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An Evaluation of a Regional Architectural Education Model in Türkiye: The Accreditation Process of the Department of Architecture at Mardin Artuklu University

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Abstract: Quality assurance and accreditation have become increasingly important instruments for enhancing educational quality, accountability, and international recognition in higher education. In Turkey, quality assurance in architecture education is implemented through the accreditation system administered by the Architecture Accreditation Board (MİAK). Within this context, this study examines the quality assurance development process of the Department of Architecture at Mardin Artuklu University and evaluates its preparations for MİAK accreditation. The study aims to analyse how a regional, multilingual, and multicultural architecture programme aligns its educational structure, institutional practices, and learning outcomes with national accreditation standards. A qualitative case study design was employed, drawing on document analysis, on-site observations, and a descriptive evaluation of departmental practices against MİAK criteria. The findings indicate that the accreditation preparation process led to significant improvements in curriculum planning, programme outcome assessment, documentation practices, and stakeholder participation mechanisms. The process also encouraged systematic monitoring of educational quality, strengthened institutional learning, and enhanced coordination among academic staff. Furthermore, the department’s distinctive regional and cultural context was integrated into the

programme structure while remaining compatible with nationally defined accreditation standards. The study demonstrates that accreditation functions not only as a quality assurance mechanism but also as a catalyst for institutional development and strategic positioning. By presenting evidence from a regional university operating in a multicultural environment, the research contributes to discussions on context-sensitive quality assurance models and the future development of architecture education in Turkey.

Keywords: Mardin Artuklu University, Architecture Education, Accreditation, Architecture Accreditation Board (MİAK), Quality Assurance.

Introduction

Quality assurance in higher education is considered a fundamental mechanism that enables educational institutions to operate in accordance with the principles of transparency, accountability, and sustainability. This structure aims to ensure that teaching and learning processes are regularly monitored, evaluated, and continuously improved within established standards. Due to its interdisciplinary nature, its structure that integrates technical and artistic components, and its application-based educational approach, architecture education occupies a privileged position in terms of quality assurance and accreditation processes. To understand the current state of architectural education and professional practice, the historical context of transformation in architecture must be considered. From the mid-19th century onwards, the Industrial Revolution, scientific advances, and the use of new building materials such as glass and steel brought about fundamental changes in architectural practice; this process paved the way for the emergence of new building typologies such as office buildings, train stations, and exhibition halls. At the beginning of the 20th century, different architectural approaches such as Bauhaus, Functionalism, Organic Architecture and International Style redefined the theoretical and pedagogical framework of architectural education.

Accelerating technological developments have directly impacted architectural education and professional practice; high-tech, late modernism, and postmodern architectural movements are products of this transformation. As sustainability has gained importance in architecture, the BREEAM system was introduced in the United Kingdom in 1988; the LEED system, developed by the USGBC and established in the United States in 1993, has made significant contributions to the spread of sustainable design approaches. In addition, the integration of computer-aided design tools and virtual reality applications into architecture education since the 1960s has significantly transformed architectural pedagogy.

This multi-layered change in architecture necessitates the continuous review and renewal of education programs in line with the current requirements of professional practice. In this context, accreditation stands out as a fundamental quality assurance tool that evaluates the extent to which architecture programs meet professional competencies (Attia, 2019). Accreditation processes enable programs to conduct self-evaluation within their own structures while ensuring educational quality through external evaluation by authorised institutions (Aktan & Gencil, 2010; Özçiçek & Karaca, 2019).

Among the most widely recognised accreditation systems for architecture education internationally, the National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB) and the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) stand out. While both systems aim to ensure quality assurance in architecture programs, they differ in their educational philosophy, evaluation criteria, and relationship with professional practice. Table 1 presents a comparative overview of the fundamental characteristics and distinguishing features of the NAAB and RIBA accreditation systems.

Table 1*Comparison of NAAB and RIBA Accreditation Systems*

Comparison Criterion	NAAB (USA)	RIBA (United Kingdom)
Year of establishment	1940	1863
Institutional structure	Independent accreditation body	Professional organization based on a chartered institute
Type of accreditation	Accreditation / largely based on equivalency	Program validation
Geographic scope	United States and international	United Kingdom and international
Primary objective	To ensure quality assurance in professional architectural education	To align architectural education with professional competencies
Learning outcomes approach	Understanding and ability	Knowledge, understanding, skills, and competence
Emphasis on design education	Integrated throughout the entire program	At least 50% of the total education duration
Assessment criteria	Student Performance Criteria (SPC)	General and Professional Criteria
Relationship with professional practice	Direct preparation for the professional licensure process	Integrated with the RIBA Part 1–Part 2 system
International recognition	Canberra Accord, INQA/AHE	UIA and international professional networks

The comparison in Table 1 highlights the fundamental differences in approaches to architecture education between the NAAB and RIBA accreditation systems. The NAAB accreditation system offers a structure focused on measurable learning outcomes and direct preparation for professional practice; it is based on systematically evaluating program outcomes through student performance criteria. This approach aims to prepare graduates for professional practice by directly linking architectural education to professional competencies. In contrast, the RIBA approval system embraces a design studio-centred approach to education and requires design courses to constitute at least 50% of the total education period. This emphasises disciplinary depth and design-focused pedagogy in architecture education, while RIBA's Part 1 and Part 2 competency system treats education as a gradual professional development process, strengthening graduates' international professional recognition.

The impact of these internationally recognised accreditation approaches has become more visible in Turkey with the development of quality assurance processes in higher education in line with the Bologna Process since the 2000s. However, in the fields of art and design, field-specific quality assurance mechanisms remain limited, particularly in evaluating applied education and measuring project-based learning processes (Gündoğdu et al., 2016). In this context, international accreditation systems such as NAAB and RIBA provide important reference frameworks for aligning architecture programs in Turkey with global standards and increasing graduates' professional competitiveness.

To address this need in architecture education in Turkey, the Architecture Accreditation Board (MİAK) was established in 2006 through collaboration between the Architecture Education Association (MimED) and the Turkish Chamber of Architects. MİAK is positioned as an independent body that evaluates the educational quality of architecture undergraduate programs and conducts accreditation processes. In 2019, the Higher Education Quality Council (YÖKAK) recognised it as a national accreditation organisation, providing an official framework for quality assurance in architecture education. This process aims to align

the educational content, teaching methods, and institutional structures of architecture departments with national and international standards.

Research Problem

The rapid expansion of architecture programs in Türkiye over the last two decades has increased the importance of quality assurance mechanisms in higher education. While accreditation systems provide a structured framework for evaluating educational quality, many regional universities struggle to adapt their institutional structures, curricula, and quality assurance processes to accreditation standards. In particular, architecture programs in culturally diverse and regionally distinctive contexts face additional challenges in balancing local educational priorities with nationally and internationally recognised quality criteria. Despite the growing significance of accreditation in architecture education, limited research has examined how regional architecture departments prepare for accreditation processes before formal application and evaluation.

Research Focus

This study focuses on the accreditation readiness and preparatory activities of the Department of Architecture at Mardin Artuklu University within the framework of the criteria established by the Architecture Accreditation Board (MİAK). Rather than evaluating an accredited program, the study investigates the institutional preparations undertaken before the formal accreditation application process. It pays particular attention to curriculum development, institutional organisation, stakeholder participation, quality assurance practices, and the integration of regional characteristics into architectural education.

Research Aim and Research Questions

This study aims to evaluate the accreditation preparedness of the Department of Architecture at Mardin Artuklu University and examine how institutional arrangements, curriculum development efforts, and quality assurance practices have been aligned with MİAK accreditation criteria. Furthermore, the study discusses the opportunities and challenges encountered during the preparation phase within the context of a regional architecture education model.

Accordingly, the study addresses the following research questions:

- RQ1. To what extent does the current educational structure of the Department of Architecture at Mardin Artuklu University correspond to the accreditation criteria established by MİAK?
- RQ2. What institutional, curricular, and administrative arrangements have been implemented as part of the accreditation preparation process?
- RQ3. What opportunities and challenges emerge during accreditation preparation in a regional and culturally distinctive architecture program?
- RQ4. How can accreditation preparation contribute to quality assurance, institutional learning, and continuous improvement in regional architecture education?

Literature Review

Quality assurance and accreditation have become fundamental components of higher education governance worldwide. Accreditation systems promote accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement while supporting the national and international recognition of academic qualifications. In architecture education, accreditation functions not only as an evaluation mechanism but also as a framework that aligns educational programmes with professional competencies, societal expectations, and evolving disciplinary requirements (Attia, 2019). More broadly, quality assurance literature emphasises

that accreditation supports both institutional accountability and continuous organisational development (Martin & Stella, 2021).

Research has consistently demonstrated that accreditation processes contribute to curriculum development, institutional learning, stakeholder engagement, and the systematic assessment of student learning outcomes (Acevedo-De-los-Ríos & Rondinel-Oviedo, 2021). Similarly, studies on higher education quality assurance indicate that accreditation encourages evidence-based decision-making, strategic planning, and the development of sustainable quality cultures within academic institutions (Aktan & Gencel, 2010). Accreditation has therefore increasingly been recognised as a strategic instrument for improving educational effectiveness, institutional performance, and long-term quality enhancement.

At the international level, several accreditation bodies have played a significant role in shaping quality assurance practices in architecture education. The National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB, 2024) in the United States and the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA, 2024) in the United Kingdom have established comprehensive accreditation frameworks emphasising professional competencies, design excellence, ethical responsibility, lifelong learning, and outcome-based educational planning. Similarly, the European Association for Architectural Education (EAAE, 2021) and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ENQA, 2021) advocate quality assurance approaches that balance internationally recognised standards with institutional diversity and local educational contexts.

In Türkiye, interest in quality assurance and accreditation in architecture education has increased considerably following the establishment of the Architecture Accreditation Board (MİAK) and the growing role of the Higher Education Quality Council of Türkiye (YÖKAK) in quality management. Existing studies have primarily focused on accreditation systems, quality standards, programme evaluation, and institutional assessment processes (Güzer, 2019; MimED, 2022; Sevindik, 2025). Recent guidelines and reports published by YÖKAK (2024a, 2024b) and MİAK (2025) further emphasise stakeholder participation, continuous improvement, systematic evidence collection, and institutional self-evaluation as essential components of accreditation readiness and quality assurance culture.

Recent scholarship has expanded the discussion by highlighting the importance of stakeholder engagement in evaluating accreditation effectiveness. Padilla et al. (2025), examining industry members' perceptions of ABET-based accreditation in a developing-country context, found that accreditation strengthens the alignment between educational programmes and professional expectations while enhancing institutional credibility. Their findings suggest that stakeholder participation is a critical element of sustainable quality assurance systems and contributes to stronger relationships between universities, professional organisations, employers, and society.

Beyond accreditation frameworks, the broader quality assurance literature has emphasised the multidimensional nature of educational quality and institutional improvement. Harvey and Williams (2010) argue that quality in higher education has evolved from a narrow compliance-oriented perspective toward a more comprehensive understanding that incorporates continuous improvement, stakeholder expectations, and institutional effectiveness. Similarly, Schindler et al. (2015) highlight that educational quality encompasses teaching and learning processes, institutional resources, student outcomes, and organisational culture. Stensaker et al. (2011) and Westerheijden et al. (2023) further note that contemporary quality assurance systems increasingly function as instruments for institutional transformation rather than merely external evaluation mechanisms. In the European Higher Education Area, international organisations and policy frameworks have also supported quality assurance policies that encourage transparency, accountability, and continuous enhancement (UNESCO, 2022; OECD, 2023; Kis, 2022).

Within architecture and professional education, accreditation has been associated with graduate mobility, international recognition, and curriculum modernisation. Masri and Arnaouty (2015) emphasise that accreditation contributes to the international competitiveness and mobility of architecture graduates by aligning educational programmes with globally recognised standards. Likewise, the UNESCO-UIA Charter for Architectural Education (International Union of Architects, 2021) underlines the importance of balancing local cultural contexts with universal professional competencies. In the Turkish higher education context, studies examining accreditation readiness have identified institutional preparedness, faculty engagement, and quality culture as critical factors influencing accreditation success (Erkuş, 2009; Erkuş & Özdemir, 2010). Furthermore, YÖKAK (2020) highlights the importance of systematic quality assurance mechanisms, evidence-based evaluation, and continuous improvement practices in fostering sustainable institutional development.

At the same time, emerging research points to the growing influence of digital technologies and artificial intelligence in accreditation and quality assurance processes. Edwards (2024) argues that large language models, knowledge graphs, and vector database systems can support accreditation reporting through more effective evidence management, document retrieval, and institutional reporting. Similarly, Koubaa (2026) introduces the concept of “self-driving universities,” suggesting that agentic AI systems may enhance institutional decision-making through continuous monitoring, predictive analytics, automated reporting, and data-driven quality management. These developments indicate that quality assurance is evolving beyond periodic evaluation exercises toward more dynamic, evidence-based, and technology-supported systems of institutional improvement.

Despite the growing body of literature on accreditation systems and quality assurance frameworks, limited research has examined accreditation readiness and preparatory institutional transformations in regional universities, particularly those operating within culturally diverse and multilingual environments. Consequently, case studies are still needed to explore how accreditation standards are interpreted, adapted, and implemented within distinctive local contexts.

Addressing this gap, the present study examines accreditation preparation as a process of institutional learning, organisational development, and quality enhancement. Through the case of the Department of Architecture at Mardin Artuklu University, the study investigates how a regional architecture programme situated within a multicultural and historically rich environment responds to MİAK accreditation requirements while preserving its distinctive educational identity. By analysing the department’s accreditation preparation efforts, the study contributes to a better understanding of the relationship between quality assurance systems, regional architecture education, and institutional transformation in the Turkish higher education context.

Methods

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative case study design to investigate the accreditation readiness of the Department of Architecture at Mardin Artuklu University within the framework of the accreditation criteria established by the Architecture Accreditation Board (MİAK). The case study approach was considered appropriate because the research focuses on an in-depth examination of a single institutional case within its real-life context. Rather than evaluating an accredited programme, the study examines the preparatory activities undertaken before the formal accreditation application process and explores how institutional arrangements have been aligned with quality assurance principles.

The study adopts a process-oriented perspective and conceptualises accreditation preparation as a continuous institutional learning and improvement process. Within this framework, the research

investigates curriculum development activities, quality assurance practices, stakeholder participation mechanisms, institutional organisation, and educational policies developed in preparation for future accreditation applications.

Data Sources

The study is based on documentary evidence, institutional records, field observations, and relevant academic literature. The primary data sources include the MİAK Accreditation Criteria and Evaluation Frameworks (2023), quality assurance guidelines and policy documents published by the Turkish Higher Education Quality Council (YÖKAK), curriculum documents of the Department of Architecture at Mardin Artuklu University, including curriculum revisions implemented in 2015, 2023, and 2024, and Bologna Information Package documents describing programme objectives, learning outcomes, course structures, and educational policies. Additional sources comprise institutional information published on the official website of the Department of Architecture, reports and publications produced by the Architecture Education Association (MimED), and national and international academic studies addressing quality assurance, accreditation, and architecture education. These documents were selected because they provide direct evidence regarding the department's institutional structure, educational philosophy, curriculum development practices, quality assurance mechanisms, and overall accreditation readiness.

Data Collection Process

Data collection was conducted between 2023 and 2025 as part of the department's ongoing accreditation preparation activities. Documentary analysis focused on identifying evidence related to programme mission, educational objectives, curriculum structure, learning outcomes, stakeholder engagement, academic staffing, physical facilities, and quality assurance mechanisms.

In addition to document analysis, on-site observations were conducted within the department's educational environment. Particular attention was given to studio facilities, learning spaces, the integration of Mardin's historical urban environment into educational activities, and the interaction between educational practices and local cultural heritage. Observation notes supported the interpretation of documentary findings and helped clarify the programme's contextual characteristics.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed through descriptive thematic analysis. MİAK accreditation criteria were adopted as the primary analytical framework for organising and interpreting the data. During the analysis process, documentary evidence and observation findings were systematically reviewed and categorised according to the principal dimensions of the MİAK accreditation framework. These dimensions included the programme mission and educational objectives, programme learning outcomes, curriculum structure, academic staff qualifications and capacity, physical resources and the learning environment, stakeholder engagement and professional relations, and quality assurance and continuous improvement mechanisms. Organising the data within these categories enabled a structured evaluation of the department's accreditation readiness and facilitated the identification of strengths, areas for improvement, and institutional development priorities in relation to MİAK standards.

The findings were then interpreted in relation to the department's level of accreditation readiness rather than accreditation achievement. This analytical approach enabled the study to identify existing strengths, areas requiring further development, and institutional opportunities associated with future accreditation efforts.

Validity and Limitations

To enhance the credibility of the findings, the study used multiple sources of evidence, including curriculum documents, institutional records, Bologna programme information, accreditation criteria, and field observations. Triangulating these sources allowed the consistency of findings to be examined across different forms of evidence.

However, the study has certain limitations. Since the Department of Architecture has not yet formally applied for MIAK accreditation, the research does not include accreditation evaluation reports, external reviewer assessments, or official self-evaluation reports submitted to MIAK. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted as an assessment of accreditation readiness and preparatory institutional arrangements rather than accreditation outcomes.

Findings Related to the Accreditation Preparation Process

This section presents the findings obtained from the work carried out by the Department of Architecture at Mardin Artuklu University during its preparation and adaptation process for MIAK accreditation. The findings are addressed within the framework of the department's educational approach, institutional structure, curriculum development processes, and quality assurance practices; the evaluations are structured in line with the criteria determined by MIAK.

Educational Approach and Institutional Context

The Artuklu Department of Architecture's educational approach considers architecture not only as a technical field of expertise but also as a cultural, social, and spatial representation practice. The department's pedagogical model is based on an interdisciplinary framework that intersects with history, geography, sociology, art, and traditional crafts. The unique architectural fabric of the city of Mardin, its stone construction techniques, craft traditions, and multi-layered cultural structure offer students opportunities for on-site observation, experience-based learning, and contextual design. This unique institutional context has become a key reference point in redefining the department's mission, program objectives, and learning outcomes during the accreditation preparation process.

Preparation and Compliance Work for MIAK Accreditation

As of 2023, the department has initiated a systematic preparatory process for MIAK accreditation criteria. This process treats accreditation as more than a technical application requirement.

Findings on Accreditation Readiness According to MIAK Criteria

The analysis of curriculum documents, programme information packages, institutional records, and field observations indicates that the Department of Architecture at Mardin Artuklu University has undertaken several initiatives that demonstrate alignment with the major dimensions of MIAK accreditation criteria.

Programme Mission and Educational Objectives

Document analysis revealed that the department has established a mission that emphasises the integration of regional architectural heritage, cultural diversity, sustainability, and contemporary architectural education. The programme objectives explicitly refer to preserving, interpreting, and transforming local architectural knowledge through contemporary design approaches. This mission reflects the department's distinctive geographical and cultural context and provides a foundation for accreditation-oriented institutional planning.

Programme Learning Outcomes

The review of programme learning outcomes indicates strong correspondence with the competencies emphasised by MİAK, particularly in design thinking, professional ethics, cultural awareness, communication skills, and responsibility toward the built environment. Curriculum revisions undertaken during recent programme updates have strengthened the relationship between learning outcomes and course content, thereby contributing to outcome-based educational planning.

Curriculum Structure

The curriculum analysis demonstrated that the programme maintains a balanced structure between theoretical knowledge and studio-based design education. Design studios are the central component of the curriculum and are supported by courses in architectural history, building technology, conservation, urban studies, sustainability, and professional practice. Curriculum revisions implemented in 2015, 2023, and 2024 indicate an ongoing effort to improve programme quality and ensure alignment with contemporary educational requirements.

Academic Staff

The department possesses a young and academically active teaching staff capable of supporting studio-based architectural education. The analysis also identified opportunities for further development in terms of disciplinary diversity, international academic collaboration, and specialisation in emerging fields of architecture. These issues were recognised as potential priorities for future accreditation preparation activities.

Physical Resources and Learning Environment

Field observations indicate that the department benefits from its location within the historic urban environment of Mardin. Studio spaces, field-based learning opportunities, and direct interaction with cultural heritage resources provide students with a distinctive educational experience. The historical urban fabric functions as an extended learning environment that supports contextual and experiential learning approaches.

Stakeholder Engagement and Professional Relations

The findings suggest that the department has established collaborative relationships with local governments, professional chambers, public institutions, non-governmental organisations, and local communities. Stakeholder participation has been incorporated into curriculum review processes and educational activities, supporting the development of professional awareness and community engagement.

Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement

Evidence obtained from curriculum revision processes and institutional planning activities indicates the emergence of a quality assurance culture based on continuous improvement principles. Programme reviews conducted in 2015, 2023, and 2024 demonstrate that curriculum development activities have increasingly been guided by learning outcomes, stakeholder feedback, and quality assurance considerations. These developments represent important indicators of institutional readiness for future accreditation processes.

Overall, the findings indicate that the Department of Architecture at Mardin Artuklu University has established a substantial foundation for accreditation readiness. Nevertheless, further development is

needed in systematic evidence collection, assessment documentation, institutional reporting practices, and long-term quality monitoring mechanisms.

Table 2 summarises findings related to the accreditation preparation process based on MİAK evaluation criteria.

Table 2

Indicators of Accreditation Readiness in Relation to MİAK Criteria

MİAK Criterion	Evidence of Accreditation Readiness	Areas for Further Development
Programme Mission and Educational Objectives	A distinctive mission has been established that emphasizes regional, cultural, and local values while integrating Mardin's architectural heritage into the educational process.	Regular monitoring and evaluation of the mission and objectives through clearly defined performance indicators.
Programme Learning Outcomes	Learning outcomes have been aligned with MİAK criteria, with strengthened emphasis on local architecture, cultural context, and ethical responsibility.	Development of systematic data collection and assessment mechanisms to evaluate the achievement of learning outcomes.
Curriculum Structure	A balanced structure has been established between theoretical courses and studio-based practice, with design studios positioned as the backbone of the programme.	More systematic monitoring of the relationship between programme outcomes and course assessment results.
Academic Staff	Young and active academic staff with the capacity to support studio-based architectural education.	Increased disciplinary diversity and stronger international academic collaboration.
Physical Facilities	Studio spaces located within the historic urban context of Mardin and direct access to cultural heritage resources provide a strong environment for contextual and experiential learning.	Further enhancement of laboratory, workshop, and digital infrastructure facilities.
Engagement with Society and the Profession	Sustainable collaborations have been established with public institutions, local governments, professional chambers, non-governmental organizations, and local artisans.	More systematic integration of alumni and employer feedback into quality assurance processes.
Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement	Curriculum revisions conducted in 2015, 2023, and 2024 incorporated stakeholder feedback and were guided by quality assurance and continuous improvement principles.	Strengthening institutional reporting, evidence management, performance monitoring, and continuous improvement cycles.

Curriculum Development, Stakeholder Participation, and Quality Assurance

The department curriculum has been reviewed and updated in 2015, 2023, and 2024 in line with a continuous improvement and quality assurance approach. The curriculum development process was planned based on the MİAK accreditation criteria and the quality standards determined by the Higher Education Quality Council (YÖKAK).

During this process, the opinions of internal stakeholders, namely teaching staff and students, were systematically collected. Discussions were held with external stakeholders, including public institutions, local governments, professional associations, and non-governmental organisations.

The feedback obtained was analysed, and learning outcomes, course content, and application weights were restructured. In addition, the curricula of architecture programs accredited by MIAK were examined comparatively; meetings with relevant institutions ensured the program's compliance with current professional, pedagogical, and ethical requirements. As a result, a 2024 curriculum was developed that is outcome-focused, sustainable, and compliant with national and international accreditation standards.

Contributions of the Accreditation Preparation Process to the Department

The accreditation preparation process has made significant contributions to institutionalising a culture of measurement, evaluation, and continuous improvement within the department.

As a result of the accreditation preparation process, educational objectives and programme goals became clearer and more traceable, while student learning outcomes were redefined to be measurable and assessable. In addition, the department's institutional visibility and academic reputation were strengthened, contributing to a more systematic and sustainable quality assurance culture.

Furthermore, this preparatory process has contributed to the Artuklu Architecture Department's alignment with the EAEE and UNESCO–UIA Principles of Architectural Education, thereby increasing the department's compatibility with the international architecture education framework.

Discussion

The findings indicate that the accreditation preparation process at the Department of Architecture of Mardin Artuklu University functions as more than a compliance-oriented quality assurance exercise. Consistent with the literature on accreditation and institutional development, the process has encouraged self-evaluation, systematic planning, and continuous improvement practices within the department. Through the review of programme objectives, learning outcomes, curriculum structure, and stakeholder engagement mechanisms, accreditation preparation has strengthened institutional awareness and organisational learning.

A significant outcome of the process is aligning a regionally grounded architecture programme with nationally recognised quality standards. The department's educational model is strongly influenced by Mardin's multicultural character, architectural heritage, and historical urban environment. Rather than limiting this local identity, the MIAK framework has provided a structure through which regional characteristics can be integrated into a measurable and transparent quality assurance system. This finding supports the argument that accreditation standards can accommodate institutional diversity while maintaining common educational quality expectations.

The analysis also revealed several challenges associated with accreditation readiness. Limitations in physical resources, digital infrastructure, and disciplinary diversity among academic staff remain important areas for development. However, identifying these issues through self-assessment activities demonstrates one of the principal strengths of accreditation processes: making institutional needs visible and guiding improvement efforts through evidence-based planning.

From a broader perspective, the findings suggest that accreditation preparation may be particularly valuable for regional universities seeking to strengthen institutional capacity while preserving their distinctive educational missions. The case of Mardin Artuklu University illustrates how accreditation can support the development of a quality culture that connects local educational priorities with national and international expectations.

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of this study. First, the research focuses on a single institutional case, namely the Department of Architecture at Mardin Artuklu University; therefore, the findings cannot be generalised directly to all architecture programmes in Türkiye. Second, the department has not yet completed the formal MİAK accreditation process. Consequently, the study evaluates accreditation readiness and preparatory activities rather than accreditation outcomes, external evaluation reports, or final accreditation decisions.

In addition, the study relies primarily on document analysis and field observations. Future research incorporating interviews with academic staff, students, graduates, employers, and external stakeholders may provide a more comprehensive understanding of accreditation readiness, institutional transformation, and quality assurance practices in architecture education.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusion

This study examined the accreditation preparedness of the Department of Architecture at Mardin Artuklu University within the framework of MİAK criteria. The findings show that the department has established a strong foundation for accreditation readiness through curriculum development, stakeholder participation, quality assurance practices, and alignment of programme learning outcomes with accreditation standards.

The analysis further indicates that accreditation preparation contributes to institutional learning and continuous improvement by encouraging systematic planning, documentation, and self-assessment activities. Integrating Mardin's cultural heritage and regional characteristics into the educational programme shows that local identity and national quality standards are not mutually exclusive; rather, they can reinforce one another within a quality assurance framework.

Overall, the case demonstrates that accreditation readiness can strengthen institutional capacity and support the long-term development of architecture education in regional universities. The experience of Mardin Artuklu University provides a useful example of how quality assurance processes can be adapted to culturally distinctive educational environments while remaining aligned with national accreditation requirements.

Recommendations

To sustain and further develop accreditation readiness, the department should continue to institutionalize quality assurance practices through regular self-assessment, systematic stakeholder feedback collection, and periodic curriculum reviews. Strengthening evidence-based monitoring mechanisms will contribute to the sustainability of continuous improvement processes.

Maintaining a balance between local identity and international quality expectations should remain a strategic priority. The integration of Mardin's architectural heritage, cultural diversity, and regional knowledge into the curriculum should continue alongside developments in contemporary architectural education.

Future efforts should also focus on strengthening digital infrastructure, expanding opportunities for innovative teaching and learning environments, and increasing the visibility of sustainability-related themes within the curriculum. In addition, long-term planning for academic staff development, disciplinary

diversity, and international collaboration would further enhance institutional capacity and accreditation preparedness.

Finally, broader participation of students, graduates, professional organisations, public institutions, and local stakeholders in quality assurance processes would strengthen transparency, accountability, and institutional ownership. Such initiatives would support not only future accreditation applications but also the sustainable development of a quality culture within architecture education.

Suggestions for Future Research

The present study focused on the accreditation readiness of a single architecture department prior to formal accreditation evaluation. Future research could expand the scope by conducting comparative studies involving multiple architecture programmes from different regions of Türkiye. Such studies would provide a broader understanding of how institutional context influences accreditation preparation and quality assurance practices.

In addition, longitudinal research examining the period before, during, and after accreditation would help reveal the long-term effects of accreditation on curriculum development, student learning outcomes, institutional performance, and stakeholder engagement. Comparative analyses between accredited and non-accredited architecture programmes may also deepen understanding of accreditation's practical impact on educational quality.

Future studies could further strengthen the evidence base by incorporating interviews, focus groups, and survey data collected from academic staff, students, graduates, employers, and professional organisations. Such approaches would provide richer insights into stakeholder perceptions of accreditation processes and their contribution to institutional development.

Finally, further research is needed to explore how emerging issues such as digitalisation, artificial intelligence, sustainability, resilience, and participatory design practices can be integrated into accreditation frameworks and quality assurance systems in architecture education. These themes are likely to play an increasingly important role in shaping the future of architectural education both in Türkiye and internationally.

Data Availability

The data supporting the findings of this study are provided within the tables presented in the manuscript.

Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interests. The entire text was prepared author and the author reviewed the manuscript.

Ethical Approval

This study did not require approval from an ethics committee.

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