

QUALITY ASSURANCE ACTIVITIES IN TURKISH UNIVERSITIES

Prof. Dr. Atilla Eriş
The Council of Higher Education

Prof. Dr. Mehmet Durman
Sakarya University

- ✧ QA activities in Turkey before the Bologna Process
- ✧ Current activities since the Bologna Process
- ✧ Further steps to be taken

THE CHRONOLOGICAL STEPS IN EMERGENCE OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN TURKEY

3

- 1981: The Higher Education Law of No: 2547: The role and responsibilities of The Council of Higher Education with regard to quality assurance in higher education
- 1994: ABET's (Accreditation Board for Engineering & Technology, the USA) evaluation activities in some engineering programmes
- 1997: Quality Assessment Project in Turkish Universities
- 1998: Accreditation and improvement of quality in teacher training programmes
- 2001: Participation of Turkey in Bologna Process
- 2002: MÜDEK's (Association for Evaluation and Accreditation of Engineering Programmes) evaluation and accreditation activities in engineering programmes
- 2002: EUA's (The European University Associations) Quality Culture Project & Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) activities

THE CHRONOLOGICAL STEPS IN EMERGENCE OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN TURKEY

4

- 2005: Regulations for Academic Assessment & Quality Improvement in HE and Establishment of YÖDEK (The Commission of Academic Assessment & Quality Improvement)
- 2006: Public Finance Management and Control Law (No:5018) and Regulations on Principles and Basis of Strategic Planning in Public Administrations
- 2010: Development and Approval of Turkish Qualifications Framework for HE(TYYÇ) by the CoHE
- 2010: Establishment of new programme-specific evaluation and accreditation associations (TPD, FEDEK,)
- 2011: The amendments regarding QA activities in HEIs in the Higher Education Law (2547) made by a new law numbered 6111.

THE HIGHER EDUCATION LAW AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

- The framework of the higher education system in Turkey is based on two articles of the Turkish Constitution (Articles 130 and 131) and the Higher Education Law no. 2547 enacted in 1981,
- The upper bodies of the higher education system are the Council of Higher Education (CoHE, YÖK) and the Inter-university Council (IUC, ÜAK),
- The CoHE is an autonomous corporate public body responsible for the planning, coordination, governance and supervision of higher education within the provisions set forth in the Constitution of the Turkish Republic and the Higher Education Law,
- The IUC is an academic advisory body comprising the rectors of all universities (state and foundation) and one member elected by the senate of each university.

THE HIGHER EDUCATION LAW AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

- When the CoHE was founded in 1981 in order to steer the higher education institutions in Turkey, the number of the higher education institutions were only **27** and all were state universities. At present, there are **103** state (**101** universities and **2** institutes of high technology) and **69** (**62** universities and **7** two-year vocational schools of higher education) foundation (private, non-profit) higher education institutions in Turkey which are all subjected to the same Higher Education Law of 1981 and to the regulations enacted in accordance with the Law.
- Both state and foundation universities are founded by law to be enacted by the Parliament upon the recommendation of the CoHE to the MoNE and the approval of the cabinet.
- The faculties, graduate schools and the four-year vocational/professional higher schools as well as two-year private foundation vocational schools are founded by the decision of the Cabinet upon the recommendation of the CoHE .

THE HIGHER EDUCATION LAW AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

- The two-year vocational higher schools as well as opening academic units and sub units under HEIs are established in compliance with criteria set by the CoHE and through permission of the Council.
- By law, it is the responsibility of the CoHE and the IUC to see to it that a national system of quality assurance with a structure and function comparable to its transnational counterparts is established and implemented.
- CoHE is the responsible body for initial accreditation of pre-bachelor, bachelor, master's and doctoral degree programs offered by the HEIs based on written and publicly available criteria. Once a program is approved, it is accepted and automatically accredited.

- Although these processes ensure that minimum criteria are met at the beginning and related units start service at a certain quality level; there is no clear legal procedure to evaluate and monitor the later effectiveness and quality level of services of these academic units.
- In the last fifteen years, quality assurance in higher education has always been in the agenda in Turkey and consequent to close interest shown by certain universities and the upper bodies of HE to the issue, there have been a number of important steps taken in this respect.

These are summarised in the following slides:

- **ABET's (Accreditation Board for Engineering & Technology, the USA) evaluation activities in some engineering programmes (1994):**

In Turkey, since there is no statutory body specifically charged with quality assurance in higher education. Universities themselves voluntarily invite foreign bodies such as ABET for programme-specific evaluation. It is a practice frequently preferred by the well-established universities in particular for the engineering programmes.

In search of international recognition of their engineering programmes, some established universities (namely; Istanbul Technical, Bosphorus, Middle East Technical and Bilkent Universities) invited ABET starting from the first half 1990's. Most of the engineering programmes of those universities have been evaluated by ABET at different times and they have received "substantial equivalence" from ABET (ABET's only accreditation for countries outside the USA). These universities have since then been co-operating with ABET for quality assurance of their engineering programmes and more universities have followed them. So far, **43 engineering programmes** in those universities have received substantial equivalency recognition through evaluation by ABET. As for today, **23 engineering programmes** of three of these universities have a valid accreditation of ABET.

- **Quality Assessment Project in Turkish Universities (1997)**

In 1997, the CoHE, in cooperation with British Embassy, has developed a pilot project called “Quality Assessment in Turkish Universities” and in this context, 13 departments of various fields from 8 universities have been included in the project. The pilot project aimed at starting studies to improve quality and raise academic standards in the universities through monitoring and accreditation processes and establishing a quality assurance system through self evaluation of institutions, peer review, performance assessment, reporting of results and establishment of national quality agency.

The project was based on the UK model of the time that separates assessment of research and teaching. In the context of this project, an opening conference, 2 workshops, 4 study visits and 2 pilot assessments have been done and in the light of obtained results, a feasibility report on the establishment of a quality assurance system in Turkish universities, similar to those in OECD and EU countries, has been prepared.

However, this project has not been further developed and implemented in the following years.

- **Accreditation and improvement of quality in teacher training programmes (1998)**

As a result of the project in collaboration with the World Bank, starting from 1998-1999 academic year, restructuralization of faculties of education has been undertaken by the CoHE. The implementation aimed at both increasing the quality of teacher training and overcoming the problems of employment. In the context of these studies, teacher training programs in faculties of education has been rearranged and new arrangements have been made for the accreditation of teacher training and improvement of quality in this respect. However, this implementation, while provides a standard in the quality of teacher qualifications nationwide on one hand, with almost no change in a standardized curriculum prescribed by the CoHE at that time till now, on the other, does not provide HEIs with flexibility and diversity enough to meet the current requirements of teacher training and very much on debate now.

- **Turkey's participation in Bologna Process (2001):**

Turkey participated in Bologna Process in 2001 and since then it has been actively involved in the process under the responsibility and the coordination of CoHE to meet the requirements set forth by its action lines.

As explained above, although there had been some attempts at the national level to initiate QA system and individual voluntary exercises of some universities in the field, until Bologna Process it had not been a priority item in the agenda of Turkish HE.

Affords and activities at the national level to take Bologna reforms forward has gained a momentum particularly after 2005 and among these, setting up a national system of quality assurance, with a structure and function comparable to its transnational counterparts, that would also match Turkey's future needs in HE has always been in discussion.

In spite of some good progress has been achieved in implementation of many action lines of the Bologna Process at both national and institutional levels, up to now, a satisfactory progress towards establishment of a fully functional QA system which includes the component of national system of external quality assurance has still not been achieved in parallel to the laborious work, so far, done in the field and this has stayed as one of the weakest area lacking behind in successful implementation of the Bologna Process. This is also reflected in the last Bologna Stocktaking Report of 2009 as seen from the Figure 1 showing Turkey's progress in the field of QA among others reviewing their QA system against ESG. The work which has been done in this area will be further explored later in this presentation.

- **Turkey's participation in Bologna Process (2001):**

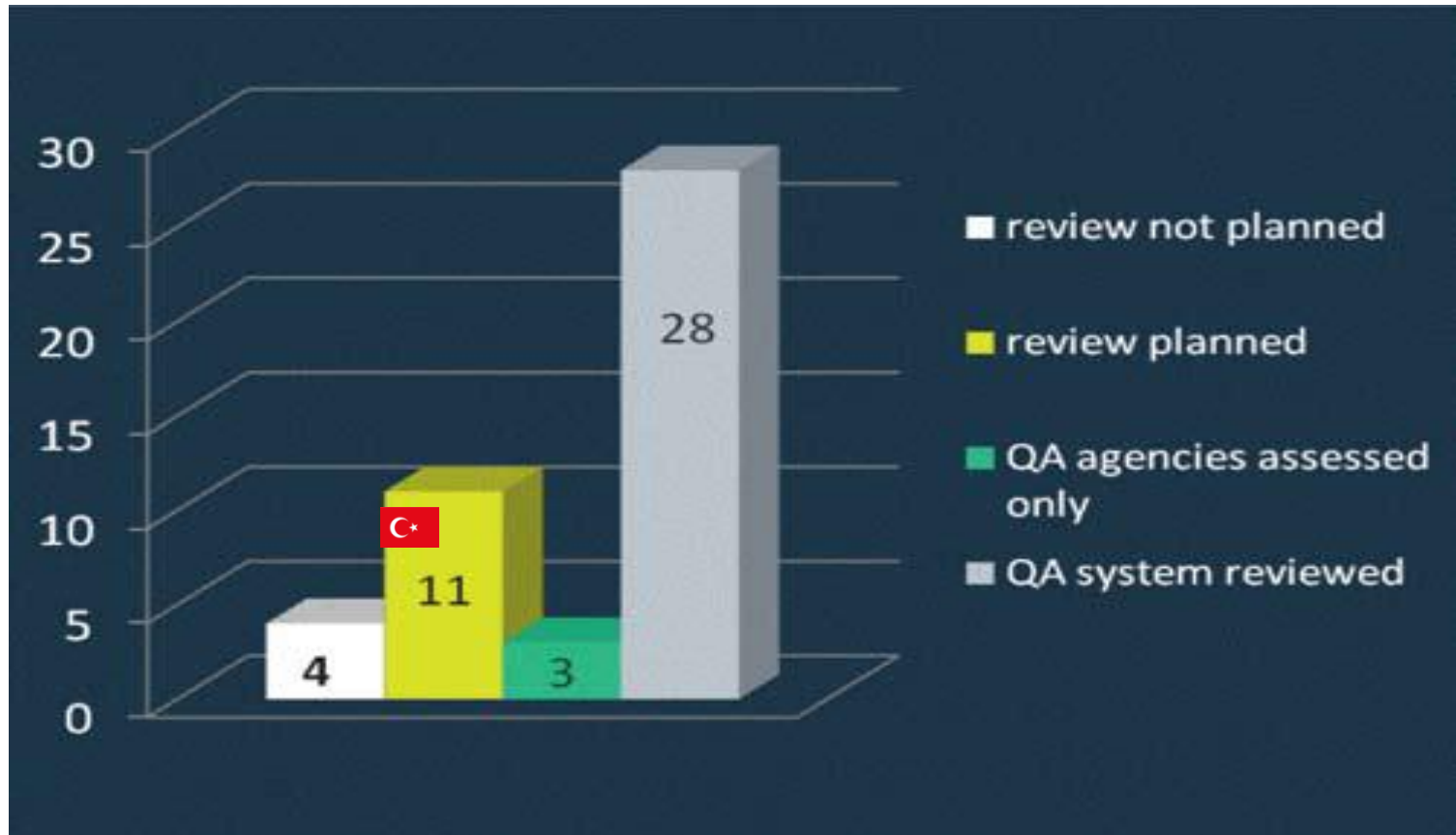


Figure 1: 2009 Stocktaking Report: The number of countries reviewing their QA Systems against the ESG for QA in HE.

- **MÜDEK's (Association for Evaluation and Accreditation of Engineering Programmes) evaluation and accreditation activities in Engineering programmes (2002):**

The co-operation with ABET has motivated all the engineering faculties to establish a national system of quality assurance for engineering programmes in Turkey. The Engineering Evaluation Board (MUDEK) was formed with the contribution and efforts of the Conference of Deans of Engineering Faculties in 2002. MUDEK receives support of the universities and is already a partner in EUR-ACE (European Accreditation Programme for Engineering, an ongoing Socrates programme), has gained the first official recognition of the CoHE and, so far, it has accredited more than **90 engineering programs** in **17 universities**.

- **EUA's (The European University Association) Quality Culture Project & Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) activities (2002):**

Another quality culture development activity of higher education institutions in Turkey is “Quality Culture Project” of EUA. From 2002 up to date, 5 universities (Bosphorus, Uludağ, Yıldız Teknik, Istanbul Teknik and Mersin Universities), have been included in the scope of this project. The project aims at developing and sharing quality culture among Bologna countries.

In the recent years, another popular quality assessment method that has received the attention of higher education institutions in Turkey is “Institutional Assessment Program” by European University Association (EUA).

The Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) is a service of the European University Association (EUA) that has been designed to ensure that higher education institutions gain maximum benefit from a comprehensive evaluation conducted by a team of experienced European higher education leaders. The intention is for these evaluations to support the participating institutions in the continuing development of their strategic management and internal quality culture. In Institutional Assessment Program of EUA; based on the internal assessment report of the institution that is being assessed, compliance of activities of the institution with the strategies defined, effectiveness of decision making mechanisms and quality improvement studies are reviewed by 4 experts in two visits during which they interview various representatives of the institution and in the final report suggestions are made to contribute to the studies of the institution.

Up to date, **28 universities** in Turkey have been subject to this assessment process of EUA.

- **Regulations for Academic Assessment & Quality Improvement in HE and Establishment of YÖDEK (The Commission of Academic Assessment & Quality Improvement) (2005):**

As stated above, quality awareness and studies of higher education institutions in Turkey, accelerated especially by Bologna Process has resulted in a considerable accumulation and experience. However, up to date, a national quality assurance system could not be established other than practices brought by law no 2547.

Most important step for filling the gap in this respect has been the “Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement in Higher Education Institutions” regulations implemented after being published in Official Gazette on September 20, 2005 and amended in 2006.

The regulations has been prepared taking into consideration the developments in the world and especially in Bologna Process in Europe and defines the general principles of assessment of education, training and research activities and administrative services, improvement of quality of higher education institutions as well as approval and recognition of their level of quality through an independent “external assessment”.

- **Regulation for Academic Assessment & Quality Improvement in HE and Establishment of YÖDEK (The Commission of Academic Assessment & Quality Improvement) (2005):**

The regulation also aims to establishment of independent associations, establishments and councils that are capable of carrying out academic assessment and quality improvement activities at the higher education institutions in accordance with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) for Quality Assurance in EHEA for the external equality assurance as well as recognition of international quality assurance agencies to be operative in quality assurance activities in HE in Turkey.

According to the regulations, an independent Commission (the Commission for Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement in Higher Education-YÖDEK) consisting of ten members (nine members selected by the Inter-university Council and one representative selected by the National Council of Students) has started operations to run, coordinate and stipulate procedures for internal and external assessment activities within the framework of regulations. YÖDEK has been an associate member of ENQA since 2007.

- **Regulations for Academic Assessment & Quality Improvement in HE and Establishment of YÖDEK (The Commission of Academic Assessment & Quality Improvement) (2005):**

YÖDEK, in order to implement the process within the responsibilities set forth by the regulation, issued standards and guidelines and defined the processes and indicators necessary for maintenance of the activities for academic assessment and quality for the use of HEIs in their internal and external quality assurance procedures.

These include the main processes of:

- Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement
- Strategic Planning and Implementation
- Institutional Assessment (self-and environmental)
- Periodic Review and Improvement

- **Regulations for Academic Assessment & Quality Improvement in HE and Establishment of YÖDEK (The Commission of Academic Assessment & Quality Improvement) (2005):**

Figure 2 shows the Main Process Map of academic assessment and quality development studies in higher education institutions prepared by YÖDEK on the basis of Regulations on Academic Assessment and Quality Development in Higher Education Institutions. Figures 3 and 4 show Strategic Planning and Implementation Process and Self-assessment Model developed by the YÖDEK.

The processes require all HEIs to perform an annual institutional assessment (including self and environmental assessments), define and/or review their measurable strategic objectives within the context of their missions and strategic plans published and periodically review and improve them with the follow up procedures. Within the scope of the regulations set up, at national level; YÖDEK and at institutional level; Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement Boards (ADEKs) established within the HEIs are responsible for organising, coordinating and conducting the processes.

- **Regulations for Academic Assessment & Quality Improvement in HE and Establishment of YÖDEK (The Commission of Academic Assessment & Quality Improvement) (2005):**

The self-assessment model developed by YÖDEK and used by HEIs as a guide for self-assessment exercise within their institutions includes the following areas:

- Inputs (Resources and Relations)
- Institutional Qualities and Characteristics
- Education-Training Processes
- Research and Development Processes
- Implementation and Service Processes
- Administrative and Support Processes
- Management (Structural)
- Management (Behavioural)
- Results (Outcomes)
- Mission of Higher Education

QUALITY ASSURANCE ACTIVITIES IN TURKEY

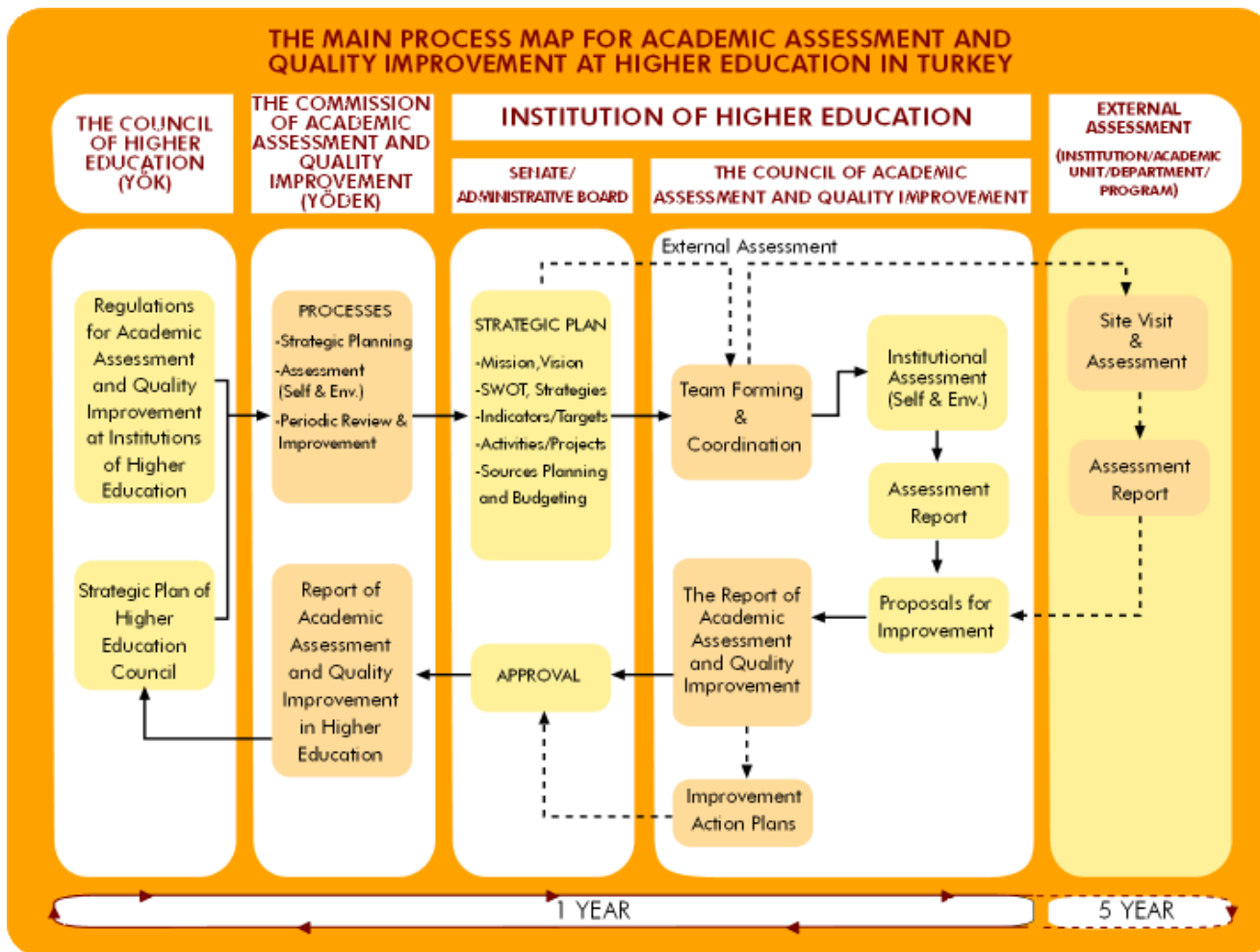


Figure 2. The Main process Map for Academic assessment and Quality Improvement adopted by YÖDEK at the national and institutional levels

QUALITY ASSURANCE ACTIVITIES IN TURKEY

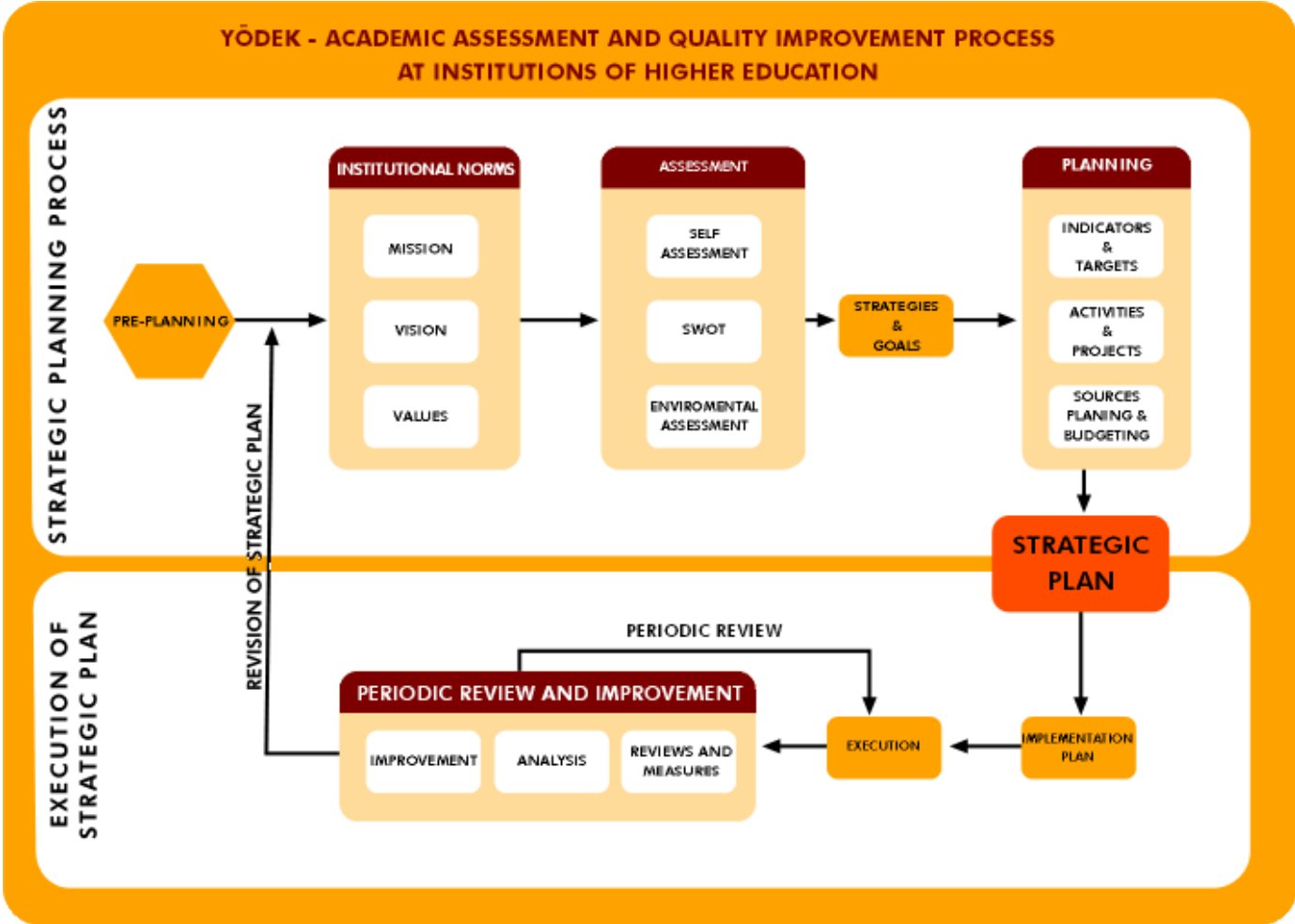


Figure 3. Strategic Planning and Implementation Approach in Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement

QUALITY ASSURANCE ACTIVITIES IN TURKEY

23

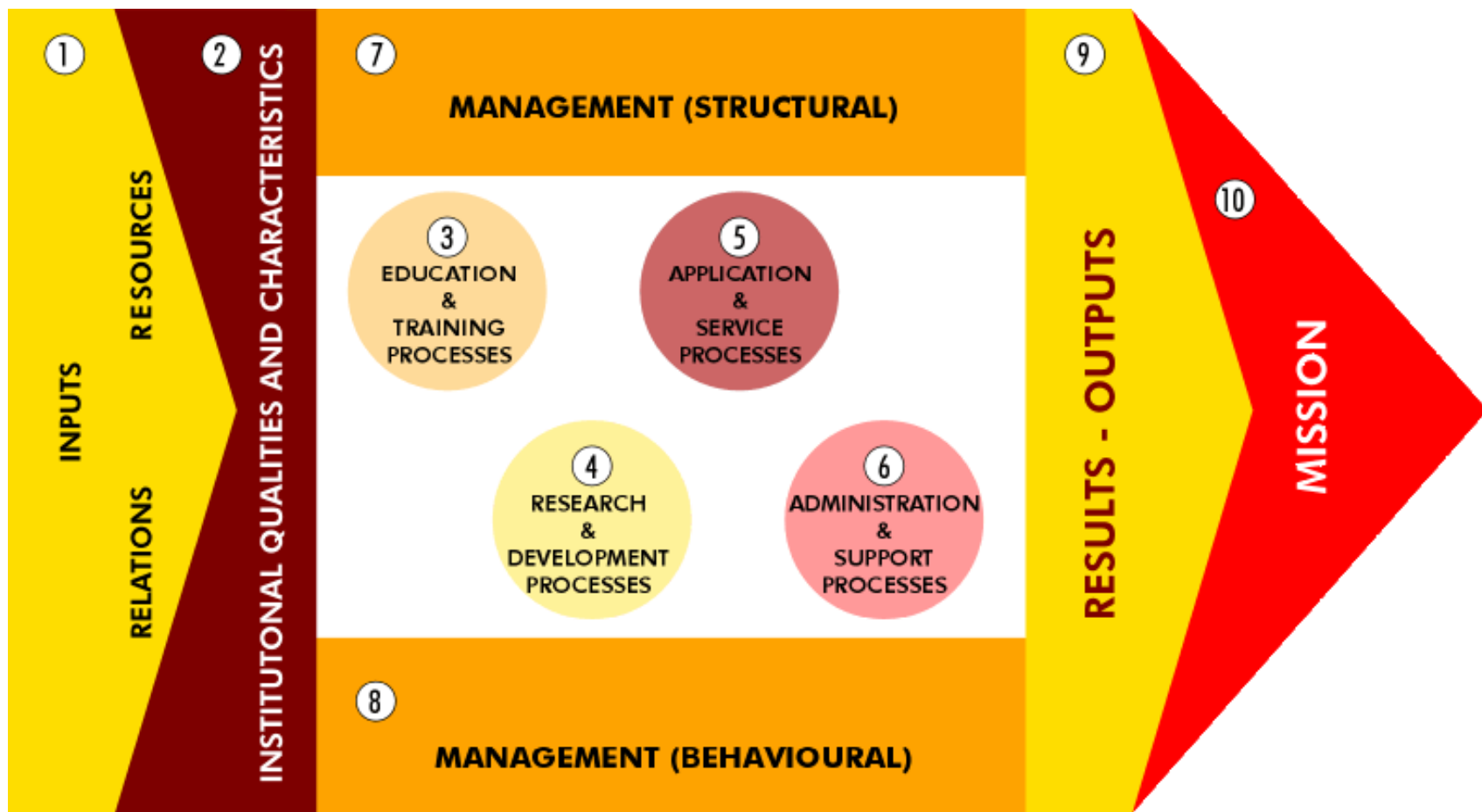


Figure 4. The self-assessment model developed by YÖDEK for the use HEIs

- **Regulations for Academic Assessment & Quality Improvement in HE and Establishment of YÖDEK (The Commission of Academic Assessment & Quality Improvement) (2005):**

Implementation of these procedures started in 2006 and since then HEI's, each year, prepare their self-assessment reports regularly in January and February and to submit their "Self-assessment reports" which include evaluation results and a set of performance indicators to YÖDEK in April. In accordance with these reports received from HEIs, YÖDEK compiles the results of the assessments and prepares a national report which reveals the results of assessments and submit it to the upper bodies of HE in May as an input to the national higher education policies and strategies to be developed or for the existing ones to be reviewed and make it publicly available.

This cycle of implementation has, so far, worked efficiently and contributed particularly for the internal quality systems and institutional quality culture to be established within the HEIs, except that although most of the HEIs have provided their annual report within the frameworks of their self-assessment studies in time, because of the uncertainties and inconsistencies in data of the results HEIs provided, assessment results have not been published at the national level.

- **Regulations for Academic Assessment & Quality Improvement in HE and Establishment of YÖDEK (The Commission of Academic Assessment & Quality Improvement) (2005):**

On the other hand, the regulations also require that, within the principles and basis established in this framework, higher education institutions shall, once in every five years, go through “institutional external assessment” process, which is one of the most essential components of European Quality Assurance for HE.

However, up to now, **no statutory body specifically charged with performing the external institutional evaluation and assessment of HEIs** within the principles and basis of the framework of the regulations have not, yet, been established and this still remains to be the biggest challenge to the HE System of Turkey to be dealt with.

- **Regulations for Academic Assessment & Quality Improvement in HE and Establishment of YÖDEK (The Commission of Academic Assessment & Quality Improvement) (2005):**

Since the establishment of the new regulations in 2005, the foundation of a fully independent national quality assurance agency has been always been on the national agenda of the CoHE and HEIs. Several attempts towards achieving this have been made considering the alternatives shown below;

- Foundation of an agency by a new law,
- Establishment of an department independent from the CoHE but within the existing Higher Education Law 2547,
- Establishment of an HE association with the support of HEIs and stakeholders within the legislative framework of existing Associations Law,
- Licensing of a completely private establishment or association.

- **Public Finance Management and Control Law (Law No: 5018, 2003) and Regulations on Principles and Basis of Strategic Planning in Public Administrations (Reg. No: 26179, 2006):**

Public Financial Management and Control Law numbered 5018 was enacted on December 10, 2003 and began to be in force as of 2006. This law regulates the structure and functioning of the public financial management including that of the HEIs, in order to ensure accountability, transparency and the effective, economic and efficient utilization of public resources. In order to present public services at the required level and quality, public administrations shall base their budgets and their program and project-based resource allocations on their strategic plans, annual goals and objectives, and performance.

With this law and regulations, public universities came face to face with a new budget system which they have to carry out like other public institutions: Performance Based Budgeting System based on a Strategic Plan, which was as an important step forward in supporting financial autonomy and the QA activities in HEIs as well as the quality approach envisaged by YÖDEK.

- **Approval of Turkish Qualifications Framework for HE (TYYÇ) by CoHE (2010):**

The major input supporting a meaningful and successful quality assurance in learning programmes should be based on the evaluation of the outputs that are the learning outcomes, that the institution, the programme or a course unit claims to provide the learners.

From this point of view, Development of the Turkish National Qualifications Framework has been the major success in the framework of the Bologna Implementations in Turkey not only because it forms the starting point and the core of student/learner-centred approach of education and transparency at the national it also provides the basis for assessment and monitoring of study programmes, which an integrated quality assurance approach for both internal and external quality assurance at a programme or institutional level should take in to account.

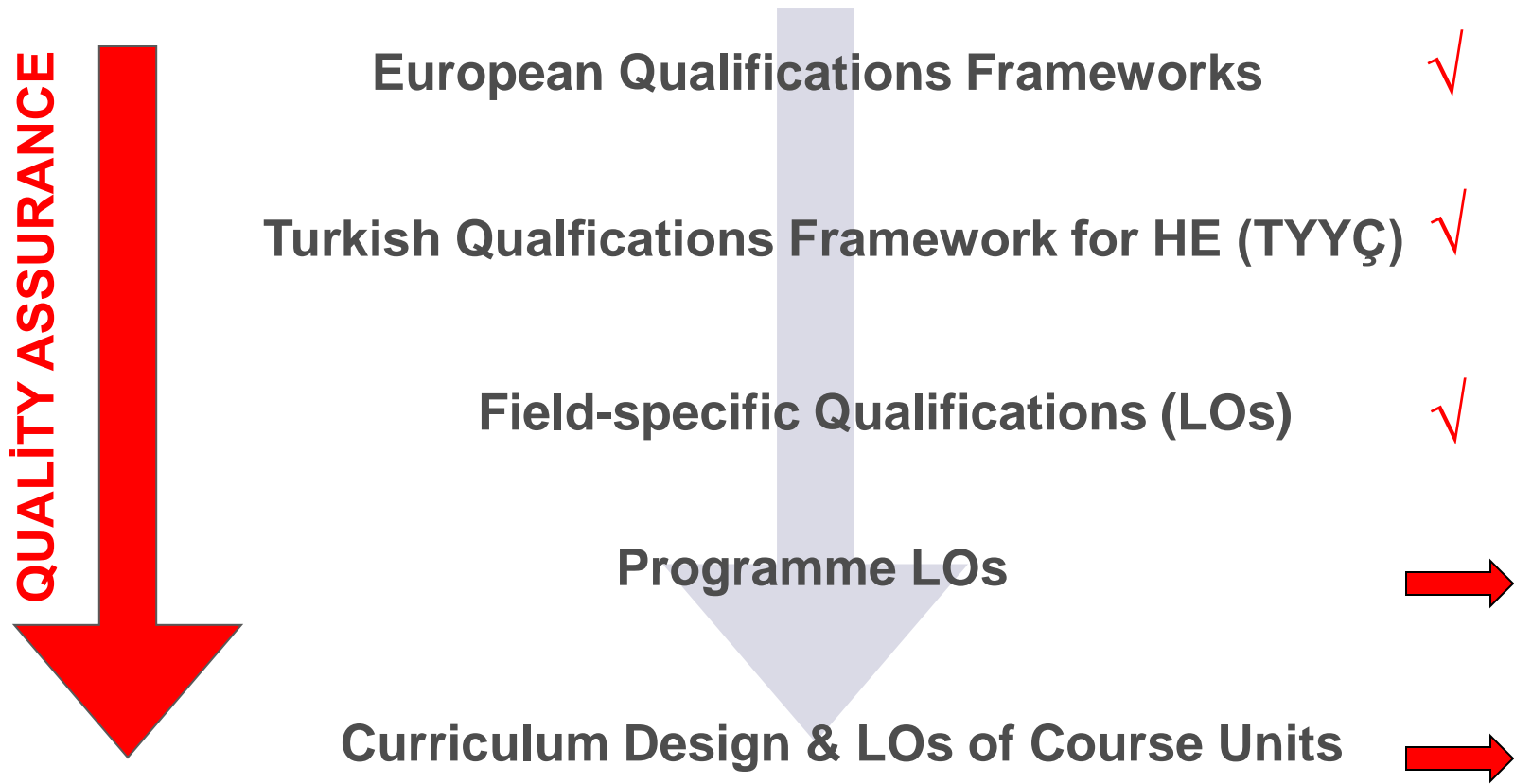
- **Approval of Turkish Qualifications Framework for HE (TYYÇ) by the CoHE (2010):**

STATE OF DEVELOPMENT OF TURKISH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR HE

1. Decision to start by CoHE: April 2006
2. Setting the agenda: 2006-2008
3. Organising the process: 2006-2008
4. Design Profile (levels, descriptors, credits): 2009
5. Consultation and national discussion: 2009
6. Approval: Partially in May 2009, Fully in Jan. 2010
7. Administrative set-up: 2011 (ongoing work)
8. Implement. at institutional/programme level: Pilot: in 2011, Full: by Dec. 2012
9. **Inclusion of qualifications in TYYÇ (Quality Assurance.): 2010 - 2015**
10. Self-certifications of compatibility with European frameworks: 2010 - 2012
11. TYYÇ Web site: www.tyyc.yok.gov.tr , established in 2011



- Approval of Turkish Qualifications Framework for HE (TYYÇ) by the CoHE (2010):



TYYÇ & ISCED 97 FIELDS OF EDUCATION

	ISCED CODE	FIELDS OF EDUCATION
1	14	Teacher Training and Educational Sciences
2	21	Arts
3	22	Humanities
4	31	Social and Behavioral Sciences
5	32	Journalism and information
6	34	Business and administration
7	38	Law
8	42	Life Sciences
9	44	Physical Sciences
10	46	Mathematics and Statistics
11	48	Computing
12	52	Engineering
13	54	Manufacturing and Processing
14	58	Architecture and Building
15	62	Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery
16	64	Veterinary
17	72	Health
18	76	Social Services
19	81	Personel Services
20	84	Transport Services
21	85	Environmental Protection
22	86	Security Services

- **Establishment of new programme-specific evaluation and accreditation associations (TPD, FEDEK,) (2010)**

Quality Assurance System designed for Turkish Higher Education within the provisions of the present regulations and subsequent YÖDEK processes is based on the approach of institutional evaluation, i.e. the evaluation of the HEIs with all services they provide with in the YÖDEK model, including evaluation the educational processes and procedures with respect to that whether the LOs of the programmes within the institutions at the stated levels are in line with those of TYYÇ and the course structure are design accordingly and how HEIs monitor and improve them.

In addition to that, field/discipline-specific QA associations like MÜDEK are encouraged to be established and carry out recognition procedures for a particular function of performing assessment and accreditation on programmes within a specific study filed/discipline whether the programmes satisfy the LOs of the relevant levels of TYYÇ and those of fields of studies described within the TYYÇ as well as other specific requirements of the relevant programmes in the fields/disciplines, in which they operate, through more rigorous procedures.

- **Establishment of new programme-specific evaluation and accreditation associations (TPD, FEDEK,) (2010)**

MÜDEK has been a success story in activities related to accreditation of bachelor's degree (first cycle) engineering programs in Turkey and welcomed by the universities having engineering programmes. This has motivated the deans of faculties to initiate similar activities in other study fields and some of these initiations have already lead to establishment of new associations.

Recently, two more associations; the Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Science and Art Programmes and the Association of Turkish Psychologists have acquired the recognition of the CoHE and have been licensed as national quality assurance agencies in the related fields. Currently, two more association in order to become nationally recognised QA bodies in the study fields of Medicine (UTEAK) and Architecture (MIAK) are under an evaluation process by the YÖDEK and the CoHE.

Eventually, the number of such agencies are expected to extend to cover all fields and levels of studies, hence all study programmes within the fields, laid out in Turkish Qualifications Framework for HE.

- **The amendments regarding QA activities in HEIs in the Higher Education Law (2547) made by a new law numbered 6111 (2011)**

Very recently, on 13 February 2001, due to the need for a change brought about by the recent developments and implementations in HE. There were some amendments made on Higher Education law 2547 by a new law numbered 6111, among which the major emphasis was on the Turkish Qualifications Framework for HE (TYYÇ) and internal and external quality assurance. By law it is, now, under the responsibility that HEIs should see to it that the programmes they offer are in line with the requirements (in terms of credits and LOs) of the levels of the TYYÇ in relation and assure their quality through internal and external quality assurance mechanisms in accordance with the principles and the framework which is to be drawn out by the CoHE and the senates of the HEIs.

This new amendment to HE Law 2547 emphasis the urgent need a fully functional QA System to be established, which has been looked forward and loudly expressed by all internal and external stakeholders of HE, but this time, not ever done before, by law.

■ FINAL WORDS AND CONCLUSION

For the last 15 years QA has been on the agenda of the CoHE and HEIs in various forms of implementations. Affords and activities in the fields has gained a new impetus with Bologna Process. Turkey, as a country negotiating with the EU and as a member Bologna Process, is still lagging behind other European Countries in development and implementation of an external QA system as an essential part of its fully functional National QA system. However, through the QA activities practiced over the years;

Turkey;

Has learned a lot,

Has experienced a lot,

Has also worked on the issue a lot,

And there has been nothing unknown and unsaid left in this regard,

Now, it is time to move on fast and achieve a lot.