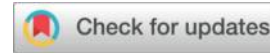


## Mechanisms for Evaluating the Quality of Higher Education Outcomes in the Algerian University



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### Abstract

This study aims to examine the mechanisms for evaluating the quality of higher education outcomes in Algerian universities through an analysis of the conceptual framework of quality and its outcomes, as well as a review of the principal tools and mechanisms adopted in measuring and assessing them, such as self-evaluation, academic accreditation, performance indicators, graduate tracking, and the extent to which university training aligns with labor market requirements and development needs.

The study also seeks to highlight the role of the various stakeholders within the university institution including administration, faculty members, students, and quality assurance bodies in consolidating a culture of quality and achieving continuous improvement. Such efforts contribute to enhancing the efficiency of Algerian universities, strengthening their competitiveness at both the national and international levels, and producing educational outcomes that respond to societal needs and to contemporary scientific and economic developments.

**Keywords:** Higher education; educational outcomes; quality; performance indicators; academic accreditation; Algerian university.

### Introduction

The issue of the quality of higher education outcomes constitutes a central focus in contemporary educational discourse due to its direct connection to the status of the university and its role in building human capital and achieving comprehensive development. University outcomes are no longer measured solely by the number of graduates, but rather by the extent to which they possess the cognitive, professional, and ethical competencies that qualify them to contribute effectively to society

and to keep pace with rapid scientific and technological transformations. Consequently, evaluating the quality of these outcomes has become a strategic necessity imposed by the challenges of globalization, the demands of the knowledge economy, and the standards of academic ranking and accreditation.

Within the Algerian context, universities have undergone successive reforms, most notably the adoption of the LMD system (Licence–Master–Doctorate), with the aim of modernizing the educational system, enhancing the comparability of academic training at the international level, and improving its compatibility with the labor market. However, the success of these reforms remains contingent upon the existence of precise and objective mechanisms for evaluating the quality of outcomes, whether at the level of academic programs, teaching methods, scientific research, or the competence of graduates and their professional integration.

Quality evaluation mechanisms vary between internal mechanisms, which rely on self-assessment, student satisfaction surveys, monitoring graduate performance, and indicators of success and employability, and external mechanisms, represented by academic accreditation, periodic reviews, and university rankings. This process also requires integration among the various actors within the university sphere including administrations, faculty members, students, and economic partners in order to ensure the comprehensiveness and objectivity of evaluation.

From this perspective, research into the mechanisms for evaluating the quality of higher education outcomes in Algerian universities aims to analyze the theoretical and procedural foundations of these mechanisms, reveal the extent of their effectiveness in improving university performance, identify the challenges that hinder them, and propose ways to develop them in a manner that strengthens the culture of quality and transforms it into a sustainable institutional practice rather than a mere temporary administrative procedure.

## **1. The Concept of Quality in Education**

Quality is considered a multidimensional concept that originated in the industrial sector before gradually being transferred to the field of education, where it acquired new connotations suited to the particular nature and objectives of the educational process. Given the multiplicity of definitions and related terminology, the definition most consistent with the nature and objectives of this study has been selected. The concept of quality in education has also been addressed through an explanation of its dimensions and standards, in addition to introducing the ISO specifications as one of the most prominent approaches adopted in implementing quality systems within educational institutions.

Quality is defined as the ability to accomplish tasks with a high degree of proficiency and efficiency, whereby a product or service is delivered with a set of characteristics and attributes that meet the needs, desires, and expectations of beneficiaries, whether explicit or implicit. Quality is also associated with achieving a high level of mastery through the adoption of defect-free processes and products or reducing defects to the lowest possible level in a manner that ensures beneficiary satisfaction and continuous improvement.

According to the definition of the International Organization for Standardization in the ISO 9000 specification, quality is defined as the degree to which a product or service conforms to the requirements of the beneficiary, whether these requirements are explicit and declared or implicit and expected. This definition emphasizes the importance of attending to the visible characteristics perceived by customers in goods and services, in addition to the benefits derived from their use, thereby ensuring the fulfillment of their needs and the achievement of a high level of satisfaction.<sup>2</sup>

Since this research paper addresses the quality of higher education outcomes, it is necessary to move toward defining the concept of quality within the educational field and clarifying its dimensions and standards, given the particular nature of education as a formative process aimed at building knowledge, developing skills, and consolidating values, rather than merely providing a conventional service.

Quality in education is defined as a comprehensive and integrated system aimed at continuously improving and enhancing educational outcomes. It represents a process of translating students' needs and expectations into specific characteristics and standards that constitute the foundation for delivering an effective educational service capable of meeting their aspirations and aligning with the requirements of society and the labor market, thereby ensuring efficiency and excellence in educational performance.<sup>3</sup>

The quality of educational services at the university level is also defined as the set of characteristics and standards that enable such services to qualify and prepare students scientifically, professionally, and ethically in an integrated manner, so that they become distinguished university graduates possessing the competence and ability to achieve their personal and professional goals, respond to labor market requirements, and contribute effectively to serving society and fulfilling its developmental aspirations.<sup>4</sup>

From the two previous definitions, it becomes evident that quality in the first definition is presented as an integrated system directing the educational process toward continuous improvement, whereas in the second definition it is portrayed as a set of characteristics and standards that distinguish

educational services. Accordingly, quality in education may be understood as the provision of a distinguished educational service capable of achieving genuine benefit for the beneficiary and meeting their highest expectations through ensuring a high level of efficiency and mastery across the various components of the educational process.

## **2. Classification and Elaboration of Higher Education Outcomes**

Higher education outcomes are diverse and multifaceted according to the nature of the knowledge, skills, and values that university education seeks to provide students with. These outcomes may be classified into three principal dimensions which together contribute to shaping a well-rounded graduate capable of meeting the demands of professional and social life:

### **A. Cognitive Outcomes**

This category encompasses all aspects related to theoretical knowledge and the mental processes acquired by students throughout their studies, such as remembering, understanding, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating. These outcomes constitute the cognitive foundation that enables students to comprehend scientific concepts and principles, relate them to one another, and derive innovative solutions to academic and practical problems. Cognitive outcomes also contribute to the development of critical thinking and lifelong learning abilities, both of which are essential skills for keeping pace with the rapid developments occurring across various fields of knowledge.

### **B. Skill-Based Outcomes**

These outcomes relate to the ability to apply theoretical knowledge in practical situations. They include technical and specialized skills, in addition to general competencies such as time management, problem-solving, and teamwork within multidisciplinary groups. Such outcomes enable students to perform practical tasks effectively and efficiently after graduation, whether in the workplace, scientific research, or any other applied field. The skills acquired through practical learning and field training constitute an essential component of educational quality, as they connect theory with practice and prepare students for the challenges of professional life.

### **C. Affective and Social Outcomes**

These outcomes concern the values, attitudes, inclinations, and psychological and social abilities acquired by students as a result of their interaction with the university environment, their professors, and their peers. They include professional ethics, commitment to academic and societal values, adaptability to change, communication skills, conflict-resolution abilities, teamwork, and the assumption of responsibility. Such outcomes aim at shaping students' personalities and social

competencies, ensuring that university graduates are not only academically qualified but also capable of contributing effectively to their communities.<sup>5</sup>

### **3. The Importance of Integration Among the Three Types of Outcomes**

Balanced attention to the dimensions of knowledge, skills, and affective and social behaviors ensures the preparation of a well-rounded university graduate who possesses the capacity for lifelong learning, innovation, and contribution to sustainable development. Consequently, the quality of these outcomes represents a fundamental element in measuring the quality of higher education, as the integrated graduate is regarded as a genuine indicator of the success of educational institutions and their ability to prepare qualified human resources capable of meeting the demands of the modern era.

### **4. Elements of the Quality of Higher Education Outcomes**

The elements of the quality of higher education outcomes are multiple and encompass all aspects that ensure the preparation of a well-rounded graduate capable of contributing effectively to society and the labor market. These elements may be clarified as follows:

#### **1.4 Quality of Graduates**

Graduates are considered the most prominent outcomes of universities; hence, the importance of focusing on enhancing the quality of their outputs. This depends on developing students' cognitive and practical abilities, including their capacity for continuous learning, understanding professional and theoretical foundations, and recognizing methods for applying them across various fields of work. This element reflects the university's ability to prepare competent graduates capable of addressing the challenges of society and the labor market with a high degree of efficiency.<sup>6</sup>

#### **2.4 Quality of Scientific Research**

Scientific research represents a central component of higher education quality because of its direct connection to meeting the needs of society and the labor market. The quality of scientific research includes several indicators, among them:

The quality of organizing, structuring, and developing scientific research within the university.

The quality of relationships and scientific partnerships between educational institutions, society, and the labor market.

The quality of encouraging and valuing scientific research through financial and moral support and the provision of an environment conducive to innovation.

This dimension ensures the university's contribution to producing applied scientific knowledge linked to the actual needs of society, while also developing graduates' research competencies.<sup>7</sup>

### **3.4 Quality of Community Service**

The quality of community service is based on strengthening the relationship between universities and society through cultural and civilizational advancement and by linking education to the reality and foundations of society. This is achieved through providing appropriate solutions to societal problems, developing individuals' social and cultural awareness, and preparing graduates to play an effective role at both the local and international levels.<sup>8</sup>

Each of these elements possesses its own specific indicators that may be used to measure the level of quality of higher education outcomes, thereby ensuring the integration of the educational process and the achievement of the university's academic and societal objectives.

## **5. Indicators of the Quality of Higher Education Outcomes**

The quality of higher education outcomes is measured through a set of quantitative and qualitative indicators that reflect the level of university performance and the effectiveness of its academic, research, and societal roles. These indicators may be classified as follows:

### **A. Indicators of University Efficiency**

These indicators reflect the institution's level of academic performance. Among the most prominent are:

The percentage of success rates in final academic years.

The proportion of students graduating with distinction.

The average number of years required for graduation compared with the legally prescribed duration of study.

The number of research projects completed within the university.

These indicators demonstrate the university's ability to achieve its educational objectives efficiently, reduce academic wastage, and improve levels of academic achievement.

### **B. Indicators of Community Service**

These indicators relate to the extent of the university's openness to its social and economic environment. The most important include:

The level of professional compatibility of graduates and the extent to which their specializations correspond to labor market requirements.

The degree to which university research responds to the needs of service and production institutions.

The number of scientific consultations provided by the university to community institutions.

The number of innovations and scientific discoveries registered in the university's name.

These indicators highlight the university's role in local and national development, as well as the extent of its contribution to addressing societal issues.

### **C. Indicators of Satisfaction Among Higher Education Stakeholders**

The degree of stakeholder satisfaction constitutes an important criterion for judging the quality of educational outcomes. This includes:

The level of satisfaction of community institutions and production sectors regarding the competence of graduates.

Parents' satisfaction with educational performance.

Students' and graduates' satisfaction with academic programs and educational and research services.

Faculty members' satisfaction with the academic work environment.

Administrative staff's satisfaction with the university as an institution.

These indicators contribute to providing a comprehensive picture of the quality of university performance, based on the evaluations of the various stakeholders and actors interacting with the institution.<sup>9</sup>

The integration of these indicators allows for an objective measurement of the quality level of higher education outcomes and assists in identifying strengths and reinforcing them, while also detecting shortcomings and addressing them within the framework of continuous improvement.

## **6. Ranking of University Institutions within International Classifications**

International university rankings are considered among the most important modern tools used to indicate the level of quality of university institutions and higher education outcomes. Universities have increasingly sought to improve their positions within these rankings because of their impact on

enhancing academic and research reputation at the global level. Technological development and the availability of digital data have contributed significantly to facilitating the process of evaluating universities according to precise criteria, including the quality of scientific research, the number of scientific citations, the caliber of graduates, the volume of academic publishing, and the extent of the institution's digital presence.

Among the most prominent internationally recognized rankings is the Shanghai Ranking (ARWU), which relies on a set of scientific indicators, most notably the number of graduates who have received international awards, the number of highly cited researchers, the volume of articles published in prestigious scientific journals, and the academic performance of faculty members. This ranking is considered one of the most rigorous and accurate systems for evaluating universities worldwide.

The results of the 2022 Shanghai Ranking revealed the dominance of American universities in the top positions, with Harvard University ranked first globally, followed by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Some Arab universities, such as King Abdulaziz University and King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, were placed within the (101–150) category globally. As for Algerian universities, Djilali Liabès University appeared within the ranking, although it occupied relatively low positions compared to both global and Arab universities. This reflects the limited indicators of scientific research, academic publishing, and scientific citations within Algerian universities.

Likewise, the Webometrics Ranking is regarded as one of the significant international rankings, as it evaluates universities based on their electronic presence and the impact of their websites on the Internet, in addition to indicators of transparency and scientific excellence. American universities also occupied the leading positions in this ranking, while King Saud University topped the Arab universities. At the national level, Mentouri University of Constantine ranked first in Algeria, followed by the Houari Boumediene University of Science and Technology, and then Abou Bekr Belkaid University of Tlemcen.<sup>10</sup>

These rankings reveal the existence of a clear gap between Algerian universities and their international counterparts, despite the efforts undertaken by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in developing scientific research, encouraging innovation, and digitizing the sector. The low ranking of Algerian universities is attributed to weak indicators of international scientific publishing, the limited number of highly cited researchers, and the scarcity of patents in comparison with advanced universities.

## **7. Conclusion**

This study demonstrates that the quality of higher education outcomes is no longer an organizational option or a merely formal requirement; rather, it has become a strategic necessity imposed by the rapid transformations occurring in the fields of knowledge, economics, and technology. Today, universities are required to transcend their traditional role of merely transmitting knowledge and instead undertake a more comprehensive function consisting in preparing graduates who possess solid cognitive competencies, advanced practical skills, and professional and social values that qualify them for effective integration into both local and international environments. Consequently, the quality of outcomes represents the true criterion for measuring the effectiveness of educational policies and the efficiency of adopted reforms.

The analysis of the concept of quality in education also revealed that it is based on the logic of an integrated system linking inputs, processes, and outputs within a framework of continuous improvement. Quality is therefore not confined to a narrow academic dimension; rather, it encompasses all aspects of the educational process, from program planning, teaching methods, and evaluation to scientific research and community service. In this context, the role of internal and external evaluation mechanisms emerges as a means of regulating performance and ensuring its alignment with national and international standards.

Furthermore, the classification of higher education outcomes into cognitive, skill-based, and affective-social dimensions confirms that genuine quality can only be achieved through the integration of these three dimensions. Restricting education to cognitive achievement without developing skills or consolidating professional values leads to unbalanced outcomes. Accordingly, universities are required to periodically reconsider their programs and methods in order to achieve this balance and ensure the preparation of graduates capable of lifelong learning, adapting to change, and innovating in the face of challenges.

On the other hand, the elements of quality represented by the quality of graduates, the quality of scientific research, and the quality of community service reveal the organic interconnection between the university's three fundamental functions. Rigorous scientific research supports the quality of education, community service strengthens the link between theoretical knowledge and practical reality, and the quality of graduates constitutes the ultimate outcome of this interaction. Likewise, measurement indicators whether related to university efficiency, the extent of community service, or the degree of stakeholder satisfaction serve as objective tools for identifying strengths and reinforcing them, while also determining weaknesses and addressing them within a sustainable developmental vision.

Based on this, consolidating a culture of quality within Algerian universities requires the activation of precise evaluation systems, the provision of a motivating organizational environment, and the strengthening of partnerships with economic and social sectors, in addition to involving all stakeholders in the process of continuous improvement. Quality is not a temporary procedure, but rather a permanent institutional practice founded upon planning, monitoring, evaluation, and development.

Accordingly, it may be affirmed that improving the quality of higher education outcomes represents the fundamental gateway to building a university capable of competitiveness and innovation, qualified to contribute to sustainable development and the construction of a knowledge society, thereby enhancing its standing and making it a central actor in the path of national progress.

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