EDUCATIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE IN TURKEY AND ISTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY

Turkey's educational quality assurance (EQA) and school management standards are characterized by a strong international perspective and an emphasis on the country's requirements.

The world is increasingly competitive and technology-driven, making education quality improvement crucial. Education is a fundamental pillar of personal and societal development, ensuring that individuals can adapt to changes in economy and society. The Turkish education system undergoes significant reforms to meet global standards and support the development of self-governing communities.

1. Concepts of the Educational Quality Assurance System

The three-step quality assurance system in education includes:

1. **Quality Control** – Setting and maintaining educational standards established by experts.
2. **Quality Inspection** – Monitoring compliance with educational standards.
3. **Quality Assessment** – Evaluating schools based on internal and external quality assurance principles.

2. Principles of Educational Quality Assurance (EQA)

- The goal of education is to produce competent and ethical individuals.
- The PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) cycle is used in educational quality assurance:
    - **P (Plan):** Define goals and standards.
    - **D (Do):** Implement policies and procedures.
    - **C (Check):** Monitor and assess progress.
    - **A (Act):** Make improvements based on evaluations.

3. Legal and Policy Framework for Educational Quality Assurance in Turkey

3.1 Key Laws and Regulations

Turkey's education system is governed by several laws and policies that define quality assurance mechanisms:

1. **The Turkish Constitution (1982)**
    - Article 42: Guarantees the right to education for all citizens.
    - Mandates state responsibility for overseeing and improving education quality.
2. **The Basic Law of National Education (No. 1739)**
    - Establishes principles for national education, including equal opportunities, quality control, and lifelong learning.
    - Defines the role of the Ministry of National Education (MEB) in setting education standards.
3. **The Higher Education Law (No. 2547)**
    - Regulates university education and accreditation processes.
    - Governs the Council of Higher Education (YÖK), responsible for overseeing higher education institutions.
    - Mandates quality assurance policies for universities.
4. **The Turkish Higher Education Quality Council (THEQC - Yükseköğretim Kalite Kurulu, YÖKAK)**
    - Established in 2015, YÖKAK is responsible for external quality assurance, accreditation, and institutional evaluation in higher education.
    - Conducts quality assessments every five years.
5. **The Vocational Education and Training Law (No. 3308)**
    - Regulates technical and vocational education standards.
    - Ensures compliance with European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and Turkish Vocational Qualifications Authority (MYK).

6. **Education Vision 2023 (MEB Strategic Plan)**
   o A roadmap for modernizing Turkey's education system.
   o Focuses on teacher training, digital transformation, and international benchmarking.

4. Internal and External Quality Assurance in Turkey

4.1 Internal Quality Assurance (IQA)

- Managed by schools, universities, and vocational institutions under MEB and YÖK.
- Each institution must submit an Internal Evaluation Report (İç Değerlendirme Raporu) annually.
- Public and private schools undergo regular internal inspections based on curriculum effectiveness, teacher qualifications, and student performance.

4.2 External Quality Assurance (EQA)

- Conducted by MEB for primary and secondary education and by YÖKAK for universities.
- Universities must undergo an institutional accreditation process every five years.
- International accreditation bodies (e.g., ABET, AACSB, AQAS) are encouraged for specialized fields.
- Public reporting of quality assessment results is required to ensure transparency.

4.3 The Role of YÖKAK in the Accreditation of Turkish Universities

The Higher Education Quality Council of Turkey (YÖKAK) is the primary body responsible for external quality assurance, accreditation, and evaluation of higher education institutions in Turkey. Established as an autonomous organization, YÖKAK ensures that universities meet national and international quality standards, enhancing transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement in higher education.

4.4 Key Roles of YÖKAK in Accreditation:

1. **Institutional Accreditation Program (KAP)**
   o YÖKAK assesses universities based on their governance, education, research, and societal impact.
   o Institutions meeting the required quality assurance standards receive institutional accreditation, valid for a specific period (typically 5 years).
2. **Program Accreditation Authorization**
   o YÖKAK recognizes and authorizes independent accreditation agencies to accredit individual academic programs (e.g., engineering, business, medical programs).
   o It ensures that these agencies operate according to internationally accepted accreditation standards.
3. **Institutional External Evaluation (KDDP)**
   o Conducts periodic external evaluations of universities, even if they are not seeking accreditation.
   o Provides feedback reports on institutional performance to support continuous quality improvement.
4. **Higher Education Quality Index & Monitoring**
   o YÖKAK publishes an annual Higher Education Quality Index, evaluating universities on multiple performance criteria.
   o Monitors the progress of institutions in terms of education quality, research output, internationalization, and societal contribution.
5. **Alignment with International Standards**
   o Ensures Turkish universities align with European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and ESG (European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education).
   o YÖKAK is a member of ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education) and registered in EQAR (European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education), strengthening its global recognition.

YÖKAK plays a critical role in maintaining and enhancing higher education quality in Turkey by evaluating and accrediting institutions, overseeing program-level accreditation, and ensuring universities comply with national and international standards. Its work supports the global competitiveness of Turkish universities and fosters a culture of continuous quality improvement.

5. Five Educational Standards for Learners

Turkey's National Education Standards align with European and international benchmarks and has five key educational standards in the Turkish system:

1. Ethical and Social Values (Ahlak ve Sosyal Değerler)
   - Focus on the constitutional principles, democracy, and citizenship.
   - Emphasizes honesty, discipline, and responsibility.
2. Critical Thinking and Innovation (Eleştirel Düşünme ve Yenilikçilik)
   - Encourages problem-solving, creativity, and scientific reasoning.
   - Supports STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics) education.
3. Curriculum Proficiency (Müfredat Yeterliliği)
   - Ensures students achieve minimum national competency levels in Math, Science, Turkish, English, and Social Studies.
4. Self-Learning and Digital Competency (Bireysel Öğrenme ve Dijital Okuryazarlık)
   - Promotes self-directed learning, digital literacy, and lifelong learning.
   - Emphasizes e-learning platforms such as EBA (Eğitim Bilişim Ağı).
5. Workplace Readiness and Entrepreneurship (İş Dünyasına Hazırlık ve Girişimcilik)
   - Supports vocational and technical education (MESEM, İŞKUR programs).
   - Encourages entrepreneurship through innovation labs and startup programs.

6. Moving Towards a Global Standard for Turkish Education

- Turkey's education system already integrates quality assurance policies, but improvements are needed in teacher training, digital assessment, and international accreditation.
- Aligning MEB and YÖKAK policies with global standards will ensure that Turkey remains competitive in the EU and international education sector.

7. The Impact of Globalization on Education

- The rise of digital technology and international competition requires Turkish education to align with global benchmarks.
- International quality assurance models influence Turkish policies.
- Schools must prepare students for a competitive global workforce.

8. Benefits of Educational Quality Assurance

1. Continuous Improvement – Ensures schools are constantly developing and adapting.
2. Transparency and Trust – Provides clear information for students, parents, and policymakers.
3. Efficient Resource Use – Improves school management and funding allocation.
4. Higher Student Achievement – Ensures students meet academic and professional standards.
5. Global Competitiveness – Aligns Turkish education with international best practices.

Educational quality assurance is essential for ensuring that Turkish schools meet national and international standards. Internal and external quality assurance systems work together to provide accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement. Globalization and technological advancements necessitate continuous reforms in education quality standards. The future of education depends on effective quality assurance mechanisms to enhance student learning, professional development, and national competitiveness.

Istanbul Aydın University has achieved a significant milestone by receiving a **5-year institutional accreditation** from the **Higher Education Quality Council of Turkey (YÖKAK)**. This accreditation reflects the university's **commitment to excellence in education, research, governance, and societal impact**, aligning with both **national and international quality assurance standards**. The accreditation process involved a rigorous evaluation of the university's strategic vision, academic programs, faculty qualifications, student support services, and research initiatives. By meeting these high standards, Istanbul Aydın University has demonstrated its dedication to continuous improvement, transparency, and innovation in higher education.

This achievement not only strengthens the university's reputation but also enhances the value of degrees awarded to its students, increasing their competitiveness in the global job market. The accreditation further solidifies the institution's role in shaping future leaders, fostering international collaboration, and contributing to societal development through impactful research and community engagement.

As a YÖKAK-accredited institution, Istanbul Aydın University will continue to uphold quality standards and pursue new advancements in teaching and learning, ensuring that its academic environment remains dynamic, inclusive, and future-oriented.