TOJQIH
The Online Journal of Quality in Higher Education

The Online Journal of Quality in Higher Education

Volume 4 Issue 3
July 2017

www.tojqih.net
July 2017

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Published in TURKEY

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A STUDY ON SYNCHRONIZED CLASSROOM OF NATIONAL UNION OF NETWORKED TEACHER EDUCATION IN CHINA

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ABSTRACT
Synchronized Classroom of National Union of Networked Teacher Education (NUNTE) is an online education model which breaks through the barriers of relatively closed traditional university teaching methods and makes it possible to share high-quality teacher education resources among universities in China. Under this new model, unified standards for shared courses management, technical supports, and teaching resource services have been set up, and the interscholastic curricula-selecting and the credit mutual-recognition are also accomplished. A questionnaire survey by NUNTE shows that the students generally regard the Synchronized Classroom as a very creative online education model and expect that it can be applied to more students by further improvement.
Keywords: Synchronized Classroom, National Union of Networked Teacher Education, Teacher Education Resources, Teaching Model, Interscholastic Study

INTRODUCTION

During the Period of the Tenth Five-year Plan, China's higher education gross enrollment rate reached over 15%, which indicated that the China's higher education had entered the stage of mass education (Maoyuan PAN, Haitao XIAO, 2008). In 2015, the total scale of higher education in China reached 36.47 million with the gross enrollment rate of 40% (Ministry of Education of China, 2016). However, with the continuous scale expansion of higher education, there are two problems which need to be solved. The one is that the increase of education resources cannot keep pace with the massive growth of higher education scales, resulting in a declined tendency of the per capita hold of education resources of students. The other one is the uneven allocation of education resources due to the factors such as economy, culture, history and geography. These two problems adversely affect the quality of higher education. Therefore, how to make more efficient use of the limited education resources (especially high-quality education resources) is an important issue for the health development of the higher education in China.

In 2003, 14 members including national wide normal universities and related educational institutions joined efforts together and set up the National Union of Networked Teacher Education (NUNTE). As a collaborative association of sharing high-quality education resources with a set of teacher education system, satellite television and the Internet, NUNTE is committed to break through traditional self-sufficient educational condition, to improve the quality of talent training and to balance the allocation of higher education resources by sharing the high-quality teacher education resources among universities (Huaying BAO, Wenfeng HUANG, 2012).

As a significant trial to sharing the higher education resources, NUNTE initiated Synchronized Classroom within 8 normal universities for full-time students (among these students, 94% were Tuition-Free Normal College Students) since the fall semester of 2012.

BASIC SITUATION OF SYNCHRONIZED CLASSROOM OF NUNTE

The Model of Synchronized Classroom of NUNTE

The Synchronized Classroom is a kind of teaching model which is carried out based on Internet and satellite transmission, using multiple internet technologies including live video, bidirectional interaction, cloud computing service, etc. In the implementation process, Synchronized Classroom captures video frames from live broadcast classroom in one university, and then pushes the video frames to the cloud servers. The cloud servers finally deliver these video resources synchronously to the long-distance classrooms located in other 7 normal universities. This model is a creative teaching paradigm by which multi-universities can have the same class at the same time.

As a new teaching model, the Synchronized Classroom combines traditional classroom teaching with long-distance education and thus requires higher standards for the equipment of live broadcast classroom, teaching teams, educational management, and the technical supports. The live broadcast university not only has to pay attention to the response from the students in the live broadcast classroom, but also pay attention to the feedback from the students of other 7 long-distance classrooms.

Technical Architecture and Implementation Process of Synchronized Classroom of NUNTE

The technical architecture of Synchronized Classroom of NUNTE is shown in Figure 1. The live broadcast classroom pushes video frames to the cloud platform through the Internet or bidirectional satellite. The cloud platform then distributes the same captured video frames to the long-distance classrooms. This technical architecture enables the teacher in the live broadcast classroom to have interactions with the students in the long-distance classrooms.

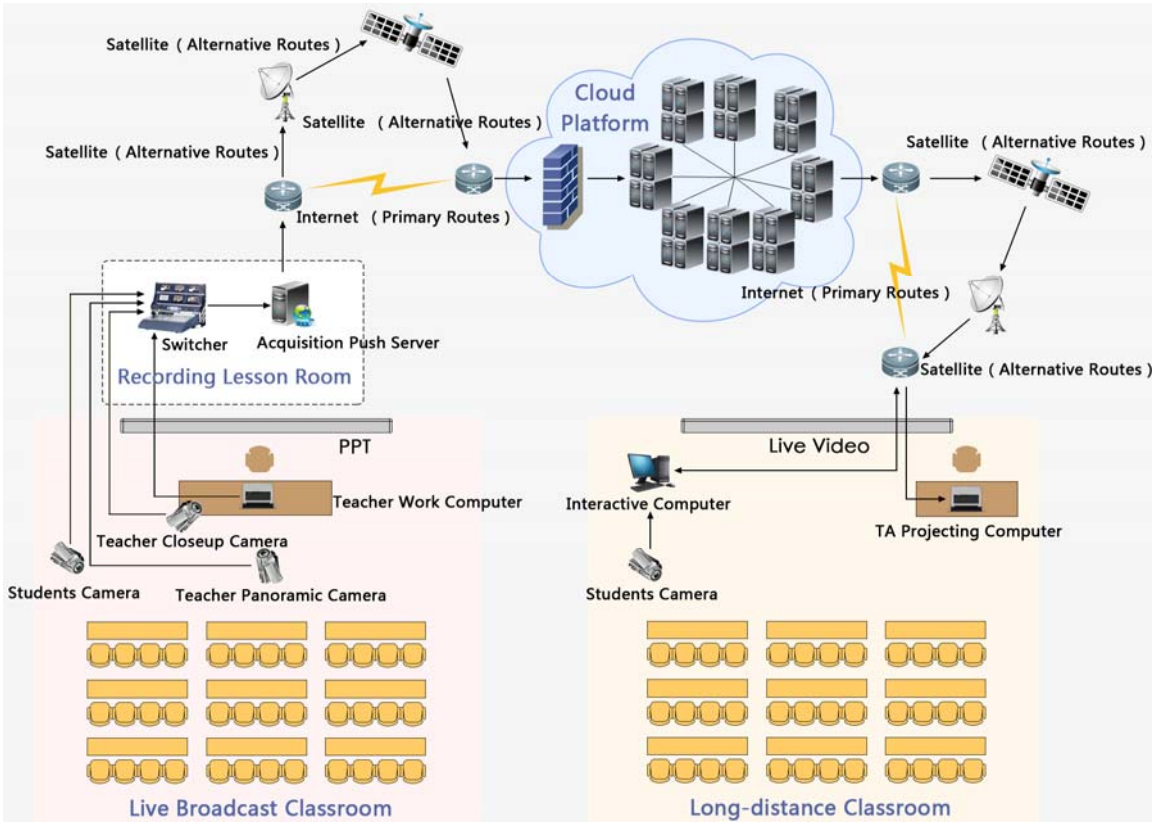

Figure 1: Technical Architecture of Synchronized Classroom of NUNTE

The implementation of Synchronized Classroom contains three stages: Preparation Stage, Teaching Stage and Feedback Stage. In the Preparation Stage, teachers need to prepare the teaching materials. Technicians need to debug live broadcast classroom equipment, as well as other tutors and educational personnel are responsible for providing supports. In the Teaching Stage, Video Acquisition Push Severs start operating while the teacher in the live broadcast classroom gives the lessons. The long-distance interaction is also available in this stage. The Feedback Stage is to provide teaching supports of video playback, to collect students' questions and then to organize further discussion. The implementation process of synchronized classroom of NUNTE is shown in Figure 2.

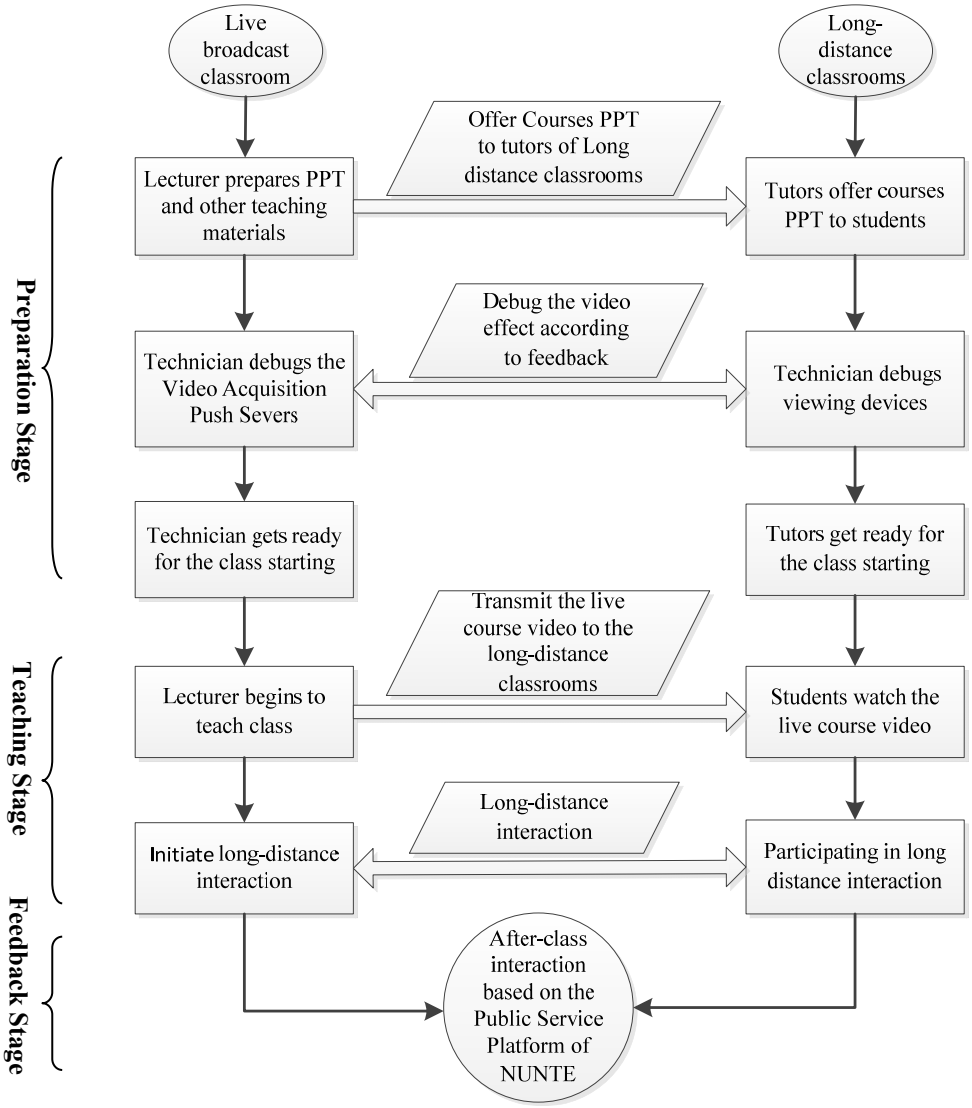

Figure 2: Implementation Process of Synchronized Classroom of NUNTE

Interscholastic Curricula-selecting of Synchronized Classroom of NUNTE

Through the Synchronized Classroom NUNTE opened 10-12 shared courses every year in the School Year from 2012 to 2015. Within 6 semesters, there were 14,823 students who selected shares courses. Taking the 2012-2013 School Year for example, the interscholastic shared courses and the number of students who selected the courses are listed in Table 1. It is clear that among the total of 4,065 students who participated in the shared courses, 74% of them selected the courses that were opened by other universities. The total number of students who selected the 2013 Spring Semester courses increased 46.7% compared to the number of students who selected the 2012 fall semester courses.

Table 1: Interscholastic Shared Courses and the Number of Students of Synchronized Classroom of NUNTE in 2012-2013 School Year

Semester	Universities* as Live Broadcast Classroom	Shared Courses	The Number of Students Selecting Shared Courses**	
			Total Numbers	The Number of Students Selecting Courses from Other Universities
2012 Fall Semester	ECNU	Classroom Management	380	365
	NENU	Educational Psychology	445	295
	CCNU	Household Pedagogy	202	172
	SNNU	curriculum and teaching theory	331	291
	SWU	Technique and Art of Teaching Behavior	290	112
	Semester Total		1648	1235
2013 Spring Semester	BNU	Pedagogy	349	232
	ECNU	Aesthetics of Teacher	392	353
	NENU	Sociology of Education Study	391	248
	CCNU	Household Pedagogy	242	206
	SNNU	Psychology	466	326
	SWU	Class Construction and Management	577	403
	Semester Total		2417	1768
Total in 2012-2013 School Year			4065	3003

Note: *BNU-Beijing Normal University, ECNU- East China Normal University, NENU- Northeast Normal University, CCNU-Central China Normal University, SNNU-Shaanxi Normal University, SWU- Southwest University, SCNU-South China Normal University, FJNU-Fujian Normal University.

**The numbers include 249 students from SCNU and FJNU.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SYNCHRONIZED CLASSROOM OF NUNTE

As an innovative teaching model, the Synchronized Classroom effectively breaks the self-enclosed traditional teaching of universities and promotes the bidirectional interaction among universities. The characteristics of Synchronized Classroom model are as follows.

Specifications of Shared Courses Management

High-quality course resources crucially guarantee the sustainable development of Synchronized Classroom of NUNTE. The shared courses of Synchronized Classroom are firstly recommended by universities with the live broadcast classroom and then accredited by NUNTE before being brought into the coming semester's curricula selecting plan of universities. Meanwhile, the universities are responsible for organizing students to select the shared courses especially the interscholastic courses. Thus, NUNTE made the unified specifications on high-quality course resources, including teaching team, basic resources, curricula time, curriculum categories and credit transfer, etc. (Table 2).

Table 2: Unified Specifications of Shared Courses of Synchronized Classroom of NUNTE

Items	Specifications
Teaching Team	· Organize the rational structure of teaching team which consists of lecturers, 1-2 tutors as well as technicians in each class. · Select the lecturers who should be competent in academic foundations and have rich experience in teaching skills.
Basic Resources	· Include curricula description, syllabus, teaching plan (or PPT), key points elaboration, question explanations, assignments, reference material, live broadcast classroom video, etc., which should be timely released on the Public Service Platform of NUNTE for students.
Curricula Time	· Unify the time of the first live broadcast class on the consideration of different curricula time among universities.
Curriculum Categories and Credit Transfer	· Give priority to 1-2 credit courses and characteristic courses to be as the shared courses. · Account 1 NUNTE credit to 15-18 study hours. · Transfer and recognize credits of shared courses mutually among the participated universities.

Unified Technical Standards

The technical supports play an extremely important role in the success of the innovative practice of the Synchronized Classroom of NUNTE. Therefore, NUNTE established a series of technical standards for the implementation of Synchronized Classroom as follows:

- Live broadcast classroom standard
- Long-distance classrooms standard
- Video acquisition and push sever standard
- The hardware and software standards of classroom
- Other standards for cloud service technical supports from technicians.

NUNTE regulated that for the live broadcast classroom, the video acquisition and push sever should have a fixed public IP, and the classroom should possess above 2M bandwidth of independent TDD (non-shared) to ensure that the network speed could satisfy the smooth broadcasting. The long-distance classrooms should possess above 1M Network access speed which enables students to visit video website and to watch live broadcast classroom video smoothly. Every single classroom has an independent QQ account (one of the popular instant messenger tools developed by Tencent Ltd. in China) for the online interaction. NUNTE supports the universities' hardware environments by distributing the video acquisition push sever and installing bidirectional satellite stations for 8 classrooms. NUNTE also constitutes a central technician team to monitor the implementation process of the Synchronized Classroom, collect the effective feedback of live broadcast video and deliver the results after each class on time.

Well-established Teaching Support Services

NUNTE has set up requirements and clarified responsibilities for classroom tutors to ensure the teaching quality. There is at least one tutor to work as teaching assistants in every classroom. The tutor in the live broadcast classroom is responsible for preparing the teaching materials for the lecturer, promptly conveying the feedback and suggestions from the long-distance classroom students to the lecturer, and collecting students' questions in the long-distance interaction period. The tutor in the long-distance classroom is responsible for the classroom management, assessment and evaluation, and teaching resource services. The students who are absent from the classroom due to some special reasons are allowed to watch synchronized classroom video via laptop, iPad, smart phone and other mobile devices under the teacher's authority.

More than just providing synchronous interactions between live broadcast classroom and audience classroom, the Learning Management System (LMS) module on the Public Service Platform of NUNTE is also available for after-class interactions and constant learning activities. The tutor and the teacher of live broadcast classroom can upload the teaching resource and answer questions through the LMS. Generally, synchronized classroom video is supposed to be retained on the LMS for at least two weeks. In this way, students can login to the LMS and watch live broadcast classroom video, post questions and participate in online learning activities. Under the learning through the Synchronized Classroom and the participation on the LMS, teachers and tutors can evaluate their students on the use of both process and summative assessment.

QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SYNCHRONIZED CLASSROOM OF NUNTE

At the end of June 2013, NUNTE initiated an anonymous questionnaire survey among the students who selected courses of the Synchronized Classroom in 2012-2013 School Year. 130 valid questionnaires have been received.

The statistical results showed that 82.5% of the students agreed that "Synchronized Classroom reflects an innovative approach to sharing high-quality educational resources". Furthermore, 81.7% of the students agreed that "Synchronized classroom enables us to experience varied teaching styles and to develop the interscholastic academic exchanges ".

In terms of the evaluation on teachers, 90.1% of the students satisfied with the teachers' professional ethics, and 91.4% of the students approved the teachers' academic proficiency.

For the evaluation related to the class teaching, the satisfaction rates of the course contents and teaching methods are 82.4 % and 85.6 %, respectively. Whereas nearly half of the students did not satisfy with the Synchronized Classroom interaction which means that the long-distance interaction needs to be enhanced.

On the aspect of the evaluation of teaching services, the tutor supports were praised by 77.1% of the students, while the satisfaction rates related to the tutor's learning guidance and class-assignment evaluation are both only 67.2%.

The survey also showed that the top four items among all the question selective items which are network speed, live video technology, course resources and learning guidance, need to be improved. The specific findings are represented in Figure 3.

Obviously, the technical support service is the most important factor that affects the performance of the Synchronized Classroom and the outcomes on the overall assessments of the Synchronized Classroom. Moreover, the immature mode of interscholastic course-selecting also tends to result in problems, including the difficulties in the sharing of the course resources and the ineffectiveness of learning guidance.

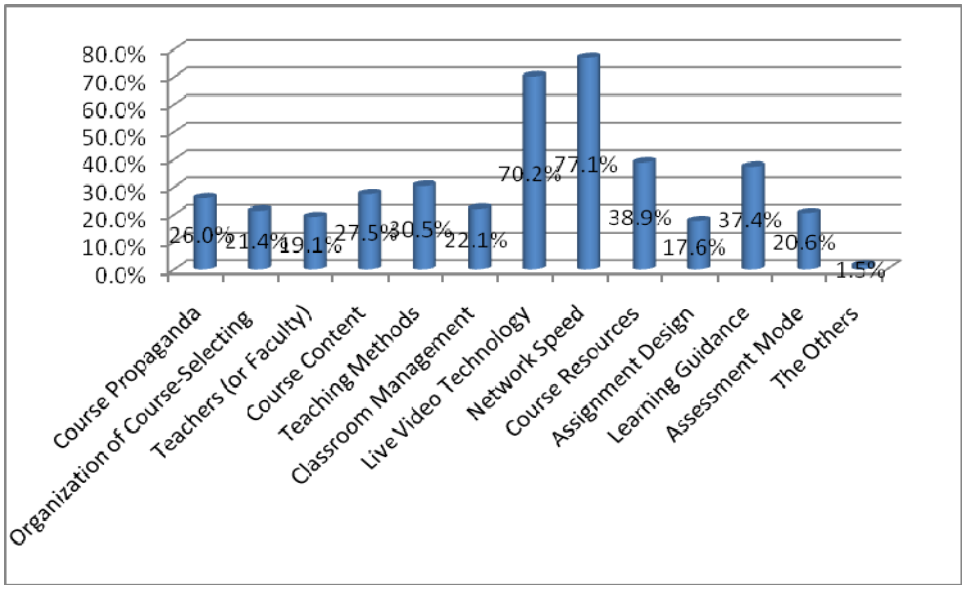

Figure 3: Results of the Survey for the Items that Should Be Improved

Furthermore, the questionnaires survey collected students' suggestions and expectations such as (1) enhancing long-distance interactions and after-class communication, (2) improving the function of switching frames of the live classroom video, (3) and optimizing the network environment. One student mentioned that "the Synchronized Classroom is very creative. It could make possible for education resource sharing and information sharing if applied properly. I hope that the network technique will become more mature and achieve smooth and stable visual effects, enabling more students to experience various learning in different atmosphere".

CONCLUSIONS

Synchronized Classroom of NUNTE is an innovative teaching model for boosting the sharing of higher education resources. It breaks through the barriers of relatively closed traditional teaching methods among universities, and sets up the unified standards for shared courses management, technical supports, and teaching resource services, achieving the interscholastic curricula-selecting and the credit mutual-recognition in practice. However, at the present stage, the level of technical supports is still the crux of the effective implementation of the Synchronized Classroom of NUNTE.

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INDICATORS FOR QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION: COMPARISON BETWEEN PAKISTAN AND GERMANY

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ABSTRACT
There is a strong relationship between knowledge management, quality practice, indicators and quality in the higher educational system. It would help to create the learning environment which would enhance the qualified graduates, skilled persons, who facilitate their countries in its progress. It is needed to realize the importance of knowledge management of quality indicators in Higher Education and its impact on the quality of Higher Education. Knowledge management of quality indicators can be between institutes at national level and also between the international institutions of developed and developing countries. Nevertheless, using only a few indicators to evaluate universities in different countries and cultures seems not to be adequate, as not only the institutions and cultures are diverse but so are the interests and demands of students, too. It will be a central challenge for university rankings in the future to judge more differentiated and to respect different cultures and traditions as well as local demands and different kinds of research.

INTRODUCTION

International rankings in higher education compare universities all over the world with respect to their performance in research and teaching. Meanwhile, rankings are a central and often criticized instrument for developing images of universities, while their initial idea to provide information for international students to choose the best university is still alive. This idea assumes that the quality of higher education can be compared across countries and cultures without looking closer on national educational systems, local history and culture. It is obvious that these background variables have a strong impact on teaching and research in universities but the central question is, if it is possible to evaluate all universities all over the world with the same set of indicators. To put it in other words: Are there indicators which seem to be relevant for all universities, no matter where they are located?

HIGHER EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM OF DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

To explore this question by comparing two quite different higher education systems. Germany stands here for a highly developed educational system with a long tradition in higher education as some of the oldest universities of the world can be found here. Currently at least two or three German universities can be found regularly among the top 100 universities in international rankings and Germany seems to be attractive for students from abroad, even if there are more outgoings than incomes. Pakistan in contrast stands for a quite young higher education system that has been expanded seriously during the last decades but is still on the way to find its place in the global competition of higher education. In some respects the higher education system in Pakistan is comparable to developing countries, in some respects it has evolved significantly.

Different aspects of quality of higher educational systems of Germany and Pakistan will be described in a comparative perspective.

HIGHER EDUCATION OF PAKISTAN

Pakistan is an independent country since 1947. At the time of independence the condition of Higher Education of Pakistan was very precarious. There was only one university, the Punjab University in 1947 (Khawaja, 1996). At that time an institution “University Grants Commission (UGC)” had been established, which accredited the universities in Pakistan. This institution was revised in 1974. It came in its modern form as “Higher Education Commission (HEC)” in 2002. HEC is an independent, autonomous and constitutionally established institution of primary funding, overseeing, regulating and accrediting the Higher Education efforts in Pakistan. HEC played a vital role to enhance the standard of Higher Education.

Furthermore, in Pakistan only 3 per cent of the age cohort of 17-23 years was enrolled in colleges and universities. This is one of the lowest ratios anywhere in the world. Therefore, the deficiency in quality of Higher Education has been noticed, which was/is alarming for the survival of the quality of Higher Education. Thus, for the significant improvement and to enhance the quality of Higher Education, Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan has established “Quality Enhancement Cells (QECs)” at ten public sector universities in 2006. In 2007-08 twenty more QECs were established in the public sector universities for improvement of their academic, teaching and learning standards. These cells were extended to other fifteen public sector and seventeen private sector universities in 2009-10. To establish the QEC's in the remaining universities is in process (HEC, 2010).

QULITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION OF PAIKISTAN

A lot of efforts have been done for the enhancement in the quality of Higher Education of Pakistan, such as quality of staff and faculty (Abedor, 1987). For the faculty development, the focus is on the knowledge, skills sensitivities of the candidates. Furthermore, the organizational developmental aspect has also been considered to seek the change in the structure of Higher Education. For the instructional development the focus is on systematic design. The beginning of teacher training programs such as pre-service training programs, in-service training programs seminars, conferences and workshops are also included in the quality of Higher Education of Pakistan.

In other factors of quality of Higher Education of Pakistan the quality of students such as admission on merit, control of student progress in the class etc., quality of curriculum, like updated learning material, quality of infrastructure, well equipped laboratories, classrooms, libraries etc., quality of management and governance: Decision making, organizing, staffing, planning, controlling, communicating, directing (Hawkins, 1993; Drucker, 1974), quality of accountability (Massey, 1992), are included. But the question is how far it is implemented in the Higher Education system of Pakistan. Few researches have been done on that.

Conclusions of these researches criticize the quality of Higher Education, while the governmental reports show a positive and satisfactory picture of Higher Education. Ground realities are totally others. So it can be said that the assessment of the quality of education is quite a new subject on Pakistan, though all the universities are subject to financial audit annually; however, traditions of academic audit in many universities are non-existent. There is now a realization that the quality of students, teachers and flawed institutional framework are the main contributing factors in determining the quality of Higher Education of Pakistan. The quest for quality has become a watchword all over the world: this aspect too has recently received an urgent attention in Pakistan. Also due to this aspect other important steps such as the internationalization of Higher Education, marketing of Higher Education by foreign universities, proliferation of Higher Education institutions, competition from the private sector institutions, diminishing financial public resources, expanding size of middle class population and the ability of the people to pay for their education, and the greater accountability have been taken in the meanwhile by Higher Education Commission (HEC).

PROBLEMS IN THE QUALITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION OF PAKISTAN

The importance of Higher Education is also a political agenda but not in top political priorities in Pakistan. Pakistan spends only 2.7% of its GNP instead of 4 % recommended by UNESCO for all developing countries (UNDP, 2002). That means Pakistan paid dearly for neglecting education. That's why Pakistan unfortunately even after 67 years of its existence does not find itself in an enviable position. Even Pakistani Higher Education is struggling through Higher Education Commission (HEC) to improve its quality, but it is still a common perception that the quality of education in Pakistani universities is not according to the international standard and that's why it has deteriorated rapidly. A main reason can be that the system is not responding to a large number of in-puts (which are mentioned above) made for raising the quality.

In some obvious and other reasons, education is not one of top priority of the government. Further, the level of competence and dedication of the teachers stemming from poor remuneration and lack of social status, poor standard of students selection or intake from the schools and colleges. Outdated curricula and learning material, old teaching methods and lack of teaching aids, quipped laboratories and libraries, lack of discipline amongst the student, the teachers and the subordinate staff. According to Iqbal, ineffective governance and management structures and practices, inefficient use of available resources, inadequate funding, poor recruitment practices and inadequate development of faculty and staff, inadequate support for research, politicization of faculty, staff and students, strong skepticism about the realization of reform are other important issues of the quality of Higher Education in Pakistan. (Iqbal, 2003).

University teachers are main factor in the quality of Higher Education of Pakistan (HEC, 2002). Because university teachers accepted challenges and extra workload if they received extra financial reward (Arshad, 2003), but his research showed that there is no system of training for university teachers in Pakistan. Here it can be said that the original research is the neglected field at Pakistani Universities. That's why only 26% of the faculty possesses Ph.D. (UGC, 1987), which is fundamental factor to conduct the research at university. But in the meanwhile HEC has started from 2002 scholarship schemes to send the academics and students abroad for PhD. According to a statistic from the independency of Pakistan 1947 till 2002, in 50 years there were only about approx. 4000 PhD holders, after the establishment of HEC in 2002, from 2002 to 2012 the numbers of PhD holders went only in 10 years double to approx. 8000 (HEC, 2012). But there is again the question of its effect on the quality of Higher Education of Pakistan. This significant quick raising in numbers of PhD holders in Pakistan is due to HEC Scholarship scheme. But how relevant and applicable are the researches of these scholars in Pakistani Higher Education, who did their PhD abroad? A pilot study showed that the academics, who did

their research from abroad cannot apply their research at Pakistani Universities on their returning, because of the significant gap between the research level of Pakistan and the international institutes (Anonymous, 2014). There is missing some communication between inter-institutes and institutes of developing and developed countries, and also culture fit research etc.

Another indication from Malik is that the students, parents and even teachers are not satisfied with teaching standard, physical and research facilities, poor library support, and ill equipped laboratories. (Malik, 2002). According to Moosa & Saeed, there is also the deficiency of the appropriate framework for quality assurance and use of proper quality tools in universities (Moosa & Saeed, 2003), while Kalam (2003) indicated the absence of periodic meetings of all statutory bodies, which he found a basic quality principle. (Kalam, 2003).

INIDICATORS FOR THE QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION OF PAKISTAN

Higher educational policy making is a very important aspect for the quality of Higher Education, because all the planning, implications, controls, results etc. are included in this policy making discussion and indicators can be effectively used for policy decisions (Cohen, 1980). In Pakistan National Educational Policy in 1979 had been decided that the universities would be facilitated with adequate educational scientific equipment and laboratories facilities, libraries with update equipment. A national System for admission in a university has been developed and launched (Read Pakistan, 2015). Pre- and In-service teacher training programs had been organized by the national academy of Higher Education. And the standard amendment in university act has been made for the betterment of the university management.

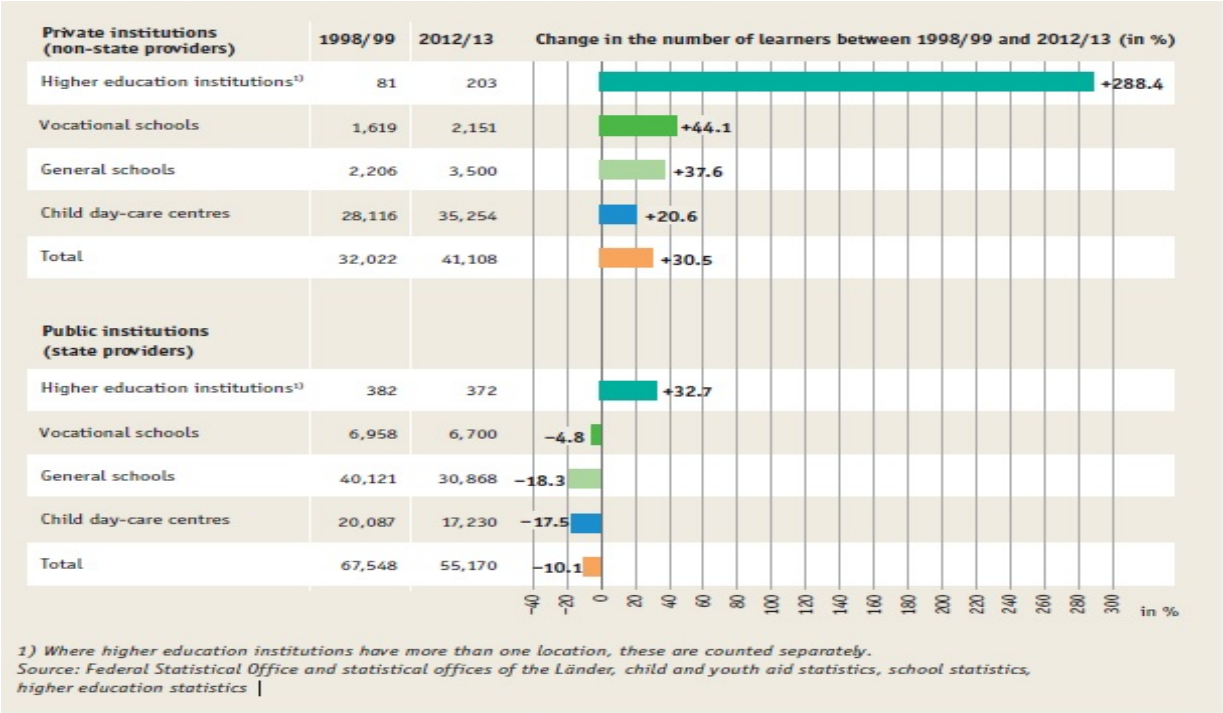
According to the factors/indicators which had been decided in the national education policy 1979, the first university in the private sector, the Agha Khan University was established in 1983, then Lahore university of management science (LUMS) in 1985. This has set the trend for establishment of other private universities in the private sector according to these standard indicators. Factors like the administration management, quality of teachers, accreditation, student clubs, and 80% attendance strict call have also been included in policy in 1992. 1998-2010 policy brought additional to upgrade the quality of Higher Education by bringing teaching, learning and research process in line with international standards. Furthermore quality of students like standard of student intake and infrastructure e.g. curricula are considered as the major quality factors of Higher Education. For all these things policy making and its implementation is a very important issue. It can also assumed that there is no uniform implementation criteria of HEC for universities. Although the universities are passing through a transition period e.g. due to lack of enough financial resources, the proper yardstick of HEC to assess the quality of the universities is violated badly by the institutes. For example private universities violate the standard criteria for selection of the appropriate faculty members and for the admission of students. Public universities have competitive faculty compared to private institutes but the infrastructure of public universities is not so standard. So both public and the private universities have strengths and weaknesses. It is responsibility of HEC to develop and maintain the standard uniform quality criteria. This is to ensure the provision of quality education at Pakistani Universities. Nevertheless it is now quite interesting to know about the quality of a higher educational system of Germany.[1]

SHORT INTRODUCTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION OF GERMANY

There are different higher educational institutes with equivalent status in Germany, which provide the different types of Higher Education. The higher educational institutes are based on universities, universities of applied sciences and colleges of art and music. These institutes are accredited and are private, state higher educational institutions and financed and run by state, recognized private institutions, the protestant and catholic churches. Some universities are area specific such as Medicine, Art, and Technology. Whereas the practical work contained area of Engineering, Business and Social Sciences have been offered by applied sciences universities which are mostly private higher educational institutes of this country. However, the overall educational institutes have been decreased, but the Higher Educational institutes in Germany have risen to 24% from 1996/7 (Bildungsbericht, 2014). Due the founding of in the meanwhile large number of applied universities, but with less number of students the number of higher educational institutions becomes more and more. Students are mostly being registered in state universities. One reason can be the significant rising number of study courses on offer, which are approximately 9500 Bachelor and 7000 Master programs (Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung (2014), Bildung in Deutschland 2014). And the rising number of students is shown in following figure:

[1] Why Germany, and Pakistan the reasons has been described above.

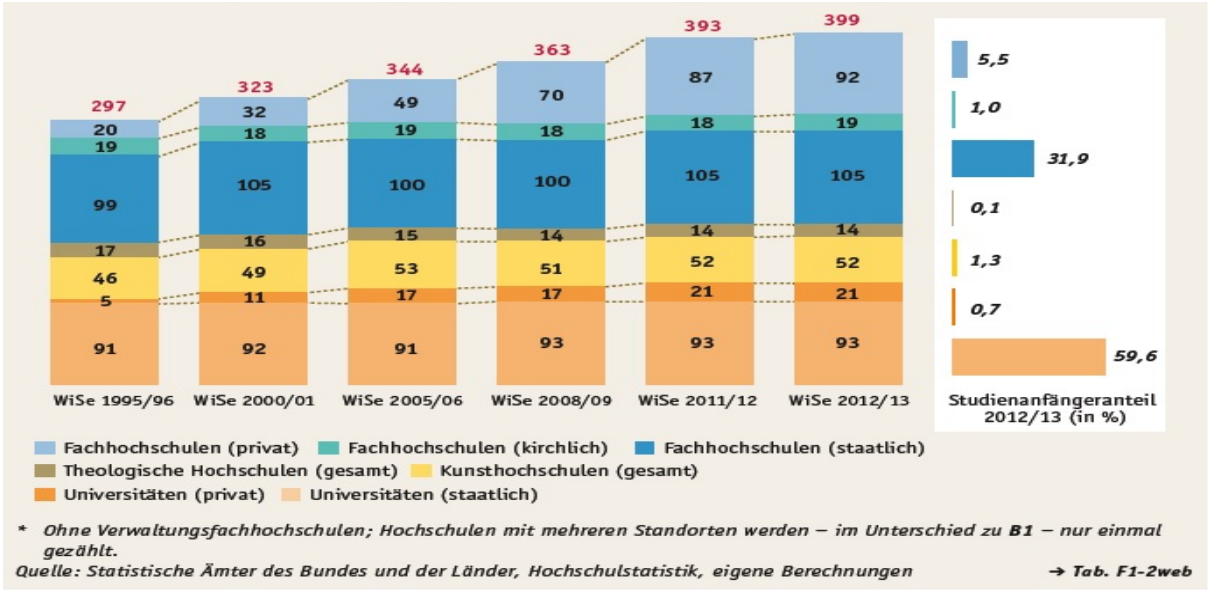
Figure 1: Changes in the number of education institutions and learners between 1998/99 and 2012/13



Source: Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung (2014), Bildung in Deutschland 2014.

In addition, another figure shows the gradually rising number of higher educational institutes.

Figure 2: Number of higher educational institution rate of first-year students winter semester 1995 until 2012/13



Source: Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung (2014), Bildung in Deutschland 2014.

It is a quick view of the rising number and types of higher educational institutes in Germany. Although in the meanwhile in Pakistan, the number of higher educational institutes and in it offered subjects are being raised, which has been mentioned above. However, these are much more less than in Germany. The number and types of higher educational institutes and in it offered subjects in Germany are much more than in Pakistan. There is also big difference between the qualities of higher educational institutes of both countries. Pakistani higher educational institutes are not as qualitative compared to Germany, among the basic reason can be the over flow

of population and very limited sources and insufficient budget for education (UNESCO, 2011; HEC, 2010). Indicators for the quality of Higher Education in Pakistan have been discussed above. In the following the indicators for the quality of Higher Education in Germany will be discussed.

INDICATORS FOR QUALITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN GERMANY WITH A GLIMPSE OF COMPARISION WITH PAIKISTAN

In German Higher Education, research and teaching are being considered among others as main indicators for the quality of Higher Education, while in Pakistan although teaching is considered as an indicator for the quality of Higher education but research is unfortunately not a prominent indicator. Somehow these both indicators (research and teaching) in higher educational institutes are evaluated since the amendment of the framework act of Higher Education in 1998 (Lohmar & Eckhardt, 2012), but until the end of 1980s the process to evaluate and to improve the quality of teaching, learning and research has not been started in German Higher Education. However, there are two types of this evaluation, external and internal (Lohmar & Eckhardt, 2014; Hochschulrektorenkonferenz, HRK, 2015). Further in German educational system has been described that „In Germany a two-tiered system of evaluation is widely applied which combines internal and external evaluation. The internal evaluation consists of a systematic inventory and analysis of teaching and studying, taking account of research, performed by the individual department or the faculty and concludes with a written report. On this foundation, an assessment by external experts takes place who also lay down their findings and recommendations in a written final report"(Lohmar & Eckhardt, 2012). In that sense evaluation can also be considered as the indicator for the quality of Higher Education in Germany. As mentioned above, the internal evaluation is very week in Pakistani higher educational institutes, some institutes are not doing that, while German higher educational institutes practice this also themselves (Neave, 1988), Higher Education Commission of Pakistan has forced the institutes to do the evaluation. In external evaluation at Pakistani Institutes is teaching in main focus of Higher Education Commission (HEC, 2014), for that purpose learning innovation section of Higher Education Commission of Pakistan offers many courses to improve the teaching competence of university teachers and then evaluate teaching quality through professors and researchers of other institutes. It can be called external evaluation, but international evaluation is still missing as another indicator for the quality of Higher Education in Pakistan. In German Higher Education the international evaluation is also included in external evaluation. Furthermore, two more indicators for the quality of Higher Education in Germany are the higher educational policy, which focus on the student learning outcome and second students' learning outcomes (Brennan & Shah, 2000), one more indicator, students' criticism on teaching can be considered an indicator for the quality of Higher Education in Germany. These indicators play a vital role to improve or decrease the quality of Higher Education. In Pakistani Higher Education the deep and close relationship between policy and for which indicator is this policy, is not intensive as in German Higher Education. According to the policy for the student learning outcomes a specific level of knowledge, skills, which can be personal and interpersonal skills (Federal Ministry of Education & Research, 2015), and abilities in a particular educational program should be achieved by a student (Dill & Soo, 2005). Exactly at that point another indicator for the quality of Higher Education in Germany connects itself, which is the family background of the student. Either student has a migrant background, then he needs more time to learn than a native speaker. So that point is also being considered as indicator for the quality of Higher Education in Germany. More deep, specific and sub-indicator of learning outcome of a student with a migrant background can be the equity and quality for all students at all level of education in Germany. This indicator was/is helpful to improve the performance in all areas especially mathematics and socio-economic (PISA, 2012). In 2003, the percentage of low achiever in mathematics was 21.6 %, but in 2012 it decreased significantly to 17.7% (OECD, 2014).

Furthermore, educational monitoring, which can be considered as an indicator for the quality of Higher Education in Germany, had been introduced by standing educational conference in June 2006. This indicator consists of further four areas, which are participation of higher educational institutes in international comparative studies of pupil achievement, higher educational institutes review of achievement of educational standards in comparison between the countries, higher educational institutes comparative studies nationally and internationally to review the efficiency of institutes, joint education reporting of the federation and the countries (Kultusministerkonferenz – KMK, 2015). But in Pakistan as described above such kind of monitoring and on the basis of such kind of monitoring the betterment in the quality of Higher Education is still missing. International Standard accredition of master and bachelor courses, its curriculum is also an indicator for the German Higher Education (Schwarz & Westerheijden, 2004). Unfortunately, in Pakistan accreditation of master's and bachelor's courses does not meet the international standard; the reasons for that have been reported in the Pakistani section above.

These mentioned indicators for the quality of Higher Education in Germany and Pakistan showed a significant difference between the higher educational systems and their quality of both countries, although many Pakistani scholars and students come to Germany every year for their study and research. Due to the big gap between research and higher educational system, they cannot find some suitable way to convert their learning's in

Pakistani higher educational system on their returning after the completion of their mission (Anonymous, 2013). Cultural difference, communication gap between institutes and inter institutes can also play a role in this regard. Research cooperation especially in social sciences fields between two countries will be helpful to fulfill these differences and may also be helpful to improve the quality of higher education at Pakistani side and help for Germany to review their policy to make research cooperation and to take the students and scholars with their research from developing countries.

NEED OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT – QUALITY INDICATORS – HIGHER EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM OF DEVELOPED & DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

In the meanwhile quality in Higher Education has become the most permanent issue in both developed and developing countries. For that it is needed to provide the higher educational policy making continuously support of knowledge dimensions. It can be helpful to achieve the betterment in the quality of higher Educational system. For that it is necessary to analyze the quality indicator in Higher Education (Ankomah & Koomson & Bosu & Oduro, 2005). Further these analyses would be discussed to manage the knowledge dimension framework. It can organize qualitative knowledge education which would strengthen the higher educational system of developed and developing countries.

World Bank also emphasizes the importance of knowledge assessment between developed and developing countries. It helps the developed and developing countries to explore their talent and potential and contribute the knowledge revolution (Malhotra, 2003). Knowledge management positively revolutionizes the system of education of any country and inculcates awareness to explore innovative measures for implementation of beneficial educational system coupled with enhanced qualitative assurance for higher education.

Furthermore, Gyekye described that the categorizing the attained information, expertise and novel means of investigation are important to approach the institutional education of developed and developing countries according to their desire. (Gyekye, 2002). Furthermore, he emphasized the performance of these educational institutes which indicate their successes and its essentiality. And the performance of any institute can be assumed from the quality of its programs. UNICEF and UNESCO have mentioned five Dimensions to recognize the quality assurance in educational system, which are: 1. the environment, 2. the learners, 3. contents, 4. means and 5. Results. That finds the participation of youth and rights of their survival in practical life. (UNICEF, 2000; UNESCO, 2005).

According to Bishop the research activities, teaching and administration play a vital role in educational success and quality. (Bishop, 1992). Another aspect, the knowledge of subject of a teacher should be very high, it would be a good indicator for the learning and the success of students. (Darling & Hammond 2000). To access the high level of knowledge of respective subject and to understand is a problem of several developing countries, which directly impact on the quality of education. In the following table Dare has shown the indicators, their objectivity and formulation.

Figure 3: Formula for Determining Indicators of Education Quality

Indicator		Objective	Formula
1.	Student-teacher ratio	To measure the quality of education	**Number of students** / Number of teachers.
2.	Class size	To measure quality of education	**Number of students** / Number of classes.
3.	Percentage of qualified teachers	To measure the quality of education	**Number of qualified teachers** / Total number of teachers
4.	Survival rate	To evaluate educational efficiency	**Number of a cohort of students that achieve Grade 12** / Number of a cohort of students enrolled in Grade 1
5.	Repetition rate	To measure the efficiency of the educational system	**Number of repeating students** / Total number of students
6.	Percentage of educational expenditure in relation to GNP	To measure the efficiency of management system	**Educational expenditure** / GNP
7.	Proportion of "Specialized education" teachers in the teaching staff	To evaluate the weight of "specialist" Teachers in the teaching staff	**Number of specialist teacher** / Number of total teaching staff
8.	Proportion of expenditure on "specialized" education in the total expenditure	To measure the support of education policy on "specialized education"	**Expenditure on specialized education** / Total expenditure on education
9.	Expenditure on education	To measure the importance of policy	**Education expenditure** / Total expenditure
10	Per capita cost	To measure the cost of education	**Total expenditure** / Number of Students

Source: (Ankomah & Koomson & Bosu & Oduro, 2005)

CONCLUSIONS

There is a strong relationship between knowledge management, quality practice, indicators and quality in the higher educational system. It would help to create the learning environment which would enhance the qualified graduates, skilled persons, who facilitate their countries in its progress.

So it is needed to realize the importance of knowledge management of quality indicators in Higher Education and its impact on the quality of Higher Education. Knowledge management of quality indicators can be between institutes at national level and also between the international institutions of developed and developing countries. It would be helpful to learn from each other and to revisit the educational policies and make effective changes in it for the significant betterment in educational system.

Nevertheless, using only a few indicators to evaluate universities in different countries and cultures seems not to be adequate, as not only the institutions and cultures are diverse but so are the interests and demands of students, too. It will be a central challenge for university rankings in the future to judge more differentiated and to respect different cultures and traditions as well as local demands and different kinds of research.

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POSSIBILITY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM OF AZERBAIJAN: ANALYSIS OF THE BEST FOREIGN LANGUAGE AMONG STUDENTS' IN HIGHER PRIVATE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The objective purpose of the present article examines the possibility of foreign languages in the education system of Azerbaijan: which analyses and determining the most preferred foreign language for this matter. Azerbaijan is a country with traditions of multilingualism.

This research was conducted using descriptive quantitative method involving 301 students from two private Universities as participant. The instruments used for this research study are questionnaire to identify whether foreign language is supported among students in Azerbaijan, and which foreign language is preferred most. Moreover, it was sought to examine the relationship among variables of gender, social class, existing language skills, as well as attitudes to the target language preference.

It was found that foreign language learning is supported by participants, and English is the most preferred foreign language. It indicates that multilingual societies like Azerbaijan are supportive of language acquisition choices that help preserve and develop multilingualism. Moreover, it was found that attitude to foreign language learning itself differ due to income level and existing language skills.
Keywords: the English language, examine, Azerbaijan, attitude, the best foreign language learning, multilingualism

INTRODUCTION

The article presents and evaluates the concept and importance of the relationship or even the difference between the foreign languages especially English and Russian at our country (Baku, Azerbaijan). Examine the best foreign language in the education system of Azerbaijan, and determining the most preferred target language is the aim of this article.

The article focuses on the research that was done to measure the best dominant foreign language among Higher Education Institutions. Also article adopted to analyze the effectiveness of learning foreign languages among students in the bilingual context.

All languages in the world are ideal. For each country for each human beings their own language is ideal. Moreover, in some conditions a target language become an ideal or even native language. Each language constantly changing in that case continuing need for adaptation is more normal. What you wanted to say and how you said it – between content and expression is called an ideal language (*Finnegan, 3rd edition*). Author agrees with this point that, language is a great way of identifying the cultural characteristics, nationality and become ideal. Changing social and intellectual needs may cause people's speaking in other languages. Even changing the living place means changing language but with mixed surrounding. So, the language depends on its place and situation.

Learning a foreign language and really putting it to work – that will make us stand out. Not only children but also animals; birds, cats, dogs can imitate the sounds and patterns which they hear around. Moreover, humans continue to imitate and practice these sounds and patterns until they form "habits "of correct language use. This plays an important role in future life. By making this as "habit" of correct language child will get success in language learning (*Smolinski, 1993*). The paragraph discusses that; the study of language cannot be equated with the study of history or math because more than understanding; it involves adapting to certain custom of a different social group.

As the paper investigates, the language is dominant and leader the research also shows that foreign language is special and most frequently used one. It is first necessary to understand the resources that a language makes available to its **native speakers**, those who have acquired it as children in a natural setting. Because communication is not restricted, language must do something more than provide a package of ready-made messages. Language is more than communication. Language must be **creative** – allowing novelty and innovation in response to new experiences, situations and thoughts. In nation building language is an essential factor. When the language is in decline, the identity of a nation is in decline too. As a result, each language has a deep historical background related to its nation.

Multilingualism in Azerbaijan

When we talk or discuss about learning, language planning, *the best foreign language*, especially about styles in Azerbaijan, it is impossible to talk or to give an example from Soviet times (*Ulkar Shafiyeva & Sara Kennedy, 2010*). Azerbaijan's nation and language have a long history. Surviving invasion by the Russian Empire and then the Soviet Union, Azerbaijanis managed to preserve their national identity and native language. The period of seven decades under Soviet rule resulted in sociolinguistics problems for the country. The orthography of the Azerbaijani language was shifted to Cyrillic by the Russian Empire in 1939, close to the script of the Russian language. Notwithstanding all these pressures and stresses, Azerbaijani nation managed to preserve the national identity of its mother tongue, customs and traditions under Soviet rule.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan declared its independence from the Union. These years can be characterized as the times of nation building, language building, and reconstruction. During these years Azerbaijan has not only put forth a policy of improvement, but also as a young independent country has taken care of the ethnic minority languages within Azerbaijani borders.

Not surprisingly, Azerbaijan is the homeland of diverse ethno linguistic groups that speak languages of different family groups. According to the 1999 statistics in Azerbaijan, the minority groups were – Lezgins, constituting 2.2%, Russians 1.8%, Armenians 1.5%, Talysh 1.0%, Avar 0.6%, Tat 0.13%, Georgians 0.2%, Kurds 0.2%, Jews 0.1% and other nationalities 0.12% of the total population in Azerbaijan (Library of President. *The Population: 32*). These abovementioned ethnicities in Azerbaijan belong to the following language groups: North Caucasian, Indo-European, Afro-Asiatic and Kartvelian. According to the statistics of 1999, Lezgins were the biggest minority group in Azerbaijan. (*Balayev, 2007*).

In the contrast to the Soviet years, the minority nations were now given opportunities in their own languages. In 1992, article 6 of the 7th October law on Education and Article 3 of the state language law ensured the minority nations the rights and educational opportunities in their native tongues.

Nowadays, certain issues still remain in the improvement of the Azerbaijani language to be dominant. One of the current tasks on the paths toward language policy can be considered the need to decrease numerous Russian schools remaining as the part of the former Soviet Union "Russification" policy. Taking into account that, the numbers of Russian schools have not decreased in Azerbaijan nowadays, one may think that Russian has the same status as in the years of Soviet Union. According to the State Statistics Committee in Azerbaijani, the number of pupils attending state and private Russian schools was 108,240 pupils in the 2000-2001 year, and in the 2005-2006 years it constituted 108,737 pupils; moreover, beginning in the year 2006-2007 the number starts falling down to 108,257, while in 2009-2010 this figure is indicated to be 95,567 pupils (*State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan*). Taking into account the year 2009-2010, out of 1,260,600 pupils 95,567 pupils attended Russian state and private schools in Azerbaijan (*ibid*.).

Under Soviet rule, the Russian language played a role in nation building and as a language of policy. Russian was considered the state language along with Azerbaijani. Russian played the role of the lingua franca among 14 Soviet Union countries (including Russia, the Soviet Union countries numbered 15). The policy of the Soviet Union consisted of improvement of the Russian language among the union countries with the goal of gradually reaching the highest level, achieving Russophones in the union countries. However, according to the 1989 census 97.7 percent of Azerbaijan considered Azerbaijani their native and heritage tongue (*Grenoble, 2003*). Moreover, the majority of the elite consisted of Russophones. In 1959 in Azerbaijani 837 books were printed in Azerbaijan and 283 books were printed in Russia, while in 1979 the number of Azerbaijani books was 834 books (three books less than 1959), while Russian books numbered 430 books (147 books more than 1959) printed in Azerbaijan (*Balayev,2007*).

In that time, during Soviet Union, foreign language didn't have any need. Moreover, Russian language wasn't as a foreign language. At schools the saying Russian sector was more used and it was as a second language. People wanted their children to know beside mother tongue the well-used Russian language. So, with learning and educating our literature and history the Russian history and literature was educated well. Well organized policy shown with such ruling. The value of Russian language was high despite the fact that Azerbaijani held the status of a state language. The people with lack of Russian knowledge were considered less modern.

Without a doubt, the importance of the Azerbaijani language has significantly increased within 21 years of independence. Instead, the Russian language is in the process of steadily shifting to a widely used L2 (second language) along with English language among the population. The status of the Russian language is decreasing; the importance of English language is increasing in comparative terms with decades before. From this standpoint, some scholars maintain Russian and English languages as a threat to the national purity and threat to the development of titular languages in Azerbaijan (*Pavlenko, 2008*). From authors point of view, the importance of Russian in Azerbaijan can decrease and transfer to the L2 spoken status, if the number of Russian schools would increase. The next logical step, where the government should make a gradual change, is the field of primary and secondary education sectors.

The author concluded that, the importance and scale of the Russian language and Russophone population in Azerbaijan has diminished, but not significantly disappeared. The importance of the English language as a foreign language increased after the independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Moreover, Russian is still in use as a communication method rather than as a foreign language in the country. The amount of Russophone elites has diminished, but not disappeared. Among the growing generation, Azerbaijani is important. Moreover, there are still families that allow their children or grandchildren grow up in Russian. However, the improvement and enhancement of the language should be put into practice for the long term.

Overall, it can be said that, Azerbaijan has a relatively liberal linguistics setting with some signs of elite multilingualism. Moreover, in all cases population choose foreign language especially English for their better future conditions because, the modern life and modern circumstances make language wide use and much more demandable and also as a way of communication which is essential for better education, for better living, for better knowledge and even for better job. From that point learning a foreign language is so important and it will help fully establish Azerbaijani as the primary language of communication and facilitate the learning of desired languages on the other.

Previous Research

The study of gender is also one of the aspects that draw an attention in this research when it comes to attitude towards language learning in general. Wright (1999), Kobayashi (2002), Cenoz (2001) studies found significant differences between male and female attitude towards learning languages; girls demonstrated more positive attitude towards language learning compared boys. Cenoz (2001) and Merisuo-Storm (2007) found that achievement of students in second language learning depends on their attitude to a target language. The more positive attitude to foreign languages results in higher achievements of students in L2. Another similar research conducted by Papaja (2012), who studied the attitude of university students towards foreign language learning in Poland. On the national level, this paper represents a pioneering attempt to study the English language in Azerbaijan.

METHOD

Research Setting

The research site is considered among two private Universities; Khazar University and Qafqaz University in Baku, Azerbaijan. Both of them use English language as a second foreign language for instructions.

Khazar University was founded in 1991. It is a private educational institution for undergraduate, graduate and professional studies promoting advanced study and research, educational policy and development in the Republic of Azerbaijan. Survey at Khazar University was conducted on March 21st, 2015. Khazar was ranked first among Azerbaijan Universities according QS World University Rankings. Survey at Khazar University was conducted on March 10th, 2015. The sample students were selected randomly. 158 students questioned (n=158; female 96 (60.8%), male 62 (39.2%) mean age = 21 (86.1%))

Qafqaz University was founded in 1993, by decree of the Azerbaijani Republic's National Assembly and approval by the Cabinet of Ministers. In QS World University Rankings, it ranked second among Azerbaijani Universities

after Khazar University. Survey at Qafqaz University was conducted on April 21st, 2016. The sample students were selected randomly. 143 students questioned (n=143; female 63 (55.9%), male 80 (44.1%), mean age = 20 (86 %))

Research Questionnaire

The purpose of this investigation is to explore language planning, the best foreign language learning as second language in multilingual context. The questionnaire was self-developed by the author, who identified four main social factors (ethnic identity, age, sex, social class). According the distinct socio-linguistic group in Azerbaijan the survey questionnaire asks question on the language of secondary school, L1 acquisition in the Azerbaijani context. After the collection of data, answers were aggregated and codified for analysis. Furthermore, the study also examined among foreign language learners motivation and purpose. Following are the points that were studies:

1. Do you think is it necessary to learn a foreign language?
2. Which foreign language do you consider the best foreign language in Azerbaijan? 2a. Why?
3. Which foreign language do you know best? Circle the appropriate *number* from 1 to 8. (1-minimum \ 8-maximum)

See the Appendix A (Survey Questionnaire).

Sampling Method

This article focused its research on those people who are exposed to education and foreign languages. The data is quantitative and by one-way were analysis mean, mode, median, range, variance, standard deviation (SD), z-score and t-score.

The survey was conducted from 2015-2016 academic years for the purpose to determine the prevalence of the best foreign language. Students in various majors within the research sample were stratified through stratified sampling. Students with different majors for the conducted research were randomly selected. Participants involved in this study were 301 people from two private educational institutions (Khazar University and Qafqaz University) in Azerbaijan. These participants were purposively selected due to their interest being multilingual. The ages of the participants varied between 18 and 29. Survey questions were prepared in paper and distributed to each person personally. Ethical considerations of the research were taken into account: participants at the survey were voluntary; the participants were informed about the research and the future fate of the questionnaires.

Participants

Undergraduate students from two private educational institutions (Khazar University, Qafqaz University) participated at this survey.

Table 1. Observed frequencies: Gender

Gender of data	*Valid number & percent*
Male \0	171
including,	
Khazar University	62 (39.2)
Qafqaz University	80 (55.9)
Female \1	130
including,	
Khazar University	96 (60.8)
Qafqaz University	63 (44.1)
Total	301
Mean age (SD)	21 (86.0)

Totally, 301 valid responses were registered (female 159, male 142, mean age = 21, SD = 86.0) (See Table 1).

Data Analysis

IBM® SPSS® Statistics Data Editor (version.23) was used to conduct statistical analyses.

FINDINGS

Findings of statistical analyses on students' attitude to the best foreign language among two Higher Private Institutions (Khazar and Qafqaz University) in Azerbaijan are presented below.

Table 2. Observed frequencies: Age

Age of data	*frequency*	*valid percent*
Khazar University		
18-21 (0)	136	86.1
22-25 (1)	20	12.7
26-29 (2)	2	1.3
Missing	0	158
Total	158	100.0
Qafqaz University		
18-21 (0)	123	86.0
22-25 (1)	17	11.9

26-29 (2)	3	2.1
Missing	0	143
Total	143	100.0

The descriptive statistics tests revealed that the mean age (.1519), Std. Deviation (.39386), Variance (.155), and Range (2.00) for Khazar University. For Qafqaz University the mean age (.1608), Std. Deviation (.42211), Variance (.178) and Range (2.00) (See Table 2).

Table 3. Observed frequencies: Question 1. Do you think is it necessary to learn a foreign language (FL)?

Category	*frequency*	*valid percent*
Khazar University		
Yes (0)	155	98.1
No (1)	3	1.9
Missing	0	158
Total	158	100.0
Qafqaz University		
Yes (0)	136	95.1
No (1)	7	4.9
Missing	0	143
Total	143	100.0

The descriptive statistics tests revealed for question 1, that the mean (.1090), Std. Deviation (.13691), Variance (.019) and Range (1.00) for Khazar University. For Qafqaz University the mean (.0490), Std. Deviation (.21652), Variance (.047) and Range (1.00). The majority of participants answered YES. Out of 301 students 291 answered YES for necessity of learning a foreign language, 10 students indicated NO for the necessity of learning a foreign language. (see Table 3).

Table 4. Observed frequencies: Question 2. Which foreign language do you consider the best FL for Azerbaijan?

Category	*frequency*	*valid percent*
Khazar University		
English (0)	146	92.4
Russian (1)	7	4.4
Other (2)	5	3.2
Missing	0	158
Total	158	100.0
Qafqaz University		
English (0)	126	88.1
Russian (1)	10	7.0
Other (2)	7	4.9
Missing		
Total	143	100.0

The descriptive statistics tests revealed for question 2, that the mean (.1076), Std. Deviation (.40040), Variance (.160) and Range (2.00) for Khazar University. For Qafqaz University the mean (.1678), Std. Deviation (.48912), Variance (.239) and Range (2.00). The majority of participants preferred English. Out of 301 students 272 indicated English as the most preferred foreign language, 17 students indicated Russian as preferred, 12 students favored other language. (see Table 4).

Table 5. Observed frequencies: Question 3. Which foreign language do you know best?

Category	*frequency*	*valid percent*
Khazar University		
English (0)	127	80.4
Russian (1)	28	17.7
Other (2)	3	1.9
Total	158	100.0
Qafqaz University		
English (0)	131	91.6
Russian (1)	4	2.8
Other (2)	8	5.6
Missing		
Total	143	100.0

The descriptive statistics tests revealed for question 3, that the mean (.1076), Std. Deviation (.40040), Variance (.160) and Range (2.00) for Khazar University. For Qafqaz University the mean (.1678), Std. Deviation (.48912), Variance (.239) and Range (2.00). Students enrolled in private universities were more likely indicated as the best known language English. Out of 301 students 258 indicated English, 32 indicated Russian and 11students indicated as the best known language other. (see Table 4).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the main findings of the study, which are based on the results of the survey conducted to the students' in two Higher Private Educational Institutions. The research findings revealed a significant support of foreign language and indicated that English is the most preferred foreign language in Azerbaijan. These findings add further evidence to the existing literature that second language learning is feasible in multilingual settings. An overwhelmingly strong preference for English in Azerbaijan, where 90% of the population is bilingual in Russian

and Azerbaijani, adds new knowledge to the fact that bilingualism is thought to be not only beneficial for helping to acquire a third language, but also positively affects attitudes to learning of a third language in general. Moreover, there was a statistically significant relationship between L1 and the attitude to language learning. Although both linguistics groups (Azerbaijani and Russian speakers), were supportive of English, the level of support among Azerbaijani speakers was higher. This study did not find relationship between gender and attitude towards foreign language learning among male and female learners.

The data collected on social class and income level was limited due to local circumstances as explained above, and findings should be interpreted cautiously. The analysis did not find statistically significant relationship with the variable of ownership form of the educational institutions, which acted as proxy for social class. Students from private universities supported foreign language learning almost on the same level. Students enrolled in public universities were more favorable towards English.

The strong relationship between the attitudes to English language deserves attention. Supporters of English language more likely (90 %), those who did not support English language (10%). The obtained statistical significance sheds some new light on theories of the relationship between the language of education and second/foreign language acquisition, and attitude. Research suggests that, attitudes to language acquisition depend on attitudes towards the second/foreign language community, target language and language learning. Moreover, L1 seems to be one of the important elements that affects attitude of learners towards English.

Future research would be useful to examine the reasons of observed significant relationship between L1 and the attitudes to English to find out whether multilingual persons are less willing to learn and additional language than monolinguals do or that receiving education in Russian affects the attitude to English in the Azerbaijani context.

Overall, the findings suggest that multilingual societies such as Azerbaijan generally support language-learning approaches that help preserve and enhance multilingualism. This finding reinforces the concept put forward by Merisuo-Storm, (2007), who found that multilingual people are open to learn additional languages. Such a strong support for foreign language learning brings new space for maneuvering for decision makers in language policy and planning, for which the question of which language is paramount importance. The research draws on the human ability to learn more than one language and makes the question of "which single language" redundant. For such language policies, public support is an important factor and it is evidently present in Azerbaijan as it can be inferred from this study. The possibility of Russian is conditioned by the availability of resources, geographical, social, and political factors. The role of English is underpinned by its role as the global lingua-franca, and the strong positive attitude to this language among the population as the findings from this work indicate.

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Appendix A: Survey Questionnaire (Original)

This survey questionnaire is made for the purposes of research by Valida Karimova, (PhD (c.) on Germanic languages). The aim of the research is to find out the best foreign language among students' in the Higher Private Education Institutions. *Ethics: Participation in this survey is voluntary. You may refuse to respond this questionnaire without any negative consequences. Your responses will remain anonymous and confidential, and no information that could reveal your identity will be used.*
Possibility of Foreign Languages in the Education System of Azerbaijan: Analysis of the best foreign language among students' in Higher Private Educational Institutions.

Name			
Surname			
Affiliated education institute			
Gender	Male ☐		Female ☐
Age	18-21 ☐	22-25 ☐	26-29 ☐

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
1. Do you think is it necessary to learn a foreign language?
YES ☐ NO ☐
2. Which foreign language do you consider the best foreign language in Azerbaijan?
English ☐ Russian ☐ Other (please specify) _____
2a. Why?
3. Which foreign language do you know best? Circle the appropriate *number* from 1 to 8. (1-minimum \ 8-maximum)
English ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧
Russian ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧
Other (please specify) _____ ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧

THE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT TOOLKIT

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ABSTRACT
As the importance of demonstrating student learning within higher education has grown, institutions have developed learning outcomes assessment programs to provide evidence of student learning. Further driven by quality assurance requirements and accreditation mandates, institutions have started to develop systematic assessment programs that include assessment structures, personnel, processes, and documentation. At Zayed University the assessment program is based on an annual assessment cycle where colleges and departments are asked to prepare assessment plans and reports, to collect and analyze assessment data, and to implement improvements when necessary. To do this, faculty charged with learning assessment responsibilities require a common set of resources or tools. Recognized as one of 10 inaugural *Excellence in Assessment Designees*, an award sponsored by the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment, Zayed University has developed a series of templates, exemplars, rubrics and other resources to help facilitate effective assessment and ensure quality in its assessment program. These documents comprise the Quality Improvement Toolkit (QIT). Drawing on the performance improvement literature, and, in particular, Thomas Gilbert's Behavior Engineering Model (BEM) and its descendants, this paper introduces Zayed University's QIT and illustrates its effectiveness in helping to assure quality and promote effective assessment of student learning.

INTRODUCTION

Because of interventions that occurred in the US more than a century ago, higher education quality assurance has been, and remains, linked to accreditation (Woodhouse, 2012). Within the US however, the term assessment is more often the term used by accreditors, and more recently, this is primarily focused on collecting evidence about the degree to which students are achieving learning outcomes. Though all areas of institutions should be assessed to assure quality, the emphasis is on student learning.

Learning outcomes assessment provides the necessary overview to determine whether or not students are achieving the required learning outcomes. While it is expected that faculty are regularly altering and modifying their courses or pedagogy to improve student learning, it is macro-level oversight offered by program learning outcomes assessment that ensures students, as a collective, are learning what they are expected to learn. Over the past number of years and with the assistance of accreditors, expectations have come forth as to what constitutes effective learning outcomes assessment and what processes and resources may be required. These resources and processes, though context specific, share similarities as they normally include an assessment cycle that includes a plan and report. How these resources and processes are actualized and manifested within institutions can facilitate cross-institution learning and is how best practices emerge. Components of Chevalier's updated Behavior Engineering Model (2003) have been used in the ongoing and multi-year development of Zayed University's Quality Improvement Toolkit (QIT) and can demonstrate the University's internationally recognized best practices in assessment, the foundation of its academic quality assurance processes.

THE CONTEXT

Founded in 1998, Zayed University is a UAE federal institution providing English-medium, baccalaureate and masters degree programs to approximately 8,500 students on its two campuses located in Abu Dhabi and Dubai. Students are primarily Emirati undergraduates who study in a gender-segregated environment in either the College of Business (COB), the College of Education (COE), the College of Arts and Creative Enterprises (CACE), the College of Technological Innovation (CTI), the College of Communication and Media Sciences (CCMS), and the College of Sustainability Sciences and Humanities (CSSH).

Zayed University was established as a learning outcomes-based institution, which put it in good position to pursue international accreditation. Because of this and as a way to quality assure the institution, Zayed University has purposefully pursued a number of such accreditations. The university was first accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE), one of six US-based regional accreditors, in 2008. Since then, COB has been accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, COE by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, CTI by the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET), CCMS by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications, and CACE by the National Association of Schools of Art and Design. It is felt that these accreditations differentiate the institution from its regional peers and fully establish it as an institution worthy of the name of the UAE's founding father, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan. More recently, Zayed University has become accredited nationally by the UAE's Commission for Academic Accreditation, a process from which the institution had previously been exempt. Taken together, the history as a learning outcomes-based institution and the various accreditations have provided the impetus for quality improvement and compliance that has led to development of the QIT.

ACCREDITOR EXPECTATIONS

Over the past number of years, as there have been increased accountability pressures applied to tertiary institutions (Ewell, 2009), accreditation bodies have often taken the lead in insisting that universities demonstrate quality, and that the key function of nearly all universities, that is, educating the next generation, be measured, evaluated, reported, and improved upon when necessary. The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), the umbrella organization for US accreditors, defines the learning outcomes assessment process as:

- Articulating student learning outcomes;
- Providing evidence towards attainment of the learning outcomes;
- Reporting on successes and expectations of the learning outcomes;
- Using results for improving student learning (CHEA, 2014).

Most US accreditors implement such a process, but couch it in slightly different terminology and may go about it in unique ways. MSCHE describes the four step assessment process as:

1. Developing clear and measurable learning outcomes;
2. Providing learning opportunities where students can achieve the learning outcomes;
3. Assessing student achievement of the learning outcomes;
4. Using the results of the assessments to improve student learning (Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2009, p. 63).

From the perspective of a disciplinary accreditor, ABET (2016) explains the assessment process as one in which programs must have a set of defined learning outcomes, and "must regularly use appropriate, documented processes for assessing and evaluating the extent to which the student outcomes are being attained. The results of these evaluations must be systematically utilized as input for the continuous improvement of the program" (ABET, 2016, General Criterion 4).

Within the UAE, the CAA takes a course level perspective through its course files process. For course files, the contents of each course, that is, syllabus, teaching materials, assessments, examples of student work, marking criteria, grades and a faculty reflection, are the mechanism through which the quality of a course and programs are assessed (Commission for Academic Accreditation, 2011). Through examining the course files, reviewers should be able to determine whether course learning outcomes are being achieved and subsequently determine whether or not the program learning outcomes are being achieved.

Through the QIT and the associated assessment program, Zayed University aims to achieve academic quality assurance which meets the expectations of itself, its stakeholders, and its accreditors.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

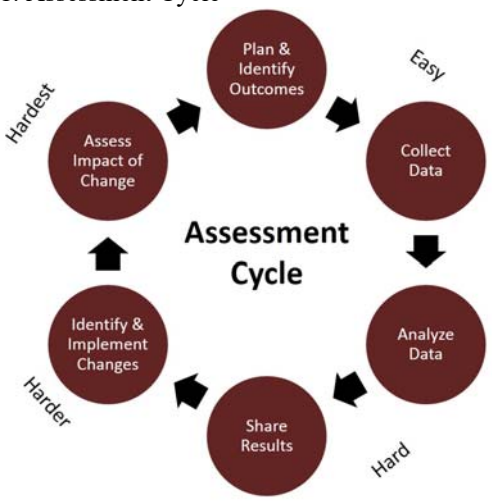
Zayed University's outcomes-based curriculum and its tight linkages with international accreditation have meant that it has always been near the forefront of the assessment movement. In its early years, it developed a set of university and program learning outcomes that were often assessed through an electronic portfolio. Though more an artifact repository than a portfolio, rubrics were used to assess the students' level of attainment against aligned learning outcomes. With leadership transitions, inadequate faculty understanding, and technology changes, this approach, though still a best practice today, began to evolve. As these were still early years in the assessment movement, this initial process was still very much focused on conducting assessment, rather than on using results. The influence of accreditation bodies had had an impact, but more on establishing

the mechanisms of assessment, rather than on using assessment data to inform programmatic changes to improve student learning. This, in turn, made assessment seem like an accreditation compliance issue when it should have been seen as an integral part of the teaching and learning process. There was limited institutional understanding about the purpose of assessment and there was no toolkit to serve as a resource.

The next phase in the development of the Zayed University's assessment program, though staying true to its learning outcomes origin, began to mature as did the assessment movement. As part of this maturity, seminal publications such as Walvoord's *Assessment Clear and Simple* (2010), Suskie's *Assessing Student Learning* (2009), and *Designing Effective Assessment* (Banta, Jones, & Black, 2009) were released. These books firmly established the *how to* of assessment and, given that assessment of this sort had been underway for a number of years, were able to share examples from numerous institutions. The basic structures and designs of learning outcomes, assessment plans, assessment reports, curriculum maps, and the meaning of direct and indirect measures were all firmly established, but the impact of assessment remained mixed. For example, in their 2009 National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) survey of Provost's and Chief Academic Officers, Kuh and Ikenberry (2009) found that about 75% of institutions had common learning outcomes, that accreditation was the main driver of assessment, that assessment data was only used somewhat to evaluate programs, that it was operated on a shoestring, and that faculty engagement remained by far the top challenge faced by leadership. Not surprisingly, the findings from the NILOA survey would have also described the state of assessment at Zayed University then as well. Mirroring these developments, Zayed University's assessment program began to implement the basic processes, guidelines, and documentation, beginning with the creation of its QIT.

The current phase in the development of Zayed University's assessment program is one of re-positioning itself, much like the assessment movement, to focus on using assessment data to implement meaningful actions and to improve student learning (see Figure 1). Though always the raison d'etre of learning outcomes assessment, moving to where

Figure 1. Assessment Cycle



assessment was seen as an integral part of the teaching and learning has been a challenge. As Hall stated "assessment is pedagogy. It's not some nitpicky, onerous administrative add-on. It's what we do as we teach our courses, and it really helps close that assessment loop" (Association of American Colleges and Universities, para. 8, 2010).

Within the assessment movement, there has been a call for better use of assessment data because data proliferates, processes and procedures are well developed, but rarely is student learning data used to improve higher education. In describing findings from the massive multi-year Wabash assessment study, Blaich and Wise (2011) recognized that the problem was not a lack of data, but rather effective utilization of data already on hand- they had found that only 25% of institutions had effectually responded to the data. Though implementing effective actions remains a challenge, actually progressing to the point where changes lead to improved student learning is rarely in evidence. For example, Banta (2011) was only able to find 9 (6%) cases out of 146 assessment exemplars where an improvement in student learning had been demonstrated after changes had been implemented. On a positive note, the 2013 NILOA survey of Provost's and Chief Academic Officers found that there had been a number of changes over the previous 4 years (Kuh, Jankowski, Ikenberry, & Kinzie, 2014). Two of the major changes were that institutional commitment to continuous improvement and faculty interest in improving student learning are now two of the top drivers of assessment, and that there is

more assessment using a more diverse set of measures than earlier reported. Nonetheless, accreditation remained the key impetus behind assessment and more faculty engagement was required. To address these issues, a number of recent publications have started to emphasize use of assessment results to a degree that has never before existed. Kuh et al. (2015) stressed the importance of beginning the assessment process with use of results in mind. Ickes and Flowers (2014) advised that answering questions such as *who will address the assessment findings?* and *how will they be addressed?* from the start of the assessment process is key. In sharing ways to facilitate use of results, Banta and Palomba (2015) described a number of best practices within assessment reports including a project ownership section and a section to describe the faculty dialogue that has occurred. This renewed emphasis on effective use of assessment results has meant that Zayed University has been making additions and alterations to its QIT.

ASSESSMENT PROGRAM CHALLENGES

One challenge encountered in our assessment program was a lack of consistency in the quality of assessment data collection and reporting in annual assessment plans and reports. Plans and reports that did not meet expectations were returned with, often extensive, feedback for revision, resulting in additional time spent and frustration for the assessment committee members. Factors contributing to this problem included, varying levels of assessment expertise and familiarity with our assessment program, changes in assessment committee membership and lack of continuity in knowledge transfer, and the once-a year nature of plan and report submissions. Assessment committee members are also active teaching faculty with research obligations, so competing demands on time is an additional factor.

The second challenge facing our assessment program was facilitating the transition from a focus on collecting and presenting assessment data, to an orientation, in both thinking and practice, toward analyzing and using this data to take evidence-based actions to improve student learning; a process referred to as 'closing the loop'. In practice, closing the loop involves analyzing program-wide student performance on a given learning outcome, identifying a performance gap between target and actual student performance, and developing and implementing interventions to close the performance gap. These interventions could be changes in the:

- academic program, e.g. adding or removing a course, revising course sequencing or admission criteria;
- curriculum, e.g., revising course content, materials, assignments, assessments, changing teaching techniques;
- academic processes, e.g., adding training or professional development, improving technology, modifying frequency or scheduling of course offerings;
- assessment plans/ processes, e.g., revising learning outcomes, data collection or analysis methods, information dissemination;

One of the reasons why making the transition from collecting, analyzing and presenting data to closing the loop is difficult is that identifying a performance gap between desired and actual performance is relatively easy, while determining the appropriate intervention/s to address the performance problem is challenging. Ewell (2009) noted that assessment evidence can identify a learning performance problem, but that this evidence does not suggest how the problem can be fixed. He continued by stressing the need for faculty engagement and discussion to uncover the causes behind the performance problem, in order to formulate appropriate interventions. Engaging faculty and eliciting insights into the cause of performance problems can also be a challenge. Faculty may view the enterprise of program assessment with skepticism and dread. Program assessment's role in accreditation may result in it being viewed as a primarily bureaucratic exercise (Schoepp & Tezcan-Unal, 2017), but with implications for increased faculty accountability and scrutiny. Faculty may also view the opportunity cost of increased involvement with assessment as a loss of time to devote to teaching (Kuh, Jankowski, Ikenberry, & Kinzie, 2014).

A further reason why implementing this change is difficult is that taking action involves risk. No one wants to be responsible, or held accountable, for implementing an action which damages a program. As Blaich and Wise (2011) pointed out, "it's far less risky and complicated to analyze data than it is to act (p.13)." Rather than act, there is a tendency to postpone action in favor of collecting additional data.

One of the solutions to these issues is to provide faculty with tools that facilitate effective planning, collection, analysis and reporting of assessment evidence which are oriented to the goal of closing the loop, as well as additional tools to facilitate the actual closing the loop process in pursuit of improved student learning.

SUPPORTING THE ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

As Suskie (2015) stated, " the single best way to implement your quality agenda is to design everything you do to support that agenda" (p.240). In addressing our first challenge; the lack of consistency and quality in data

collection and in the quality of the annual assessment reports and plans, similar to Qatar University (Al-Thani, Abdelmoneim, Daoud, Cherif, & Moukarzel, 2014), we realized that providing faculty with well-designed tools that communicated expectations, and provided guidance and quality feedback, was essential in supporting and achieving our desired level of quality. The importance of these tools is emphasized in the performance improvement literature, where it is exemplified in Gilbert's Behavioral Engineering Model (BEM) (see Table1).

Table 1. Behavior Engineering Model

Environment	**1. Information** 1. Roles and performance expectations are clearly defined; employees are given relevant and frequent feedback about the adequacy of performance. 2. Clear and relevant guides are used to describe the work process. 3. The performance management system guides employee performance and development.	**2. Resources** 1. Materials, tools and time needed to do the job are present. 2. Processes and procedures are clearly defined and enhance individual performance if followed. 3. Overall physical and psychological work environment contributes to improved performance; work conditions are safe, clean, organized, and conducive to performance.	**3. Incentives** 1. Financial and non-financial incentives are present; measurement and reward systems reinforce positive performance. 2. Jobs are enriched to allow for fulfillment of employee needs. 3. Overall work environment is positive, where employees believe they have an opportunity to succeed; career development opportunities are present.
Individual	**6. Knowledge/ Skills** 1. Employees have the necessary knowledge, experience and skills to do the desired behaviors 2. Employees with the necessary knowledge, experience and skills are properly placed to use and share what they know. 3. Employees are cross-trained to understand each other's roles.	**5. Capacity** 1. Employees have the capacity to learn and do what is needed to perform successfully. 2. Employees are recruited and selected to match the realities of the work situation. 3. Employees are free of emotional limitations that would interfere with their performance.	**4. Motives** 1. Motives of employees are aligned with the work and the work environment. 2. Employees desire to perform the required jobs. 3. Employees are recruited and selected to match the realities of the work situation.

The BEM, was originally conceived by Gilbert (1978), and was later adapted by Binder (1998) and Chevalier (2003). Commonly known as the six boxes model, the BEM is a diagnostic tool used for identifying and analyzing performance issues in the workplace. Though Chevalier and Binder have made minor changes in terms of the labeling of boxes and the order of operations, the model largely maintains Gilbert's original content and structure and its distinction between environmental and individual factors that affect work performance. Environmental factors refer to the support provided by the work environment, whereas individual factors are those which the employee brings to the workplace performance. Chevalier (2003) noted that, "Environmental factors are the starting point for analysis because they pose the greatest barriers to exemplary performance" (p.4), and stated that environmental factors are not only the starting point for diagnosing workplace performance, but that Information (e.g., feedback, guidance, clear expectations), and Resources (e.g., tools, materials, processes) are two areas where improvements provide high impact at relatively little cost. With this in mind, it made sense for us to take advantage of these high-impact, low- cost solutions and focus first on these areas to improve performance through the development of an extensive toolkit.

THE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT TOOLKIT

The QIT is a faculty resource which contains the following components.

1. Assessment plan and report templates

The assessment cycle is built around annual submission of assessment plans and reports by each academic program. Following guidelines from the Wabash study (Blaich & Wise, 2011), the minimum expectation is that each program assess two program learning outcomes each year through a combination of a direct measure and an indirect measure. Assessment of program learning outcomes are cycled through, so that over a course of a few years, they all have been assessed. The templates provide a standardized structure for items like the outcomes being assessed, the methods of assessment, the sampling plan, the results from the assessments, and descriptions of any corrective actions being implemented. Because of differences between the disciplines, some flexibility for template adherence is permitted, but in general, the templates are closely followed, thereby increasing institutional understanding about the assessment process and expectations.

2. Assessment plan and report exemplars
   Though all assessment plans and reports are available on the website, a set of exemplars has been developed to demonstrate best practices. These have been created by synthesizing different components from a number of submissions, so that faculty members can see examples of excellent practices from across the institution. The exemplars are able to show excellence in both plan and report structure and in the assessment practices themselves.
3. Assessment plan and report rubrics
   All submitted assessment plans and reports undergo a peer review process. The concept of peer review is a practice to which academics are familiar and by having submissions reviewed by peers, not only administrators, the feedback is strengthened and faculty members learn of current practices, both weak and strong, across the institution. To normalize and guide the review process, a set of analytic rubrics have been developed which allows reviewers to evaluate plans and reports according to an agreed upon criteria which have been deemed essential to assessment. Reviewers are able to select the appropriate descriptors along the levels of performance and can add additional comments where necessary.
4. Learning outcomes assessment handbook
   The purpose of the handbook is to describe in a narrative format the entire assessment process, to provide a history and rationale for existing practices, and to link to key documentation. Given that new faculty become involved in assessment each year, the handbook provides them with a single source to learn about learning outcomes assessment. If followed, the handbook would enable a neophyte faculty member to have a meaningful understanding of assessment.
5. Assessment calendar and steps
   While the assessment handbook provides an overall understanding of the assessment processes, the assessment calendar and steps documents offer the necessary details to conduct assessments each year. Updated annually, the calendar gives key dates such as when to submit drafts of plans and reports, when the peer review processes will be conducted, when to analyze data, and when final drafts of documents are due. The assessment steps document serves as a checklist of what each unit should be doing when, in order to effectively implement the narrative shared in the handbook. These are important elements such as drafting reports or sharing results with faculty to generate ideas for improvement.
6. Guidelines for drafting learning outcomes
   Even though Zayed University has a long history of learning outcomes and learning outcomes assessment, up until recently there had not been any institutional guidelines about writing quality learning outcomes, whether these were at the course or program level. As part of the CAA accreditation process, and in concert with the new national qualifications framework, these guidelines have been developed. They provide the current best practices, suggest things to avoid, give examples of well-crafted learning outcomes, and present operational verbs (Adelman, 2015) which can lead to precise and meaningful learning outcomes. Overall, the quality of learning outcomes has increased immensely over the past few years.
7. Professional development calendar
   Stemming from faculty feedback about professional development opportunities, the professional development calendar is developed at the start of each academic year, discussed with the institution's assessment committee, and updated as required. It provides a series of workshops and presentations that are designed to increase the assessment knowledge and skills of faculty members. The priorities change depending on faculty input and the needs of the institution. For example, over the past two years with the commitment to align to the national qualifications framework, there have been many sessions concentrating on writing good learning outcomes since this forms the foundation of the alignment process.
8. PLAIR consultation tool
   In 2014 Fulcher, Good, Coleman, and Smith, published a National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment paper introducing an assessment model to effectively close the assessment loop by increasing student learning following interventions. They named the model PLAIR- Program Learning Assessment-Intervention-Reassessment, and it led to the development of our own tool known as the PCT- the PLAIR Consultation Tool. The tool was created to guide the consultation process between the Office of Educational Effectiveness (OEE) and an academic program embarking on a PLAIR initiative. PLAIR

allows programs to focus their assessment work on one learning outcome for multiple years, rather than cycling through learning outcomes. It requires in-depth and extensive assessment work, program-wide faculty buy-in, and is designed to lead to meaningful improvements in student learning, which remains a constant challenge in assessment (Blaich & Wise, 2011; Fulcher et al. 2014).

9. Syllabi templates
   With CAA accreditation the institution has been required to standardize and improve upon its existing course syllabi. The Commission has highlighted the need to more clearly present the weekly topic schedule, demonstrate alignment between course learning outcomes and assignments, and provide clearer explanations of assignments and their associated marking schemes. Working through university committees, syllabi templates have been developed for the general education, majors, and graduate programs which set the minimum standards and ensure compliance with the national accreditor.
10. Syllabi exemplars
    As was done with assessment plan and report exemplars, syllabi exemplars have been created by synthesizing different components from a number of existing syllabi. Though the syllabi templates are quite structured, they set a minimum benchmark and the exemplars provide examples of syllabi that are in compliance with the CAA, but also demonstrate excellence in that students have all the necessary course information in a clear, concise, and meaningful manner.
11. QFE alignment templates
    Within the UAE's higher education and under the auspices of the CAA, alignment of all academic programs to the national qualification framework, the Qualifications Framework Emirates (QFE), became mandatory by the end of 2015. The institution used this mandate to drive systematic improvement in both program and course level learning outcomes. In doing this we created alignment templates, bachelors and masters level, with three major sections. The first section shows alignment between program learning outcomes and the QFE outcomes; the second section demonstrates alignment of program learning outcomes to the courses; the third section shows the individual course learning outcomes alignment to the program learning outcomes. The benefit of the QFE alignment process is that faculty must be deliberate in their drafting of learning outcomes and must reflect meaningfully on how learning outcomes are linked together. As learning outcomes or programs change, the QFE alignment documents must be updated to reflect the current reality.
12. Course files guide
    The course files process is an initiative from the CAA, so it is relatively new to the institution. The Commission requires that institutions maintain updated files for each course of instruction with enough information so that a reviewer or faculty member could determine whether or not a course is meeting its learning outcomes (Commission for Academic Accreditation, 2011). There are seven specific sections that constitute a course file, and these include items such as teaching materials, assessment instruments, examples of student work, and a faculty reflection on the course. Course files are stored electronically and to guide the process and demonstrate compliance and effective practices, a support document has been developed. The support document emerged from faculty interactions and through an internal review of existing course files.
13. Course files reflection examples
    One of the most important elements of a course file is the faculty reflection on the course. This is where faculty are able to reflect on issues such as the appropriateness of the learning outcomes, the extent to which the syllabus was covered, the degree to which students achieved the learning outcomes, or any problems that might have occurred. This reflection can be a meaningful process if faculty see its value and see how their reflections are leading to course improvements. To facilitate the completion of faculty reflections a set of examples of both poor and high quality reflections have been created. It is expected that by showcasing high quality reflections faculty members will recognize how this can lead to areas for improvement.
14. Course files audit sheet
    Part of the institutional course files process is to ensure they are being completed, that they are completed in a meaningful manner, and that they are in compliance with the expectations of the CAA. To accomplish this, an audit sheet has been produced which will be used by the OEE as it conducts a semester-by-semester review of samples of course files from each academic program. This document confirms to programs what is being reviewed and offers a medium for the OEE to suggest areas for improvement.

By providing the assessment resources that constitute the QIT, we have successfully addressed the environmental barriers to achieving quality. Exemplars, templates, and PLAIR consultations, for example, provided guidance and allowed us to reduce faculty barriers to meeting expectations of consistency and quality of program assessment and other quality assurance mechanisms. We achieved notably higher quality submissions of assessment plans and reports, and also reduced assessment committee frustration and time

consumed in completing the assessment process. Reducing these initial barriers, allowed us to begin focusing on our second challenge, which was orientating assessment committee members towards a focus on closing the loop.

OUTCOMES

Though not equal in importance or priority, each of the processes and resources are important elements in an assessment program and in helping our organization use assessment data to improve student achievement. The introduction of assessment plan and report templates and exemplars has led to higher quality initial submissions, reducing both time and frustration in revision, and making the process less burdensome. The recent introduction of a planning for use and follow up sections should help ensure that faculty are engaged in the discussion and analysis of student assessment, and that closing the loop actions are considered, implemented and reviewed.

Increased emphasis on providing consultations as assessment committee personnel, particularly those new to the role, begin the process of writing their plans and reports, has helped provide clarity and reduce frustration. These consultations provide the additional benefit as opportunities for us to raise opportunities for research, and to encourage assessment committee personnel who have adopted best practices. As a result of these consultations, we have recognized several of these faculty members and have showcased their achievements at our annual assessment retreat and other professional development opportunities. At the department level, we recognize a college which has exemplified assessment best practices with our annual Best Practices in Assessment Award.

Our assessment peer review panel's use of a rubric provides a common framework for evaluating plan and report submissions, which facilitates the peer review process. Having a peer review has also enabled colleagues to see how assessment is conducted in other units. With the inclusion of a calendar and checklist to our assessment handbook, assessment committee personnel now have a simple, but comprehensive, 2-page document to stay aware of exactly what is required and when throughout the assessment calendar. This type of document was actually requested by a faculty at our recent assessment retreat, and we were pleased to reply that it was available in the most recent update of our learning outcomes assessment handbook.

We are currently piloting PLAIR with two colleges and are in the initial stage of implementation. Faculty members with whom we are working report that they are pleased to have this opportunity to focus on closing the assessment loop and improving student performance under the guidance of the OEE. The use of the PCT has resulted in fruitful discussions which have brought forth a variety of suggestions for improving student performance, and has led faculty members to develop much improved assessment tools that are being implemented across a number of courses.

LESSONS LEARNED AND CONCLUSION

Establishing the QIT of resources and processes plays a vital role in developing a culture of quality, assessment and learning. It provides an environmental solution (Gilbert, 1978) through which faculty can work towards a quality assured academic program. Though institutions will create their own versions of a toolkit, which best fit within their particular context, the items that constitute the toolkit have been tried and tested through use and are the mechanisms noted in assessment literature. In the 4-year process of constructing our QIT, a number of lessons have been learnt:

- Let faculty lead the process as much as possible.
- Provide opportunities for faculty to learn from one another.
- Offer regular professional development opportunities targeted to different levels of expertise.
- Seek support from higher leadership because they set the institutional tone.
- Make assessment planning include planning to use assessment results- without this it will be difficult having results lead to meaningful actions.
- Be aware of the expectations from different accreditors.
- Work hard to keep the focus on continuous improvement, not on accreditation compliance.
- Assess the assessment program and share the results with stakeholders. Any assessment program needs to be demonstrating the use of data to drive decisions to be seen as credible.
- Consultations, consultations, consultations.

While not actual documents, assessment consultations between the OEE and leadership of each academic program are held around the assessment plan and report submission due dates as a minimum requirement. In some cases, if programs are doing well it is a general update meeting with possible suggestions for improvements or praise to continue the good work. In other situations, a few meetings may be required to ensure

that programs are on track, are taking the necessary steps to be effective in their assessment practices, or are working on specific improvement projects with the OEE.

In summary, the QIT has addressed the environmental needs (Gilbert, 1978) of the institution as it seeks to further improve its assessment program and assure institutional quality. Successfully borrowing concepts and tools from the field of performance improvement and applying them to academic program level assessment highlights the value in looking beyond the academic literature in search of solutions. Whether one is seeking to improve performance in the academic workplace or traditional workplace, the need to provide employees with the requisite feedback, tools and processes is a common essential. Given the assessment program's recent international recognition, we feel it represents a best practice that is worthy of emulation.

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THE STUDENT SATISFACTION AT THE CAMPUS: THE CASE OF SULEYMAN DEMIREL UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT
Higher education has been witnessing rapid changes in recent years and universities have been perceived as service providers beside their traditional roles. In this regard, concept of quality has also been transforming and becoming a multidimensional area that comprises state, society, employers, academicians and students.Student centered quality approach regards students as the main stakeholders in this process and emphasize that the students should be the primary participants and beneficiaries of qulity improvement. In line with these developments, studies regarding student participation in quality management have been increasing and service quality of university facilities has begun to be measured. This study has also aimed at finding out assesments of students on quality of learning and student support services in a state university in Turkey, namely Suleyman Demirel University. To this end, findings of a survey held with students in 2016 are presented and discussed.
Keywords: higher education, student satisfaction, service quality

INTRODUCTION

In the last few decades services have become the dominant form of economic activity and are now playing an important role in the economy of both developed and developing countries (Abdullah, 2006). Accordingly, in marketing literature, studies have begun to focus on quality of services which had discounted and treated like goods for a long time. This ambiguity still exists in some degree, because services and goods share much of the conceptual framework of quality (Palmer, 2011). Yet, services tend to pose much greater problems in the understanding of customers' needs and expectations due to the difficulty of defining and measuring its components (Giese and Cote, 2000). Unique characteristics of services such as intangibility, inseparability, heterogeneity, perishability and lack of ownership make the quality issue more complex (Palmer, 2011). When it comes to the higher education sector, difficulties further increase because of the special attributes which differentiates universities from other service enterprises. Thus, quality of services in higher education institution is a complex and disputed issue. Some scholars assert that the roles and facilities of the universities could not be likened to private sector, while the others argue for a new entrepreneur university paradigm. For example, according to Oldfield and Baron (2000), higher education can be seen as a "pure service," suggesting that it possesses all the unique characteristics of a service.

Yet, apart from these academic discussions, in practice there is a growing tendency that the universities are increasingly assuming a service provider mission. With significant changes taking place in higher education institutions over the last decade, it seems that higher education should be regarded as a business-like service industry, which focuses on meeting and exceeding the needs of students (Gruber et al., 2010). On the other hand, quality approach has also been changing towards a more student centered approach. Accordingly, institutions are placing greater emphasis on meeting the expectations and needs of students. It is crucial for higher education providers to understand students' expectations and perceptions of what constitutes a quality service in order to attract students and serve their needs (Nadiri et al., 2009). Furthermore, this will lead to better allocation of resources, resulting in students being provided with an improved service (Abdullah, 2006). Therefore, evaluating the level of service quality through student feedbacks is an important task for universities to design their service in the best possible way.

Turkish higher education sector with 179 universities and nearly 7 million students has also witnessed important transformations in recent years. There are many newly established universities and this policy of expanding will continue due to the young population of the country. Indeed, massification of higher education has become an important topic on the agenda of many developing countries. Beside its advantages, this situation also has brought about quality concerns and thus importance of quality assurance increases. Universities have been developing mechanisms for quality assurance and including students in these processes. This study is also a product of this new understanding of quality and attempt to develop a student centered quality approach. The main objective of the study is to reflect the evaluations of students on the services of the university through a student feedback survey. Although the survey was dealt with the services in a specific university context, it is thought that this case has also many similar aspects with state universities in developing countries. Thus, the findings of the study were presented for grounding a base for further academic study.

METHODOLOGY

The student satisfaction survey was held in Suleyman Demirel University, Turkey which is a state university established in 1992. There are 65.000 students studying at associate, bachelors, and postgraduate levels as of the year 2016. Around 35.000 students are female. The survey was held in May and June, 2016 in the central campus of the university with the participation of 268 students from different faculties and gender distribution was also taken into consideration.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Survey questions were organized around five categories; academic dimension, administrative dimension, student support services, social services and external relations and general level of satisfaction. Main findings of the survey are presented below.

Table 1. Findings of the Student Satisfaction Survey

	Totaly Satisfied %	Satisfied %	Not sure %	Dissatisfied %	Totally Dissatisfied %	No Opinion %
Academic Dimension						
The quality of education in general	9	52,2	14,4	19,4	4,5	3
Course materials and teaching methods	11,9	28,4	19,4	29,9	10,4	
Foreign language courses	7,5	14,9	26,9	19,4	26,9	4,5
Knowledge and capability of lecturers	13,4	53,7	14,9	9,0	7,5	1,5
Interaction in the class	13,4	34,3	23,9	22,4	6,0	
Advisory role of lecturers	14,9	16,4	23,9	29,9	9,0	6,0
Physical conditions of learning environments	16,4	29,9	25,4	22,4	6,0	
Administrative Dimension						
Attidudes of Top management	14,9	40,3	25,4	14,9	4,5	
Faculty Management	16,4	49,3	11,9	11,9	10,4	
Administrative staff	7,5	37,3	20,9	23,9	9,0	1,5
Registrar's Office	11,9	32,8	13,4	20,9	16,4	4,5
Student Support Services						
Physical Conditions of Campus	22,4	37,3	17,9	13,4	6	3
Scholarships	7,5	22,4	19,4	28,4	16,4	6,0
Dormitories	16,4	19,4	17,9	23,9	17,9	4,5
Library services	49,3	31,3	11,9	3	3	1,5
IT and internet serices	17,9	25,4	28,4	19,4	6	3
Bookstore	11,9	40,3	23,9	10,4	10,4	3
Medical services	20,9	35,8	22,4	13,4	3	4,5
Security services	14,3	31,3	14,9	17,9	16,4	4,5
Cafeterias	19,4	34,3	17,9	19,4	7,5	1,5
Cleaning services	10,4	43,3	19,4	17,9	17,9	7,5
Shopping	9,0	23,9	14,2	19,4	20,9	11,9
Transportation	16,4	43,3	17,9	16,4	6	
Social Services						
Guidance and counseling	9	22,4	22,4	23,9	19,9	7,5
Cultural facilities	19,4	35,8	16,4	20,9	10,4	1,5
Sports facilities	20,9	37,3	13,4	16,4	7,5	4,5
Religional places	23,9	40,3	10,4	13,4	7,5	4,5
Student clubs	19,4	28,4	22,4	20,9	1,5	7,5
Relations with NGO's	13,4	23,9	26,5	22,8	10,4	3
International Office	10,4	32,8	14,9	23,9	11,9	6
General Level of Satisfaction					MEAN (10 Scale)	
Satisfaction with the Faculty						5,52
Satisfaction with the University						6,43
Satisfaction with Life						6,86

The findings revealed that the satisfaction level of the students regarding university services was generally at the medium level. The most problematic areas were appeared as the scholarships and dormitory facilities. Only 30% of the students were satisfied with the scholarships, meaning that the majority of students did not find scholarships sufficient. Similarly, only 36% of students found dormitory facilities as satisfactory. This dissatisfaction stems from inadequate capacity of state dormitories, low level of quality and expensiveness of private student hostels. Indeed these issues are major problems which affects living standards and thus academic performance of the students directly. On the other hand part-time job opportunities are very limited in many cities in the Anatolia, In Turkey, scholarships and dormitories are beyond the control of state universities and regulated by the government at a large extent. Yet, universities should take a leading role in combining efforts for producing more opportunities in these areas through the cooperation of state, local governments, NGO's, private sector and the university. Particularly universities should initiate projects in their region for improving living standards of the students.

When the general level of student satisfaction is taken into account, it was found that the students were pleased with their life in general terms. Yet, level of satisfaction decreases when the university and the department were regarded. Students were less satisfied with their departments and the university. Thus, quality development mechanisms should be built on the basis of a down-top understanding and started at the department level. This level is also more convenient for student participation. Evaluations of students on the departmental issues should be measured through more detailed surveys and other tools. Student feedbacks at both course level and departmental level should be used for developing further strategies for quality development.

In academic terms, it could be inferred that the institution generally meets the expectations of students. Yet, there are some problematic issues regarding teaching and learning. The most problematic area was founded as the foreign language proficiency. Only 22% of students were satisfied with the foreign language courses at the university. Indeed, foreign language and particularly English proficiency is one of the most important barriers for academic quality and mobility in Turkey as is the case for most of developing countries. Most part of the academic literature is produced in English and academic studies as well as academic career heavily depend on English proficiency. Yet, English prepatory courses at the university are not sufficient for developing academic language skills. Indeed language education should be started at earlier ages and insufficiency of language education in primary schools and colleges leads to problems in university education.

Another finding of the survey is that students thought that their lecturers had necessary knowledge and capabilities in their subject matters. Yet, they were more dissatisfied with teaching methods and course materials. It means that although lecturers are competent in their areas, there are some problems in transmitting this knowledge to the students. This might be resulted from differences between lecturers and students regarding forms of communication and interaction. In the internet age, there is a new generation which uses information technologies intensively and learns through visual tools, rather than books and other written sources. Thus, course materials and teaching methods should be overviewed in line with the technological developments and with the needs of "Z generation".

Satisfaction level of the students with academic advising was lower and they thought that lectures could not allocate sufficient and convenient time for consultation. This inefficiency stems from the overload of lecturers in terms of both teaching and research responsibilities. Indeed, this is a part of a wider problem stemming from high student/lecturer ratios in Turkish higher education. While increased massification of higher education and establishment of new universities proved beneficial in many aspects, it has also led inevitable quality problems in the face of insufficient lecturer numbers. As the case in many countries Turkey suffers from inadequacy of academicians in both quantitative and qualitative terms. Thus, doctoral education should be widened and conditions of academicians should also be improved for creating a greater pool of academicians. It should not be forgotten that university education is something more from teaching in the classroom and it comprises leadership of academicians in many aspects which necessitates strong advising.

Physical conditions and equipment of learning environments are also problematic areas since the number of universities have rapidly grown without sufficient resources for infrastructure investment. The university where the survey was held was founded in 1992 and had relatively more opportunity for developing infrastructure compared to many newer universities. Yet, nearly half of the students were dissatisfied with physical conditions which might be regarded as an important portion. This also another result of the dilemma between enhancing higher education opportunities for more students and providing quality education.

Regarding administrative dimension of the institution, it was found that the students were more satisfied with the attention and treatment of top university management and faculty directors, and less satisfied with the

administrative personnel at lower levels. Nearly half of the students did not feel satisfied with the attitudes of the administrative staff. Top managers (rectors and deans) are also academicians in Turkish state universities and this finding implies that the interaction between academics and students is better and more fruitful. It is a matter of concern that in many universities in Anatolian cities, administrative staff have been hired on the basis of local relations rather than merit. Thus, they do not have necessary competences for performing in the university which has unique relations and rules different from other kind of institutions. On the other hand, most of the administrative staff have permanent job contracts and gain their wages directly from the government which also decreases their performance. Indeed, quality and performance of the administrative personnel is an important problem in most of the public institutions in Turkey and the universities are not immune from this situation. Taken into consideration that the administration is an indispensable part of the quality, this structure should be reorganized. Personnel must be employed on the basis of merit and their performance should be assessed for both payment and promotion.

Services of the Registrar's Office are the ones which students mostly face with in their academic life. According to the findings, nearly half of the students evaluated these services as sufficient. Yet, 20% of students dissatisfied with the Office. For improving student services the university tried to use technology more intensively at the admission and registration processes. These efforts have given their fruits, yet there are still problems stemming basically from insufficiency of personnel.

The findings regarding the main student support services in the campus are as followings: The highest satisfaction level was depicted for library services according to the survey. This finding is not surprising given the fact that university top management have pursued a strategy of supporting the library in both financial and logistic matters. The library has been directed by a professional manager, developed digital infrastructure and provides service 7/24 for the students. Thus, the high quality of library services could be reagrded as a proof that support of leadership, professional management, effective use of resources and student centred service vission produce fruitful results in university facilities. Similarly, students were satisfied with the sports facilities of the universities which are also important for personal development. Again, places devoted for worship were found as satisfactory. Yet, it should be noted that these places are for Muslims which constitute majority of the university population and places for other people belonging other religions should also be taken into account. The lowest level of satisfaction were recorded for psychological counselling servies, shopping facilities and security services. Psychological counselling is one of the most important and problematic matters for particularly state universities in small size cities. Universities have difficulty in hiring professionals for psychological counseeling due to the personnel regulation of government which does not give flexibility in wages. Universities in small cities could not offer attractive positions for psychologists and suffer from this inadequacy. Yet, psychological counselling has a paramount importance particularly for young students who leave their families and start a different life in a strange environment. Thus, counselling issues both in academic and psychological terms must be reorganized. Again, security services throughout the campus must be handled seriously and related personnel should be continuously trained not only in terms of security matters but also in terms of relations with the students.

The above mentioned findings imply that contemporary universities are becoming service provider institutions in many aspects beside their traditional missions of teaching and research. This new role for universities is a complex one and could be afforded with the participation and contribution of the students. Thus, student feedback and representation should be a regular part of quality improvement efforts in any university. This cooperation becomes possible with the development of a quality culture within campus, rather than the implementation of formal rules of quality assurance. The student centered approach should gain prominence in the university environment, yet students should not be perceived as customers who are right in every situation. Universities have the capacity and should manage this transformation in quality understanding through finding a balance between tradition and change, quality and autonomy, freedom and responsibility.

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