

ANALYSIS OF THE POST-GRADUATE THESES ON THE SUBJECT OF QUALITY IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION

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Abstract: The present study examines the post-graduate theses the subject field of which are coded as education by YOK (The Council of Higher Education) Head of Journal and Documentation Department based on the concept of quality; according to their publication years, universities, institutes, departments/programs, educational levels, subject fields, and purposes. The study was conducted on a total of 35 theses. Data were obtained via document review. Post-graduate theses on the subject of “Quality” in the work group were downloaded from the website of YOK Head of Journal and Documentation Department in .pdf format. Then, theses downloaded on the computer were analysed in accordance with sub-purposes. Descriptive analysis method was adopted for data analysis. Data obtained via document review were then arranged according to the themes formed by research questions, and were presented in tables. The findings revealed that most-frequently studied subject matter for post-graduate theses was total quality management.

Key Words: *quality, thesis analysis, graduate education, education.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Education has always played the most active role in the development of individuals and societies. Education has been an important investment tool for development for almost every society. The importance of education has become more prominent in 21st of century. Social, cultural, and economic developments, and technological changes in the world made education the most privileged subject. Because, equipped individuals who can accommodate with the developments and changes can only be raised via education.

Education plays a very important role in helping individuals and societies to keep pace with the social, economic, and cultural changes; and also supports the development of the capital required for economic growth. Education systems’ performing these roles depends on some factors. These are; educational institutions’ and teachers’ adapting to the changes, and the content of the education being developed in accordance with the needs of today and citizens of tomorrow (OECD, 2001,1).

Quality in education should be provided for the educational institutions and teachers adapting to changes and development of educational content. A qualified and educated person can only be raised through a qualified education process.

The classical definition of quality is “compliance with standards”. However, this definition is not adequate today, and quality is considered as the compliance with customer needs (Kavrakoglu, 1996, 9). According to Arnold and Holler (1995,14), quality is compliance with the standards that are based on the customer needs and expectations that represent the basic features of products and services. Quality in education, on the other hand, refers to compliance with the needs of individuals who expect service from education. According to Senturk and Turkmen (2009,132), quality in education means that education system is appreciated, and perfect; and at the same time, people have the knowledge and skills to follow changes.

One of the founders of quality management philosophy; Dr. Deming defines the basic purpose of education as:” increasing positives, decreasing negatives, and so maintaining the students’ desires to learn” (Doğan, 2014, 4).

Many countries are questioning their education systems. The starting point of this questioning is that education systems that produce stereotyped minds, don’t have many benefits, and societies need thinking, producing, and problem solving minds. According to these opinions, societies try to put the students in a more active position in the education system. In short, students won’t sit down silently and be content with just what is given. Students will see, hear, analyse, speak, do, participate, share and learn to learn (Ozden, 1998, 32). Individuals who can think critically, question, and produce knowledge can only be raised through a qualified education.

European Union determined four domains and 16 indicators related to these domains that indicate quality, in order to achieve its strategic objectives. These four domains and 16 indicators are as follows (European Commission, 2000): **1. Skills:** Mathematics, Reading, Science, Use of Knowledge and Communication Technologies, Foreign Language, Learning to Learn, Civics. **2. Achievement and Transition:** Rates of Leaving School, Rates of Completing Secondary Education, Domains of Transition to Higher Education. **3. Following of Education:** Management and Evaluation of Education, Parents Participation. **4. Sources and Structures:**

Education and Training of Teachers, Participation in Pre-school Education, Number of Computers per Students, Budget of Education per Student. European Union member and candidate countries have focused on education. As a candidate country, Turkey is paying strict attention to education and trying to develop education in both qualitative and quantitative terms. According to Gultekin and Anagun (2006), considering the four domains related to education determined by European Union, Turkey is unfortunately behind European countries.

According to World Bank report (2011), the most important issue that Turkish citizens are worried about is education. Turkey started the education breakthrough with primary education, since primary education underpins education. Almost all citizens attend primary education in Turkey, and now she is in need of enhancing the quality of education. According to the report, another important issue is that, the present quality of primary education in Turkey is lower than many OECD countries; and there are no differences in the education between high and low performance students. The quality of teachers and education was also stated to be lower than international standards. Moreover, the quality varies according to the regions, and it is at a lower level in the eastern and further parts of Turkey. Quality is also not equal in the different types of schools countrywide.

Council of Higher Education (Yuksekogretim Kurulu (YOK)) founded the Council of Higher Education Commission of Qualification, Quality Assurance, and Accreditation (Yuksekogretim Kurulu Yeterlilikler, Kalite Guvencesi ve Akreditasyon (YOKAK)) in May, 2014 in order to determine the principles of quality studies and implementation. Among the primary duties of YOKAK is conducting the studies on the ultimate quality model of Turkish Higher Education for qualification, quality assurance, accreditation, and foreign quality agency (YOK, 2014)

Many studies are being conducted in order to achieve a better standard in education. But, these studies should be multi-systematic, and intended at the modern world requirements. As is the case in the past, quality studies in education are of critical importance for today's and future's world (Cafoglu, 1996, 1). From this point of view, the purpose of the present research is analysing the theses on quality in education.

1.1. Purpose of the Research

The purpose of the present research is analysing the post-graduate theses on quality in education, assessing the present situation, and shedding light on the further studies.

1.2. Sub-purposes

In accordance with the general purpose; we try to seek answers to the sub-purposes below:

- How do post-graduate theses on quality in education range by **years**?
- How do post-graduate theses on quality in education range by **universities**?
- How do post-graduate theses on quality in education range by **institutes**?
- How do post-graduate theses on quality in education range by **departments/programs**?
- How do post-graduate theses on quality in education range by **level of education**?
- How do post-graduate theses on quality in education range by **themes**?
- How do post-graduate theses on quality in education range by **purposes**?

1.3. The Importance of Research

We wanted to determine which themes were studied more frequently, while examining the post-graduate theses on quality in education. We consider that, findings to be obtained in the present research will guide and contribute to the further researches on the subject matter.

1.4. Limitations

The present research is limited with the theses on quality in education that are registered and accessible on the database of "Council of Higher Education, Department of Documentation National Thesis Centre".

2. METHOD

The present research adopted qualitative research method.

2.1. Work Group

The work group of the present research is formed by the MA and PhD theses on quality in education. The research is conducted on a total of 35 theses.

2.2. Data Collection and Analysis

Traditionally, there are three main data collection methods for qualitative researches. These are; interview, observation, and review of documents and publications (Merriam, 2013). The data in the present research is obtained via "document review". Document review comprises the analyses of the written materials that involve information about the target fact or facts to be researched. Document review alone can be a data collection in

qualitative research or can as well be used with other data collection methods. The stages of document review are; accessing the documents, controlling the originality, understanding documents, analysing the data, and using the data (Yildirim & Simsek, 2011). Documents can be in a digital format, and obtained via computers or internet (Bas & Akturan, 2013). The postgraduate theses in the work group of the present research were obtained as follows: We accessed the Council of Higher Education, Department of Documentation National Thesis Centre database online and put in the “quality” term in search area. After the search, we accessed 2000 theses. Among these, we selected the postgraduate theses in the “education” field. Then, the ones that can be accessed via website were downloaded in .pdf format. Finally, these downloaded these were analysed in accordance with the sub-purposes mentioned above.

A qualitative research technique; *descriptive analysis method* was adopted for the analysis of the data. According to Yildirim and Simsek (2011), in descriptive analysis, obtained data are summarised and analysed in accordance with the themes determined before. Data can be arranged in accordance with the themes presented by the research questions, or they can also be presented considering the questions or dimensions used in interview or observation processes. The purpose is providing the readers with the obtained data in an arranged and interpreted way. With this purpose, obtained data are first described in a systematic and clear way. Then these descriptions are explained and interpreted, cause and effect relations are examined, and some results are obtained. The association, meaning, and prediction of the themes can also be involved among the dimension of the interpretations of the researchers. There are four stages of descriptive analysis. These are: forming a framework for descriptive analysis, processing of the data in accordance with the thematic framework, defining of the findings, interpretation of the findings.

The data of the present research were analysed in terms of the years, universities, institutes, departments/programs, educational levels, themes, and purposes of the postgraduate theses conducted.

3. FINDINGS

Table 1: Distribution of the Postgraduate Theses on Quality in Education by the Years

Years	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
n	1	1	0	0	0	3	2	2	1	3	6	10	3	3
%	2,85	2,85	0	0	0	8,57	5,71	5,71	2,85	8,57	17,14	28,57	8,57	8,57

As can be seen in Table 1, most of the postgraduate theses on quality in education were conducted in 2012.

Table 2: Distribution of the Postgraduate Theses on Quality in Education by Universities

University	n	%
Marmara University	4	11,42
Yeditepe University	4	11,42
Orta Dogu Teknik University	3	8,57
Gazi University	3	8,57
Selcuk University	3	8,57
Bogazici University	3	8,57
Abant Izzet Baysal University	2	5,71
Ondokuz Mayıs University	2	5,71
Istanbul University	1	2,85
Akdeniz University	1	2,85
Ataturk University	1	2,85
Dicle University	1	2,85
Eskisehir Osman Gazi University	1	2,85
Firat University	1	2,85
Hacettepe University	1	2,85
Sabanci University	1	2,85
Pamukkale University	1	2,85
Adnan Menderes University	1	2,85
Anadolu University	1	2,85
Total	35	100

Table
e 2

presents the distribution of postgraduate theses on quality in education by the universities they were written in. The highest number of theses on the subject were written in Marmara and Yeditepe Universities.

Table 3: Distribution of the Postgraduate Theses on Quality in Education by Institute

Institute	n	%
Institute of Social Sciences	23	65,71
Institute of Educational Sciences	9	25,71
Institute of Science	2	5,71
Institute of Health Sciences	1	2,85
Total	35	100

Table 3 presents the distribution of theses on the subject by institutes they were written in. The highest number of theses were written on institutes of Social Sciences and Educational Sciences.

Table 4: Distribution of the Postgraduate Theses on Quality in Education by Departments/Programs

Departments	n	%
Educational Sciences	12	34,28
Management	6	17,14
Education Management and Supervision	3	8,57
English Language Teaching	2	5,71
Child Development and House Management Education	2	5,71
Education Management and Planning	1	2,85
Tourism Management	1	2,85
Public Administration	1	2,85
Physical Education and Sports	1	2,85
Philosophy	1	2,85
Economy	1	2,85
European Studies	1	2,85
Construction Education	1	2,85
Primary School Science Education	1	2,85
Technology Education	1	2,85
Total	35	100

Table 4 presents the distribution of postgraduate theses on quality in education by departments/programs. The highest number of theses were written by students of “Educational Sciences” and “Management” departments.

Table 5: Distribution of the Postgraduate Theses on Quality in Education by Educational Level

Postgraduate Education Level	MA	PhD	Total
n	26	9	35
%	74,28	25,72	100

Table 5 shows that the highest number of postgraduate theses on quality in education were written in Master’s degree.

Table 6: Distribution of the Postgraduate Theses on Quality in Education by Themes

Themes	n	%
Total Quality Management and Application in the schools of MEB	8	22,85
Life Quality	5	14,28
Service Quality	3	8,57
Enhancement and Development of Quality in Education	3	8,57
Total Quality Management Applications in Higher Education	3	8,57
Total Quality Attitudes of Grade Teachers	1	2,85
Quality Criteria in English Language Teaching	1	2,85
Quality Culture at Schools	1	2,85
Concrete Quality of Construction	1	2,85
Setting Quality Standards	1	2,85
Concepts of Quality and Qualified University	1	2,85
Quality Dimension of a Certificate Education Program	1	2,85
Marriage and Motherhood Quality of Women	1	2,85
Scientific and Socio-scientific Argumentation Quality Related to Cloning	1	2,85
Total Quality Management Applications in Teacher Unions	1	2,85
Service Quality in Higher Education	1	2,85
European Dimension of Quality Assurance in Higher Education	1	2,85
Academic Evaluation and Quality Development	1	2,85
Total	35	100

Table 6 presents the themes and the distribution of the themes of the postgraduate theses on quality in education. Most studied theme was “Total Quality Management and Applications”. Most of the studies on the subject were conducted in the schools of Ministry of Education (MEB).

Table 7: Distribution of the Postgraduate Theses on Quality in Education by Purposes

Purposes	n	%
Determining the Opinions Related to the Total Quality Management Applications in the Schools of MEB	8	22,85
Researching the Total Quality Management Applications in Higher Education Institutions	2	5,71
Giving ideas on the total quality management applications in teacher unions	1	2,85
Determining the service quality perceptions of students who study at foreign language courses	1	2,85
Examining the significance of the correlation between content knowledge of Science and Technology teacher candidates and socio-scientific argumentation quality	1	2,85
Determining the correlation between social skill development of male children with Attention deficit/Hyperactivity disorder-Hyperactive-Impulsive and their perceived life quality	1	2,85
Evaluation of the service quality at schools within the context of parents opinions	1	2,85
Evaluation of the Baskent University Vocational School of Social Sciences Program of Tourism and Hotel Management in accordance with the total quality management principles	1	2,85
Determining the extent at which quality culture is experienced at schools and the variables that contribute to the formation of the quality culture in accordance with teacher perceptions	1	2,85
Determining the concrete quality of the buildings	1	2,85
Determining the depression levels of amputee individuals who do and don't do sports in terms of life quality by determining their depression and life quality levels	1	2,85
Setting quality standards for distant education	1	2,85
Preparing the higher education SERVQUAL scale	1	2,85
Determining the opinions on the quality standards in pre-school education institutions	1	2,85
Examining the difference between children with and without learning disability in terms of perceived life quality	1	2,85
Examining the university life quality of students in terms of some variables	1	2,85

Examining the quality assurance studies on higher education in Europe	1	2,85
Examining school life quality perceptions of primary school students	1	2,85
Examining the quality level and quality enhancement studies of education services in Turkish higher education services	1	2,85
Determining the perspectives on quality of the primary school with ISO 9001:2000 certificate of quality	1	2,85
Examining the marriage quality, motherhood quality; and the correlation between marriage quality, and motherhood quality among women	1	2,85
Evaluating the implementation of enhancing quality in education and career steps in terms of teachers' personal rights	1	2,85
Determining the opinions related to the enhancement of quality in preschool education	1	2,85
Defining students' perspectives related to the concepts of quality, qualified university, qualified education, qualified instructor	1	2,85
Determining the applicability of accreditation system in the faculties of education	1	2,85
Determining the perceived quality dimensions elated to the computed airport reservation and ticketing certificate program organized within the scope of commercial and ground services education	1	2,85
Studying the extent to which quality criteria defined by EAQUALS (Evaluation & Accreditation of Quality in Language Services) are applied in the teaching of English language in secondary education institutions in Turkey	1	2,85
Total	35	100

Table 7 presents the distribution of the purposes of the postgraduate theses on quality in education. The most common purpose among these purposes is “Determining the Opinions Related to the Total Quality Management Applications in the Schools of MEB”.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The highest number of theses on quality in education were written in 2012. The most commonly studied theme in the theses on quality in education was “Total Quality Management and Applications”. Most of these theses were conducted in the schools of MEB.

Total Quality Management (TQM) perception aims at continuous development and enhancement of all processes, products and services via complete participation basing on quality. The most important five components of it are: internal and external customer satisfaction, continuous enhancement, basing on data, determination of management, and participation of all parties. The basic condition for success is the handling and applying of these five elements with a systematic approach (Ceylan, 1997). TQM perception affected educational institutions deeply, as it affected all organizations. Education systems are questioned, and their structure, operation, and whole education process is reviewed according to this perception (Ozdemir, 1996). Unlike traditional management understanding, TQM projects a close cooperation with other educational organizations that provide input (student, teacher, and educational material). Because, as long as the “input” is not qualified, education cannot be at the desired quality. One of the most important conditions for adapting with the changes in the world is qualified education (Yildiz & Ardic, 1999).

The introduction of Total Quality Management Model to Turkish education system was the Project of National Education Development, supported by the World Bank. The purpose of this project was re-structuring of education system through all dimensions. As a result of the studies for the application of TQM in education management that started in 1995, “Total Quality Management Application Directions” and the project for the application of these directions were put into force in 1999. In 2001, “MEB Field Service TQM Application Project” was put into force, to be applied in MEB field organization and educational institutions. As stimulants for the implementation, prizes in two categories were started to be awarded as 2005-2006 academic year, as “Qualified School/Institution of the Year”, and “Qualified Team of the Year” (Aslan and Kucuker, 2011).

The highest number of theses on quality in education were written in 2012. The reason for this may be that after “MEB Field Service TQM Application Project” was put into force, prizes were started to be rewarded as of 2005-2006 academic year. And the theses on the subject matter could be completed only in 2012. The most frequently studies theme in the theses on quality in education was “Total Quality Management and Applications”. Most of these studies were conducted in the schools of MEB. The reason for that may be that TQM Project was put into force as of 1999 in MEB Central Organization, and as of 2001 in field organization.

The distribution of postgraduate theses on quality in education by year presents that, a thesis was written in 2001, and after 2006 to 2014, many studies were conducted on the subject matter.

Distribution of postgraduate theses on quality in education by institutes presents that the highest number of theses were written by students of Institutes of Social Sciences, which is followed by Institutes of Educational Sciences. The reason for Institutes of Social Sciences being in the first place is that, many theses written in institutes of educational sciences were completed in institutes of Social Sciences. The second reason is that, theses written in the departments such as Management, Tourism Management, Economy, Public Administration were also conducted in the institutes of Social Sciences. Moreover, most postgraduate theses on quality in education were written by the students of “Educational Sciences” and “Management” departments.

The importance of TQM in the field of Management is increasing day by day. Because, businesses today are in great competition because of the rapid changes in technology. In our time, following technological developments daily is difficult. In such a time, businesses can only succeed with different management styles and implementations. This fierce competition made businesses compete with the businesses that are not even in the same sector. Under this fierce competition, one of the most important developments that gave hope businesses is TQM philosophy (Kaya, 2009).

The distribution of postgraduate theses on quality in education by purposes reveals that, the most common purpose of these theses is “Determining the Opinions Related to Total Quality Management Implementations”. Because, both schools of MEB, and higher education institutions place more emphasis on total quality management studies today.

As is the case with other countries, the demand for higher education is increasing everyday, which led to the increasing of studies for quality evaluation and forming an accreditation systems, since maintaining and enhancing the standards is getting more and more difficult (Kavak,1999).

Consequently, the highest number of postgraduate theses on quality in education were completed in 2012. The most common theme studied in these theses was “Total Quality Management and Implementations”. Most of these studies were conducted in the school of MEB and then universities. The most common purpose among these postgraduate theses on quality in education was “Determining the Opinions related to the Total Quality Management Implementations”. Determining the opinions related to service and life quality followed this as a purpose.

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