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The value of peer review on the appointment criteria of Universities in Turkey

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Peer review is one of the issues that is emphasised meticulously in scholarly communication. Although it has been criticised from various aspects, there is not yet a structure as an alternative to peer review in the quality control procedures. These procedures in scientific publishing activities are mostly carried out by editors and referees, and sometimes publishers can also contribute. Although peer review has become a widely accepted structure in scientific publishing, there are serious concerns and controversies regarding the extent to which it is valued. Turkey is among the countries that has increased the production of scientific publications over time. However, the issue of how quantitative production is reflected in quality is controversial. In this study, the value attributed to peer reviewing by universities in Turkey is examined with respect to academic appointment criteria. The research findings reveal that some universities score peer reviewing while others do not in their criteria, pointing to the fact that peer reviewing activity is not made within a certain logic. When evaluated in general, it has been determined that the research evaluation system in Turkey is not consistent in terms of the value given to peer review for the appointment criteria of universities.

Keywords: *Scholarly communication, Refereeing, Peer review, Research evaluation policy, Academic appointment criteria, Academic promotion criteria.*

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1. Introduction

In scholarly communication, it is possible to talk about five basic components: author, editor, referee, publisher and reader. While the first four are concerned with the

production side of scientific publications, the fifth and the final stage is completed by the reader who is the final target of this production. Although it is observed that the final target differs in various geographies over time, the idea created by the author still reaches the reader through different stages in the scholarly communication process. Concluding this process in the expected quality depends on a strong communication established between the various combinations of the actors involved in the publication process, such as the author and the editor, the editor and the referee, the author and the publisher.

Discussions on the importance of peer review in scholarly communication often centre around evaluating journal articles, disregarding other forms of publications. Yet, it is no less significant to review and control different types of publications (such as books, proceedings papers) other than articles before providing the reader with the final product. Additionally, decisions, such as which project is worth supporting and which person will be placed in which position, are also determined by peer review. Both the efficient use of scarce resources and the implementation of merit-based appointments and promotions are directly related to how peer reviews are carried out. In this context, it is clear that the peer review mechanism is an important part of research evaluation systems.

In this research, the value of peer review in the academic appointment criteria of universities in Turkey is examined, attention is drawn to the problems that these applications have created or may create, and finally, some suggestions are presented.

2. A Brief Literature Review and the Situation in Turkey

Today, the number of scientific publications is increasing drastically. There were more than 2.6 million publications in the year 2021 and document type "article" in the Web of Science Core Collection alone [5]. This growth in the number of publications is related to the increasing number of scientists as much as to the shortening period of the use of scientific knowledge. In such conditions, editors and referees have the important responsibilities of evaluating the publications in question and eliminating those that are not suitable for publication [11]. From a historical perspective, it is possible to trace the timeline of the concept of peer review in scholarly communication back to the 17th century [10]. In the second half of the 1600s, when the first scientific journal met with the reader, scientific studies produced in the form of informal personal correspondence began to take on a more controlled structure. In this structure, the editor of the journal functions in such a way as to include the role of the reviewer by making all decisions himself [16]. Over time, applications for the peer review mechanism have undergone changes and transformations. Different types of peer review and application platforms have become a part of the scholarly communication process.

In the literature, issues such as the phenomenon of refereeing and the peer review system [25], how refereeing should be done and its value considered [11], the effectiveness of different types of peer review [15], duration of peer review [12] and open refereeing [9] are discussed from various aspects. Related studies express the importance of refereeing in terms of the quality control process while also emphasising the problematic issues that

refereeing brings, such as prolonging the delivery of products to the end user [8], revealing biased behaviours [10] or difficulties in finding referees [13].

It is known that different peer review systems, such as the author does not know who the referee is (single-blind), the author and the referee do not know each other (double-blind) or open peer review, are used in scientific publishing. Additionally, post-publication peer review practices have also become widespread in recent years. It is seen that each type of peer review, such as single-blind peer review, double-blind peer review, post-publication review, transferable review, and collaborative review, has its own advantages and disadvantages [17]. In essence, the expected function of a peer review system is the smooth execution of the quality control process of scientific studies. Despite this, situations such as the withdrawal or correction of studies are still among the issues that the peer review system cannot prevent.

Issues such as consistency between referees, the quality and reliability of peer review, and the cost of sending studies to referees are also seriously questioned [4], [18], [1]. These questions, in a sense, open up the necessity of peer review for discussion. All the efforts put into creating better and healthier scholarly communication are interrupted by the discovery of "back doors". In this context, research performance evaluation systems based on quantitative evaluations pave the way for various abuses in scientific publishing activities (e.g., predatory journals and unethical behaviours). This situation not only has the potential to lead to developments that can be described as "bad science expelling good science" but also causes quality to be ignored. Nevertheless, the current refereeing system is still one of the most important resistance points against the defeat of good science by bad science, perhaps because no alternative has been found yet.

There are many different discussions about refereeing in Turkey and these are directly reflected in the practices. There is no consensus on the value of refereeing in the associate professorship application requirements, academic appointment criteria of universities, and academic incentives. For example, when the application requirements of the Interuniversity Board (ÜAK) for associate professorship between the years 2016-2022 are examined, it is seen that there is no scoring for refereeing [21]. The application requirements of the ÜAK for associate professorship give the minimum conditions that the candidates are expected to meet. However, while a wide variety of activities such as editing, citations, and oral presentations are included, it is noteworthy that refereeing is excluded from the scoring charts.

Before moving on to the purpose of the study, it will be useful to provide information about the higher education system and research evaluation system in Turkey. Universities in Turkey have been managed by a centralised system since 1981 with the establishment of the Higher Education Council (YÖK). YÖK has influence and authority in almost every field, from appointment of university rectors to the regulations related to the universities. In this context, YÖK is the institution that regulates higher education in Turkey and directs the activities of higher education institutions.

Another leading institution in the Turkish higher education system is the ÜAK. Since its establishment in 1946, this board has been carrying out a wide variety of tasks, from executing

the associate professorship process to evaluating the titles obtained abroad and granting equivalence. Although there has been a strong central authority in the Turkish higher education system since 1981, it is known that, over time, authorities and responsibilities of organisations related to higher education (such as universities, ÜAK, TÜBİTAK, YÖK) have overlapped and sometimes even conflicted. For example, the authority of the ÜAK regulates the principles regarding the associate professorship exam, which is determined by the law article "to organise the associate professorship exams and to evaluate the publications and researches of associate professor candidates in accordance with the relevant regulation, to determine the principles related to the associate professorship exam and to select the juries", has been transferred to the YÖK as of 2008 [6]. Implemented first by YÖK in 1993, TÜBİTAK's International Scientific Publications Incentive Program (UBYTP), which aims to reward Turkey-addressed scientific publications in citation indexes within the scope of academic incentive allowance, encourages quantity-based publication activities on the one hand, and serves to enforce the "back doors" mentioned above on the other.

The contradictions observed in the research evaluation approaches of universities and the different practices regarding the appointment criteria within the same university require serious questioning [3]. While for a period of time the articles in *WoS* were highlighted as an indispensable condition for appointments [3], later on, publishing articles in the journals included in the *TR Index* became important in the academic system. For example, in 2022, associate professorship applications and publishing in national refereed journals covered by ULAKBİM (Turkish Academic Network and Information Center) is a condition that must be fulfilled in most academic fields [21]. According to the relevant legislation, the expression "national refereed journals covered by ULAKBİM" describes *TR Index* [20]. *TR Index*, a platform where more than 1000 national journals are evaluated by committees consisting of experts and academics in their fields, in a sense, serves like a local *WoS*. The most fundamental problem with this type of platform is that the systems are primarily used for research and evaluation purposes, whereas they should be used for information access.

Turkey's research and evaluation ecosystem maintain its existence within a quantitative approach to obtaining academic titles and positions. A person who is permanently appointed to the highest academic rank at a university cannot even apply for a temporary position at another university with the same portfolio. It is reasonable to allow universities to implement their criteria up to a point. However, in a country like Turkey, where the influence of the central structure is dominant, this situation causes unavoidable problems. For example, while academic promotions take place swiftly in some universities, it takes time or is not even possible to be appointed to relevant positions in others due to the incompleteness of the quantitative criteria. Unless quality-oriented practices are implemented, problems will continue with the existing criteria based on numbers only. In this context, it is hoped that studies showing anomalies in the relevant quantitative criteria will be effective on future policy changes.

Our study aims to examine the value given to refereeing in Turkey from different perspectives. While the authors want their articles to be published quickly, some journals

find difficult in pursuing referees who can evaluate the articles. Although their number is low, some journals have begun to pay fees to referees. For example, faced with large number of articles sent for publication to the journal that need to be refereed *Milli Folklor*, which is indexed in *A&HCI*, has been paying the referees from the money it receives from its authors since 2010 due to the reasons such as the lack of referees, the workload of potential referees and the difficulty of finding new referees [14]. The authors send 400 TL (approximately 24 USD) to the journal for refereeing expenses, and the journal pays 100 TL (approximately 6 USD) to each referee (the given values have been calculated over the exchange rates on 17 December 2021). It is also challenging that these figures correspond to the factors cited as the justification for the refereeing fee listed above. While it is difficult to assess the value of the effort and time spent in refereeing an article, the monetary value of approximately 6 USD is not easy to explain.

Although it is not fully articulated, the practices show that it is important to publish in journals covered by citation indexes in the research evaluation system in Turkey. In a earlier study [3], it was revealed that the criteria used in academic promotions in universities in Turkey adopted the publishing policy mentioned above as an indispensable condition. In this context, it should be noted that the research evaluation system in Turkey has a structure based on score-oriented quantitative elements. For example, through the UBYTP, which has been in effect since 1993, people from Turkey whose work has been published within the citation indexes are paid a certain amount of money. The program is still in effect, even though it has been demonstrated by data that these payments do not fully serve to increase the impact and quality of Turkey-addressed scientific publications [19].

It is evident that the research evaluation system in Turkey adopts the quantitative approach. Various practices such as UBYTP, academic incentives, ÜAK associate professorship criteria and universities' appointment criteria largely reward quantity rather than quality. While doing this, various inconsistencies are faced, or adjustments are made on the system. Adjustments are required in regulations to because of the actions of people who have not had their share of academic honesty, and sometimes changes are made when decision-makers realise the inconsistencies.

3. Method

In this study, the answers to the following descriptive questions are evaluated, and the value given to refereeing in scientific publishing in Turkey is discussed.

- Is refereeing scored in the academic appointment criteria of universities?
- How many types of refereeing are defined in the criteria by which refereeing is scored?
- Are there any differences in the refereeing scores defined in the academic appointment criteria of universities?
- What is the connection between the scores for refereeing and the scores for article writing in terms of consistency in the academic appointment criteria of universities?

To find answers to the above questions, appointment criteria of universities were obtained from the Higher Education Council's website [23] on October 15, 2021. Although the number of universities in Turkey was 207 as of October 15, 2021 [24], the academic appointment criteria of 144 universities were available through the relevant site [23]. To maintain consistency, we limited our research to the universities available in the YÖK [23] website. There are several reasons for such limitations: firstly, when the websites of universities were visited, information about previous years was included in the academic appointment criteria, secondly, the existing criteria could not be accessed through some university websites, and finally, there were more than one appointment criteria in some universities.

In line with the aim of this study the academic appointment criteria of each university were examined one by one, and the following information was transferred to the data set:

- University name
- University type
- Whether refereeing is scored
- How many types of refereeing are awarded scores where refereeing is scored?
- Refereeing score - *SCI, SSCI & A&HCI*
- Refereeing score - *TR Index*
- Refereeing score - national journal
- Article score - *SCI, SSCI & A&HCI*
- Article score - *TR Index*
- Article score - national journal

It is quite difficult to conceptualise the issues listed above for refereeing and article publishing. It is seen that in academic appointment criteria in Turkey, journals accepted as national journals are given lower scores than those in *TR Index*, and articles in *TR Index* are scored lower than articles indexed in *WoS*. Some journals may be indexed both in *WoS* and in *TR Index*. Concepts such as "national journal" and "national peer-reviewed journal" can be defined in different ways in ÜAK, YÖK and in the practices of universities. It is also observed that there are attempts to resolve the confusion on the subject on the websites of relevant institutions and organisations. For example, ÜAK [22] states that "national peer-reviewed journals" are the journals covered by the *TR Index* of ULAKBİM. However, alterations over time and different definitions seem to add to the confusion. For example, DergiPark [7], which provides electronic hosting and editorial process management services for academic peer-reviewed journals published in Turkey under the umbrella of ULAKBİM, defines "national refereed journal as a journal that has an editor and a group of advisors consisting of academic members from at least five different universities, that publishes original scientific research articles, that is published at least twice a year and has been regularly published and distributed in the last five years, and is accessible in university libraries". In the regulations prepared for academic incentives, which concern

only the public universities in Turkey, definitions are altered frequently. For example, the changes made annually regarding the definition of peer-reviewed journals in the relevant regulations are as follows: According to the Academic Incentive Allowance Regulation in December 2015, the peer-reviewed journal is described as "regularly published for at least five years", while in the Academic Incentive Allowance Regulation in December 2016 it is defined as "regularly published for the last three years, at least once a year" [2]. Regarding the subject with such variable definitions, care was taken in our study to stick to the scoring in the appointment criteria of universities and consistency was maintained for the 144 universities examined.

In line with the research objective, new data were generated by making calculations over the titles transferred to the data set. For example, in order to see how many *TR Indexed* journal refereeing an article published in *TR Index* is worth, the article score in the relevant index is divided by the refereeing score in that index. Both the refereeing scores based on universities were compared within themselves, and the connection between refereeing and authorship in each university was revealed in terms of the value given comparatively.

Although the number is not high, it is seen that some universities created subdivisions for the journals in SCI, SCI-Expanded, SSCI and A&HCI, classifying them as a class (type) A, B and C according to their impact factors. In such cases, if the article or refereeing score is different from each other, the value in the category with the lowest score is taken as the basis. For example, in one of the universities (Abdullah Gül University), articles published in journals classified as type A score 25, type B 20, and type C 15 points [23]. The article score for the university in question was taken as 15.

In most universities, all scientific fields are treated equally in the scoring, and this is problematic. Evaluation of scholars from different disciplines in a single category indicates that the scholarly communication characteristics of the relevant disciplines are not taken into account. In our study, to ensure internal consistency in cases where there is a scoring difference between the fields, all scoring was carried out on the basic fields of social sciences.

4. Findings and Discussion

Refereeing is scored in the academic appointment criteria of 74% (107 universities) of the universities included in our study. Some of the universities do not include refereeing in their appointment criteria since they take ÜAK's requirements for Associate Professorship as the basis. As stated in the introduction, no score is given for refereeing in the centralised system of ÜAK. Some of the universities have requirements only on the basis of publication activities. In the appointment criteria of one of the universities (Van Yüzüncü Yıl University), although refereeing is not scored, it is seen that the condition of "having been a referee in at least 2 (two) articles published in scientific journals" is sought [23].

The qualifications of universities that do not include refereeing in their appointment criteria are also quite different. YÖK has chosen 10 of the public universities in Turkey as research universities. According to this conceptualization, research universities in Turkey are defined as universities with research outputs that have a major role in the development

Table 1

Research universities that score and do not score refereeing

University	Refereeing Scored
Ankara University	Yes
Boğaziçi University	No
Erciyes University	Yes
Gazi University	No
Gebze Technical University	Yes
Hacettepe University	No
İstanbul Technical University (ITU)	Yes
İstanbul University	Yes
İzmir Institute of Technology	No
Middle East Technical University (METU)	No

of science, together with research priority and research culture reflected from education to knowledge and technology transfer activities, from cooperation with the public and industry to international collaborations. Table 1 below shows the first universities in Turkey defined as research universities and whether these universities included refereeing in their appointment criteria.

As seen in Table 1, while half of the public universities categorised as research universities included refereeing in their appointment criteria, the other half did not in any way. In our research, it has been determined that there is no consensus regarding refereeing in the appointment criteria of public and non-profit foundation universities. While 78% (87 out of 111) of public universities in our data set included refereeing in their criteria, 22% (24 of 111) did not. 61% (20 of 33) of non-profit foundation universities incorporated refereeing in their appointment criteria while 39% (13 of 33) did not. There are no studies in Turkey that state justifiably whether universities with different characteristics, with respect to their descriptive features (such as being a public or non-profit foundation university, foundation year or whether it is a research university), should or should not include refereeing scores in their appointment criteria.

Types of refereeing that are scored in the appointment criteria of the universities in general are: refereeing in articles, books, proceedings papers, and projects. Article refereeing is scored in all of the 107 universities that include refereeing in academic appointment criteria. In a way, this shows that the refereeing activity for the articles published in the journals is given more value than the other types. Although refereeing other than articles

Table 2
Number of refereeing types scored

Number of refereeing type	Number of universities	%
0	37	26
1	62	43
2	30	21
3	13	9
4	2	1
Total	144	100

are activities that also require serious effort, it is clear that they are not valued as much as article refereeing in the appointment criteria of universities. The number of universities that incorporate project refereeing in their appointment criteria is 34, book refereeing is 19, and proceedings refereeing is 9.

Table 2 shows how many different types of refereeing are scored in the appointment criteria of universities. Accordingly, in 43% of universities only one type of document is scored, and that is the article. Nearly one-fifth of the universities scored two different types of refereeing in their criteria. Out of these 30 universities, 5 did not accept refereeing scores other than articles and proceedings papers, 6 other than articles and books, and 19 other than article and project refereeing. In only two of the universities, refereeing for articles, books, proceedings papers, and projects was included in the scoring criteria.

There are significant differences in the refereeing scores defined in the academic appointment criteria of universities. In this study, the scores given to the article refereeing are examined because they are included in all the appointment criteria of the universities within the scope of our research. In this context, comparisons are made over the scores given to refereeing in three different categories of journals, namely *WoS*, *TR Index* and national journals. First of all, it should be noted that there may not be information for all three categories in the appointment criteria of every university. For example, while 89 of the 107 universities that include article refereeing in the appointment criteria validate all three categories, the number of universities where refereeing in both *WoS* and *TR Index* are included in the scoring is 99. No university has given a lower score for refereeing in *WoS* than in *TR Index* in their appointment criteria. In 6% of universities, the same score is given for refereeing in the two indexes. In this context, Table 3 shows the number of refereeing needed in journals covered by *TR Index* to obtain the score given to single refereeing in *WoS* journals.

Table 3

Comparison of journal refereeing in *WoS* and *TR Index*

How many refereeing in *TR Index* equals one refereeing in *WoS*?	Number of universities
Equal	6
>1<2	24
2	30
>2<3	22
3	5
>3<4	7
>4	5
Total	99

Since the number of universities in Table 3 is 99, there was no need to provide a separate percentage column. The table shows us that, in 30% of universities, two refereeing in journals in *TR Index* are equal to one refereeing in journals indexed in *WoS*. In approximately 40% of universities, it is necessary to referee more than two *TR Index* journals in order to obtain the required score of a *WoS* journal refereeing. Quantitative assessments of this type have their peculiarities in different ways. For example, many Turkish journals (such as *Anatolian Journal of Cardiology*, *Hacettepe Journal of Mathematics and Statistics*, *OLBA*) are indexed simultaneously in both *TR Index* and *WoS* index. In this context, the assumption that journals indexed in *WoS* are worth more in score value than *TR Indexed* journals requires questioning from the very beginning. Differences in the appointment criteria of universities are also striking. In addition to universities where a refereeing in *TR Index* journals is the same as refereeing in *WoS* journals, there are also examples where four or more refereeing in *TR Index* journals are equal to only one *WoS* article refereeing. One extreme example is that while refereeing in *TR Index* journals can score as low as 2, refereeing a *WoS* journal can go up to 15. In other words, refereeing a *WoS* article at the relevant university (Üsküdar University) is 7.5 times more valuable than refereeing a *TR Index* article.

In addition to the comparisons made on refereeing within the scope of our research, the data, showing the value of refereeing over the article, obtained from such questions as "how much *WoS* refereeing a *WoS* article is worth?", "how much *TR Index* refereeing a *TR Index* article is worth?" and "how much national article refereeing is national article worth?" were also examined. Here, too, it has been determined that there are many different applications. For example, in the academic appointment and promotion criteria of Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, writing an article in any journal indexed in *WoS* and refereeing in the same journal are scored equally. In another university (Altınbaş University), the score obtained when an article is written in a journal indexed in *WoS* is 40 times the score obtained from refereeing in the same journal. The number of universities where the difference is 15 times or more is 11 (10% of the universities with the appointment criteria).

Table 4

Comparison of the scores given to the articles published in journals indexed in *WoS* and refereeing in journals indexed in *WoS*

How many *WoS* refereeing is a *WoS* article worth?	Number of universities	%
Equal	1	1
≥2≤3	12	11
>3<5	15	14
5	19	18
>5≤6	12	11
>6≤8	18	17
>8≤10	16	15
>10	14	13
Total	107	100

Table 4 provides information on the number of refereeing needed in the journals indexed in *WoS* to reach the score obtained when an article is written in a *WoS* journal.

There are differences in the practices regarding how much *WoS* refereeing in a *WoS* article is worth in universities in Turkey. The fact that there is a 4-fold difference in the score given to an article in a *WoS* journal and a refereeing in a *WoS* journal in 10 universities, five-fold in 19 universities, 8-fold in 10 universities, 10-fold in 14 universities, and 20-fold in 3 universities, suggests that the scores were made quite haphazardly. The average value for how many *WoS* refereeing a *WoS* article is worth is 7.6 and the median value is 6.0 (see Table 5).

Article authorship in national journals is scored in the appointment criteria of 101 universities, while only 89 universities scored article refereeing in the same journals. In 17 universities, article authorship in national journals is scored, but no score is given for refereeing in the same journals. In 5 universities, while refereeing in national journals is scored, authorship in the same journals is not. In this context, the data that can show how many national articles refereeing is worth is limited to 84 universities. The fact that authorship and refereeing activities are scored so differently is an indication that even quantitative evaluation, which is inherently problematic, cannot be conducted properly. The negligence of policy-making institutions to fully internalise the phenomenon of research evaluation and the oversight of university boards to realise that research evaluation is a special research area with a rich literature of its own are among the reasons for the existing conflicts.

Analysis of the number of *TR Index* and *WoS* refereeing that equals a national journal refereeing in terms of scoring gives mixed results. For example, while national journal refereeing in 6 universities is equated with *WoS* refereeing, in 6 other universities a score given to a *WoS* refereeing can be obtained by five national journal refereeing. As an extreme example, it is seen that 10 national journal refereeing in a university (Bayburt University)

Table 5

The value of article scores over refereeing scores

Question	N	Mean	Median	Mode	SD
How many *WoS* refereeing is a *WoS* article worth?	107	7,6	6,0	5,0	5,6
How many *TR Index* refereeing is a *TR Index* article worth?	99	7,4	6,0	5,0	6,2
How many national article refereeing is a national article worth?	84	5,6	5,0	5,0	5,4

is worth just one *WoS* refereeing. The scores given to the national journal refereeing and *TR Index* refereeing are close to each other. In fact, the same scores are given for both in 68 universities. In two universities, four national journal refereeing scores are equal to one *WoS* refereeing, while in three universities the difference in scoring is threefold.

The academic appointment criteria of 144, out of a total of 207, universities in Turkey are shared by YÖK [23], which is the central authority. While some of the universities whose appointment criteria are not shared through YÖK are newly established universities (such as Ankara Medipol University, Ankara Music and Fine Arts University), some are universities that stemmed out of the existing universities (such as Afyonkarahisar Health Sciences University, Isparta University of Applied Sciences). However, in a significant number of these universities, no criteria other than the minimum qualifications determined by the legislators are sought for the appointment of faculty members. On the other hand, when Table 5 is examined, it can be seen that 107 of the 144 universities scored both the articles and the refereeing in *WoS*, 99 universities had comparable data for *TR Index*, and lastly, 84 universities scored both the articles published and the refereeing activities in the national journals. It is also understood that some universities do not include refereeing while keeping article authorship in their appointment criteria.

In the method part of the study, the level of importance given to *WoS*, *TR Index* and national journals in academic appointment criteria was examined by comparison of the scores given by the universities. It is thought that the platform in which academic activities are carried out is revealed in terms of their level of importance to some extent in Table 5. Our study shows that authorship and refereeing activities in national journals are scored in fewer universities than those in *TR Index*. Similarly, activities related to articles in *TR Index* are scored in fewer universities than those in *WoS*. Generally speaking, such artificial distinctions have the potential to lead to distraction from the content of academic studies. Practices in which qualified and beneficial referee reports are valued in the same way as "referee evaluations" that do not even give any feedback to the articles, and practices in which the index a journal article appears in is valued more than its content deepen the systemic disorders.

5. Conclusion

The evaluation of academic staff working in universities in Turkey based on quantitative criteria causes serious problems. The essence of these problems is the evaluators' disregard for merit in the name of being "objective". The emergence of rent-seeking people as a result of systemic disorders also leads to the devaluation of the academy. This study discusses the issue of refereeing, which is a small part of complicated system.

The value given to refereeing in Turkey remains to some extent nominal. There needs to be coherence and consistency in practices. Although many people claim that quality should be prioritised, evaluations based on quantity needs to continue. The issue gets more complicated when quantitative assessments lead to differences in comparable practices. The research evaluation system in Turkey has a structure that focuses on measuring outputs. Most of the time, the inputs that feed the system are ignored or the process leading to the output is not evaluated carefully.

In our research, the academic appointment criteria of universities in Turkey were examined and the following results were obtained in general:

- There are universities that do not consider refereeing in their academic appointment criteria. Refereeing is also an activity that is ignored in ÜAK associate professorship application requirements, which is the most important stage for obtaining a full-time staff position. There is no significant demographic difference (for example, whether it is a public or non-profit foundation university) among universities where refereeing is scored and where it is not.
- In universities where refereeing is scored, more value is attributed to article refereeing. There are many universities that do not score project, book or proceedings paper refereeing. Considering the existence of university appointment criteria with very detailed scoring, it is remarkable that in some universities, refereeing any scholarly activity other than the article is ignored.
- There are various practices that categorically do not comply with the general approach adopted in academic appointment criteria in Turkey. For example, in some universities, the refereeing of the journals in *TR Index* and the refereeing of *WoS* journals have the same score. What is more interesting is to find an example where the refereeing and authoring activities had the same score.
- The differences between the score given to refereeing and the score given to writing an article are remarkable. While the score given for a *WoS* article can be reached with two *WoS* refereeing in some universities, 20 *WoS* refereeing is required to achieve the same score in others.

Appointment criteria documents of the universities do not explain how the scoring, in general, and the scoring for refereeing, in particular, are determined. In this context, it is seen that there are very different scoring practices. This situation both indicates the existence of problems in terms of consistency and gives the impression that the scoring

is done casually. The fact that even the scores in the appointment criteria do not show any consistency in the Turkish academy, where quantitative evaluations are the subject of complaints, is disappointing in terms of transitioning to a quality-oriented system in the near future. It is recommended that the scoring-based evaluation system in Turkey be abandoned as soon as possible.

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