

THE ROLE OF VALUES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF QUALITY CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to identify the role of values in the establishment and sustainable development of a quality culture within higher education institutions. Utilizing a literature review methodology, the study provides a comparative analysis of the theoretical frameworks proposed by scholars such as Ehlers, Woods, Yorke, Gümüş, and Koyuncuoğlu, while assessing the current state of quality culture within the national context through an examination of accreditation reports from Azerbaijani universities. The analysis indicates that a quality culture is reinforced not merely through compliance with procedural and normative requirements, but also through internalized shared values, interpersonal relationships, collaboration, and process-oriented management within the organization. The study emphasizes that values such as collaboration, transparency, integrity, inclusiveness, trust, and commitment are fundamental components ensuring the sustainability of quality-oriented organizational activities; in the absence of the systematic application of these values, efforts toward developing a quality culture lack stability. The research concludes that a value-oriented management model serves as a fundamental framework for the strategic advancement of quality culture in higher education institutions; without such a model, qualitative improvements remain ephemeral and unsustainable.

Keywords: *Quality culture, higher education, organizational values, accreditation, values and quality culture.*

Introduction

In the contemporary era, the educational system is no longer confined to the mere transmission of knowledge and skills; rather, it has evolved into a multifaceted structure that facilitates the social, spiritual, and cultural development of learners. Within a period of rapidly shifting global challenges—encompassing technological transformation, cultural diversity, social justice imperatives, and sustainable development goals—the value-based guiding role of education has become increasingly pertinent. In this context, the quality of education, regarding both its content and methodology, assumes critical importance. Educational quality is fundamentally delivered through educational institutions, where the quality assurance system is defined by core values and organizational identity. Accordingly, investigating the development of a quality culture in educational institutions as a means of ensuring the preparation of both professionals and citizens, as well as its direct contribution to national progress, remains a highly topical issue.

Jean Monnet, one of the founders of the European Union, famously remarked: “If I were to begin again, I would start with culture, not the economy” (Koyuncuoğlu, 2020). While the significance of economic power in developed nations is undeniable, the prioritization of culture highlights the reality that cultural considerations frequently remain marginalized in many national contexts. Raymond Williams, writing on the nature of culture, stated: “Culture is ordinary: every human society has its own shape, its own purposes, its own meanings... and its own way of life” (Harvey and Stensaker, 2007). This perspective elucidates the direct correlation between culture and education, as the objectives of any human society can be viewed as the direct outcome of the education provided within that society.

Consequently, as Koyuncuoğlu (2020) asserts, quality management in higher education institutions must commence with culture. It follows that culture must be at the forefront of any structure being established or requiring reconfiguration over time. Vardar (2020) notes that, globally, state institutions expect higher education establishments to contribute to national prosperity, treating them as domains of strategic investment. As a result, specific regulatory frameworks are implemented to monitor the return on these investments. In this regard, continuous reforms in the educational sector, aligned with the demands of a changing world, should focus on both the optimization of education and the enhancement of national welfare. Therefore, every educational institution must first conceptualize what the term “quality” signifies within its specific context. While numerous definitions of quality exist, the ISO 9000 standard defines quality as the “degree to which a set of inherent

characteristics of an object fulfils requirements” (www.iso.org). In this framework, a "requirement" implies a specific expectation or a necessity. Fundamentally, educational quality is the extent to which educational institutions can successfully satisfy the needs and expectations inherent in society.

Objective

The primary aim of this research is to identify the role of values in the establishment and sustainable development of a quality culture within higher education institutions. The study seeks to substantiate that quality culture is reinforced not merely through procedural and normative requirements but through shared values, interpersonal relationships, and behavioral patterns internalized within the organization. Furthermore, the research aims to assess the progress of quality culture within the national context, based on a comparative analysis of accreditation reports conducted at Azerbaijani universities during the 2023–2024 academic period. Within this framework, the study evaluates value-based quality assurance mechanisms against the background of international best practices to determine the strategic orientations necessary for their implementation in the local higher education system.

A key focus involves elucidating how existing and emerging values within higher education institutions influence the consolidation of a quality culture. Ehlers (2008) observes that higher education institutions are transitioning into a new era of quality management, characterized by a developmental approach centered on values, competencies, and professionalism. This transition underscores the critical priority of fostering a quality culture in education. By examining which specific values fulfill significant roles in this development, the study provides a comprehensive overview of their impact on educational quality culture. Additionally, the research aims to offer recommendations for future scholarly inquiries in this field. Ultimately, the study addresses the following fundamental question: *“Which values play a pivotal role in the development of a quality culture in education?”*

Significance

The significance of this research lies in its status as a systematic investigation that examines the formation of quality culture in higher education institutions through the prism of values. Woods (1996) emphasizes that in the contemporary world, quality assurance mechanisms are not merely composed of technical procedures; rather, they are underpinned by organizational values, collaborative relationships, transparency, and process-oriented management. This article aims to provide a scientific exploration of the specific role these values play in shaping a quality culture within higher education.

Furthermore, by basing the study on an analysis of accreditation reports from Azerbaijani universities for the 2023–2024 academic year, the research enhances its relevance to the national context and underscores the necessity for a renewed approach to quality culture within the higher education system. Consequently, the study holds both theoretical and practical importance for educational policy-making bodies and university leadership alike. By providing a scientific framework for the establishment of a value-based quality management model, the research supports the implementation of quality-oriented strategic management within universities. This is of profound importance for the institutional development of higher education establishments, the refinement of management culture, and alignment with international standards.

Theoretical Framework

The academic literature reflects a multitude of perspectives regarding quality culture in higher education, with researchers emphasizing various dimensions to underscore its significance. For instance, Koyuncuoğlu (2020) asserts that the teaching staff—specifically faculty and academic personnel—constitute the primary source of educational quality. He maintains that cultivating high-quality students is inherently difficult without a high-quality faculty. In this regard, the primary duty of educators is to provide effective instruction. However, institutional constraints within management structures, human resource systems, educational and research mechanisms, as well as finance and infrastructure, are steadily increasing. Consequently, faculty members struggle under the burden of mass education, facing difficulties in fulfilling the tripartite functions of higher education: teaching, research, and public service. Excessive teaching loads and high student-to-teacher ratios impede student access to faculty and create communication barriers. Furthermore, the inadequate preparation of instructional materials can be perceived as an indicator of the level of importance faculty members assign to teaching. Collectively, these factors contribute to a decline in educational quality (Koyuncuoğlu, 2020). Such challenges further exacerbate the necessity of establishing a quality culture within higher education institutions. Quality culture is not limited to the mere implementation of standards or adherence to procedures; rather, it is a comprehensive concept that necessitates the unification of faculty, students, and management around shared values, expectations, and a collective sense of responsibility regarding quality. If the teaching staff faces limitations in terms of environment and motivation to deliver high-quality instruction, the institutional consolidation of a quality culture becomes arduous. Ehlers (2008) stipulates that the quality of teaching and learning processes is significantly influenced by cultural factors. These factors include attitudes, faculty

competencies, student skills and motivation, the organizational environment and values, as well as existing structures such as rules, regulations, and legislation. Accordingly, to create a high-quality educational environment, higher education institutions must prioritize the strengthening of cultural factors (Ehlers, 2008). This necessitates the promotion of professional development for faculty, the creation of an environment that fosters student motivation, and the assurance of transparency and participation in administrative processes. The refinement of management culture, in turn, facilitates the optimization of the instructional process, the overall enhancement of quality, and the attainment of the strategic objectives of higher education.

Gümüş (2022), a prominent researcher in this field, posits that the quality culture existing within an organization is a sub-dimension of organizational culture. It refers to the organization's beliefs and values concerning quality, the quality level of the products and services it provides, its quality philosophy, practices, goals, norms, habits, and its general approach to the conceptualization of quality (Gümüş, 2022). Similarly, the European University Association (EUA) defines quality culture as "a type of organizational culture that aims to continuously improve quality." According to the Association, quality culture characterizes an organizational environment aiming for continuous improvement through two primary elements:

1. A cultural and psychological aspect, encompassing shared values, beliefs, and expectations among organizational members, as well as a commitment to quality.
2. A structural and managerial aspect, based on defined processes and management systems (EUA, 2006).

Quality culture is a type of culture formed through the mutual complementation and continuous development of two main directions. Gümüş also notes that the core components of quality culture consist of organizations that strive at every step on the path to "being quality-oriented" by learning quality-related values, sharing these values, internalizing them among employees, drawing lessons from their mistakes, and continuously implementing all these processes (Gümüş, 2022).

Quality culture refers to an organizational culture oriented towards quality across all processes, activities, and behaviors, beginning with strategic planning within an institution. Organizations possessing a quality culture are strong entities that uphold values and belief systems promoting overall quality-oriented behavior (Mahmood & Mohammed, 2008). This definition indicates that quality culture is not merely about adherence to procedures and standards; rather, it represents a profound cultural approach concerning the overall thinking and behavior of the organization. Institutions with such a culture ensure that quality serves as the primary criterion in decision-making at every stage and encourage all employees to act in accordance with the same value system. Consequently, quality transforms from a random outcome into a systematically created and sustained value.

Quality culture is a dynamic and transparent form of culture that integrates a healthy competitive environment within the organization, the proper execution of tasks, continuous improvement, and a mindset in which failures and errors are openly discussed. In this culture, employees do not merely comply with quality instructions but also engage in quality-oriented activities, with everyone discussing quality matters (Gümüş, 2019). This explanation emphasizes that quality culture is built upon transparency, learning, and continuous improvement in organizational behavior. Within such a culture, the open analysis of errors—rather than their concealment—becomes the norm, thereby expanding learning opportunities. The internalization of quality by employees not only at the level of execution but also at the levels of thinking and attitude constitutes one of the fundamental factors ensuring the long-term success of the organization.

When examining the principles of quality culture, the principle of conveying the values derived from the mission and strategy of higher education institutions to all levels of the structure and possessing shared values (as stated in the KT book) once again demonstrates that values must be considered in the improvement and development of quality culture. In addition, as Koyuncuoğlu notes, "quality culture represents both visible and invisible cultural elements" (Koyuncuoğlu, 2020). This implies that institutions must understand the cultural elements comprising quality culture and strive to implement them in order to create and develop their quality cultures. From this perspective, the empirical research conducted by Ehlers in this field holds considerable significance. The quality culture model in education developed by Ehlers, along with its various components, constitutes a model that can directly exert a positive influence on the development of quality culture in organizations. The model takes into account existing research and approaches and creates conditions for their more measurable development in the domains of quality and education. It is a conceptual and structural model that defines the structure of the concept of quality culture, as well as its various components, and illustrates their interrelationships. The model consists of four main components:

1. **Structural factors** – elements representing the quality systems of universities.
2. **Activating factors** – elements supporting quality competencies that enable organizations to integrate their quality systems into their cultures.
3. **Quality culture factors** – elements representing the organization's specific products, symbols, and rituals.
4. **Integrating factors** – connecting elements that link these components through participation, trust, and communication (Ehlers, 2008).

The cultural elements influenced by quality development processes are situated in the outer layer of the model and reflect the organizational culture approaches proposed by Schein (1992) and Morgan (2002). Quality development processes can influence existing assumptions regarding values, rituals, and tangible cultural artifacts. For instance, symbolically “heroic” figures highlighted through reward mechanisms represent successful quality development processes in higher education institutions and serve as a mechanism that promotes the advancement of quality within the organization. Koyuncuoğlu also states that when seeking an answer to the question “*What is good education?*”, teaching and educational values must be taken into account (Koyuncuoğlu, 2020). In this regard, every higher education institution possesses its own unique symbols, values, and thought models, which form an integral part of organizational culture.

Throughout history, there has been a sustained interest in understanding the essence of human values and their role in explaining and promoting behavior. Posner and Munson note that philosophers such as Aristotle and Kant referred to values when discussing aesthetic issues, while Plato, Hobbes, and Rousseau did so when contemplating problems of state governance and civic responsibility. Similarly, military, industrial, and political leaders such as Eisenhower, Sloan, Rockefeller, and Morgan paid attention to the concept of values when considering strategies for motivating and leading their subordinates (Posner and Munson, 1979). These facts demonstrate that values have not been merely the subject of philosophical discussion but have also been accepted as a primary mechanism in the governance of various social systems across different eras. Both thinkers and practical leaders throughout history have recognized the powerful role of values in shaping human behavior, directing decision-making, and guiding action. This indicates that values constitute the foundational principle of human activity and play a decisive role in interpersonal relations, regardless of time or culture.

Although there is no single definition of values, various approaches exist. Woods states that values are our fundamental beliefs about what we consider right, good, true, correct, desirable, and moral (Woods, 1996). In this context, our stance and way of thinking toward various situations are directly related to the values we possess. Values are as important for individuals as they are decisive for organizations. Munson emphasizes that values underpin organizational decisions, behavioral differences between managers and non-managers, and the foundations of management success (Telford, 2002). This approach reaffirms that the formation of a common value framework is essential for ensuring that decisions made within the organization are consistent, objective, and goal-oriented. In an environment where values are aligned, both leadership and employees can focus on the same objectives, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of management processes.

McMurray has demonstrated that many of the “human problems” arising within organizations stem from value incongruence (McMurray, 1963). This finding reveals that the root of organizational conflicts, confrontations, and misunderstandings among employees lies not in formal rules but in value systems. Thus, in the absence of shared values in the work environment, the workplace becomes tense, trust among employees decreases, and the organization’s overall operational capacity weakens. Clare and Stanford, for their part, emphasize that values distinguish organizations from one another (Clare and Stanford, 1979). This perspective shows that the primary element defining an organization’s identity and operational style is precisely its value system. Even organizations operating in the same field exhibit differences in management philosophy, decision-making processes, and employee relations when they possess distinct values. This differentiating role of values serves as a significant factor influencing the organization’s image and long-term objectives.

Literature Review

When examining quality culture in education and organizational values from a general perspective, it becomes evident that values represent a significant factor in the development of organizations and in achieving their defined objectives. Nevertheless, empirical and theoretical studies dedicated to the interrelationship between quality culture and values remain relatively scarce in the academic literature. Woods argues that if organizations aim for the effective functioning of the entire system, they should not focus solely on optimizing one part and expect this to automatically exert a positive influence on the whole system. Instead, they must always consider how any single action will affect all other components (Woods, 1996). Therefore, the development of quality culture requires that all its components — particularly values — be taken into account. In this regard, the values directly involved in quality culture must first be identified.

The studies by Woods (1996), Ehlers (2008), Ehlers (2016), Cardoso, S., Rosa, M. J., and Stensaker, B. (2016), and Stephens and Roszak (2021) are of considerable importance concerning the interplay between quality culture and values. Woods identifies six core values that can serve as a foundation for building a successful quality culture: (1) *we are all in this together: company, suppliers, customers*; (2) *there is no concept of “above” or “below”*; (3) *open and honest communication is essential*; (4) *everyone has access to all the information they need*; (5) *focus on processes rather than individuals*; and (6) *there is no success or failure — only learning experiences*.

In explaining the meaning of these values, Woods considers the first value — “we are all in this together: company, suppliers, customers” — as the most natural starting point for quality culture within organizations. He notes that this value is realized when individuals perceive themselves as part of “something greater than

themselves” and subsequently align their personal achievements with these broader goals. In this context, teamwork and loyalty come to the forefront. The second value — the absence of “above” or “below” hierarchies — fosters a culture of equal opportunities, encouraging collaborative work for the benefit of all and creating a quality culture based on equality. The third value highlighted by Woods emphasizes transparency and honesty in communication, particularly highlighting the importance of integrity and empathy. Another researcher, Peter Senge, observes that individuals sometimes use communication as a tool for personal manipulation. He asserts that this behavior constitutes one of the main factors negatively affecting quality culture in organizations (Senge, 1990). Therefore, one of the most effective ways to promote truth-telling is to cultivate a culture in which people genuinely listen to and seek to understand one another. Only in this way can problems be properly analyzed and goal-oriented solutions achieved.

Woods’ fourth value concerns ensuring that everyone has access to all the information they require. In institutions where this value is established, new organizational structures emerge that are centered around teams, processes, and projects. Moreover, modern technology provides direct access to necessary information and individuals, thereby enabling more efficient task performance. The fifth value focuses on processes rather than individuals. The advantages of process orientation include: (1) enhancing the importance of teamwork and collaboration while highlighting the interdependence of tasks; (2) prioritizing tools that make the management and improvement of processes more efficient and effective; (3) emphasizing the use of quality tools to measure process performance and team effectiveness, along with continuous improvement; and (4) shifting people away from a “blame the individual” mindset toward a “blame the process and improve it” approach.

The sixth and final value articulated by Woods is expressed as “there is no success or failure — only learning experiences.” Success and failure are always retrospective evaluations. We may be satisfied or dissatisfied with an outcome, yet in both cases, the situation is temporary — merely another experience in our lives from which we can learn and record.

Stephens and Roszak contend that linking quality culture with a systematic approach is based on six fundamental values for establishing an effective quality culture. These include: strengthening corporate identity, fostering collaborative relationships within the organization’s internal network, open communication based on trustworthy information, unrestricted access to information regarding organizational processes, and a focus on processes and learning regardless of success or failure (Stephens & Roszak, 2021). Upon reviewing this approach, it is apparent that both Woods (1996) and Stephens and Roszak (2021) rely on the same foundational values. This further confirms the critical role of these values — particularly those identified by the aforementioned authors — in the development of quality culture within organizations.

Additionally, a study conducted in Portugal revealed that academic staff identified both cultural-psychological deficiencies (such as excessive workload, training gaps, lack of trust, and communication shortages) and structural-managerial deficiencies (including leadership behavior, decision-making processes, financial conditions, and infrastructure) as key barriers to quality (Cardoso et al., 2016). This research clearly demonstrates that the absence of values such as trust and effective communication directly impacts both quality outcomes and the development of quality culture in higher education institutions.

Methodology

This article was written using the literature review method. The purpose of the study is to explain the role of values as a fundamental component of quality culture in education and to identify the mechanisms through which they influence the formation of quality culture. To achieve this objective, both theoretical and applied sources were systematically analyzed. During the literature selection process, scientific articles, books, and conceptual studies primarily addressing the topics of “quality culture,” “values,” “organizational values,” “organizational culture,” and “quality culture and values” were examined. The analysis of the sources was conducted based on a thematic approach, with the positions of various authors regarding the essence of values, their functions within organizations, and their relationship with quality culture evaluated comparatively. In carrying out the analysis, approaches explaining the impact of values on behavior, decision-making processes, and the quality of management within organizations were investigated.

Thus, this methodological approach enables a multifaceted understanding of the fundamental role that values play in the development of quality culture and forms the theoretical foundation of the study.

Findings and Discussion

The results of the study lead to the conclusion that quality culture is not a spontaneously formed organizational and managerial characteristic, but rather a structured system based on values. A comparison of various authors’ approaches reveals that quality behaviors cannot be sustained without values, and organizations are unable to achieve long-term development in their absence. The findings demonstrate that values constitute a fundamental component that plays a central role in the formation and development of quality culture. The continuity and effectiveness of quality-oriented activities in organizations, particularly in higher education institutions, are closely linked to the extent to which values are internalized within these institutions.

The analysis indicates that values do not merely serve as a normative framework regulating organizational behavior; they also act as a strategic factor that defines the structure, functional mechanisms, and developmental dynamics of quality culture. In this regard, the manifestation of values in the organization's daily practices, decision-making processes, management mechanisms, and human relations directly influences the strengthening of quality culture. The study shows that any system cannot change instantaneously; change becomes sustainable and effective only when it occurs in a gradual, sequential, and balanced manner. This finding further reinforces the specific role of values in the transformation process. Values function as a "guiding force" that ensures natural and continuous change within the system. Change efforts without values tend to be short-term or generate resistance, whereas value-driven change creates conditions for the fundamental renewal of behaviors, relationships, and management principles. This demonstrates that the genuine development of quality culture is possible only through a value-based approach.

Within the framework of the study, several values have been identified as key directions of particular importance. One of these is collaboration and teamwork within organizations. Collaboration, mutual support, and collective action directed toward shared goals form the core values of quality culture. Strong collaboration within an organization enhances transparency in management and creates conditions for the development of innovative and adaptive behaviors. Ehlers states that trust, participation, and communication play a decisive role in the formation of quality culture (Ehlers, 2008). The study also found that institutions with a high level of collaboration exhibit more stable and sustainable quality indicators.

The next direction concerns organizational commitment and loyalty. Loyalty expresses employees' emotional, moral, and professional dedication to the institution. The renowned Chinese educator Mei Yi-chi noted that "a good university is measured not by its buildings, but by the quality of its academic staff" (Koyuncuoğlu, 2020). This perspective reaffirms the importance of values within an institution. The attitudes and behaviors demonstrated by academic staff toward the institution and its objectives reflect their level of loyalty. The presence of this value strengthens goal-oriented behaviors, increases a sense of responsibility, and supports the preservation of quality culture. The research revealed that in environments lacking the value of loyalty, quality remains largely formal and the potential for long-term development weakens.

Another significant direction relates to the values of equality and inclusivity within institutions. The study results confirm that quality culture develops more robustly in higher education institutions where equal opportunities and fair treatment are ensured. Equal rights enable individuals to feel valued, participate more actively in processes, and internalize the culture collectively. Integrity and transparency constitute another key value. Honesty is a fundamental prerequisite for the accurate evaluation of quality-related issues. Understanding the true nature of problems, presenting facts without distortion, and making transparent decisions form the foundation of quality culture. The study determined that as the level of integrity increases, the effectiveness of quality-oriented decisions also rises.

Empathy and active listening are highlighted as further important values. Empathy and the ability to listen actively are essential for understanding the root causes of quality problems. The research showed that when individuals listen to one another and understand different perspectives, organizational conflicts decrease and continuous quality improvement is enhanced.

Another critical issue is process orientation. One of the important findings of the study is that focusing solely on individual behavior is insufficient; primary attention must be directed toward the essence of processes. Systematic analysis of processes ensures that transformations within the institution are genuine, not artificial, and sustainable. This is also a fundamental condition for making quality culture development transparent and measurable. Focusing on processes rather than outcomes is among the key values. The study found that labeling work as "successful" or "unsuccessful" is often a retrospective interpretation. The core value lies in understanding the process, monitoring the changes it produces, and objectively assessing their impact on quality culture. This approach forms the main pillar of long-term quality development.

The analysis of various literature sources, comparison of theoretical frameworks, and examination of research results indicate that values are not merely an external element of quality culture, but the foundational factor that defines its structure, dynamics, and management philosophy. The development of quality culture depends on the systematic internalization of values within the institution, their integration into daily activities, and their acceptance as a priority in management processes. These findings reaffirm the importance of organizing activities aimed at improving quality culture in higher education institutions and other organizations within a value-based management framework. A value-based approach can be regarded as a roadmap for long-term, sustainable, and systematic quality and quality culture development.

Although Azerbaijan joined the Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area in 2005, the accreditation criteria for higher education institutions in force until 2022 did not contain any specific indicator related to quality culture. In the 2022 accreditation criteria, indicator 2.3.2 addresses quality culture as follows: "Feedback in the area of quality assurance, monitoring of quality, tracking and research on the development of quality culture" (<https://www.tkta.edu.az/p/akkreditasiya-hesabatlari>). As can be seen, quality culture is mentioned only in terms of tracking and researching its development, without providing any additional

explanation. This does not create a clear understanding of how quality culture should actually be evaluated in higher education institutions.

A comparative analysis of accreditation reports from eighteen Azerbaijani universities conducted in 2023–2024 suggests that activities in the area of tracking quality culture development are still in their initial stage. Only after establishing an effective quality assurance system can institutions transition to the stage of continuous quality culture development. To achieve this, it is essential to transform quality assurance systems based on values — drawn from international experience and academic literature — into functional mechanisms and to make quality assurance policy a leading direction in the strategic management of universities. In this regard, a specific criterion concerning the development of quality culture is proposed for the new version of accreditation criteria for higher education institutions. The main requirement is that higher education institutions demonstrate justified results related to the development of quality culture (Criteria, 2025 draft project, unpublished).

The research findings confirm that values are the key component playing a decisive role in the formation and sustainable development of quality culture. Based on these findings, the following observations can be made:

Yorke notes that if higher education institutions wish to create a quality culture, they must first transform into “learning organizations.” Learning organizations are able to benefit from individual and collective experiences, compare their practices with other organizations, avoid short-term and superficial solutions, prioritize relationships based on trust and confidence, focus on continuous development, and accept leadership as a constantly evolving role (Yorke, 2000). In this sense, every educational institution aiming to improve quality culture can reach this goal gradually, step by step.

For the effective development of quality culture, the internalization of values at both conceptual and practical levels within the organization is essential. Without values, an organization operates merely through formal procedures and rules, which does not allow for the creation of long-term and sustainable quality. Values act as a driving mechanism across all stages — from strategic planning to daily operations. Therefore, organizations seeking to develop quality culture must understand what this culture means to them and strive to articulate it clearly.

As Srinivasan and Kurey state, quality culture can be truly understood when employees not only follow quality instructions but also observe quality-oriented behaviors in those around them, witness discussions about quality, and feel quality as part of their daily work environment (Srinivasan & Kurey, 2014). It is clear from the above that quality culture must be felt in the environment, become a topic of discussion, and constitute the essence of activities. Only then can one speak of genuine quality culture development.

As stated in the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance, quality assurance supports the development of quality culture by encompassing all stakeholders — from students to academic staff — in institutional leadership and management (ESG, 2015).

Although the development of value-based quality culture primarily emerges as a result of institutional strategic management, more significant outcomes can be achieved when all stakeholders actively participate in management and teaching processes. Paradoxically, ensuring such participation itself depends on the existence of quality culture. Therefore, the development of value-based quality culture may depend on the presence and potential of a supportive environment at the organizational level.

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