution, there are a total of 208 universities in Türkiye, consisting of 129 state universities, 75 foundation universities, and 4 private vocational schools.

According to the statistics from the YÖK, it has been determined that, across Türkiye: there are 75 Faculties of Sports Sciences at state universities and 15 at foundation universities; there are ten Schools of Physical Education and Sports at state universities and two at foundation universities.

According to the statistics from the YÖK, the number of Faculties of Sports Sciences and Schools of Physical Education and Sports at universities has been reviewed. It was found that: 102 universities have active faculties or schools with enrolled students, two foundation faculties and one foundation school have been established but are not currently offering active education. These faculties and schools that are not actively providing education were not included in the evaluation.



Graph 1.
Number of SBF (Faculty of Sports Sciences) and BESYO (School of Physical Education and Sports) in State and Foundation Universities. Reference: https://istatistik.yok.gov.tr/(Yükseköğretim Kurumu Atlas, 2025)

Total quality studies in higher education are conducted based on the guidelines prepared by the Higher Education Quality Council. These guidelines serve as the foundation for the preparation of the BİDR, ABİDR, and KİDR. The topics covered in these reports are supported by laws, regulations, directives, and procedures. The related processes are documented with supporting evidence and submitted to the higher council for review. There are 25 accreditation boards under the YÖKAK. Among these, the accreditation body specific to the field of sports sciences is the Sports Sciences Association (Evaluation and Accreditation Board for Sports Sciences Education Programs - SPORAK). When examining the quality processes of state and foundation universities providing education in sports sciences, it is observed that they undergo certification by both national and international accreditation organizations. Additionally, they are audited by independent auditing bodies for certification from the TSE under the Ministry of Industry and Technology.

SPORAK: Evaluation and Accreditation Board for Sports Sciences Education Programs is the institution responsible for evaluating the programs of faculties, schools, and departments providing education in the field of sports sciences. These evaluations are conducted through the Sports Sciences Association to assess compliance with established standards.

Aims and Objectives (Sports Sciences Association Working Regulation, 2018):

- To guide the continuous improvement of educational programs and curricula in Faculties of Sports Sciences and Schools of Physical Education and Sports, as well as the diversification of these programs,
- To ensure the advancement and sustainability of quality education and training in the field of sports sciences in Türkiye.

It has been determined that 20 state universities have received SPORAK accreditation for their Faculties of Sports Sciences, covering a total of 29 programs. No foundation universities have been granted SPORAK accreditation (https://sporbilimleri.org.tr/akreditasyon-belgeler/ Accessed: 11/05/2024).

Turkish Standards Institution

The TSE was established to define the standards for products and services through Law No. 132, enacted on November 18, 1960. The institution operates under the authority of the Ministry of Industry and Technology. Its responsibilities include: regulating standards in sector-specific areas, auditing standards established within or outside the institution and defining them as Turkish Standards upon approval, publishing accepted standards and supporting their implementation, preparing standards or projects based on the requests of both the private and public sectors, providing expert opinions on relevant standards (Turkish Standards Institution, 2024).

In Türkiye, state and foundation universities can apply to the TSE to have their quality processes evaluated based on specific standards. Upon undergoing audits, they are certified accordingly. The first foundation university to receive a TSE certificate in the field of sports sciences is Istanbul Gelişim University. In 2019, its School of Physical Education and Sports was awarded the ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management System and ISO 10002:2018 Customer Satisfaction certificates. It has been determined that the validity of these certificates is renewed annually through follow-up visits.

The process of understanding the satisfaction of internal and external stakeholders at universities includes the leadership of top management, transparency to the public, accessibility, and responsiveness in operational processes in line with quality objectives. The efforts made

Table 1.
Quality Assurance Initiatives of the Faculty of Sports Sciences and the School of Physical Education and Sports

Faculty of Sports Sciences and School of Physical Education and Sports Quality Assurance Initiatives			
Unit quality commission	Strategic plan	feedback	Quality manual
SWOT analysis	Job descriptions	Guidelines	Unit activity report
Process management	Workflow diagram	Stakeholders	Documents and reports
PDCA action plan	Quality assurance directive	Social contribution	Internal control processes
Quality documents	Forms	Risk analysis	Surveys
Quality motto	Accreditation	Self-assessment	Satisfaction surveys
Quality ambassadors	Processes	Preventive activities	Information dissemination
Quality management system	Critical task list	Stakeholder expectation form	Graduate employment office
Solution center	Board decision minutes	Code of ethics guide	Senate decisions
Internal audit	Suggestion system	Public service standards	KVKK (Personal Data Protection Law)
Service inventory	Management review	EFQM model	Peer mentor
PEER - Peer teams	KİDR (Institution Internal Evaluation Report)	BİDR (External Evaluation Report)	ABİDR (Department External Evaluation Report)
University Information Management System	QDMS (Quality Data Management System)	Institutional accreditation board	SPORAK
ISO 9001:2015	ISO 10002:2018	AQAS	Annual training plan
Internationalization	Research & development	TSE (Turkish Standards Institution)	TÜRKAK (Turkish Accreditation Agency)
Performance management	Improvement reports	Quality coordination	PESTEL analysis

AQAS = Agency for Quality Assurance.
(Yükseköğretim Kalite Kurulu, 2025)

in the quality certification processes of Faculties/Schools/Institutes/Vocational Schools include:

The components encompassing the vision, mission, objectives, and quality policies; organizational context; Quality Manual and Student Handbook; regulations, directives, procedures, formal documents, supporting documents, and forms; strategic plan; organizational chart and job descriptions; risk and opportunity identification; annual training plans; student and staff satisfaction and feedback mechanisms; documentation practices; personnel performance evaluation; improvement processes and the PDCA cycle; internal and external audits; management review meetings; corrective and preventive actions; and the establishment of workflow processes, records, and documented evidence across all procedures collectively constitute the framework of the ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management System and the ISO 10002:2018 Customer Relationship Management standards (Hoyle, 2009).

Agency for Quality Assurance

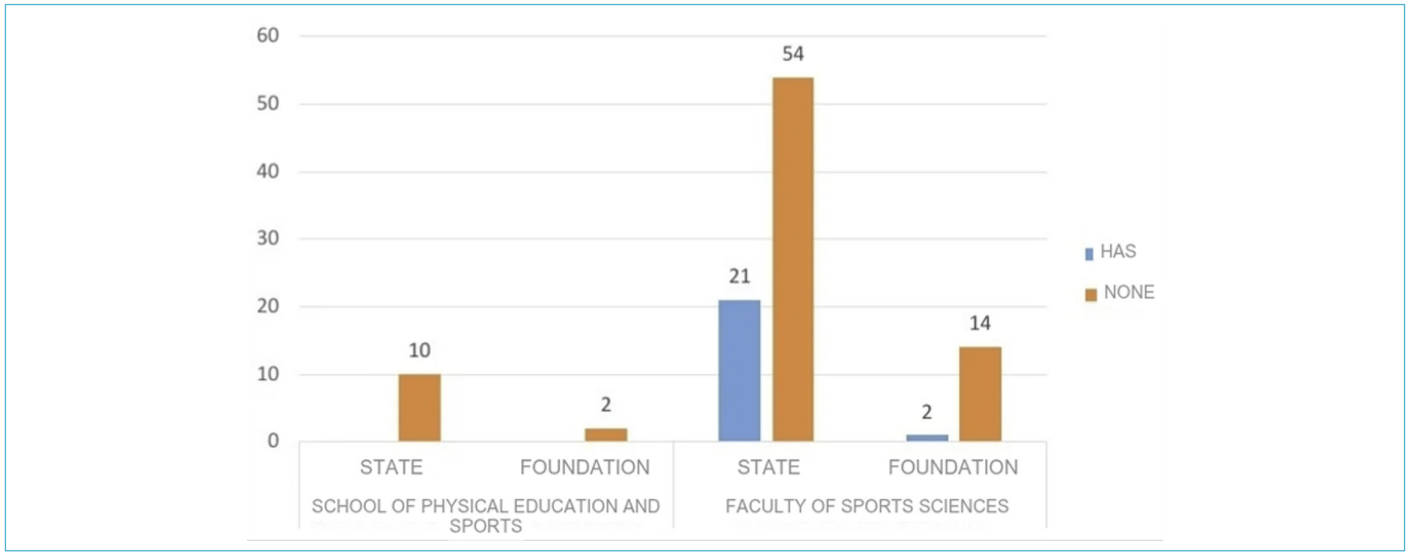
Established in 2002 through universities in Germany, AQAS is a non-profit association approved to organize external evaluation procedures for higher education institutions in Germany and Europe. Agency for Quality Assurance is included in the European Quality Assurance Register. In the international accreditation process, AQAS bases its criteria for internal and external quality assurance in learning and teaching on the ESG. These standards and guidelines were prepared by various European associations and networks, including the ENQA, the ESU, the EUA, and the EURASHE. They have been accepted by all 48 European countries participating in the European Higher Education Area. Agency for Quality Assurance is an internationally recognized accreditation organization acknowledged by the Higher Education Quality Council. Accreditation certification for universities attests to the quality of their educational services. Independent external auditors assigned by AQAS evaluate applicant faculties in terms of alignment with overall objectives, program structure, general operations, business processes, human resource structure, faculty profiles, compliance of the academic curriculum with international standards, course content, learning processes, faculty and student evaluation processes, learning facilities, student support programs, graduate and stakeholder relations, and societal contributions (İstanbul Gelişim Üniversitesi, 2024; İstanbul Üniversitesi2024).

Higher education institutions in Türkiye pursue certification from national and international accreditation organizations to ensure that their educational processes meet quality standards. In 2018, the School of Physical Education and Sports at Istanbul Gelişim University received accreditation from the independent organization AQAS for its Coaching Education, Exercise and Sports Sciences, Sports Management, and Recreation programs (https://besyo.gelisim.edu.tr/tr/akademik-icerik-uluslararasi-akreditasyon-belgeleri Accessed: May 11, 2024).

The quality assurance efforts of Faculties of Sports Sciences and Schools of Physical Education and Sports at universities were analyzed through data obtained from the YÖK and YÖKAK websites, universities' KİDR, BİDR, and official university websites. It was observed that higher education institutions providing educational services in the field of Sports Sciences engage in total quality management practices that are publicly accessible, easily reachable, and regularly updated.

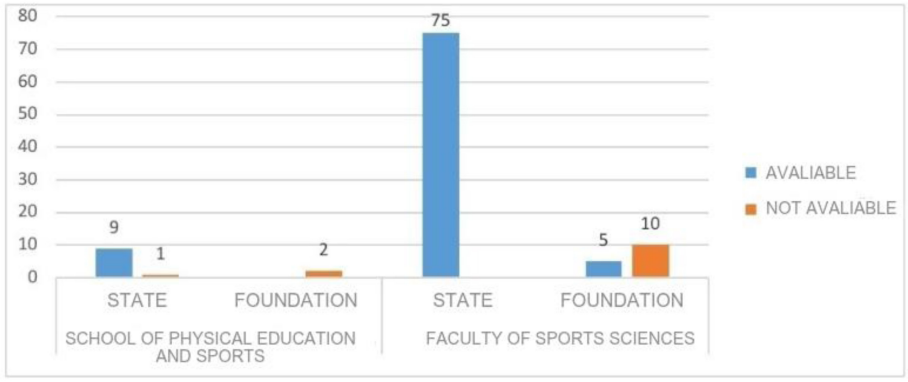
Key features of the quality assurance system in Sports Sciences include:

- A student-centered educational approach,
- Emphasis on originality and entrepreneurship,
- An institutional structure aiming for continuous improvement,
- Implementation of participatory management practices,
- Importance given to internal and external stakeholder engagement,
- Establishment of commissions and promotion of teamwork within the institution,
- Integration of internal workflows into a written documentation system,
- Conducting projects within the scope of community service to contribute to production,
- Availability of general and sports sciences-specific strategic plans at universities,
- Conducting situation assessments and interpretations through tools like SWOT analysis,
- Administration of surveys as part of satisfaction studies,
- Dissemination of information via websites and social media platforms,



Graph 2.

Document Status of the Faculty of Sports Sciences (SBF) and the School of Physical Education and Sports (BESYO).



Graph 3.
Status of Quality Initiatives at the Faculty of Sports Sciences (SBF) and the School of Physical Education and Sports (BESYO).

- Setting internationalization goals,
- Developing programs focused on industry/sector needs to design, improve, and train the workforce accordingly.

The certification status of the Faculties of Sports Sciences and Schools of Physical Education and Sports at state and foundation universities was examined. Among state universities, 21 Faculties of Sports Sciences were found to have quality certificates. In foundation universities, one institution held a national certificate, while another had an international certificate. In contrast, it was determined that 54 state universities and 14 foundation universities with Faculties of Sports Sciences had no certifications. Similarly, no certifications were found in 10 state universities and 2 foundation universities with Schools of Physical Education and Sports.

The quality initiatives of the Faculties of Sports Sciences and Schools of Physical Education and Sports at state and foundation universities were examined through their websites. Among state universities, 75 Faculties of Sports Sciences were found to have ongoing quality initiatives. In foundation universities, 5 institutions were conducting such initiatives, while 10 were not. Regarding Schools of Physical Education and Sports, nine state universities had active quality initiatives, with only one institution lacking them. In foundation universities, two institutions were identified as not engaging in quality-related activities.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study was conducted to examine the functioning of quality assurance systems and accreditation processes of Faculties of Sports Sciences and Schools of Physical Education and Sports affiliated with higher education institutions. During the research process, higher education quality efforts, the quality certifications and accreditations of Faculties of Sports Sciences and Schools of Physical Education and Sports at state and foundation universities in Türkiye, and the impact of publicly available evidence on the quality of education were comprehensively analyzed.

The quality management system, which includes components such as internal and external stakeholder satisfaction, effective communication, regular scheduling, time management, and continuous improvement practices, contributes to the workflow within the educational ecosystem, particularly in higher education institutions. In line with these objectives, it has been observed that accreditation and quality certification efforts have increased during this period, having a significant impact on the education and training system process (Yıldız, 2018). The study shows that the Faculties of Sport Sciences and the Schools of Physical Education and Sports implement process steps within the quality management system, strive to spread this culture within the institution, and place importance on certification efforts.

For the effective implementation of quality management system improvement practices in state or foundation universities and to ensure positive progress, teaching-focused centers should be established within institutions. Acquiring a quality philosophy within the institutional culture supports employee performance, work quality, and the operation of the sustainability principle (Kalaycı, 2008).

It has been determined that state and foundation universities' faculties of Sports Sciences and Schools of Physical Education and sports follow quality management system practices and, in line with the principle of transparency, publish their initiatives on their websites.

According to the Council of Higher Education statistics, there are a total of 75 Faculties of Sports Sciences at state universities and 15 at foundation universities across Türkiye. Additionally, there are ten Schools of Physical Education and Sports at state universities and two at foundation universities.

In this study, the quality, accreditation, and self-evaluation report sections of publicly accessible websites from 88 state universities and 17 foundation universities with Faculties of Sports Sciences and Schools of Physical Education and Sports were examined. Total quality management efforts are guided by manuals prepared by the YÖKAK, resulting in the development of BİDR, Academic Internal Evaluation Reports, and Quality Internal Evaluation Reports. These reports are prepared with supporting laws, regulations, directives, and procedures, along with relevant evidence of the processes, and are submitted to the higher council. Among these, the KİDR is prepared by the university. The system developed to maintain the institution's objectives, goals, and policies within the quality processes evaluates institutions at an organizational level under the quality system framework. Based on this assessment, a decision is made on whether the respective university should apply for institutional accreditation (YÖKAK, 2025). In their 2023 evaluation report, Taşçı and Lapçin noted that all workflow processes in state and foundation universities are prepared in accordance with quality management system standards, taking the institutional context into account. These reports, which are publicly shared on university websites, include services offered to

internal and external stakeholders of higher education, physical infrastructure, internationalization efforts, research and development activities, social responsibility projects, and industry collaborations.

An examination of accreditation programs recognized by the Council of Higher Education reveals that in the field of Sports Sciences, there are 20 state universities with a total of 29 programs accredited by SPORAK. It was determined that no foundation universities have received SPORAK accreditation.

An analysis of the accreditation programs recognized by the Council of Higher Education reveals that the SPORAK accreditation, specific to the Sports Sciences field, has been obtained exclusively by faculties at state universities. Based on the available data, it has been concluded that no foundation universities have received SPORAK accreditation. In this context, it is evident that there is a need to examine quality initiatives and incentive practices aimed at encouraging applications from foundation universities to increase the prevalence of field-specific certification systems. In the 2023 Unit Internal Evaluation Report of Kastamonu University Faculty of Sports Sciences, the faculty outlined a plan to apply for SPORAK national accreditation to enhance the quality of its student-centered education system. This plan includes updating department curricula, revising course content, collecting new course requests, and gathering feedback from internal and external stakeholders.

In his 2018 study, Karahan found that the TSE ISO 9000 standards are applicable to universities within the framework of the quality audit system to establish student-centered and sustainable total quality-oriented institutions in higher education, which aligns with the findings of this study. State and foundation universities in Türkiye can apply to the Turkish Standards Institute to request an evaluation of their quality processes within specific standards. They undergo an audit and, if successful, receive certification. In the field of Sports Sciences, the first foundation university to obtain a TSE certificate was Istanbul Gelişim University. In 2019, its School of Physical Education and Sports was awarded the ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management System and ISO 10002:2018 Customer Satisfaction certificates.

Agency for Quality Assurance is an international accreditation organization recognized by the Higher Education Quality Council. Providing accreditation certification for universities confirms the quality of their educational services. In 2018, the School of Physical Education and Sports at Istanbul Gelişim University was accredited by the independent organization AQAS for its Coaching Education, Exercise and Sports Sciences, Sports Management, and Recreation programs. In his 2019 study, Gökmen examined the quality approaches, practices, research, and outcomes of universities in Türkiye and Europe. The findings of his research, which highlight continuous improvement and change, leadership, organizational culture, teamwork, and customer satisfaction, show similarities with the results of this study.

Data on the quality assurance efforts of Faculties of Sports Sciences and Schools of Physical Education and Sports at universities were obtained by examining statistics from the YÖK and the YÖKAK websites, KİDR, BİDR, and university websites. It was observed that higher education institutions providing educational services in the field of Sports Sciences engage in total quality management practices that are publicly accessible, easily reachable, and regularly updated. In their 2018 study, Atatekin and Dulupçu analyzed universities' academic internal evaluation and unit internal evaluation documents. They found that external stakeholder feedback is included in areas such as the opening of programs like faculties, schools, and vocational schools, suggestions for course curricula, and the assessment of industry expectations.

An examination of the certification status of Faculties of Sports Sciences and Schools of Physical Education and Sports at state and foundation universities reveals that 21 state universities with Faculties of Sports Sciences hold quality certificates, while only one foundation university holds both a national and an international certificate. In addition to these findings, it was determined that 54 state universities and 14 foundation universities with Faculties of Sports Sciences lack certification. Similarly, no certifications were found in Schools of Physical Education and Sports at 10 state universities and 2 foundation universities.

An examination of the quality initiatives of Faculties of Sports Sciences and Schools of Physical Education and Sports at state and foundation universities, based on information from their websites, reveals significant differences in engagement. Among state universities, 75 Faculties of Sports Sciences have implemented quality initiatives, reflecting a strong commitment to enhancing educational standards. In contrast, only five Faculties of Sports Sciences at foundation universities have undertaken such efforts, while 10 have not engaged in any quality-related activities. Regarding Schools of Physical Education and Sports, nine state universities have active quality initiatives, whereas one state university has yet to implement them. Similarly, at foundation universities, two institutions with Schools of Physical Education and Sports were found to have no quality improvement efforts.

The rising developments in quality management system practices in higher education at the international level have prompted institutions to take swift actions in implementing national quality certification and accreditation efforts and embedding them within their organizational culture (Sipahi Mencet & Akar, 2022; Taştan & Yılmaz, 2021; Yöntem & Mazman, 2023).

The publicly accessible websites of universities were examined to review the quality management system efforts and related documents of their faculties and schools. In educational processes, the operation, control, and improvement plans of internal audit mechanisms are crucial for adopting a quality philosophy in higher education to ensure satisfaction. In their 2023 study, Köse and Özdilek found that the institutional information shared on the websites of Faculties of Sports Sciences and Schools of Physical Education and Sports often includes expressions such as providing high-quality educational services and training qualified individuals within their vision and mission statements.

In conclusion, accreditation certificates are understood not only as a requirement but also as a significant tool that contributes to the improvement of the educational process. In this context, strengthening the accreditation processes of institutions providing education in the field of sports sciences will enable steps to be taken to enhance quality. The study revealed that quality certification and accreditation efforts are limited in both state and foundation universities. It was observed that international accreditation bodies and independent organizations recognized by the YÖK have certified faculties, schools, departments, or programs, particularly at foundation universities. However, state universities, adhering to the principles of transparency and accountability in quality, were found to provide more extensive reports on quality initiatives and evidence of their

practices on publicly accessible websites compared to foundation universities.

The effectiveness of accreditation and quality assurance systems will not only enhance inter-institutional competition but also lead to significant improvements in the education provided to students. Future studies may examine each stage of the accreditation processes in greater depth and offer suggestions on how to make these processes more efficient. Additionally, conducting comprehensive research on how quality assurance systems can better meet the specific needs of the sports sciences field would be beneficial.

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Ethics Committee Approval: Ethical committee approval was received from the Ethics Committee of İstanbul Gelişim University (Approval No.: 2024-20-17; Date: December 19, 2024).

Informed Consent : This study is based on qualitative research methods; the data were obtained fron public available sources and documents and are cited in the relevent references.

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