

REVISTA

**YACHAY**ISSN: 2412-2963  
e-ISSN: 2520-9051

Envío: 28/12/2023

Revisión: 27/02/24

Aceptado: 04/04/24

Publicado: 30/06/24

**Cómo citar:**

Aslay, S.(2024). An overview of the historical development and current vision of academic education. *Yachay*, 13 (1), 62-66.

**Fuente de financiamiento:**

No financiado.

**Declaración de conflictos de interés:** el autor declara no tener conflicto de interés

## An overview of the historical development and current vision of academic education

Semra Aslay

Faculty of Medicine, European University of Lefke, Turquía.

[saslay@eul.edu.tr](mailto:saslay@eul.edu.tr)<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4653-9194>**Abstract**

The academic side of education has always been the ultimate point regarding purpose, structuring, and reflecting education to society from past to present. Naturally, the definition of the university and its contribution to society should not be ignored. Historically speaking, universities are institutions where inquisitive minds are trained. Therefore, it is necessary to research the quality of their impact on society. This article aims to draw attention to the fact that the educational disciplines of today's universities need to be questioned more loudly, as the demand for higher education and the increase in quality do not go parallel. In this article, the stages of academic education from its historical beginnings to the present have been evaluated by scanning the literature. Thus, it is aimed to make the readers question themselves about whether the situation of academic education from the beginning to the present is positive progress or just a change. Therefore, the study focused on discussing the quality of education at universities rather than comparing articles with each other. Articles focused on the main idea of the research were downloaded, examined, and indexed according to the path of academic education in history. The optimal approach should be to evaluate each university according to its own social, geographical, and cultural environment, as well as international standards. Easier access to information is of no importance without a mind that questions the accuracy and validity of the information. The ultimate point that an academic education can reach should be measured by the contribution to society of the people who have attained that education.

**Keywords:** Academic, higher education, education history, university.

## Una visión general del desarrollo histórico y la visión actual de la educación académica

**Resumen**

El aspecto académico de la educación siempre ha sido el punto final en cuanto a propósito, estructuración y reflexión de la educación para la sociedad desde el pasado hasta el presente. Naturalmente, no se debe ignorar la definición de la universidad y su contribución a la sociedad. Históricamente hablando, las universidades son instituciones donde se forman mentes inquisitivas. Por lo tanto, es necesario investigar la calidad de su impacto en la sociedad. Este artículo tiene como objetivo llamar la atención sobre el hecho de que las disciplinas educativas de las universidades actuales deben cuestionarse más enérgicamente, ya que la demanda de educación superior y el aumento de la calidad no van en paralelo. En este artículo, se han evaluado las etapas de la educación académica desde sus inicios históricos hasta la actualidad mediante el escaneo de la literatura. Por lo tanto, se pretende que los lectores se pregunten si la situación de la educación académica desde el principio hasta el presente es un progreso positivo o solo un cambio. Por lo tanto, el estudio se centró en discutir la calidad de la educación en las universidades en lugar de comparar artículos entre sí. Los artículos centrados en la idea principal de la investigación se descargaron, examinaron e indexaron de acuerdo con el camino de la educación académica en la historia. El enfoque óptimo debería ser evaluar cada universidad de acuerdo con su propio entorno social, geográfico y cultural, así como con los estándares internacionales. Un acceso más fácil a la información no tiene

**OPEN ACCESS**

Distribuido bajo:



importancia sin una mente que cuestione la exactitud y validez de la información. El punto máximo al que puede llegar una educación académica debería medirse por la contribución a la sociedad de las personas que han alcanzado esa educación.

**Palabras clave:** Académico, educación superior, historia de la educación, universidad.

## Introduction

Education is a process of acquiring knowledge, experience, and skills. Academic education and academicism are two branches of education. While theoretical knowledge is gained through institutes, universities, and organizations, education is achieved by those who seek knowledge themselves.

The definition of university for a school in history was used for the first time in 1088 in Italy (Alemu, 2018). Even though some institutions provided education with the same principles before, it is accepted as the first known university in the world since it was used as a definition for the first time. Since then, universities have been established in Paris (1150-1260), Oxford (1096), and Cambridge (1209). Generally speaking, it is considered accepted that university education started in Europe.

Although Bologna has the first known academic education institute, the history of institutions for learning and research dates back to the 5th-6th centuries BC. Nalanda has been recognized as one of India's oldest international education and training centers (Oza and Japee, 2020). These library and accommodation facilities were built in the sixth and fifth centuries, equivalent to what we now see as a university. It was established as a school that provided a different education than the Nalanda period, had libraries, and had its system, including meeting sociocultural and religious needs. Due to this structuring, UNESCO has accepted it as a university since 2010 (Alemu, 2018).

Similarly, the Akademia founded by Plato in Athens epitomizes a center of education and learning equivalent to a university of the modern age (Oza and Japee, 2020). However, what remains today at Nalanda and Akademia are archaeological sites that underline the prestige of these educational centers, although they once lacked the concept of "university."

Apart from all these, the city of Fes in Morocco has the privilege of a university education. UNESCO has included the educational institution here on the "World Cultural Heritage" list and acknowledged that it is the oldest university in the World (Alemu, 2018).

In medieval Europe, universities had close relations with the church and were involved in training clergy. Nalanda and Fes universities also provided education based on Buddhism and Islam in different periods. Teaching in universities continued for a long time, supporting the idea that one should not separate from religion (Alemu, 2018; Oza and

Japee, 2020). In this respect, academic education, dominated by religious institutions and organizations in university education from the Middle Ages until almost the end of the 18th century, is no longer valid. Today, the definition of a modern university is "a research and education institution that is not under the control and influence of religion." (Alemu, 2018; Tight, 2024)

The idea that education at universities should also support scientific research dates back to the early 19th century. In this model established by Alexander von Humboldt, teaching and research should continue in harmony, free thought should be supported, and the university should consist of students and teachers who support this idea. Humboldt's idea became widespread after this period, and university teaching became research-centered (Bongaerts, 2022).

After all those years, In the 21st century, although university education now has modern foundations that are free from religious influences and where research comes to the fore, philosophers such as Chomsky, especially in America, claim that academic education has come to the point of collapse due to the system also called the "Wal Mart" model. This model got its name because it is similar to the way Walmart stores in America consider employees who do not have social assistance problems as "partners". It is considered a high profit as a result of less trouble and less cost. This method is especially implemented by university boards of trustees to reduce labor-related costs and to make universities financially profitable by increasing the number of concurrent students. Increasing the number of part-time employees and university students is a temporary solution, but as a result profits and reduced costs also increase. Since more is needed for teaching at a university to have all these features, but these features must also be of a certain quality, the university's existence can be ranked very low regarding academic evaluation (Sowards and Chomsky, 2014).

## Methodology

The article makes use of the literature review. Databases – Google Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science – were searched using keywords to identify potentially relevant articles, books, and reports that had been published on the topic. The keywords used included "academic", "higher education", "history of education", and "university". A literature review was conducted using the keywords mentioned above, and literature research involved articles published after 2000. In this way, even though there were 246 publications in the literature, survey studies, publications related to economics, medical sciences, and other topics were excluded. The total number of references, which was 39, was limited to 23 because those with a critical approach were preferred.

Thus, it is aimed to make the readers question themselves about whether the situation of academic education

from the beginning to the present is positive progress or just a change. Therefore, this study focused on discussing the quality of education at universities rather than comparing articles with each other. Articles focused on the main idea of the research were downloaded, examined, and indexed according to the path of academic education in history. Also, articles with topics including innovative survey studies, defense of an idea, and future suggestions have been excluded.

Research on the early days of academic education was the starting point (Gray, 2001; Alemu, 2018; Oza and Japee, 2020). Articles that specifically defined academic education in the 19th and 20th centuries were subsequently included. In the final part, the critical approaches of philosophers, especially in America, and the issue of academic education having different methods over time were highlighted.

To ensure the quality of the research, these articles, especially those with a critical perspective, were discussed with a trusted colleague.

## Results

Although academic education has been known as an education devoted entirely to learning since it began to be included in university education, this definition has been further developed, today. The spread of knowledge, ease of communication, and rapid information sharing have led to the training being evaluated as performance. Academic education received according to quality and standards can be considered an individual's positive contribution to society (Kwek et al., 2010).

The aim of higher academic studies should be to ensure the institutionalization of knowledge and to build a capacity to apply it so that graduates of a course are placed to evolve successfully throughout their lives, both in their working and private lives.

With Lincoln's signing of the "Morrill Land Grant Act" in 1862, public universities were seen as institutions that undertook public service duties in education, and the state's support for universities was approved (Rose, 2017). Academic institutions in America that received this support focused on master's and doctoral-level education by synthesizing British and German models in education. This view is still debated in today's American academic education but is simultaneously accepted (Guzman-Valenzuela et al., 2022; Alemu, 2018). During the post-World War II period, when the American economy was booming in the 1960s, Kerr observed that the university's role in society was changing with the experience of being an academician and put forward the definition of "multiversity." According to Kerr, the university has now become a tool for national purposes; it is at war, including within itself, and knowledge is the most critical factor in economic and social growth. In the knowledge-based economy, disseminating and sharing the information obtained from research and returning education as a service to society is still accepted. In his speech at Harvard in 1963, Clark Kerr

brought forward new definitions regarding the characteristics a modern university should have and serve as factories serving industry and the state (Gray, 2001; Sigurdson, 2013; Tight, 2024).

Even though it first started in Europe, a doctorate, which began to be accepted and valued earlier in America, now means multidisciplinary education that trains advanced knowledge workers who contribute to the social economy under the definition of multiversity. With the spread of this view, doctoral education has come to the fore in economics, which is the main factor in the growth of society, and it has been accepted by everyone that university education is both widespread and has specific standards (Varghese, 2004; Rose, 2017).

However, over time, supporting the existence of universities in society due to their contribution to the economic dimension has become openly debatable. According to this view, academic education contributes more to the economic extent of increasing social welfare and the sociological aspect. In UNESCO's research, which evaluated all aspects of higher education in the Asian continent, the aim was initially to provide a qualified academic education, identify and analyze existing problems, and offer solutions to these problems (UNESCO, 2014). However, the results showed that many Asian countries see university education, especially postgraduate education, as a means of increasing economic competitiveness (Kwek et al., 2010; Alemu 2018; Gray, 2001).

This situation supports Chomsky's "Wal Mart" model. The emphasis has been on directing the existing workforce and participating in a neo-liberal war environment rather than the quality of education. According to this model, the boards of trustees, as effective property owners, sought to reduce the cost of education and increase the number of those receiving education by ensuring that labor was docile and obedient. This pushed society to polarize under the name of the wealth system-existence system rather than the quality of academic education (Kwek et al, 2010; Bongaerts, 2022).

Although the role of universities in contributing to the economy increases day by day, the fact that the individuals they graduate can shape society politically and sociologically should be addressed. An academically educated mind can support the current system and question the dominant governments. This will contribute to widespread social awareness of social responsibility. At this point, the issue that needs attention is the principles that university education should comply with and their prevalence. Today, education, especially in the Far East, bears the influence of European-centered academic education. This situation can be generalized to all countries where universities are increasingly emerging. To what extent a continent historically hosted this institution should influence other countries concerned about globalization is a matter of debate because every country will observe its university education and its effects primarily

on its society. This means that the cultural and local social structure will directly change positively or negatively from this situation. For this change to take place in a positive direction, the idea that countries' university education should interact with the whole world in terms of information sharing, determining and ensuring standards, postgraduate education, development, and support of research, but should first create a balance of criteria in their internal system in academic evaluations is something that should be taken into consideration the situation (Moshtari and Safarpour, 2023).

Rather than being one of the stages of learning, the university is the fundamental point of all-around human development worldwide. Although some approaches have a prominent impact on the economy, it is ultimately the most effective and advanced education that can be received for many professions. A university graduate must have the necessary knowledge and skills in the work which in they are trained and must be competent in many matters, from social responsibility awareness to problem identification and analytical approach. Educated people carry the driving force with the knowledge they have for all kinds of changes and developments due to globalization.

The university contributes to the formation of ideal individuals with the necessary education for the welfare of society and the continuity of the institutional order. In communities where those with a higher level of education have more income, the university has become a must-pass step in education, with the aim of those who want to keep their living standards high.

Although almost everyone has an opinion about quality, it takes work to establish a complete consensus regarding the definition of quality in education, especially in academic education.

Many researchers have expressed their opinions about quality standards in university education over time; it should not be ignored that each country's sociocultural and geographical conditions affect this situation. This complicates the unity and standard definition of quality between countries.

Institutions with international accreditations and a defined mission, vision, and standards are essential for quality academic education. Wildly, in cases where revision is required to meet these conditions, the complex structure of the education system may only succeed if it is analyzed well. Some researchers claim that to avoid this situation, the issue must be approached using the seven quality models in education. A broad perspective can be provided on the methods of the goals and characteristics model, resource input model, process model, satisfaction model, legitimacy model, absence of problem model, and organizational learning model. In their research, Harvey and Green stated that criteria should be determined to evaluate quality in higher education, and different understandings of quality that inform stakeholders' preferences should be understood (Kwek et al., 2010).

As can be seen, although the definition of the university has been used since the 11th century, the training of academics who would question the system itself and talk about standardization on a common ground coincides with the first half of the 20th century. In the second stage of this inquiry, it was accepted that the issue was not only student feedback, the definition of quality in education, and model application but also equally important in the approach to higher education and academic research (Yılmaz and Temizkan, 2022).

## Discussion

Increasing the university's role in education is an assurance, and it is possible to consider the situations where quality assurance and educational development are separated in the quality factor as a problem. An educational institution capable of providing higher education must add the definition of "development in education" to its mission to ensure simultaneous quality development (Owens, 2017; Chankseliani and McCowan, 2021).

The conclusion from research on improving quality in academic education is that further research is needed to determine the feasibility of developing a universal definition of quality that will apply to different types of institutions in other geographical locations. In addition, it should be remembered that cultural factors make it difficult for quality to have an ordinary meaning as a definition (James, 2001; Chorsi et al., 2022).

Increasing the university's role in education is an assurance, and it is possible to consider the situations where quality assurance and educational development are separated in the quality factor as a problem. An educational institution capable of providing higher education must add the definition of "development in education" to its mission to ensure simultaneous quality development (Pedro et al., 2020; Smaniotto et al., 2020)

The conclusion from research on improving quality in academic education is that further research is needed to determine the feasibility of developing a universal definition of quality that will apply to different types of institutions in other geographical locations. In addition, it should be remembered that cultural factors make it difficult for quality to have an ordinary meaning as a definition (Singh, 2010; Schindler et al., 2015).

For this reason, the academic education provided by each university should first be evaluated within the framework of its own geography, society, and cultural structure, and then these results should be discussed in the international arena (Schindler et al., 2015; Sattler and Sonntag, 2018; Yılmaz and Temizkan, 2022)

## Conclusion

In the beginning, looking at academic education historically, there was the idea of educating selected people for a developed society. These institutions were distant from



society and focused more on discussing scientific ideas.

However, with population growth, crowded cities, and economic developments, the number of people who want to receive academic education has increased. People preferred to access universities easily.

Although this situation was limited to the increase in the number of universities for a certain period, over time, increased students and academics became a financial burden for the continuity of educational institutions.

Some universities preferred to increase the number of students and work with part-time academics for commercial continuity. However, this situation has become a question

of the quality of education. Therefore, at first, university boards of trustees need to decide whether they will prioritize commercial concerns for quality higher education as their goal.

## Limitations

This research was conducted with selected keywords. The number of references in the research is limited. The aim is to draw attention to the existence of universities that can count the increase in the number of students or lecturers as quality in education. Therefore, the comment was made not based on specific international rating criteria but by reflecting the author's opinion.

## REFERENCES

- Alemu, S.K. (2018). The meaning, idea and history of university/ higher education in Africa: A brief literature review. *Forum for International Research in Education*, 4 (3), 210-227. <https://doi.org/10.32865/fire20184312>.
- Bongaerts, J.C. (2022). The Humboldtian Model of Higher Education and its Significance for the European University on Responsible Consumption and Production. *Berg Huettenmaenn Monatsh*, 167(10), 500-507. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00501-022-01280-w>.
- Chankseliani, M., McCowan, T. (2021). Higher education and the Sustainable Development Goals. *Higher Education*, 81 (1), 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-020-00652-w>.
- Chorsi, M.G., Hassani, M., Ghalavandi, H., Alishahi, A.G. (2022). Challenges and obstacles of academic culture in institutionalizing quality culture in higher education: A grounded theory study. *Journal of Medical Education Development*, 15 (47), 43-45. <https://doi.org/10.52547/edcj.15.47.43>.
- Gray, H.H. (2001). The University in History: 1088 and All That. Presented at the Idea of the University Colloquium, January 17, 2001. <https://iotu.uchicago.edu/gray.html>
- Guzman-Valenzuela, C., Tagle, A.R.M., Palacios, D. (2022). Celebrating Higher Education's 50 years: trends, absences, and opportunities. *Higher Education*, 84, 1183-1206. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-022-00924-7>.
- James, R. (2001). Participation disadvantage in Australian higher education: An analysis of some effects of geographical location and socioeconomic status. *Higher Education*, 42 (4), 455-472. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1023/A:1012264010667>.
- Kwek, C.L., Tan, H.P., Lau, T.C. (2010). The Impact of Resource Input Model of Education Quality on the Overall Students' Perceived Service Quality. *Canadian Social Science*, 6 (2), 125-144. <http://cscanada.net/index.php/css/article/view/j.css.1923669720100602.013>
- Moshtari, M., Safarpour, A. (2023). Challenges and strategies for the internationalization of higher education in low income East African countries. *Higher Education*, Published online 23 January 2023, (1-21). Reached at December 25, 2023. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10734-023-00994-1>
- Owens, T. L. (2017). Higher education in the sustainable development goals framework. *European Journal of Education*, 52(4), 414-420. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12237>.
- Oza, P., Japee, G. (2020, January 20). History of Higher Education – From Ancient to the Modern. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.14254.46406>.
- Pedro, E.M., Leitao, J., Alves, H. (2020). Bridging Intellectual Capital, Sustainable Development and Quality of Life in Higher Education Institutions. *Sustainability*, 12 (2), 479. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12020479>.
- Rose, D. (2017). The Morrill Land Grant Acts and the Roots of Higher Educational Opportunity for African-Americans. Prepared for Delivery at the Annual Meeting of the International Public Policy Association (IPPA), Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (NUS), Singapore June 28-30, 2017. <https://www.ippapublicpolicy.org/file/paper/594fb799d2db7.pdf>
- Sattler, C., Sonntag, K. (2018). Quality Cultures in Higher Education Institutions—Development of the Quality Culture Inventory. In P. Meusbürger & L. Suarsana (Eds). *Geographies of the University*. (pp.313-327). Springer Open. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-75593-9\\_9](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-75593-9_9).
- Schindler, L., Puls-Elvidge, S., Welzant, H., Crawford, L. (2015). Definitions of Quality in Higher Education: A Synthesis of the Literature. *Higher Learning Research Communications*, 5 (3), 3-13. <http://dx.doi.org/10.18870/hlrc.v5i3.244>.
- Sigurdson, K.T. (2013). Clark Kerr's Multiversity and Technology Transfer in the Modern American Research University. *College Quarterly*, 16 (2), <https://collegequarterly.ca/2013-vol16-num02-spring/sigurdson.html>
- Singh, M. (2010). Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Which Pasts to Build on, What Futures to Contemplate? *Quality in Higher Education*, 16 (2), 189-194. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13538322.2010.485735>.
- Smaniotta, C., Battistella, C., Brunelli, L., Ruscio, E., Agodi, A., Auxilia, F., Baccolini, V., Gelatti, U., Odone, A., Prato, R., Tardiyo, S., Voglino, Valent, F., Brusaferrero, S., Balzarini, F., Barchitta, M., Carli, A., Castelli, F., Coppola, C.,...Sisi, S. (2020). Sustainable Development Goals and 2030 Agenda: Awareness, Knowledge and Attitudes in Nine Italian Universities, 2019. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, Dec 2;17(23):8968. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17238968>.
- Sowards, R. J., Chomsky, N. (2014). Chomsky: How America's Great University System Is Being Destroyed. Adjunct Faculty Association of the United Steelworkers in Pittsburgh, PA. <https://chomsky.info/20140228/>.
- Tight, M. (2024). The idea of the university: towards a contemporary formulation. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 46 (1), 48-62. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2023.2242080>.
- UNESCO, (2014) Higher Education in Asia, Expanding Out, Expanding Up. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000146541>.
- Varghese, N.V. (2004). Private Higher Education in Africa. International Institute for Educational Planning. UNSECO, 2004. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000150255>
- Yılmaz, K., Temizkan, V. (2022). The Effects of Educational Service Quality and Socio-Cultural Adaptation Difficulties on International Students' Higher Education Satisfaction. *SAGE Open*, 12 (1), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440221078316>.