

Turning the Beast into a Beauty: An Accreditation Journey

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Abstract: The process of getting accredited can be perceived as a challenge by institutions. However, it became a fruitful experience for our institution. This presentation will cover our journey of accreditation: how it all started, proceeded and reached the happy ending. It will also provide some practical tips for schools aiming to turn accreditation into a rewarding and developmental process.

Summary: Accreditation, regarded as a burden by many institutions, could indeed create high demands with its requirements. However, at the School of Languages (ScOLA), Özyeğin University, we turned this ordeal into a learning opportunity. The presentation aims to share the whole process by first starting with the stage prior to the advisory visit where all parties came together and weighed the pros and cons rather than the management making a top-down decision. To this end, we formed groups for self-assessment based on EAQUALS (Evaluation and Accreditation of Quality Language Services) criteria. We analysed what was available and what we needed to improve.

The second part of the presentation will show the actions taken during the and after the self-assessment process through which we were able to increase our awareness of the school culture by rewording the ethos, mission, vision, teaching philosophy of ScOLA. Following the self-assessment, we felt confident and were ready for the advisory visit. We experienced a smooth visit as all instructors showed a strong ownership due to the effectiveness of the self-assessment process.

The last part of the presentation will be devoted to the details of the process following the advisory visit. Acting on the advisor's feedback, relevant parties began to work on the actions to be taken to increase the effectiveness of teaching, assessment, material development, class observation cycle and so on. The road to success was actually seeing the accreditation process as a tool rather than the ultimate goal, which in turn, increased school effectiveness and school culture.