

TQM: QUALITY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Globalization of higher educational services has become an area of key focus for many countries in post WTO scenario. In order to fuel the socio-economic development of the country, higher education is playing a more active role in our country and this requires a paradigm shift in terms of governance and service delivery. Higher education institutions must become more innovative leading to quality institutions of knowledge production and dissemination. Realizing the importance of higher education, a lot of innovative experiments are being done to improve the performance of this sector. The Application of Total Quality Management (TQM) concepts is one of such measures, which will go a long way in revolutionizing the higher education system. Total Quality Management is recognized as an important management philosophy widely used in US industry. It has been used very successfully in the development and acquisition of systems such as satellites and aircraft to preparing officer performance reports. Over the last few years, TQM has been applied in the education industry. The Air Force Academy has been a leader in this application of TQM. The principles of TQM are described with an emphasis on the importance of identifying the customer and analyzing the processes. The 14 Points of Dr. W. Edwards Deming, which form a framework for the implementation of the TQM, are individually applied to the academic environment based on the experience gained at the Air Force Academy. The indomitable spirit of higher education paves the way for the growth of a nation in the political, economic, social, intellectual and spiritual dimensions. Teacher education is one of the areas in higher education which trains student-teachers in pedagogy, which in turn helps them to train the young minds of educational institutions. The "Fate of the nation is decided in the classroom," is a remark made by the Education Commission of India. Such classrooms are created by committed and dedicated teachers.

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Total quality Management (TQM) has gained wide acceptance in the business world as an institutional transformation philosophy. During the last two decades, it has claimed the attention of scholars and practitioners as a “paradigm worth considering” for managing higher education. While accepting the successes of TQM in business and industry, it is worth noting that the barriers to implementing TQM in education are the same as those experienced in the industry and the health care sector.

Total Quality Management (TQM) was first espoused by Dr. W. Edwards Deming in the late 1950's. His ideas were not accepted by US industry but were heartily endorsed by Japan in their recovery from World War II. Largely as a result of the implementation of TQM, 'Made in Japan' has changed from a derogatory term to high praise. In the 1980's, US industry began to see the value of a TQM approach. Universities, however, have been slower to see the value of using TQM in their business, although several schools are now using TQM to improve the administration of the university. In 1990, Oregon State University endorsed TQM as its management philosophy and has experienced outstanding success in improving the operations of the university.

Total Quality Management (TQM) is inevitably common factor that will shape the strategies of higher educational institutions in their attempt to satisfy various stakeholders including students, parents, industry and society as a whole. The new economic growth theories have emphasized the role of human capital as the key of economic growth and development. The World Bank's recent study of 190 countries reveals that it is higher education that helps in enriching the quality of manpower. Thus higher education is a basic investment necessary to improve the overall quality of life. The strong linkage between the economy and education was never as clearly visible as now. It is the availability of employment in the market that makes the learners chooses their areas of study.

MEANING OF QUALITY

The word quality is derived from Latin word qualis, which means “what

kind of". It connotes a variety of meanings and implies different things to different people. According to Juran "Quality is fitness for use or purpose". Crosby considers it as "conformance to standards". Deming defines quality as "a predictable degree of uniformity and dependability at low cost and suited to market". In general quality is one, which satisfies customer needs and continuously keeps on performing its functions as desired by customers as per specified standards.

Quality is easy to visualise and yet difficult to define. Quality is used both in absolute and in relative terms. Quality may be defined as something which passes a standard or something which is consistently good with no defects. Quality may also be defined with reference to a purpose, i.e., something which fulfils the purpose for which it exists. Some define quality as equitable value for money. Quality may be defined as excellence with reference to both the price and the cost. Quality is neither mind nor matter, but a third entity independent of the two. Quality of education is a multi-dimensional concept, with varying conceptualizations. It includes, within its ambit, the quality of inputs in the form of students, faculty, support staff and the infrastructure.

Total Quality Management in Education

The Gurukula System of education was probably the best example of quality management in education. In the Gurukula (Gurukula means Preceptor"s family) system, students lived with the Guru in his family until the time they completed their study. The Gurukula tradition of total quality was successfully transferred to the early Indian Universities like Nalanda and Takshasila.

The expertise of visionaries also in institutional planning should be a part of planning the academic curriculum. The Concept of Total Quality Management should not be left to the corporate world. It should extend its reach to educational institutions too. Now some computer education institutions have obtained ISO 9001 to assure their clientele (the learners enrolling in their institutions) of quality education.

Quality Education in schools and colleges will lead to qualified human resources moving to higher education and in their producing highly qualified manpower for demanding careers (Barnett, 1994). Once appointed in colleges in government scale of pay, there is stagnation in the teachers' growth and development. The teaching community should not become complacent with the belief that experience alone would suffice to carry on their work effectively.

Theory and Principles of TQM

Philosophy, Vision, Strategy, Skills, Resources, Rewards and Organisation are the principles of total quality management (Myron Tribus, 1994). Many people have their own definition of quality and restrict the concept of quality to some sectors only. Education is an obligation and quality should extend its reach to the Education Diaspora. The concept of quality instruction goes above and beyond innovation. It is not that we do not know how to make learning more innovative and joyful. We do. It is that we need to design educational experience that will deliver predictable learning. Success can come from thinking about acting strategically to define, design and deliver quality instruction. Teachers should design Quality Instruction Planning Programme to optimize learning situations. They have to define, design and deliver educational experiences in the context of quality provided the instruction is innovative and will be useful for the target learner. The learning experience should be rewarding, leading to life-long learning, so that the learners learn where and when to use them effectively to empower themselves (Kaufmanns and Zahn, 1993). When applying TQM principles to learning, Principles should be taken to give due importance to all the above.. The omission of anyone in this chain renders the theory inoperable since all are interlinked.

Philosophy: Inspiration

The presence of sound philosophy leads to inspiration but in the absence of philosophy, there are no followers. Application of TQM principles to classroom teaching will inspire the learners, which will lead them to adopt a similar methodology in their future assignments.

Vision: Life-Long Learning

A good vision leads to life-long learning while the absence of vision may lead to confusion. This is a long-term benefit that a learner will enjoy. Lifelong learning is an important aspect in one's life. Any course or degree should not be considered an end to learning. The teacher should be a visionary in inculcating a passion for lifelong learning in the learners.

Strategy: Learning Skills

The presence of a sound strategy leads to developing learning skills; otherwise there will be a problem from the very beginning. To achieve the objectives of learning and to have the desired learning outcomes, it is necessary to devise the learning instruction in such a way that learners learn to learn. Developing learning skills are very important not only to accomplish the immediate course or degree requirement but also to imbibe the quality to learn.

Skills: Holistic Approach

Presence of good skills leads to a holistic approach but in the absence of skills there is anxiety. A holistic approach to learning ensures quality in education and makes learning a pleasure and joy. The attachment to learning should be healthy. It requires dedication and commitment to facilitate self-directed learning.

Resources: Maximum: Usage of Available Resources and Facilities

The availability of appropriate resources leads to optimum usage of available resources and facilities. The absence of resources leads to frustration among both learners and teachers. Before going in for procuring new resources and facilities for facilitating the process of innovative teaching and practice, the existing resources should be used in an optimum manner. Instead of wasting precious time, money and energy, a teacher should use the available resources.

Rewards: Desired Learning Outcomes

The presence of suitable rewards leads to desired learning outcomes. In the absence of rewards, there is bitterness. Rewards and recognition for innovative teaching leads to the desired learning outcomes. The following are

some of the rewards that can motivate the teachers.

Completion of units of the course in an innovative way.

Involvement of all learners in the learning process.

Recognition from learners, colleagues and the head of the institution.

Benefit from teamwork and learning the art of working as a team.

Different learning environments resulting in development of leadership qualities.

Co-operative and collaborative learning.

Recognition and appreciation of peers.

Appreciation for the learning experience.

Organisation: Cooperation of Support Services

For any innovative experiment to be successful, the co-operation of both the teaching and the non-teaching staff of the educational institution are necessary. In the absence of organization, there is no co-operation of support services which hinders organized learning.

TQM Process and Strategies

In an educational institution, the TQM process brings with it the commitment to quality, commitment to the employees, and commitment to the organisation. Principals, administrators and teachers, as parts of the educational partnership, really want good things to happen for students. All those who contribute to the system should be involved, with a clear understanding of the purpose. It is an approach to improve the effectiveness and flexibility of the organisation as a whole. The quality performance is directed towards satisfying cross functional goals as quality, cost, manpower development, quality of work life, etc. These activities ultimately lead to increased students and employee satisfaction. The process to introduce TQM in colleges should generally have the following steps:

1. **Mission and Passion:** Total quality is an idea which has to be communicated. The determination and announcement of mission statement is the first and foremost task on which the whole tqm will depend. It helps everyone to focus on the central theme. Everyone shares a passion to move continuously close to the ideal vision. The students, the teachers, the employees and the administrators push the college in one direction. Action of each one of them will be directed and moved by a common philosophy.
2. **Administrator as a Role Model:** you have completely identified yourself with your institution. you are always thinking of making, it is a better and better college every day and fighting with all your strength. It must also be clear from the side of administrator/principal of the institution that he/she is committed to total quality. The commitment should be communicated in meetings with employees and students It must be by word of mouth and action visibly demonstrated. The process of pursuing this agenda should be continuous and never lost sight of.
3. **Environment factors:** The next step is identification of the factors of internal and external environment, which have a bearing on the institution building. These include factors effecting the work environment in the institution (proper cleanliness, lighting, teaching aids, projectors, computer labs, lab materials, canteen, sports, gardening, water, etc) and factors helpful in image building of the institution (industry-institution interaction, debates, conferences, seminars, public relation including media management etc.) In managing total quality, endeavour should be to involve both internal and external environment factors. Involve students to help create environment for better learning/activity process. There is a need to develop self-motivation for TQM in everybody. Liberalisation and globalisation have set new trends in domestic and global competitive environment. This has led to a great disparity between what is taught and what is needed at the work place. Due to the socio-economic, cultural and technological transformation which has taken place during past decade, newer demands are being placed upon educational institutions.

Educational system can effectively react to these internal and external challenges only when it emphasizes on total quality. Engage in the delicate balancing act of ensuring quality to external customer (students, parents, taxpayers), while at the same time paying attention to the needs of internal customers (teachers, board members, and other co-workers).

4. **Accountability:** We have to develop the system in which every group (student, teachers, researcher and manager) is accountable to all other groups and members of each group are accountable to one another. Accountability is defined in terms of explicitly stated objective criteria, in which students are accountable to teachers because they have to submit regular assignments and they are subject to regular and continuous open internal assessment and accountable to taxpayer who wants them to receive their education by hard work. We should develop a system in which teachers are accountable to students through instruction surveys and are accountable to management through self assessment and assessment of teacher by outside organizations and in which researchers are prepared to be assessed by outside agencies and funding agencies for their work. Moreover all accountability at all levels has to be in terms of criteria laid down sufficiently in advance.
5. **Human Relations:** There is a need to enthuse quality in the whole setup, including the relationship. All individuals, small or big must be viewed as important human beings with physiological, psychological, social and ego needs. Establish systematic and continued communication among everyone. Develop skills in conflict resolution, problem solving and negotiations while displaying greater tolerance and appreciation of conflict. The informal relations must be tuned to help the formal organization.
6. **Feedback:** TQM is a continuous process. There is a need for continuous performance appraisal of all the subsystems as well as the system as a whole. The quality standards may be fixed in advance and performance compared both in qualitative and quantitative terms. The standards may

also be reviewed as the graph of performance rises. The independent assessment machinery should be created in the form of a Quality Co-ordinator or TQM committee to achieve the goal of Total Quality. The machinery should be such as may have high moral credentials and faith of everyone, completely independent of the management/administration.

CONCLUSION

It is generally viewed that quality lies in business organizations, but due to rapid change in social needs, it has become prime agenda of the countries worldwide. Consequently, many countries initiated “national quality assurance mechanisms” and many more are in the process of evolving suitable Strategy. Most of the quality assurance bodies were established in nineties and after a few years of practical experience, they have started rethinking many issues of quality assurance. Despite massive expansion of Indian higher education, quality has been a crying concern as reflected in the reports of the various committees appointed from time to time by University Grants Commission. Although conventionally loss of quality has been related, in cause and effect relationship, to expansion, this is difficult to prove on the basis of knowledge assessment in educational science. Although in the popular and administrative parlance, quality of higher education is linked to per capita expenditure -- infrastructure particularly, laboratories workshops, ICT facilities, etc. Educational science provides clear indication that quality of higher education stands on the tripod of curriculum, instruction and evaluation. There are various techniques of quality management in education like Quality Circle, Quality Benchmarking, Total Quality Management, Six Sigma, etc. Almost all these techniques profess optimizing human quality and contribution. But Quality management is not an overnight process and it is not the product of a single hand.

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