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Nazife Karadağ and Betül Balkar

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Abstract: This study examines and compares the strategic objectives of the universities included in the "mission differentiation and specialization on the basis of regional development" project carried out in the Turkish higher education system and well-established universities in Turkiye. Therefore, the aim of this study is to determine how the goal of "mission differentiation and specialization on the basis of regional development" is tried to be realized in the higher education system and whether this goal really brings a difference to the activities of universities. The study was conducted through document review. The universities included in the study were determined by criterion sampling and two different study groups were formed for comparison. The first study group consisted of the universities involved in the mission differentiation project. The second study group consisted of the well-established universities located in various geographical regions of Turkiye. Data were analyzed through the content analysis. The strategic objectives of the universities were examined under the themes of increasing quality in education, increasing the quantity and quality of scientific research, improvement of communication and interaction with stakeholders, strengthening of corporate identity/structure/ensuring institutionalization and internationalization. The strategic objectives of the universities with mission differentiation are also analyzed in terms of leading local and regional development. The results of the research show that universities subject to mission differentiation and well-established universities have different qualifications only in terms of "leading local and regional development" and "strengthening community service studies."

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However, there are also points where goals and performance indicators depending on these strategic objectives are resembled. The similarities in the strategic objectives of the universities show that the missions of the universities with mission differentiation and specialization should first be clarified based on a general framework provided by the Council of Higher Education. In line with the guiding framework, universities should establish their unique strategic objectives in the strategic planning process in order to contribute to regional development.

Keywords: regional development; mission differentiation; strategic objectives of universities; strategic plans of universities; higher education.

I. Introduction

In the historical process, universities have passed through three stages in line with their missions. The change in universities is explained by classifying the universities as a science-oriented medieval university (First-generation), a Humboldt-type university focused on education and research (Second-generation), and an entrepreneurial and socially integrated university (Third-generation).[1] First generation universities were established with the aim of "creating critical professions."[2] The first-generation universities, which played almost no role during the Enlightenment and were in stagnation, exhibited a structure far from the scientific and political developments of the age, as "ivory towers" designed separately from the society and unwilling to open their doors to the emerging middle class. Second Generation universities, also known as research universities, were founded in 1810 by Wilhelm von Humboldt's reform of the University of Berlin.[3] The third-generation universities, which have created an innovative, creative university model that contributes to the development of their regions, draw attention with their entrepreneurial structure.[4]

In the 21st century, "academic institutions and systems have faced pressures of increasing numbers of students and demographic changes,

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[1] Johan G. Wissema, *Towards the Third Generation University: Managing the University in Transition* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2009), 3-43.

[2] Ali Rıza Erdem, "Üniversite Anlayışındaki Değişim: Birinci Nesil Üniversiteden Dördüncü Nesil Üniversiteye [Change in Mental of University: From the First-Generation University to the Fourth Generation]," *TYB Akademi Dil Edebiyat ve Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 16, no. 16 (2016): 21-52.

[3] Philip G. Altbach, "The Complex Role of Universities in the Period of Globalization," accessed August 9, 2021, https://upcommons.upc.edu/bitstream/handle/2099/8111/altbach. pdf.

[4] Münevver Çiftçi, "Girişimci Üniversite ve Üçüncü Kuşak Üniversiteler [The Entrepreneur University and Third Generation Universities]," *Dumlupınar Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 27 (2010): 1.

demands for accountability, reconsideration of the social and economic role of higher education, and the impact of new technologies."[5] Additionally, "higher education is facing unprecedented challenges in the definition of its purpose, role, organization and scope in society and the economy. The information and communication technology revolution, the emergence of the knowledge economy, the turbulence of the economy and consequent funding conditions have all thrown new light and new demands on higher education systems across the world."[6]

"Increased global competition has placed higher education at the center of government policies. Governments are reviewing higher education systems since academic research functions are seen as a catalyst for innovation and economic growth."[7] The increasing importance of information production and innovation for economic development necessitated universities to have new roles. In many higher education studies, it is stated that the missions of universities should be reconsidered depending on the rise of the knowledge-based economy together with globalization and global crises.[8]

With the higher education policies adopted after 2004 in Turkiye, access to higher education has increased significantly and there has been an increase in the massification of the higher education system. However, the increase in access to higher education has caused many problems as well, the problem of localization in particular. In many studies, it is emphasized that planning problems depending on the distribution of the number of students and instructors,[9,10] problems related to graduation-employment,[11] problems due to

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[5] Philip G. Altbach and Todd M. Davis, "Global Challenge and National Response: Note for an International Dialogue on Higher Education," *International Higher Education* 14 (Winter 1999): 2.

[6] European Commission and OECD, "A Guiding Framework for Entrepreneurial Universities," (2012), accessed July 27, 2022, https://www.oecd.org/site/cfecpr/EC-OECD%20 Entrepreneurial%20Universities%20Framework.pdf.

[7] Ellen Hazelkorn and Jeroen Huisman, "Higher Education in the 21st Century–Diversity of Missions," *Higher Education Policy* 21, no. 2 (2008): 147.

[8] Chiara Rinaldi et al., "Universities and Smart Specialisation Strategy: From Third Mission to Sustainable Development Co-creation," *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education* 19, no. 1 (2018).

[9] Didem Doğan, "Yeni Kurulan Üniversitelerin Sorunları ve Çözüm Önerileri [Problems of Newly-Founded Universities and Solution Offers]," *Yükseköğretim ve Bilim Dergisi* 3, no. 2 (2013): 112.

[10] Fatma Mızıkacı, *Higher Education in Turkey* (Bucharest: UNESCO/CEPES, 2006), 81.

[11] Üstün Ergüder, Mehmet Şahin, Tosun Terzioğlu, and Öktem Vardar, *Neden Yeni Bir Yükseköğretim Vizyonu* [*Why A New Higher Education Vision*], (İstanbul: İstanbul Politikalar Merkezi, 2009), 20.

the insufficient number of lecturers,[12] problems due to insufficient physical infrastructure,[13,14] are experienced in Turkiye. Since 2006, the rapid expansion of universities and the policy of establishing a university in every province adopted in those years caused the Turkish higher education system to face some problems in practice. In addition, there are problems such as the low academic performance for universities established after 2006 and the fact that universities adopt a mission based on progress in every field instead of specializing in certain fields.[15] These problems negatively affect the fulfillment of university missions for education, scientific research, and community service, and prevent universities from being the locomotive of development in a knowledge-based economic system.

It seems possible for universities to develop economic, social, and human capital through the integration with the city and region they are located in. Therefore, the missions of universities in Turkiye have been reconsidered based on their strengths in order to enable them to tend towards differentiation and diversity. The "Mission Differentiation and Specialization on the Basis of Regional Development" project was initiated by the Council of Higher Education in cooperation with the Ministry of Development, especially for higher education institutions established after 2006 in order to increase the contribution of universities to the region they are located in and to encourage specialization in certain fields.[16] Accordingly, some of the universities were selected as Regional Development Oriented University and their fields of focus are as follows: Bingöl University, *agriculture and basin-oriented development*; Burdur Mehmet Akif Ersoy University, *animal husbandry*; Düzce University, *health and environment*; Kırşehir Ahi Evran University, *agriculture and geothermal energy*; Uşak University, *textile, leather and ceramics*; Aksaray University, *sports and health*; Kastamonu University, *forestry and nature tourism*; Muş Alpaslan University, *animal*

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[12] Mızıkacı, *Higher Education in Turkey*, 80.

[13] Doğan, "Yeni Kurulan Üniversitelerin Sorunları ve Çözüm Önerileri [Problems of Newly-Founded Universities and Solution Offers]," 112.

[14] Murat Özoğlu, Bekir Gür, and Sedat Gümüş, "Rapid Expansion of Higher Education in Turkey: The Challenges of Recently Established Public Universities (2006–2013)," *Higher Education Policy* 29, no.1 (2016): 31.

[15] Ebru Karataş Acer and Nezahat Güçlü, "Türkiye'de Yükseköğretimin Genişlemesi: Gerekçeler ve Ortaya Çıkan Sorunlar [The expansion of higher education in Turkey: The rationales behind this expansion and its challenges]," *Yükseköğretim Dergisi* 7, no. 1 (2017): 32.

[16] Council of Higher Education of Turkey (YÖK), "Bölgesel Kalkınma Odaklı Misyon Farklılaşması ve İhtisaslaşma Programı: Proje Hakkında [The Program of Mission Differentiation and Specialization on the Basis of Regional Development: About the Project]," accessed August 12, 2021, https://bolgeselkalkinma.yok.gov.tr/hakkinda/proje-hakkinda.

husbandry; Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University, *tea cultivation*; Siirt University, *agriculture and animal husbandry*.

The specialization of the universities involved in the project and their contribution to the region, in other words, the achievement of the objectives of the project is only possible with the effectiveness of the universities in line with the differentiation of their missions. Therefore, these universities with mission differentiation are expected to have a different operating structure than other universities in Turkiye. In addition, the fact that universities have too many missions to contribute to science and society may cause the overlapping of the missions of universities with and without mission differentiation. Therefore, it is important to compare these universities with other universities that are not subject to mission differentiation in order to determine their effectiveness in specialization and contribution to the region. Considering that well-established universities, which are among the first universities established in Turkiye, have a diversity of missions and the high potential of fulfilling their missions, it is of more critical importance to compare the strategic goals of well-established universities and universities with mission differentiation. In particular, determining whether these universities have a different function from the well-established universities in Turkiye will be able to show to what extent the new structure that is being tried to be established in higher education brings difference and diversity for higher education. In this study, the strategic objectives of the universities included in the "Mission Differentiation and Specialization on the Basis of Regional Development" project carried out in the Turkish higher education system and other well-established universities in Turkiye are examined and compared. Therefore, the aim of this study is to determine how the goal of "mission differentiation and specialization on the basis of regional development" is tried to be realized in the higher education system and whether this goal really brings a difference to the activities of universities. Thus, the present study will contribute to the higher education literature by defining the features that universities should have and the activities they should carry out in order to differentiate and specialize their missions on the basis of regional development. In line with this aim, the sub-problems of the research are as follows:

1. What are the issues of focus for the strategic objectives of the universities involved in the "Mission Differentiation and Specialization on the Basis of Regional Development" project in the Turkish higher education system?

2. What are the issues of focus for the strategic objectives of the well-established universities in Turkiye?

II. Theoretical framework

Universities, which are among the main institutions that lead the development of the city and region in which they are located, are institutions where the wisdom reached through systematic research method is transferred through teaching.[17] Altbach and Berdahl think that universities were developed as an institutional response to the pressure of meeting the professional, religious, and administrative needs of society through education.[18] As universities acknowledge and respond to social transformations and global trends, their missions have also undergone a transition process.[19] The mission of universities, which began with transfer of knowledge and education in the Middle Ages, has evolved and expanded over time to include searching for, producing, and applying knowledge. The first universities were learning centers for professions in the fields of law, clergy, medicine, and academia, which were known as the main professions of the period. Although the medieval universities mainly focused on vocational training, they were also engaged in intellectual, religious, and political life.[20] However, medieval universities emerged as a powerful modernization element for medieval culture.[21]

Until the 19th century, universities focused largely on teaching activities and training specialists in fields such as medicine, law, and theology, but in the early 19th century, the research, as a mission, became prominent for the universities. Research universities have their origins in Wilhelm von Humboldt's reform of the University of Berlin in 1810.[22] Humboldt adopted the research function as a main function of the university and argued that the university should be a place where scientific knowledge is produced rather than a vocational training service is provided. The rise of the German Humboldt University in the 19th century enabled universities to undertake the function of producing knowledge for the realization of teaching and vocational training. As a result of this development, the teaching and research

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[17] Karl Jaspers, *The Idea of the University* (London: Peter Owen Ltd, 1965).

[18] Philip G. Altbach and Robert O. Berdahl, *Higher Education in American Society*, rev. ed. (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1981), quoted in Thomas J. Denham, "*A Brief History* of The Major Components of the Medievel Settings" (PhD diss., Nova Southeastern University, 2002), 2.

[19] Jonathan R. Alger, "The Educational Value of Diversity," *Academe* 83, no.1 (1997).

[20] Altbach, "The Complex Role of Universities."

[21] Rocco Frondizi et al., "The Evaluation of Universities' Third Mission and Intellectual Capital: Theoretical Analysis and Application to Italy," *Sustainability* 11, no. 12 (2019): 1.

[22] Philip G. Altbach "The Past, Present, and Future of the Research University," in *The Rood to Academic Excellence: The Making of World-Class Research Universities*, ed. Philip G. Altbach and Jamil Salmi (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2011), 11-32.

functions of the university were linked to each other.[23] With the emergence of research universities, "research" has not only become an academic initiative but has also been associated with applied sciences and national development.[24] After these developments regarding the research-oriented mission of universities, universities associated their functions with social interests and developed a wider sense of responsibility towards society.[25] The new and universal university model, based on the principles of Newman and Humboldt, has been the main source of social progress. Therefore, such universities focused on research on national and global problems.[26]

After the Second World War, the need for highly educated human resources and the changing socio-economic environment increased the need for higher education. This demand paved the way for massification of the higher education. In this process, as a result of the advances in science and technology and the democratic pressure to improve living conditions; universities had to adopt the mission of contributing to socio-economic development as well as their research and development mission.[27,28] Massification, which became dominant with the increase in the number of students and lecturers, the increase in the number of institutions, the improvement of the infrastructure and the increase in the number of departments, created the third mission of the university, the mission of serving the public.[29]

In recent years, there have been significant changes in the ways of acquiring, disseminating, and transforming knowledge depending on the structural changes that have become prominent terms such as globalization, the information age, and the rise of the knowledge-based economy.[30] With the transition from the industrial society to the information society, the concept of knowledge has begun to take place on the basis of socio-economic reality. The concept of knowledge is at the heart of the knowledge-based

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[23] Roger King, "The Contemporary University," in *The University in the Global Age*, ed. Roger King (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 1-27.

[24] Altbach, "The Complex Role of Universities."

[25] Sintayehu Kassaye Alemu, "The Meaning, Idea and History of University/ Higher Education in Africa: A Brief Literature Review," *Forum for International Research in Education* 4, no.3 (2018).

[26] Geoffrey Boulton and Colin Lucas, "What are Universities For?" *Chinese Science Bulletin* 56, no. 23 (2011).

[27] Frondizi et al., "The Evaluation of Universities' Third Mission."

[28] King, "The Contemporary University."

[29] King "The Contemporary University."

[30] Bo Göransson and Claes Brundenius, eds., *Universities in Transition: The Changing Role and Challenges for Academic Institutions* (New York: Springer, 2011), 3-10.

economy. Therefore, universities, one of the knowledge-intensive institutions, have become centers of economic development.[31] The evolution of the global, digital, and knowledge-based economies of the 21st century has also affected higher education institutions.[32] In the 21st century, higher education institutions and systems have to face issues such as increasing student numbers, demographic change, accountability requirements, reconsidering the social and economic roles played by higher education, and the effect of new technologies.[33] As a result of all these changes faced by higher education institutions, higher education institutions need to focus on the mission of creating different learning environments that will meet the different needs of students to ensure inclusiveness. In addition, it has become a necessity to strengthen e-learning and technology-based learning opportunities in facilitating the access of individuals with exceptional characteristics to educational resources in order to prevent disadvantages in accessing higher education and to ensure equality in education.[34]

According to Wissema, the aforementioned new situations cause new and urgent demands from higher education institutions in order to ensure adaptation to the changing needs of the society and the economy. As a result of the radical changes of the learning-teaching process by digital technologies and the internet, it has become mandatory for universities to develop new models and strategies in order to survive in the 21st century. The search for alternative financing, which is due to the fact that the costs of scientific research using advanced technology exceed the budgets that governments can provide, is one of the primary causes that lead universities to adopt new models and strategies. For that, the universities seek cooperation with technology-oriented enterprises. In addition, the globalization created many opportunities, and the increasing opportunity for students to study abroad pushes universities to compete to attract the best students.[35]

Many internal and external factors such as the adoption of universities as an incubation center for science or technology-based commercial activities

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[31] Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Transition to Learning Economies and Societies* (Paris: OECD, 1996).

[32] Agyei Fosu, "Readiness of Universities for the 21st Century digital economies: A look at selected lecturers from Universities in Buffalo City Metropolitan in Eastern Cape Province South Africa," *International Journal of Community Development and Management Studies* 3 (2019).

[33] Altbach and Davis, "Global Challenge and National Response."

[34] Asu Altunoğlu, "Yükseköğretimde Kapsayıcılığın Uygulanabilirliği Üzerine Bir Tartışma [Applicability of Inclusiveness in Higher Education]," *OPUS Uluslararası Toplum Araştırmaları Dergisi* 16, no: 27, (2020): 679.

[35] Wissema, *Towards the Third Generation University*.

and the boom of interdisciplinary research have necessitated changes as well.[36] One of the new structures emerging in this process is the third-generation universities. The character of third-generation university is different from first- and second-generation universities. Unlike the medieval university and Humboldt University, there is a network structure dominated by perfection instead of hierarchical structure in the third-generation university.[37] According to Lukovics and Zuti, experts are trained in first-generation universities, specialists and scientists in second-generation universities, and specialists, scientists, and entrepreneurs in third-generation universities.[38]

In regions with different competitive potential, it is inevitable for universities to have different roles in order to increase their competitiveness.[39] Accordingly, it is possible to see the structuring of fourth-generation universities that have prioritized regional involvement in recent years. Fourth-generation universities are generally accepted as universities that emphasize local/regional involvement. According to Lukovics and Zuti, fourth-generation universities aim at competitiveness and try to ensure broad participation through local communities. In order to achieve this, it creates and implements an innovation ecosystem. Fourth-generation universities, which are based on third-generation universities and the concepts of university-based development and local development through universities, are considered to be the pioneers of the realization of regional development.[40] Erdem emphasized that the main characteristics of fourth-generation universities are their "thematic" and "transformative" nature. According to Erdem, fourth-generation universities have specific focuses, and therefore, exhibit thematic features, and they use their functions to transform society as a result of transferring the knowledge they have obtained in their fields of activity into practice.[41] Finally, fifth-generation universities, where knowledge-based innovative systems have become dominant due to the

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[36] Wissema, *Towards the Third Generation University*.

[37] Rudy Rabbinge and Maja Slingerland, "Change in Knowledge Infrastructure: The Third Generation University," in *Transitions Towards Sustainable Agriculture and Food Chains in Peri-Urban Areas*, eds. Krijin J. Poppe, Catherine Termeer, and Maja Slingerland (Netherlands: Wageningen Academic Publishers, 2009).

[38] Miklós Lukovics and Bence Zuti, "Successful Universities Towards the Improvement of Regional Competitiveness: 'Fourth Generation' Universities," (presentation, European Regional Science Association (ERSA) 53th Congress, Regional Integration: Europe, the Mediterranean and the World Economy, Palermo, Italy, August 2013).

[39] Lukovics and Zuti, "Successful Universities."

[40] Lukovics and Zuti, "Successful Universities."

[41] Erdem, "Üniversite Anlayışındaki Değişim."

interaction with environment,[42] are creating a new wind of change in higher education systems. "The fourth and the fifth trends concern the need for changes in university management, as multidisciplinary research teams and faculties increase the overall complexity and a huge increase in the number of students has led to bureaucracy."[43]

The fact that universities with mission differentiation have a teaching-oriented mission causes them to be considered in the category of first-generation universities. And also, they can be included in the second-generation university category in terms of serving the generation of scientific knowledge, and in the third-generation university category in terms of their potential to transform the knowledge into commercial products by considering institutional and social benefits. They are similar to fourth-generation universities in terms of providing service to the community and emphasizing regional involvement. However, the fact that they do not have a thematic structure suitable for their field of expertise, have similar education programs with universities without mission differentiation, and do not have a dominant knowledge economy-based innovation potential prevents them from being an absolute fifth- or even fourth- generation. Therefore, it can be understood that universities with mission differentiation necessitates a different university structure. Hence, they should be evaluated and defined in a separate category.

II.1. *The case of Turkiye*

Turkish higher education system has gained its current structure with the university reform in 1933. With the establishment of the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) in 1981, a restructuring process in academic, institutional and administrative aspects of higher education was started. Today, all the planning for higher education, especially strategic planning for higher education, coordination between universities and ensuring quality assurance are carried out by YÖK. The higher education system in Turkiye has a three-stage structure that provides education at associate, undergraduate and graduate levels based on secondary education. As of 2021-2022, there are

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[42] Joanna Morawska-Jancelewicz, "The Role of Universities in Social Innovation Within Quadruple/Quintuple Helix Model: Practical Implications from Polish Experience," *Journal of the Knowledge Economy* 13, (2022).

[43] Paula Kyrö and Johanna Mattila, "Towards Future University by Integrating Entrepreneurial and the 3rd Generation University Concept," (presentation, 17th Nordic Conference on Small Business Research, Helsinki, Finland, May 2012), 4, accessed July 27, 2022, http://pyk2.aalto.fi/ncsb2012/Kyro.pdf.

131 state universities and 78 foundation universities in Turkiye. In addition, there are 3,114,623 associate degree students, 4,676,657 undergraduate students and 449,717 postgraduate students registered in the higher education system. The total number of faculty members in higher education is 184,619.[44] Accountability, accreditation, internationalization, quality assurance, increasing quantity and quality come to the fore among the current trends and problems of the Turkish Higher Education system.[45]

III. Methodology

This study, adopted the qualitative research approach was carried out using the document analysis method. The main purposes of document analysis are the examination and interpretation of data in order to have a sense or understanding of an issue and develop empirical knowledge.[46] In this research, the strategic objectives and goals of the universities included in the scope of the research were analyzed and interpreted in detail through document analysis.

III.1. Study group

The criterion sampling method was adopted for determining the universities to be included in the scope of the research. In line with two different criteria adopted, two different study groups were formed in the research. In the first study group of the research, it was aimed to include universities with mission differentiation and specialization. Therefore, ten universities involved in the Mission Differentiation and Specialization on the Basis of Regional Development project were included in the first study group. Since ten universities were involved in the mission differentiation project at the time the research was conducted, the strategic plans of the mentioned ten universities were included in the scope of the research.

In the second study group, it was aimed to include the most well-established universities in different geographical regions of Turkiye. Since the aim of the research is to compare universities with mission differentiation

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[44] Higher Education Information Management System, "2020-2021 Higher Education Statistics," accessed July 24, 2022, https://istatistik.yok.gov.tr/.

[45] Gökhan Çetinsaya, "Büyüme, Kalite, Uluslararasılaşma: Türkiye Yükseköğretimi İçin bir Yol Haritası [Growth, Quality, Internationalization: A Roadmap for Higher Education in Turkey]," *Yükseköğretim Kurulu Raporu,* (2014).

[46] Juliet Corbin and Anselm Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory,* 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008).

and well-established universities, the regional distribution of the universities examined should be similar. For the inclusion process of the second study group, the following criteria were taken into consideration: If there is more than one university with mission differentiation in a geographical region, the same number of well-established universities for that region will be included in the research. Thus, it was determined how many well-established universities from each region would be examined in the research. In addition, if there is more than one well-established university in a region, the university with more programs was preferred for the study. Thus, it was determined which universities to choose from a geographical region. Since there is no university with mission differentiation in the Marmara Region, the well-established universities in the Marmara Region were not included in the scope of the research. As a result, a total of 20 universities, 10 with mission differentiation and specialization, and 10 with well-established background, were included in the study group. Information about the universities in the study groups is presented in Table 1.

It was deemed appropriate to examine the same number of documents for the universities in both groups to ensure that the richness of the documents examined regarding the universities with mission differentiation and well-established universities is similar in terms of scope. Corbetta stated that the researcher can decide the sample size himself in the document analysis.[47] The number of documents examined during the comparison process in the analyzes allowed a comprehensive comparison.

Table 1

Information on study group universities

Region	University with Mission Differentiation		Well-established University
	University	Specialization	University
Central Anatolia	Ahi Evran University	Agriculture and Geothermal Energy	Ankara University (1946)
	Aksaray University	Sports and Health	Gazi University (1926)
Aegean Region	Uşak University	Textile, Leather and Ceramics	Ege University (1955)

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[47] Piergiorgio Corbetta, *Social Research: Theory, Methods and Techniques* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2003).

Region	University with Mission Differentiation		Well-established University
	University	Specialization	University
Mediterranean Region	Mehmet Akif University	Animal Husbandry	Çukurova University (1973)
Southeast Anatolia Region	Siirt University	Agriculture and Animal Husbandry	Dicle University (1973)
Blacksea Region	Düzce University	Health and Environment Technologies	Samsun 19 Mayıs University (1975)
	Kastamonu University	Forestry and Nature Tourism	Karadeniz Technical University (1955)
	Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University	Tea Cultivation	Abant İzzet Baysal University (1992)
Eastern Anatolia Region	Muş Alparslan University	Animal Husbandry	Erzurum Atatürk University (1957)
	Bingöl University	Agriculture and Basin-Oriented Development	İnönü University (1975)

III.2. *Data collection*

"Almost all possible sources of information, data and ideas in policy-oriented research are divided in two groups as the 'documents' and the 'people'."[48] Accordingly, the data of this research, which was structured within the scope of higher education policies, were collected via document analysis method. "Document analysis is a research method for rigorously and systematically analyzing the contents of written documents."[49] Corbetta evaluates documents in two groups as personal and institutional documents.[50] The documents analyzed in this study are included in the institutional

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[48] Eugene Bardach and Eric M. Patashnik. *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving*, 3rd ed. (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2009), 6.

[49] Elise Wach and Richard Ward, "Learning about Qualitative Document Analysis," *Institute of Development Studies, Practice Paper in Brief* 13, (2013): 1.

[50] Corbetta, *Social Research: Theory, Methods and Techniques*.

document category. In the research, the institutional strategic plans of 10 universities with mission differentiation and 10 well-established universities were analyzed in this regard. The strategic plans, which were examined through document analysis, were accessed through the official websites of the universities. Since the documents used in the research are available for public use and accountability in the official websites of the universities, there is no need for ethical approval regarding the conduct of the research.

III.3. Data analysis

The data obtained from the documents were analyzed through content analysis process. Content analysis is "the process of categorizing and organizing information about the research questions."[51] Bowen recommends first quickly eye-scanning the documents in order to get a general perspective, then reading the documents in detail to determine the relevant analysis categories and interpreting the whole at the last stage. Accordingly, it can be said that document analysis consists of scanning (superficial review), reading (comprehensive review) and interpretation stages.[52] In the research, first of all, the strategic plans of the universities included in the scope of the research were examined in this regard. Afterwards, through detailed readings (comprehensive analysis), content analysis was performed to determine the analysis categories and patterns in the data sets. Then, the interpretation stage was carried out in line with the patterns in the data sets.

In the content analysis, the themes were selected in line with the strategic objectives of the universities. In line with the strategic objectives of the universities of both study groups, the themes of "increasing quality in education", "increasing the quantity and quality of scientific research", "improvement of communication and interaction with stakeholders", "strengthening of corporate identity / structure / ensuring institutionalization" and "internationalization" were determined as the common themes. Besides these common themes, the strategic objectives of the universities subject to mission differentiation are analyzed in terms of leading local and regional development, while the strategic objectives of the well-established universities are analyzed in terms of strengthening community service efforts. After these themes were determined as the representing themes of the strategic objectives of the universities, the goals related to the strategic

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[51] Glenn A. Bowen, "Document Analysis As a Qualitative Research Method," *Qualitative Research Journal* 9, no. 2 (2009): 32.

[52] Bowen, "Document Analysis," 32.

objectives and the performance indicators demonstrating the achievement level of these goals were analyzed at the conceptual level.

For the determination of the themes, coding was performed at both the paragraph and sentence level. In the coding at the sentence level, the strategic objectives directly stated in the strategic plans were coded. In the coding at the paragraph level, the strategic objectives represented by the relevant paragraphs were revealed and coded. During the analysis of goals and performance indicators, coding was performed at the level of sentences and words. Therefore, comprehensive summarization and interpretation could not be carried out for the coding of goals and performance indicators, unlike strategic objectives.

The coding process was carried out in line with the approach, a shortened example of which is presented below:

The strategic plan of Gazi University includes the objective of "increasing the quality of education and training, and expanding internationalization and accreditation." This objective was evaluated at the sentence level in the analysis and coded under the themes of both "increasing the quality of education" and "ensuring internationalization." One of the goals related to this objective is "to increase the use of laboratories and social areas and the use of current technology by students by reducing the number of students per faculty member by at least 15%." This goal was coded as "improving education and training infrastructure" in the conceptual coding. While performance indicators related to goals were coded at the conceptual level, it was also coded as "the number of associate/undergraduate students per faculty member" and "the number of graduate students per faculty member."

III.4. Reliability

In order to demonstrate how reliability is achieved in qualitative research, Hickey and Kipping recommend providing an explanation of how concepts or categories are constructed.[53] Accordingly, in this research, the data analysis process is explained in detail in order to ensure reliability of the research. In order to ensure external reliability of the research, the research processes were reported transparently, and data sources were clearly stated as references.[54] In addition, in the methodology section, data collection tools, data collection process and how the data were analyzed were explained in detail. As

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[53] Gary Hickey and Cheryl Kipping, "A Multi-Stage Approach to the Coding of Data from Open-Ended Questions," *Nurse Researcher* 4 (1996).

[54] Lynne M. Connelly, "Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research," *Medsurg Nursing* 25, no. 6 (2016).

recommended by Guba and Lincoln, more than one examiner was involved in the efforts in data collection, analysis, and interpretation stages. The researchers' areas of expertise are educational administration/education policy and higher education. Thus, regular discussions were held about the consistency of the research processes, the process stages were compared, and the consistency of the approach and interpretations in the analysis process was ensured in this regard.[55]

IV. Results

The findings of the study are presented depending on the themes included in Table 2 for the universities in both groups.

Table 2

Summary table of research findings

Group	Themes
Strategic Objectives of Universities with Mission Differentiation	• Leading local and regional development • Increasing quality in education • Strengthening of corporate identity / structure • Increasing the quantity and quality of scientific research • Improvement of communication with stakeholders • Ensuring internationalization
Strategic Objectives of Well-Established Universities	• Increasing quality in education • Increasing the quantity and quality of scientific research • Strengthening community service efforts • Ensuring institutionalization • Improvement of communication with stakeholders • Ensuring internationalization

IV.1. *Strategic objectives of universities with mission differentiation on the basis of regional development*

IV.1.1. Leading local and regional development

The universities with mission differentiation on the basis of regional development focuses on the following goals in line with the strategic objective of leading local and regional development:

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[55] Egon G. Guba and Yvonna S. Lincoln, "Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research," in *Handbook of Qualitative Research,* eds. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994).

- Developing projects
- Starting programs to train the qualified human resources required by the region
- Organizing activities to promote the natural, historical, and cultural values of the region
- Strengthening cooperation with local and regional institutions and organizations
- Organizing trainings and conducting R&D studies in line with the field of specialization
- Increasing scientific information generation capacity in line with the development-oriented mission
- Diversifying the number of undergraduate and graduate programs in line with the development-oriented mission

The performance indicators reflecting the achievement status of the university goals within the scope of the strategic objective of leading local and regional development are as follows: The number of projects in line with the development-oriented mission, the number of indexed articles published on the specialization field, the number of faculty members, the number of books published on the specialization field, the number of departments and programs opened/started, the sectoral satisfaction rates regarding the programs, the employment rate of new program graduates in organizations/enterprises in the region.

IV.1.2. Increasing quality in education

The universities with mission differentiation on the basis of regional development set goals for the following areas in line with the strategic objective of increasing the quality in education:

- Carrying out accreditation efforts
- Being a standing-out university for successful students and qualified lecturers
- By becoming a more desirable university, increasing the points required for students to apply the university
- Carrying out activities for the promotion of the university
- Improving education and training infrastructure
- Disseminating e-learning system
- Updating the curriculum
- Improving the effectiveness of undergraduate transfer process as well as minor and double major programs

- Improving the effectiveness of applied training programs
- Increasing the number of activities that will positively affect the interest and motivation of the students
- Increasing the number of lifelong learning opportunities

The performance indicators reflecting the achievement status of the goals of the universities in line with the strategic objective of increasing quality in education are as follows: The number of students benefiting from exchange programs, the number of faculty members benefiting from exchange programs, the number of administrative personnel benefiting from exchange programs, the number of associate/undergraduate students, the number of graduate students, the number of associate/undergraduate students per faculty member, the number of graduate students per faculty member, the number of congresses in which students participate with oral and/or poster presentations, the number of departments/programs included in the cooperative education project, the number of students benefiting from cooperative education, the increase in the number of students taking part in national and international projects, the number of accredited programs.

IV.1.3. Strengthening of corporate identity / structure

The universities with mission differentiation on the basis of regional development set goals for the following areas in line with the strategic objective of strengthening of corporate identity/structure:

- Strengthening the physical and administrative infrastructure
- Strengthening the IT infrastructure
- Strengthening library services infrastructure
- Strengthening the quality assurance system
- Strengthening the sense of corporate belonging
- Increasing the lodging/accommodation capacity
- Making environmental arrangements for the persons with disabilities
- Institutionalization

The performance indicators reflecting the achievement status of the goals of the universities in line with the strategic objective of strengthening of corporate identity/structure are as follows: The completion rate of documentation processes, the rate of adoption of the rules determined in the corporate identity guide, the rate of the number of operations that can be performed online, the number of managers trained, the establishment of the internal management system, creation of a corporate identity guide, increasing the number of automation, strengthening wireless access, increasing the

number of books per student, the number of units with at least one social media account.

IV.1.4. Increasing the quantity and quality of scientific research

The universities with mission differentiation on the basis of regional development set goals for the following areas in line with the strategic objective of increasing the quantity and quality of scientific research:

- Strengthening graduate education programs
- Encouraging participation in scientific activities
- Increasing university-industry cooperation
- Hosting scientific events
- Increasing the number of projects carried out with the support of institutions such as the EU (European Union), TÜBİTAK (Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkiye), the organization that supports academic and industrial research and development studies and innovations, BAP (Scientific Research Projects), Development Agency, etc.
- Organizing project trainings for personnel
- Supporting academic staff for scientific research processes
- Providing translation and corrected reading support to faculty members
- Providing academic consultancy services for scientific publication
- Increasing the number of licensed software programs used in research activities
- Establishing a foreign language translation and revision office
- Encouraging graduate students to participate in scientific activities
- Ensuring that university journals are included in international indexes

The performance indicators reflecting the achievement status of the goals of the universities in line with the strategic objective of increasing the quantity and quality of scientific research are as follows: The number of students graduating from graduate education programs, the number of national articles, the number of international articles, the number of academic journals published in the university, the number of faculty members benefiting from academic incentives, the number of new laboratories and centers established.

IV.1.5. Improvement of communication with stakeholders

The universities with mission differentiation on the basis of regional development set goals for the following areas in line with the strategic objective of improvement of communication with stakeholders:

- Ensuring active operation of application and research centers
- Ensuring students benefit from internships in public institutions and organizations
- Providing additional resources by receiving grants within the scope of public projects
- Prioritizing artistic and cultural activities
- Organizing events for individuals with special needs
- Organizing social responsibility projects
- Developing cooperation with non-governmental organizations
- Encouraging student clubs/societies for social responsibility projects

The performance indicators reflecting the achievement status of the goals of the universities in line with the strategic objective of improvement of communication and interaction with the stakeholders are as follows: The number of cooperation areas and protocols, the number of activities aimed at increasing efficiency in energy use, the number of projects carried out on nature, environmental pollution and recycling, the number of books in the central library, the number of social, cultural and sports activities organized for the students.

IV.1.6. Ensuring internationalization

The universities with mission differentiation on the basis of regional development set goals for the following areas in line with the strategic objective of ensuring internationalization:

- Signing bilateral agreements with universities in the member countries of exchange programs
- Initiating joint international graduate education programs
- Increasing the number of international students and faculty members
- Organizing informative meetings on exchange programs for students and academic staff

The performance indicators reflecting the achievement status of the goals of the universities in line with the strategic objective of ensuring internationalization are as follows: The number of students coming from abroad within the scope of the exchange program, the number of students going abroad within the scope of the exchange program, the number of faculty members coming from abroad within the scope of the exchange program, the number of faculty members going abroad within the scope of the exchange program, the number of foreign graduate program students.

IV.2. Strategic objectives of well-established universities

IV.2.1. Increasing quality in education

The well-established universities set the following goals in line with the strategic objective of increasing quality in education:

- Ensuring accreditation for undergraduate and graduate programs
- Updating education programs
- Increasing the number of double major and minor programs
- Improving library facilities
- Reducing the number of students per faculty member
- Encouraging the initiation of interdisciplinary master's and doctoral programs
- Improving support for faculty members
- Improving the physical and technological infrastructure of academic units
- Improvement of education-teaching environment and working environment

The performance indicators reflecting the achievement status of the goals determined by the well-established universities within the scope of the strategic objective of increasing quality in education are as follows: The number of accredited education programs (national), the number of students benefiting from lifelong learning programs through e-learning, the number of interdisciplinary graduate programs initiated, the number of students who qualify to study at the university by being in the first 5% tranche in the Higher Education Exam (YKS).

IV.2.2. Increasing the quantity and quality of scientific research

The well-established universities set the following goals in line with the strategic objective of increasing the quantity and quality of scientific research:

- Increasing the number of publications and citations for journals scanned in international indexes
- Improving academic publication incentives
- Providing academic publication support to graduate students
- Hosting national and international scientific events
- Increasing the number of projects supported by external resources (TÜBİTAK, EU Programs, etc.)
- Increasing the number of BAP-Supported projects

The performance indicators reflecting the achievement status of the goals determined by the well-established universities within the scope of the strategic objective of increasing the quantity and quality of scientific research are as follows: the number of projects supported by domestic resources (BAP), the total annual expenditure amount of domestic resource supported BAP projects, the annual total expenditure amount of projects with external support (Ministry of Development, EU, SAN-TEZ, TÜBİTAK, etc.), the number of research laboratories with improved infrastructure, the number of projects per faculty member, the number of faculty members trained in scientific research methods, the rate of publication of doctoral and master's theses (%).

IV.2.3. Strengthening community service efforts

The well-established universities set the following goals in line with the strategic objective of strengthening community service efforts:

- Organizing conferences, workshops, and seminars
- Increasing cooperation with non-governmental organizations
- Conducting expertise and consultancy activities
- Increasing the quality of healthcare services
- Conducting awareness projects
- Organizing events for people with disabilities
- Strengthening social unity with cultural and sports activities
- Being sensitive to social demands
- Increasing the production capacity of the units engaged in production
- Increasing the number of sports events
- Increasing the number of artistic and cultural activities
- Increasing the capacity of the university in terms of access to sports facilities/events for the benefit of the people of the region

The performance indicators reflecting the achievement status of the goals determined by the well-established universities within the scope of the strategic objective of strengthening community service efforts are as follows: The number of training/certification programs initiated by various academic units, the number of national and international sports, cultural and artistic activities held at the university, the number of social responsibility projects.

IV.2.4. Ensuring institutionalization

The well-established universities set the following goals in line with the strategic objective of ensuring institutionalization:

- Ensuring satisfaction for the students and the personnel
- Communication with alumni
- Organizing in-service training for academic staff
- Establishing a university-owned media organ to increase the recognition of the university
- Creating corporate/official accounts in social media networks

The performance indicators reflecting the achievement status of the goals determined by the well-established universities within the scope of the strategic objective of ensuring institutionalization: The number of events held for alumni, the number of personnel participating in in-service training, the job satisfaction rate of the academic staff (%), the level of belonging for students (%).

IV.2.5. Improvement of communication with stakeholders

The well-established universities set the following goals in line with the strategic objective of improvement of communication with stakeholders:

- Strengthening communication with stakeholders that provide internship opportunities
- Improving the patent process
- Establishing a career development center
- Improving cooperation with national and international organizations to strengthen cooperation among university-public sector-private sector
- Increasing the effectiveness of the continuing education center in order to strengthen the cooperation with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and to expand the phenomenon of serving the public

The performance indicators reflecting the achievement status of the goals determined by the well-established universities within the scope of the strategic objective of improvement of communication with stakeholders: The number of projects carried out in cooperation with universities, public sector, private sector, and international organizations, the number of meetings held for social information purposes, the number of social responsibility projects carried out.

IV.2.6. Ensuring internationalization

The well-established universities set the following goals in line with the strategic objective of ensuring internationalization:

- Increasing the number of foreign students and faculty members

- Initiating dual degree programs
- Initiating programs providing education in a foreign language
- Strengthening international exchange programs
- Increasing the number of students and faculty members benefiting from the exchange program
- Ensuring full participation in the programs initiated within the scope of ERASMUS programs

The performance indicators reflecting the achievement status of the goals determined by the well-established universities within the scope of the strategic objective of ensuring internationalization: The number of academic staff involved in externally funded projects, the number of academic staff with foreign master's and/or doctorate degrees, the number of international databases that can be accessed at the library.

V. Discussion and conclusion

This study has tried to explain how mission differentiation can be achieved by comparing the strategic objectives of universities with mission differentiation and well-established universities in the Turkish higher education system. Although this study was conducted in the context of the Turkish higher education system, the results of the study point out the factors and deficiencies required for mission differentiation and specialization in universities. Therefore, the results also offer practical implications for higher education systems aiming at mission differentiation for universities.

In this study, it is concluded that universities with mission differentiation and well-established universities in Turkiye fulfill similar functions in terms of strategic objectives, goals, and performance indicators. Both universities with mission differentiation and well-established universities have given importance to quality in education, scientific research, internationalization, institutionalization and cooperation with stakeholders within the scope of their strategic objectives. Apart from these common strategic objectives, universities with mission differentiation have the objective of "leading local and regional development" and well-established universities have the objective of "strengthening community service efforts." However, although it can be perceived as different areas due to their name, these two strategic objectives also have common features in terms of goals and performance indicators. As a result, although the universities with mission differentiation and well-established universities differ in terms of quality, they actually seem to have very similar objectives. Therefore, in structuring universities with a specific mission and expertise in a higher education system, it may be

useful to consider the objectives of well-established universities as a reference for comparison.

The new trends observed in higher education indicate that the economies of industrialized countries have become more knowledge-based, and universities have become the main driving force of regional economic development.[56] As stated by Gibbons, the central role attributed to Stanford University in the development of Silicon Valley has contributed to the widespread perception that universities can act as "innovation engines" generating new ideas to stimulate the creation of commercial products.[57] The main responsibility of universities in achieving this mission successfully is to train highly qualified human resources. Depending on the educational services of universities, highly qualified graduates are attending in the labor market and local workforce can easily engage in new initiatives with newly acquired skills and abilities. According to Lengyel, therefore, with the qualified workforce trained in higher education institutions, the interest of businesses from outside the region can increase and the attractiveness for entrepreneurship increases as well.[58] The universities need clearly defined strategies, international and local competitiveness, income generation opportunities, human resources, education quality and research infrastructure, and cooperation with other institutions and organizations in order to develop locally and create and maintain a global presence.[59] The strategic objectives of the universities with mission differentiation in Turkiye are generally focused on developing projects to contribute to local and regional development in line with the development mission, opening a program to train qualified human resources needed by the region, organizing activities to promote the natural, historical and cultural values of the region, and strengthening

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[56] Michaela Trippl, Tanja Sinozic, and Helen Lawton Smith, "The Role of Universities in Regional Development: Conceptual Models and Policy Institutions in the UK, Sweden and Austria," *European Planning Studies* 23, no. 9 (2015).

[57] James F. Gibbons, "The Role of Stanford University: A Dean's Reflections," in *The Silicon Valley Edge: A Habitat for Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, eds. Chong-Moon Lee, William F. Miller, Marguerite Gong Hancock, and Henry S. Rowen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 200-217, quoted in Wolfe David A., "The Role of Universities in Regional Development and Cluster Formation," in *Creating Knowledge, Strengthening Nations: The Changing Role of Higher Education*, eds. Glen A. Jones, Patricia McCarney, and Michael L. Skolnik (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 167.

[58] Imre Lengyel, "Távolság versus közelség" dilemma az ipari-egyetemi kapcsolatokon alapuló tudásalapú helyi gazdaságfejlesztésben. In A gazdasági környezet és a vállalati stratégiák. A IX. Ipar- és vállalatgazdasági konferencia előadásai, Szeged, 2008, 551-562, quoted in Lukovics and Zuti, "Successful Universities."

[59] Lukovics and Zuti, "Successful Universities."

cooperation with local and regional institutions and organizations. In addition, the performance indicators related to the achievement status of the strategic objectives of the universities that are considered within the scope of mission differentiation are generally expressed in terms of quantitative and theoretical outputs. Practical goals, especially concrete goals for strengthening cooperation with local and regional institutions and organizations, are of secondary importance. However, in order for higher education systems to create a structure conducive to mission differentiation, universities need to determine qualitative criteria for their strategic objectives. In this respect, it is predicted that universities with mission differentiation in Turkiye can generally contribute to local and regional development in academic and political fields. However, universities should focus on cooperation with regional institutions and organizations in order to encourage innovation, entrepreneurship and competition based on qualitative performance indicators and thus to produce concrete economic and social outputs. In this way, the production of projects that will provide mission differentiation can be realized in higher education systems.

According to the results, strengthening community service efforts is among the strategic objectives of the well-established universities, but it is not included in the strategic objectives of the universities with mission differentiation. Since the objective of universities with mission differentiation to lead local and regional development includes community service efforts, there may not have been a separate and specific strategic objective in this regard. Concepts of globalization, networking, better relations with the society, the development of the service sector and the knowledge-based economic structure have been effective in this mission of universities to be included in their agenda.[60] Community service efforts will contribute to the development of the regional capacity and prestige of the university.[61,62] Therefore, goals such as increasing cooperation with non-governmental organizations, conducting expertise and consultancy activities, and increasing the quality of healthcare services determined by well-established universities in line with the strategic objective of strengthening community service efforts will also contribute to the development

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[60] John Goddard, *Higher Education and Regions: Globally Competitive, Locally Engaged* (Paris: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 2007).

[61] Paul Chatterton and John Goddard, "The Response of Higher Education Institutions to Regional Needs," *European Journal of Education* 35, no. 4 (2000): 475-497.

[62] Peter Vaessen and Martin Van Der Velde, "University Knowledge Transfer Through Social and Professional Embeddedness: A Case Study," in *Economic Geography of Higher Education: Knowledge Infrastructure and Learning Regions*, eds. Roel Rutten, Frans Boekema, and Elsa Kuijpers (London: Routledge, 2003), 87-109.

of the region. In addition, as in Turkiye, the establishment of children's universities affiliated to universities can be considered within the scope of community service activities in terms of ensuring equality in access to education and supporting children's participation in social life. As a result, there is a need to clearly define what universities with mission differentiation can do within the scope of community service activities. In general, for a more functional structuring of a higher education system, universities with mission differentiation should define in what ways they differ from universities without mission differentiation in terms of community service activities. Universities should be able to make definitions on these issues in line with a general framework prepared by the governmental bodies responsible for higher education.

Increasing the quality of education in general is among the strategic priorities of the universities in both groups included in the study. Universities have prioritized accreditation in order to increase the quality of their education and training programs. One of the main goals of the reforms that started with the Bologna Process is to increase the quality of education.[63] Accreditation processes have been initiated in order to increase the quality of education and research and to ensure quality accountability.[64] By the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), increasing the quality of education has been associated with the competencies of the academic staff of the universities.[65] In this study, the goal of the universities of which the strategic objectives are examined is to increase the competencies of academic staff by increasing the support provided to the faculty members based on the objective of increasing the quality of education. In line with the Bologna Process, the quality of education is among the issues that universities with or without mission differentiation should primarily focus on. However, universities with mission differentiation are expected to set more specific objectives on how to increase the quality of education in the field they specialize in. In higher education systems aiming at mission differentiation, universities should determine more specific activities and

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[63] Barica Marentič Požarnik, "Improving the Quality of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education Through Supporting Professional Development of Teaching Staff," *Napredak* 150, no. 34 (2009): 341- 359.

[64] Council for Higher Education Accreditation (US), *Recognition of Accrediting Organizations: Policy and Procedures* (Washington: Council for Higher Education Accreditation, 2006), accessed August 12, 2021, https://www.chea.org/sites/default/files/other-content/Recognition-Policy-2006.pdf.

[65] Thune Christian, *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (Helsinki: European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, 2005).

performance indicators to ensure the development of academic staff, especially in the area of specialization they focus on.

The results of the study show that improving the quantity and quality of scientific research is another common strategic objective adopted by the universities in both groups. In the 11th Development Plan of Turkiye, policies and measures aimed at achieving this strategic objective have been adopted. Many policies included in the 11th Development Plan, prepared by the Presidency of Strategy and Budget,[66] such as "The budget resources allocated for strengthening the R&D infrastructures of universities and developing scientific research projects in terms of quantity and quality will be increased"; "a policy document regarding scientific research projects will be prepared, project monitoring mechanisms and new performance-based methods for resource allocation will be developed"; "qualified researchers carrying out high-level scientific and technological studies abroad will be supported to come to Turkiye and train researchers within the scope of the International Fellowship for Outstanding Researchers Program" support the improvement in both quantity and quality of scientific research. However, it should be noted that scientific research in different disciplines cannot be increased by employing the same methods. Universities specializing in a particular field need to determine more specific measures to increase scientific studies in their fields of expertise. Otherwise, it may not be possible to observe the difference in mission between universities in practice.

According to the results, another common strategic objective focused on by universities in both groups is to strengthen communication with stakeholders. Universities' communication with stakeholders affects many processes related to the strategic objectives of universities and the quality of education.[67] Therefore, it is important for universities to receive feedback from stakeholders in the goal setting process. Universities of which strategic plans were examined in this study set goals for internal and external stakeholders in order to strengthen institutional performance. Szwajkowski states that demands, needs and capacities of stakeholders should be taken into account in relations with stakeholders.[68] Burrows emphasizes the importance of stakeholder analysis for

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[66] Presidency of the Republic of Turkey Strategy and Budget Presidency, *11. Kalkınma Planı [The 11th Development Plan] (2019-2023)* (Ankara: Strateji ve Bütçe Başkanlığı, 2019), 100-101, accessed July 27, 2022, https://www.sbb.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/On_Birinci_Kalkinma_Plani-2019-2023.pdf.

[67] Juha Kettunen, "Stakeholder Relationships in Higher Education," *Tertiary Education and Management* 21, no. 1 (2015): 56-65.

[68] Eugene Szwajkowski, "Simplifying the Principles or Stakeholder Management: The Three Most Important Principles," *Business & Society* 39, no. 4 (2000): 379–396.

higher education institutions as an institutional survival strategy.[69] Similarly, Harvey states that the demands of the labor market should be considered by higher education institutions.[70] On the other hand, Simmons states that the performance of higher education institutions is related to their capacity to respond to the needs of stakeholders associated with the institution.[71] Therefore, the universities examined in this study aim to increase their institutional performance by prioritizing the opinions of internal and external stakeholders. This aim, of course, has a rational basis for every university. However, in order for the differentiation of mission in the higher education system to serve regional development, universities should make a systematic planning especially for determining external stakeholders and conducting cooperation with them. Therefore, it is expected that the strategic objectives of universities with mission differentiation will be structured more strongly in this direction.

Strengthening the corporate identity or ensuring institutionalization are among the strategic objectives of the universities in both groups included in the study. For these objectives, universities focus on issues that will contribute to their brand values, such as establishing a university-owned media organ in order to increase the recognition of the university, creating corporate/official accounts in social media networks, and ensuring student and personnel satisfaction. In this respect, strengthening the corporate identity is evaluated by universities in the context of branding. Gray, Fam, and Llanes examine universities under the following themes based on their prominent features in the branding process: learning environment (faculty members, physical conditions, research resources), reputation/acknowledgment (brand name, achievements, and high educational standards), career opportunities for graduated students (employment status of graduates, expected income levels, perception of the markets/sectors towards graduated students), regional image (political stability, security, and hospitality of the country where the university is located), cultural tolerance (religious freedom and cultural diversity).[72] On the other hand, Bennett and Ali-Choudhury evaluate the

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[69] Joanne Burrows, "Going beyond labels: A Framework for Profiling Institutional Stakeholders," *Contemporary Education* 70, no. 4 (1999): 5–10.

[70] Lee Harvey, "Employability: Developing the Relationship Between Higher Education and Employment," (opening presentation, the Fifth Quality in Higher Education 24-Hour Seminar, Warwick University, October 1999), accessed August 12, 2021, http://qualityresearchinternational.com/esecttools/relatedpubs/Employability5thQHE.pdf.

[71] John Simmons, "Reconciling Effectiveness and Equity in Performance Management: A Stakeholder Synthesis Approach to Organizational Systems Design," *Systemic and Action Research* 16, no. 5 (2003): 355–365.

[72] Brendan J. Gray, Kim Shyan Fam, and Violeta A. Llanes, "Branding Universities in Asian Markets," *Journal of Product & Brand Management* 12, no.2 (2003): 115.

branding processes of universities within the scope of the aspects that make universities different from other universities, the opportunities provided to students, capacity building for student needs, and increasing the interest of successful students towards the university.[73] In addition, academic offers (qualified faculty members, physical equipment, etc.) and intangible assets constitute the brand promise of higher education institutions.[74] According to Valitov, the first of the brand components of higher education institutions is university qualifications (such as accreditation, applied education programs and international validity of programs, faculty members, social and financial characteristics of the institution); the second of the brand components is the student gains such as employment guarantee, values (history/background, alumni achievements), and image, which includes artistic and sports activities as well as personal development opportunities.[75] In this study, it is noteworthy that the objectives of the universities with mission differentiation towards establishing a corporate identity are more comprehensive than the objectives of the well-established universities. Universities with mission differentiation have more emphasis on strengthening their physical and administrative infrastructure, improving the quality assurance system, and institutionalization. Therefore, universities with mission differentiation have set their objective of increasing brand values in a way that covers many areas that the literature on creating brand value points out. As a result, in a higher education system where there is an understanding of specialization and mission differentiation for universities, it is necessary to ensure that the characteristics and promises of universities are recognized by the society.

One of the primary objectives of the universities in the 21st century is ensuring internationalization. Universities included in this study also prioritize goals such as conducting exchange programs, strengthening student and academic staff mobility, and encouraging joint graduate education in line with the objective of internationalization. One of the higher education objectives included in the 11th Development Plan of Turkiye covering the period of 2019-2023 is to ensure internationalization. However, universities need to determine the methods of how to achieve internationalization in a systematic way. Universities adopt academic strategies (university rankings,

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[73] Roger Bennett and Rehnuma Ali-Choudhury, "Components of the University Brand: An Empirical Study," (presentation, 3rd Annual Colloquium of the Academy of Marketing's Brand, Corporate Identity and Reputation SIG, Brunel University, September 2007).

[74] Robert C. Lockwood and Jerry Hadd, "Building A Brand in Higher Education," *Gallup Management Journal* 12 (2007): 1-6.

[75] Shamil M. Valitov, "University Brand as a Modern Way of Winning Competitive Advantage," *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 152 (2014): 295-299.

accreditation, promotion, quality, and recognition) and institutional strategies (elements such as management, personnel, policy, and culture) in the internationalization process.[76] In order to ensure internationalization, it is recommended that governments develop national policies on internationalization, make higher education attractive with financial and non-financial incentives, and increase competitiveness; on the other hand, it is recommended that higher education institutions analyze the environment effective on internationalization, develop institutional strategies on internationalization, and strengthen the monitoring and assessment mechanisms of the internationalization process.[77] Therefore, the fact that the internationalization objectives of the universities examined in this study are limited to exchange programs may weaken their competitiveness. In addition, there is a need to know the points of internationalization strategies of universities with mission differentiation, which differ from the strategies of other universities. It should be clarified how a university serving regional development defines internationalization and what outputs it expects to produce from internationalization.

As the results of the study reveal, the strategic objectives of universities with and without mission differentiation may be similar. However, universities in a higher education system that will provide regional development through mission differentiation and specialization should define their strategic objectives by associating them with the characteristics of the area they specialize in and the dynamics of the region they are located in. Otherwise, the fact that universities with different qualifications carry out similar activities may significantly limit the structuring of the higher education system in a way that will contribute to development.

VI. Implications and limitations

The results of this study revealed that universities with mission differentiation and well-established universities have similar structures and

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[76] Abdullah Selvitopu and Ayhan Aydın "Türk Yükseköğretiminde Uluslararasılaşma Stratejileri: Süreç Yaklaşımı Çerçevesinde Nitel Bir İnceleme [Internationalization Strategies in Turkish Higher Education: A Qualitative Inquiry in the Process Approach Context]," *Hacettepe Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi* 33, no.4 (2018): 803-823.

[77] Fabrice Hénard, Leslie Diamond, and Deborah Roseveare, *Approaches to Internationalisation and Their Implications for Strategic Management and Institutional Practice: A Guide for Higher Education Institutions* (Paris: OECD, 2012), accessed August 12, 2021, https://www.oecd.org/education/imhe/Approaches%20to%20internationalisation%20 -%20final%20-%20web.pdf.

functions due to the similarity between their strategic objectives and goals. However, it is expected that the strategic goals and objectives of these universities, which have different theoretical functions, will also be different. Therefore, universities with mission differentiation should set strategic objectives by considering local and regional needs and conditions, and by including internal and external stakeholders in the planning processes in line with their own dynamics, instead of setting generalizable goals. It is recommended to make regulations that enable the participation of external stakeholders in the strategic planning process of universities with mission differentiation. Although standard procedures are applied in the strategic planning of all public institutions, an additional regulation can be made on the participation of external stakeholders in the strategic planning of such universities, unlike other public institutions.

The performance indicators of the universities in both groups are mostly based on quantitative measurements. It should be noted that performance indicators reflecting the achievement of strategic objectives should include qualitative indicators as well as the quantitative ones. The Council of Higher Education can use economic incentive mechanisms for universities that prove the quality of their activities in line with qualitative performance indicators. In the strategic planning process, studies on the defining of qualitative performance indicators may be made compulsory for universities with mission differentiation.

The goals and performance indicators of the universities in both groups are mostly limited to academic subjects. However, research and development units need to be made more active so that universities with mission differentiation can serve regional development. Universities subject to mission differentiation need to be integrated with the region and their potential to respond to regional needs should be increased. Therefore, there is a need for regulations that allow universities with mission differentiation to cooperate with institutions and organizations in their regions. Institutions and organizations that cooperate with the universities may be offered tax reductions or economic incentives by the government.

In the relevant literature, there is a research gap regarding the comparison of the objectives and activities of universities with and without mission differentiation and specialization. Therefore, it is a limitation that the results of this study cannot be compared with the results of the studies conducted in the context of other higher education systems. Future research exploring the mission differentiation and specialization of universities in the context of higher education systems of various countries may contribute to filling this research gap.

Private universities and foundation universities were not included in the study. Therefore, examining only state universities within the scope of the study can be considered as a limitation. Examination of only state universities may have played a part in determining the similarity of the strategic objectives of universities with mission differentiation and well-established universities. The strategic objectives of private universities and foundation universities may differ when compared to the objectives of state universities. For this reason, it is recommended to make a multidimensional comparison between public, private and foundation universities in future research on the missions of universities.

It is also important to mention the limitations regarding the generalizability of the study results. The adoption of the qualitative approach in the study allows the results to form an understanding of the research subject in line with naturalistic generalization. The results show the deficiencies and necessary factors that must be taken into account for the realization of mission differentiation and specialization in higher education. Therefore, the results offer important implications for higher education systems that aim to include a structure based on mission differentiation and specialization for universities. For this reason, the study provides an opportunity to gain an insight of higher education systems in which such a structuring is aimed.

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