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Examining the quality of online higher education in Chile from the perspective of equity.

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Abstract

This article explores the perceptions of 3,164 students and 727 teachers on the quality of online higher education in Chile. The aim is to analyse the results collected through two questionnaires, on perspectives of educational quality. A statistical analysis was conducted to compare groups, and significant differences were identified. The findings indicate that students and teachers agree on online higher education quality being defined more from a perspective of transformation and less from one of selectivity. The student body rejects the value for money more than the teaching staff, while the latter reject more the quality focused on the excellence of the academic programmes. The student-teacher profile explains more significant differences between the samples than other variables such as gender or type of institution. This study contributes new meanings to the quality of online higher education by incorporating nuances of equity based on the perceptions of two little explored profiles.

Keywords: quality; online higher education; equity; gender; students' perceptions; teachers' perceptions

Introduction

In the 'online global era', little is still known regarding the quality of online higher education (Guo *et al.*, 2020; Martin *et al.*, 2020). Re-examining the quality is particularly necessary if considering: (1) the particular characteristics of student and teacher profiles (Bağrıacık Yılmaz & Karataş, 2022); (2) the virtual nature of this modality constitutes a sufficiently heterogeneous, dynamic and relatively new scenario in education, which justifies an approach to quality that takes into account these particular features (Bendixen & Jacobsen, 2017); (3) that economic and technological views on online higher education are dangerously predominant, which diverts the pedagogical focus and simplifies the institutional capacities needed to implement it (Williamson *et al.* 2019).

Several studies point to the equity potential of online higher education through access to, and diversification of, the student body, given its asynchronous potential and the absence of physical barriers, as well as the permeability between different educational trajectories, particularly benefiting traditionally marginalised profiles of higher education (Harrison & Mathuews, 2022; She & Martin, 2022; Stone, 2022). However, access to technological media hides new barriers and creates under-explored inequalities (Backe *et al.*, 2018; Veletsianos *et al.*, 2018; Yoon, 2021; Sepúlveda-Parrini, 2023). Student and teacher perceptions are crucial when it comes to questioning and enriching the meanings of quality in online higher education.

The student profile fits the characteristics of non-traditional students: (1) with an average age of around 35 years, (2) combining their studies with external responsibilities, (3) not being financially dependent on their families. In addition, they are characterised by: (4) greater possibilities of dropping out, despite having the same or higher academic performance than their traditional peers, (5) greater resilience with regard to the barriers to access and permanence inherent in higher education, (6) less intense socialisation with the student environment, (7) more significant presence in non-formal studies, continuing education and distance learning programmes (Tieben, 2020). Furthermore, Sánchez-Gelabert *et al.* (2020) added that older students have a different perception of their educational experience than younger students, which is more intrinsic and focused on learning and acquiring theoretical knowledge.

Online higher education teachers acquire specific characteristics depending on the context (Xavier & Meneses, 2021). For Qazi *et al.* (2022), gender is a variable that makes

it possible to identify common characteristics in individuals' experience of the profession. The institutional context of support for teaching is critical to understanding their practices and perceptions. In this study, the task that best defines the online teacher profile is tutoring (Vlachopoulos & Makri, 2021). This task combines disciplinary, pedagogical, didactic and technical competences through feedback, monitoring, motivation and guidance in the study process (Richardson *et al.*, 2022).

Starting here, is the online higher education equity potential perceived as part of its quality? How is it manifested in addition to the access given by ubiquity? What perspectives on quality tell us about equity? The aim of the study is to analyse online higher education students' and teachers' perceptions regarding the quality of this modality. Specifically, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What are the students' perceptions of the quality of online learning?
2. What are the teachers' perceptions of the quality of online learning?
3. What are the significant differences between students' and teachers' perceptions?

Perspectives on quality in education

Quality is not a stand-alone abstract concept; instead, it emerges through a dynamic interplay of perceptions and interests held by various stakeholders and shaped by specific theoretical perspectives. These perspectives serve as the foundation for translating abstract notions into practical and valuable inputs. This article understands quality from the perspectives of Harvey & Green (1993) and Williamson (2019), as a non-neutral, political, multifaceted and subjective concept. It is constructed in a progressive and dialogical way as a cause and consequence of power relations in the institutional and social contexts in which educational systems are embedded (Giroux, 2019; Stracke, 2019). However, in neoliberal education systems characterised by deregulation in the growth of supply and increasing demand for access to higher education (Rodgers *et al.*, 2022), the pressure to demonstrate quality is achieved through accreditation through external assessments and accountability (Gerón-Piñón, *et al.*, 2021). This often harbours contradictory interpretations, ambiguities and confusion, depending on who defines the standard (Hauptman Komotar, 2020). It is therefore essential to rethink quality from the perspective of its protagonists.

This research considers the concept of quality based on the refinement made by

Jungblut *et al.* (2015) of the classical perspectives posited by Harvey & Green (1993). These categories are not mutually exclusive. However, they are useful for probing perceptions of quality from different angles.

- Quality as excellence.
- Quality as adjustment for purpose.
- Quality as exceptional.
- Quality as value for money.
- Quality as transformation.
- Quality as selectivity.
- Quality as an added value.
- Quality as student-centred.

The authors propose to divide the quality as exceptional by Harvey & Green (1993), according to two meanings. On the one hand, *quality as excellence*, closer to the vision of Harvey & Green, refers to a rarely achievable situation for which an elitist vision of education requires a series of exclusive and difficult-to-achieve conditions (Scharager, 2018). On the other hand, they define *quality as exceptional* as the presence of differentiating attributes of programmes or study contexts compared to the rest of the system. This meaning moves away from the proposal by Harvey & Green, which focuses more on achieving the minimum pre-established standards, and can be observed by external agents. *Quality as adjustment for a purpose* has a functional character that focuses on fulfilling what is proposed or offered. It is usually reflected in systems that guarantee and promote internal quality processes in an institution. *Quality as value for money* combines the educational and monetary domains by focusing on the economic efficiency of educational provision, external accountability and auditing processes specific to the business and service sector. *Quality as transformation* focuses on the capacity of education to positively change the way we perceive the world and the improvement or acquisition of new competences. This vision integrates concepts such as development, training and continuing education. *Quality as selectivity* refers to an elitist idea about the characteristics that, predefined as desirable, determine the access to and permanence of specific institutional profiles. *Quality as an added value* refers to the perception of improvement resulting from an educational experience concerning the starting situation of a student. Therefore, it is a qualitative measure to identify quality.

Finally, *quality as student-centred* refers to the empowerment processes aimed at making students capable of participating in their educational process.

Online higher education in Chile is part of a unique higher education system in the world. In the 1980s, the educational system was a laboratory of neoliberal reforms that gave way to a mercantile approach at a structural and ideological level to this day (Simbürger & Donoso, 2020).

The Chilean online higher education

Online higher education in Chile is part of a unique higher education system in the world. During the 1980s, the educational system was a laboratory of neoliberal reforms that gave way to a mercantile approach at a structural and ideological level through to the present day (Simbürger & Donoso, 2020). The ailments of this system include the reproduction of inequalities in its access and permanence (Kuzmanic *et al.*, 2021), the predominance of private funding through high-cost fees (OCDE, 2013), a strong selectivity in the admission processes (Cossani *et al.*, 2022), gaps between vocational education and training (VET) and university (Álvarez *et al.*, 2021), as well as the structural persistence of both gender violence and gender gaps in institutions (Zerán, 2019).

Since the post-dictatorship period, quality and equity have been the critical axes according to which the state has defined its link with higher education (Oyarce *et al.*, 2020). Equity, seen from the point of view of access, translated into an increase in coverage focused on vulnerable segments of the population in the hope of provoking a spiral of social mobility (Pressacco & Carbone, 2010). Meanwhile, Chilean quality went from being the result of free competition in the market (Salazar & Rifo, 2020) to being evaluated and measured through an accreditation system run by an autonomous government agency, the National Commission for Accreditation (CNA its acronym in Spanish), which internally managed it through quality assurance units with a business-like focus on accountability (Scharager, 2018). Until the recent Higher Education Law N°21091(2018) came into force, institutional accreditation was voluntary and conditioned state funding and students' access to loans to finance their studies, increasing the historical segregation between institutions and leading to corruption and favouritism scandals that highlighted bias in the process (Davila & Maillet, 2021).

Online higher education is developed through degree and postgraduate programmes in Chile. The online higher education of our study corresponds to online degree programmes, which can be professional or VET and are taught in higher education institutions: technical training centres, professional institutes and universities. Some of the characteristics of online higher education are: (1) a large number of VET programmes (CNED, 2022), composed primarily of adult students from low-income, rural, indigenous and immigrant groups (Álvarez *et al.*, 2021). The average age of online degree programme students in Chile is 35.5 years, while the average of their peers in face-to-face programmes is 23.3 years; (2) it is the only form of education that has increased in recent years, by 208,1% between 2019 and 2023, and by 1060.7% over the past decade (SIES, 2023); (3) it is defined as a critical element in the digital transformation of the entire higher education system (Salinas *et al.*, 2021); (4) it is a critical element in the growth strategies of institutions by differentiating them from the competition (Araya-Castillo *et al.*, 2018).

The quality assurance system for higher education in Chile does not distinguish between modalities. The new criteria and standards that will come into force in October 2023 assume that 'online' is one of the characteristics of a very heterogeneous system (Bernasconi *et al.*, 2020). In this way, the quality of online higher education lacks a view that contemplates the specific aspects of virtual environments, as well as the profiles of students and teachers. Online higher education is the only modality in the country whose students cannot access the free state system due solely to the modality. Therefore, all the online higher education in the country must be fully paid for by the student body. Degree programmes are implemented almost entirely by private higher education institutions. The leading state and public universities in the country do not implement online degree courses. Unfortunately, the interference exercised by these institutions in educational policies and the social value of higher education do not consider what happens in the online modality. While, the degrees certificated obtained a few years ago ceased to refer to the modality of the study programme, today there are still first-order careers and second-order careers with different assessment depending on the modality implemented. These situations relegated online higher education to the margins of the higher education system at the mercy of prejudices and differentiations that hinder the system's equity. Yet all these issues are still the elephant in the room that no one wants to acknowledge.

Method

This exploratory study involved a web-based survey analysed using descriptive and inferential analyses. It is part of a doctoral thesis.

Instrument

The questionnaire used was applied to online higher education students and to teachers. This study presents an analysis of different perspectives on quality, which are included in both questionnaires. The aim was to identify significant differences between student and teacher responses. The items were constructed based on the proposal by Jungblut *et al.* (2015), who posited 16 items for analysing students' perceptions of higher education quality. They were translated and adapted to the context of online higher education students and teachers in Chile. The question used to assess each item was as follows: 'Indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements', on a five-point Likert scale (from 'Totally disagree' to 'Strongly agree') (Table 1). This resulted in ordinal scale data.

[INSERT Table 1 ABOUT HERE](#)

The questionnaires were sent out in the form of web links. Each institution decided how to disseminate them and send reminders. The research team ensured that this was done without any incentive or compulsion. Each questionnaire was self-administered individually by students and teachers without the presence of the research team (Cohen *et al.*, 2009). Ethical approval was obtained from the University's ethics committee. This approval included information on consent, data protection procedure, data storage and use.

Reliability

The items and the scale of each survey were validated by a panel of nine expert judges (five online higher education experts in Chile and four methodological experts from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona), who assessed the clarity, relevance and pertinence of each item. According to their evaluations, the instrument was suitable for purpose.

Data collection

All 28 higher education institutions with enrolment in online degree programmes in Chile were invited to participate (SIES, 2021). Of these, 14 agreed to participate: three technical training centres, six professional institutes and five universities. The online degree programmes in this study correspond to programmes implemented before 2019 in this modality. They are e-learning programmes designed to be completed entirely through the learning management system, therefore, unaffected by the emergency remote education due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The programmes were: 51.2% professional careers (four years long), 44.2% vocational education training careers (two years long), and 3.9% continuity of study programmes (for students who had a career, with a short duration). The five subject fields are health, computer science, education, engineering and administrative management.

The sample of students and teachers was non-probabilistic. For students, the selection criterion was to have taken any semester of an online degree course during the year 2021. The sample of teachers met the criterion of having taught on one of these degree courses in 2021. The sample comprised 3,164 students (4.0% of the total enrolment in online higher education in Chile in 2021) and 727 teachers (no information exists on the total number of online teachers in Chile). Data were collected between November 2021 and January 2022.

Data analysis

The collected data were entered into SPSS 22. After applying Shapiro-Wilk and Levene's F statistics, the assumptions of normality and homoscedasticity were found not to be met. Also, as the data collected was ordinal, it was necessary to apply non-parametric tests, specifically Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis tests, depending on the type of variable (Boduszek *et al.*, 2017). In the case of ordinal variables, the Mann-Whitney U test was applied as a post-doc test (Kruskal-Miller, 2014). These tests were used to look for significant differences in perceptions of quality between two groups (students and teachers) based on the defined independent variables.

Analysis variables

The first analysis was based on the variable of role, comparing students with teachers.

Subsequently, these results were analysed based on three independent variables: gender, type of higher education institution and age range. The categories in each variable were: (i) role: students and teachers; (ii) gender: female, male, non-binary and prefer not to answer; (iii) type of higher education institution; technical training centres, professional institutes and universities. Concerning gender, the sample mainly comprised individuals who identified themselves as male or female, although five people identified as non-binary. For methodological reasons, we decided not to consider them as a group in the tests on this variable, as the number was too small for meaningful statistical analysis. However, they are included in the tests for the other independent variables. We are aware of the responsibility behind this decision, and it does not mean it responds to an exclusion criterion that seeks to make them invisible (Biglia & Bonet, 2022).

Results

Characteristics of the student and teacher samples

The sample of students totalled $n=3,164$: 49.0% ($n=1,553$) of whom identified as female and 51.8% ($n=1,611$) as male. The average age corresponds to the non-traditional student profile: 38.1 (SD= 8.8). This is slightly older than the average age of the population of online degree students in the country. The means differed by gender: 37.1 (SD=8.7) for females and 38.9 (SD=8.8) for males. Most of the sample studied in professional institutes (74.1%). Most of the respondents were in the first (23.4%) or the second (27.8%) semester.

The sample of teachers comprised $n=727$, with 51.9% ($n=377$) identifying as female and 48.1% ($n=350$) as male. The mean age was 45.1 (SD= 10.6). The means differed by gender: 44.0 years (SD= 10.0) for females and 46.2 years (SD= 11.2) for males. Nearly half the sample belonged to universities (46.3%), the rest belong to professional institutes (39.9%) and technical training centres (13.8%). Nearly half the respondents had less than three years' experience as an online teacher (46.9%), followed by 31.1% with between three and five years' experience.

Student and teacher descriptions

The descriptive results indicate that students' and teachers' preferences regarding the concepts of quality coincided in both samples. The most highly valued perspectives were

‘quality as transformation’, ‘quality as exceptional’, and ‘quality as adjustment for purpose’. In contrast, the least valued perspectives were ‘quality as selectivity’ and ‘quality as value for money’ (Figure 1). The interpretation of these results can consider both-characteristics linked to social mobility in Chilean online higher education: student profile, and the predominance of VET programmes (Álvarez *et al.*, 2021; Tieben, 2020), as well as aspects related to access to higher education that the online higher education allows: absence of selectivity processes, low fees, no mobility, or temporality barriers. In this sense, the students and teachers’ perceptions of the quality of online higher education reinforce the meanings of equity that have traditionally been linked to the online modality (Harrison & Mathuews, 2022; She & Martin, 2022; Stone, 2022).

This finding reinforces the notion posited by McGrath *et al.* (2022), who pointed out that the VET programmes of the future are adopting a transformative approach, meaning they aim to train people capable of interpreting the sustainability and human development objectives associated with the world of work rather than merely meeting the demands of the labour market.

- [INSERT Table 2 ABOUT HERE](#)

Significant differences between students and teachers

Role is the variable that explains the most statistically significant differences between the two samples (Table 2). This can be seen in the results for the perspectives on ‘quality as excellence’ and ‘quality as value for money’. In both cases, significant differences were observed in all of the analysed variables (role, role+gender, and role+type of higher education institution), with the students favouring the first perspective and the teachers the second perspective. In other words, the interpretation that students of all types of institutions of both genders reject the link between the quality of their training and a monetary investment is a greater appreciation of the qualities of equity in the access that the modality ensures online. The rejection of the items of excellence by the teaching staff, could be interpreted as a challenge to the multifaceted and contextual nature of quality, and not only linked to teaching or the curriculum (Richardson *et al.*, 2022; Xavier & Meneses, 2021).

Generally, the gender variable allows for the identification of standard features in educational experiences (Qazi *et al.*, 2022). When comparing the two samples according

to the gender variable it is noticeable that there are more statistically significant differences between students and teachers who identify as female (in 14 of the 16 items) than among those who identify as male (in 7 of the 16 items) (Table 2). In other words, perceptions of quality differ more between female students and female teachers than between male student and male teachers. These results could be interpreted considering the differences in the characteristics of both samples (most of the students were enrolled in a VET programme with an average age of 35 while most of the teachers had a master's degree and taught in a university). However, these variables also characterise the sample of males. Therefore, it would be interesting to ask about the reasons for these differences in women's perceptions according to their role (student or teacher), or the type of educational experiences associated with digital platforms or interactions influencing these differences. Undoubtedly, it is a topic to explore in greater depth.

However, a relevant element to incorporate in this debate should be the prevalence of online gender violence or gender gaps in cyberspace that has affected traditionally marginalised groups, such as people of colour and LGBTIQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex and queer). Although one could add that they also affect, women who enter higher education in adulthood, with conciliation and care work, and female teachers who teach in this modality. Addressing these complex dynamics becomes pivotal in fostering a more equitable and inclusive online higher education environment.

- [INSERT HERE Table 3](#)

Finally, concerning the variable type of higher education institution it is worth noting that being a student or teacher at a technical training centre or professional institute explains a greater number of significant differences between the two profiles compared to universities (Table 3). These differences, explained by the variable type of higher education institution, could be related to the gaps and structural inequalities of the higher education system in the country (Álvarez *et al.*, 2021). There, the historical deregulation and commodification of the system (Cossani *et al.*, 2022; Simbürger & Donoso, 2020), has created gaps between VET and university education in the country (Álvarez *et al.*, 2021), relegating online VET to the margins of the system. At the same time, it opens up an interesting line of study, still little explored, on the challenges and gaps in online VET. These results could be explained considering the characteristics of the sample, where most

of the students belonged to professional institutes, while most of the teaching staff were from universities. This is in line with the current importance of the non-traditional student profile in higher education and the relevance of continuing to explore its particularities, as well as learning more about the profile of the online teacher (Tieben, 2020; Richardson *et al.*, 2022).

- [INSERT Table 4 ABOUT HERE](#)-

Conclusions

The statistical findings of this study highlight the relevance of re-examining the quality of online higher education. Asking online higher education students and teachers about the perceptions of quality from the classic perspectives of educational quality revealed that these perspectives are insufficient or do not incorporate the necessary nuances to cover other modalities, profiles of students or teaching strategies in higher education. The particularities of the online higher education must be seen from a broad perspective. For this, the experiences and perceptions of its protagonists are fundamental.

When investigating the perceptions of the sample, aspects usually not considered in the predominant perspectives on educational quality emerge, challenging the excessive relevance of standards of excellence and accountability as synonyms of quality (Scharager, 2018; Simbürger & Donoso, 2020). The results of the study indicate that both teachers and students perceive the quality of online higher education from its transformative potential, while they reject the relationship between quality and selectivity processes and in relation to the investment of money. These perspectives complement the traditional meanings of equity by addressing access and ubiquity. In a neoliberal and highly segregated educational system (Kuzmanic *et al.*, 2021), the possibility that non-traditional students, in adulthood, and with work responsibilities can enter and pay for higher education for the first time is perceived as especially relevant to study a degree course (Cossani *et al.*, 2022; Stone, 2022).

In short, the understanding of quality through an equity lens (Harrison & Mathuews, 2022), invites questioning those perspectives that constitute ideological ballasts and put them at the service of the changes and specificities of the context, as well as the experiences of people and institutions (Harvey, 2022). This study provides a perspective of this matter based on a sample of students and teachers in Chile. However,

it is urgent to analyse the following tensions within the online higher education system: (1) how the transformative and equitable sense with which this modality is perceived coexists alongside the business management of some institutions (Davila & Maillet, 2021); (2) how the system can be democratised to allow traditionally marginalised profiles to access higher education within the competitiveness of a commercial system (Araya-Castillo *et al.*, 2018); (3) the shift towards online higher education as a critical element for the digital transformation of the system (Salinas *et al.*, 2021), with the vision of online higher education representing an opportunity to reduce resource costs and increase the profitability of institutions (Ragusa & Crampton, 2017; Williamson *et al.*, 2019).

It is necessary to re-examine the quality of online higher education to broaden knowledge of this form of education, its specificities and the challenges associated with its wide adoption (Bağrıacık Yılmaz & Karataş, 2022; Bendixen & Jacobsen, 2017). In this regard, the present study has investigated and given visibility to the perceptions of a little-researched profile, such as that of online teachers, for which information is still lacking (Martin *et al.*, 2020). Further research should enquire about both profiles' material (employment situation, student debt, care work, connectivity gaps) and non-material conditions (motivations, expectations, agency) and how cyberspace influences gaps and inequalities (Backe *et al.*, 2018; Sepúlveda-Parrini, 2023; Veletsianos *et al.*, 2018; Yoon, 2021).

The study coincides with Farley & Burbules (2022) in maintaining that the ideological and practical differences between online higher education and face-to-face education, including the absence of specific criteria for accreditation in the former, or the impossibility of its students opting for economic benefits, will create and widen multiple gaps and inequalities in education. Considering 'quality as equity', provides an opportunity to call for new perspectives on quality that incorporate the experiences of people and institutions in a form of education that it is widely agreed is here to stay.

Declaration of interest statement

The authors report that there are no competing interests to declare.

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Table 1. Items reflecting perspectives on quality

Theoretical perspectives		Items
(1) Quality as excellence	1a	The quality of a study programme depends only on its academic excellence.
	1b	The subjects must be taught by outstanding experts in their fields of knowledge.
(2) Quality as adjustment for purpose	2a	I have a clear understanding of the graduate profile for this degree programme.
	2b	The subjects are structured so as to ensure achievement of the objectives set out in the study programme.
(3) Quality as exceptional	3a	A high-quality study programme includes attributes that differentiate it from other similar programmes.
	3b	A high-quality study programme offers novel approaches to the area of knowledge in which it is framed.
(4) Quality as value for money	4a	The more you pay for a degree, the more you expect from it.
	4b	Students are willing to pay more for a high-quality study programme.
(5) Quality as transformation	5a	A degree is high-quality when students are among the best in their professional field at the end of it.
	5b	A degree is high-quality if it significantly improves students' competences.
(6) Quality as selectivity	6a	The quality of a degree programme is measured by its selective capacity and students' access.
	6b	A degree programme is high-quality when the academic staff is chosen based on its reputation.
(7) Quality as an added value	7a	A degree programme is high-quality when, upon completion, students are among the best in their professional area.
	7b	A degree programme is high-quality if it significantly improves students' competences.
(8) Quality as student-centred	8a	A study programme is high-quality if it includes mechanisms to collect student feedback.
	8b	The subjects of a high-quality curriculum are designed with the needs or characteristics of the student body in mind.

Source: Jungblut *et al.* (2015).

Table 2. Percentage of mean responses in each item of the questionnaire

Quality perspectives	Items	Role			
		Students		Teachers	
		Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree
(1) Quality as excellence	1a_academic_excellence	50.1	49.9	32.9	67.1
	1b_exceptional_experts	15.7	84.3	6.5	93.5
(2) Quality as adjustment for purpose	2a_graduate_profile	6.1	93.9	8.0	92.0
	2b_achievement_objective	7.6	92.4	8.5	91.5
(3) Quality as exceptional	3a_differentiating_attributes	5.5	94.5	7.6	92.4
	3b_novel_approaches	4.5	95.4	6.8	93.2
(4) Quality as value for money	4a_expectations_money	31.0	69.0	54.2	45.8
	4b_willing_money	31.1	68.9	47.2	52.7
(5) Quality as transformation	5a_horizon_possibilities	2.5	97.5	6.1	93.9
	5b_new_competences	2.4	97.6	5.4	94.6
(6) Quality as selectivity	6a_selectivity_students	65.4	34.6	56.2	43.8
	6b_faculty_reputation	51.5	48.5	33.2	66.8
(7) Quality as an added value	7a_best_professional	20.2	79.1	30.9	69.0
	7b_improves_competences	3.0	97.0	8.0	92.0
(8) Quality as student-centred	8a_role_students	4.4	95.6	7.1	92.9
	8b_characteristics_students	14.9	85.1	18.3	81.7

Source: authors' own data.

Note: *Disagree* includes the responses Totally disagree and Disagree. *Agree* includes the responses Agree and Strongly agree. The difference corresponds to the "Does not answer" option.

Table 3. Differences between teachers and students by role and gender

Quality perspectives	Items	Role			Gender					
		U	Teachers	Students	Female			Male		
			M-rank	U	Teachers	Students	U	Teachers	Students	
					M-rank			M-rank		
(1) Quality as excellence	1a_academic_excellence	936763.000***	1652,530	2021,140	236590.500***	816,560	1001,660	230616.000***	834,400	1012,850
	1b_exceptional_experts	786316.500***	1445,590	1445,590	194850.000***	705,840	1028,530	196937.500***	738,180	1033,750
(2) Quality as adjustment for purpose	2a_graduate_profile	1954291.500***	2090,810	1920,850	256959.500***	1060,410	942,460	288197.000	1020,220	972,480
	2b_achievement_objective	1127973.500	1920,850	1960,960	283827.000	941,860	971,240	276571.500	965,700	984,320
(3) Quality as exceptional	3a_differentiating_attributes	1063300.000***	2078,410	1923,690	262730.500***	1045,100	946,180	265978.000	1026,560	971,100
	3b_novel_approaches	1088001.500**	2044,440	1931,460	271204.000*	1022,630	951,630	270460.500	1013,760	973,880
(4) Quality as value for money	4a_expectations_money	861659.500***	2355,770	1860,220	206143.500***	1195,200	909,740	221019.000***	1155,020	943,190
	4b_willing_money	968299.000***	2209,090	1893,780	237465.000***	1112,120	929,910	242973.500***	1092,290	956,820
(5) Quality as transformation	5a_horizon_possibilities	1117467.000	2003,910	1940,740	278600.500	1003,010	956,400	276679.000	995,990	977,740
	5b_new_competences	1084417.500***	2049,370	1930,330	264970.500***	1039,160	947,620	274236.000	1002,970	976,230
(6) Quality as selectivity	6a_selectivity_students	1057016.500***	1817,940	1983,290	267808.500*	899,370	981,550	257946.000**	912,490	995,880
	6b_faculty_reputation	910784.000***	1616,800	2029,320	23405.000***	800,150	1005,640	224209.000***	816,100	1016,830
(7) Quality as an added value	7a_best_professional	1058832.000***	2084,560	1922,280	268135.000***	1057,290	943,220	267995.500	1020,800	972,350
	7b_improves_competences	1084417.500***	2141,320	1909,290	245563.500***	1090,640	935,120	259936.500**	1043,820	967,350
(8) Quality as student-centred	8a_role_students	1082001.500**	2052,690	1929,570	269042.000*	1028,360	950,240	268107.000	1020,480	972,420
	8b_characteristics_students	1069954.500***	2069,260	1925,780	258741.500***	1055,680	943,610	272503.500	1007,920	975,150

Note: U: Mann-Whitney U test. M-rank: range of means of Kruskal-Wallis test. Significant at the ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Table 4. Differences between teachers and students according to type of higher education institution.

Quality perspectives	Items	Type of higher education institutions								
		Technical Training Centres			Professional Institutes			Universities		
		U	Teachers	Students	U	Teachers	Students	U	Teachers	Students
			M-rank			M-rank			M-rank	
(1) Quality as excellence	1a_academic_excellence	11907.000***	169,57	219,58	315029.000*	1231,81	1334,79	63735.000***	358,12	465,29
	1b_exceptional_experts	12810.500***	178,61	216,70	271010.000***	1080,02	1353,47	48357.5000***	312,49	495,62
(2) Quality as adjustment for purpose	2a_graduate_profile	12665.000***	237,85	197,83	323062.500	1387,49	1315,62	76527.000**	448,92	404,94
	2b_achievement_objective	14968.000	214,82	205,17	320708.000	1395,61	1314,62	79561.000	405,09	434,07
(3) Quality as exceptional	3a_differentiating_attributes	13355.500*	230,95	200,03	304619.500***	1451,09	1307,80	84268.500	425,95	420,21
	3b_novel_approaches	13719.000*	227,31	201,19	309289.500**	1434,98	1309,78	85074.500	421,45	423,20
(4) Quality as value for money	4a_expectations_money	9682.000***	267,68	188,33	244179.000***	1659,50	1282,14	72053.500***	462,19	396,12
	4b_willing_money	11446.000***	250,04	193,95	266243.000***	1583,42	1291,51	77350.000*	446,47	406,56
(5) Quality as transformation	5a_horizon_possibilities	14119.000	223,31	202,46	321546.000*	1392,72	1314,98	83621.000	417,13	426,07
	5b_new_competences	13123.500**	233,27	199,29	310276.500***	1431,58	1310,20	83224.500	415,96	426,85
(6) Quality as selectivity	6a_selectivity_students	13078.500**	181,29	215,85	332438.000	1291,84	1327,40	76185.500**	395,07	440,73
	6b_faculty_reputation	11207.500***	162,58	221,81	304078.000***	1194,04	1339,43	60936.500***	349,82	470,81
(7) Quality as an added value	7a_best_professional	13189.500*	232,61	199,50	300109.000***	1466,30	1305,92	84167.500	426,24	420,01
	7b_improves_competences	12619.000***	238,31	197,69	279677.500***	1537,09	1297,21	84893.000	420,91	423,56
(8) Quality as student-centred	8a_role_students	13743.000*	227,07	201,27	300923.000***	1463,83	1306,23	82396.000	413,50	428,48
	8b_characteristics_students	13165.500**	232,85	199,43	304479.000***	1451,57	1307,74	81526.000	428,48	414,80

Note: U: Mann-Whitney U test. M-rank: range of means of Kruskal-Wallis test. Significant at the * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .00$