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## A CRITICALITY TESTING ON HUMAN RESOURCE AND TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT FACTORS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A PERSPECTIVE FROM INDIA

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**ASST. PROFESSOR**  
**MARWADI EDUCATION FOUNDATION GROUP OF INSTITUTES**  
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### ABSTRACT

*The endeavour of this manuscript is to provide substantiation on the scale of criticality and persistence tests for human resource linked critical success factors in TQM implementation. This involves categorization of the HR-related critical success factors from the meticulous resource of literature reviews on quality initiatives. In higher education contexts, the critical success factors in TQM programmes accentuate more management pledge, HR management and quality working attitudes for student satisfaction. Therefore, the HR aspects in the literature review stand as the elementary issue of alarm for organizational management in quality planning and constructing a quality working climate to ensure successful expected performance. Using Statistical Package for Social Sciences 16.0, the HR-related critical success factors that have high mean scores and reliability coefficients are Teamwork Spirit, Competent Staff, Customer-Focus Orientation and Visionary Leadership. The notional dialogue justifies ten HR-TQM critical factors, which are relevant to quality initiatives in the Higher Education context. They are Visionary Leadership, Customer Focus, Effective Communication, Congruent Objectives, Staff Selection and Deployment, Competent Staff, Teamwork Spirit, Training And Education, Recognition And Motivation And Innovation And Creativity. The mean scores suggest that quality team working, competent staff, customer focus orientation, and visionary leadership are the four most important HR-related factors that are critical to ensuring successful TQM implementation. The study provides empirical evidence of how careers are being managed within established employments.*

### KEYWORDS

Inter Organisational Career Movement, Retention, Restructuring HR policies, Turnover, Traditional compensation plan

### INTRODUCTION

TQM is not just an organizational management programme or management initiative package, but a complete change in an organization's culture and the way people behave at work. TQM definitions, philosophy, approaches and models were discussed in many organizational contexts by many quality gurus from various perspectives. However, Oakland (1989, p. 14–15) defined TQM in a general perspective as:

*An approach to improving the effectiveness and flexibility of business as a whole. It is essentially a way of organising and involving the whole organization; every department, every activity, every single person at every level. For an organization to be truly effective, each part of it must work properly together, recognising that every person and every activity affects and in turn is affected by others.*

This definition focuses on functional integration and employee involvement, but says nothing about the customer. However, it recognises the importance of organizational coordination for quality, which can be enhanced, for example, by conducting departmental purpose analysis – tasks negotiated between organizational members, thus smoothing workflow and inter-departmental coordination. Generally, a study on TQM implementation can be focused on either 'hardware' (especially the tools and techniques) or the 'software' (mainly the human resource aspects).

This study is mainly concerned with the soft or people issues, and usually the more qualitative aspects of a TQM programme consisting of HRM policies and activities to generate commitment to quality and the dissemination of management vision and ideology that may reinforce the maxims of quality working cultural change, continuous improvement and customer orientation. Even though the term 'quality' has broad and subjective meanings, with concepts of standards, excellence and 'fitness for its purpose', there has always been a great relevance and concern for quality in HE.

The phrase 'critical success factors' (CSFs) itself indicates the importance of the concept to ensure the success of any particular process or project. From the perspective of decision management, Ferguson and Dickinson (1982) define CSFs as those internal and external factors that must be identified and reckoned with, as they are capable of supporting or threatening the achievement of a company's objectives. HR-related CSFs in quality initiatives for HE The following sections will define 10 HR-related CSFs that were used in previous research on quality initiatives, and mostly in service organization contexts.

Top managers carry the primary responsibility for commitment to quality and support efforts necessary to achieve the organizational goals, and as the architects of change initiatives who provide a sense of direction for the workers and organization, particularly in successful TQM implementation (Crosby, 1979; Garvin, 1983, Ugboro & Obeng, 2000). In TQM implementation, leaders are responsible for developing and communicating the company vision, and then building organization-wide commitment in the people in order to achieve the specified targets (Kehoe, 1996; Waldman, 1994). Ramirez and Looney (1993), Lewis and Smith (1994) and Thiagarajan, Zairi, and Dale (1996) showed that top management roles belong to the first tier of critical factors in TQM implementation. The literature suggests that visionary leadership in any HE institution's quality initiatives is critical, as personal leadership and involvement of the top executives creates and sustains a customer-focused work orientation and provides clear and visible quality values.

### CUSTOMER FOCUS ORIENTATION

Like other industries, customers in HE institutions are the main element for quality initiatives. It is essential to identify them, along with establishing the processes to determine each of their needs to be satisfied (Owlia&Aspinwall, 1998; Spanbauer, 1995). Gap 5 in the SERVQUALmodel (Parasuraman, Berry, and Zeithaml, 1990), as shown in Figure 1, shows that it could be a major service deficiency if the organization fails to identify and provide the right specification for customer needs. Therefore, customer focused organizations involved in quality initiatives should believe that business operations would improve by satisfying customers' needs and requirements (Lin, Chow, Madu, Keui, and Yu 2005). The customers' degree of satisfaction will be the main indicator to determine the level of quality performance.

### EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

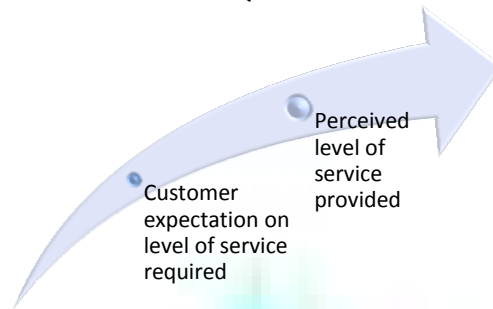
Effective communication ensures employees' clear understanding about the TQM programme, and is also useful to overcome barriers to quality improvement. In TQM, communication should happen at all levels, through all aspects of operations (Dale & Cooper, 1993; Ravichandran & Rai, 2000). However, in the HE context, Lewis and Smith (1994) suggest that effective communication will break down barriers between departments and programmes, and between faculties, administration, staff, and students. Sherr and Lozier (1992) argue that the working culture of most colleges and universities would have to be transformed through effective communication in training and education, and that only top management can only develop the total quality mindset in people throughout the organization (Voehl, 1993). Therefore, in the HE environment, quality communication is indicated within the function to adapt quality programmes to the internal and external customers, and to promote a network of cooperation between staff and students.

### CONGRUENT OBJECTIVES

Deming (1986) suggests that congruent objectives in quality management will drive out the fear of uncertainty in people, and that this is the best way to create a quality environment. According to Juran (1974) and Oakland (1993), to keep quality objectives aligned with the employees' efforts, results should be

communicated to every member and be made as a basis for continuous improvement. Meanwhile, Gaps 2 and 3 in the SERVQUAL model by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) explain clearly the effect of a lack of congruent objectives between management on the service provided by employees in terms of service perception. Nonetheless, the common objectives in TQM are to increase productivity, maximise resource utilisation.

FIGURE 1: SERVQUAL MODEL GAP 5



Source: Adapted from Parasuraman et al. (1990, p. 39).

(or total cost and capacity management) and, at the same time, ensure customer satisfaction. These objectives need always to be kept in the mind of every organizational member involved in quality initiatives. Staff selection and deployment Employee selection is a HRM decision process that is made on the basis of an assessment on the suitability of a group of potential individuals who might fill job vacancies (Redman & Wilkinson, 2001). Rees and Doran (2001) suggest that, from a TQM perspective, selection processes are designed to identify individuals who possess quality-related competencies. However, according to Ahmed and Schroeder (2002), selection criteria may involve the 'hard' or tangible aspects, such as technical and academic qualifications, and also the 'soft' aspects or behavioural skills. Staffing or staff deployment through the 'rightsizing' and 'ability-job-fit' technique in quality management essentially involves analysing a units' or departments' personnel =needs based on its long-term quality objectives, and the overall company needs, and finding the combination of permanent and temporary employees with the best skills and competencies to meet those needs (Rhinehart, 2000).

### COMPETENT STAFF

Woodruffe (1993) defined competencies as 'the set of behaviour patterns that the incumbent needs to bring to the position in order to perform its tasks and functions with competence'. Deming (1986) suggests that TQM requires specific technical knowledge and the ability to maximise the impact from each of the methods applied that would determine the quality of performance. Juran (1974) explains that internal and external failures could be minimised through improved employee competency in quality continuous improvement activities. Meanwhile, Carter, Smeltzer, and Narasimham's (2000) findings suggest there is a need for management staff to have the skills and commitment in key strategic decisions and there is a need for employees to be involved in more tactical decisions. These are both important to the success of TQM. In order for the employees to perform an excellent job as expected, they have to have the knowledge, skills and capabilities relevant to the tasks specified, which are critical to providing quality services.

### TEAMWORK SPIRIT

Atkinson (1995) defines teamwork in the TQM perspective as 'everyone in an organization is personally managing and continuously improving their own process, and working together in teams to improve their service to the customers'. Research on TQM and continuous improvement by Seers (1989), Griffin and Hauser (1992), Mohrman, Tankasi, Lawler, and Ledford (1995), and Hoegl and Gemuenden (2001) suggest teamwork as a crucial success factor. Hackman and Wageman (1995) and Behara and Gundersen (2001) find that TQM practices emphasise teamwork and cross-functional relationships that provide many opportunities for social interaction and social reinforcement. These show that the spirit of team working is one of the main features of TQM culture. The Black and Porter (1996) study identifies teamwork structures to represent efforts made to develop organizational structures in support of quality improvement initiatives. The study also explicitly ties teamwork to the importance of integrated management at all levels of service and organization in the overall quality performance. Therefore, a quality working culture of teamwork spirit is an important condition for successful TQM implementation.

### RECOGNITION AND MOTIVATION

A reward policy in HRM involves a selection of a range of rewards, designed in a manner in which they need to be administered (such as being linked to performance assessment exercise) and with the ultimate aim of motivating employees to contribute effectively to a set of organizational goals. Hackman and Wageman (1995) claim that among the evidence they reviewed for the discriminate validity of TQM was the fact that TQM explicitly eschews a number of popular motivational devices, including work redesign (e.g. job enrichment), goal setting (e.g. management by objectives), and performance contingent rewards (e.g. pay for performance). The Black and Porter (1996) study addresses employee recognition as one of the elements in the people management core constructs, while Saraph, Schroeder, and Benson (1989) identified the employee relations construct as one of the TQM critical factors. Therefore, the studies suggest that organizations must develop formal systems to encourage, track, and reward employee involvement to maintain a high level of employee motivation towards excellent performance.

### TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Deming (1986) explains that what an organization needs in TQM implementation is not just good people, but people who are continually improving with training and education. Dale and Cooper (1993) and Oakland (1999) claim that training is one of the most important factors for continuous improvement. Saraph et al. (1989) and Boltes (1992) suggest that TQM requires technical and attitudinal knowledge, and specific training for employee understanding is necessary. Ramirez and Looney (1993) and Thiagarajan et al. (1996) categorised quality education as the first tier factor, which specifies one of the roles of top management in implementing an excellent quality programme. In a validity survey, ranking the importance of CSFs in TQM implementation, Behara and Gundersen (2001) discovered training as the third in importance, and the Brah, Wong, and Rao (2000) study showed it as the fourth. Moreover, HR development and management examines the key elements of how the HE institutions develop and realise the full potential of their workforce in pursuing the quality and excellent performance objectives.

### RESEARCH METHODS

Quantitative research places great emphasis on methodology, procedure, and statistical measures of reliability and validity. A five-point Likert scale (1 ¼ Strongly Disagree; 2 ¼ Disagree; 3 ¼ Neutral; 4 ¼ Agree; 5 ¼ Strongly Agree) was used to measure. The respondents were asked for their perception of the importance of the HR-TQM factors in implementing quality initiatives for the institutions. 237 usable responses were collected, which represented 35% of the selected sample. The quantitative data analysis used the SPSS software. This study made a specific analysis of the average means and the reliability test for each factor. The internal consistency was measured using Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient.



**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The mean score of each HR-TQM critical factor shows that the top three factors rated by the individuals involved in Malaysian HE quality programmes as critically important are: teamwork spirit, competent staff, and customer focus orientation, with means of 4.26, 4.12, and 4.08 (maximum scale of five), respectively. The finding suggests that the quality of service that HE institutions must provide to their customer is always integrated in nature. These processes would involve academic, administration, post-output obligations, and various parties of stakeholders with different requirements and expectations to be put together as a total service quality. The full mean scores of all the factors tested are shown in Table 1 by institution.

Meanwhile, the average score on the importance of HR related factors in TQM CSFs, rated by all institutions, is 4.02. This is equal to 80.4% of five maximum ratings. Generally, this indicates that HR-related factors were recognised as highly important in ensuring successful implementation of TQM programmes in the HE context. The survey suggests that HR-TQM factors are given as independent constructs, which are critical as determinant factors for successful quality initiatives in the Malaysian HE context. Using the SPSS reliability analysis program, an internal consistency analysis was performed separately for the items of each critical factor.

**TABLE 1: MEAN AND SD SCORE OF HR-TQM CFS IN INDIA HIGHER EDUCATION**

| HR-TQM CSFs    | Unit 1<br>N=23 | Unit 2<br>N=50 | Unit 3<br>N=40 | Unit 4<br>N=38 | Unit 5<br>N=43 | Unit 6<br>N=43 | Average Mean<br>N=237 | Composite Std. Dev |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| X1             | 4.30           | 4.02           | 4.27           | 3.63           | 4.20           | 3.98           | 4.07                  | 0.91               |
| X2             | 4.34           | 4.06           | 4.25           | 3.94           | 4.03           | 4.09           | 4.12                  | 0.74               |
| X3             | 3.94           | 3.78           | 3.91           | 3.61           | 3.87           | 3.66           | 3.80                  | 0.89               |
| X4             | 4.32           | 4.15           | 4.01           | 3.66           | 3.97           | 4.10           | 4.04                  | 0.78               |
| X5             | 4.00           | 4.11           | 3.92           | 3.89           | 3.89           | 4.05           | 3.98                  | 0.82               |
| X6             | 4.17           | 4.08           | 4.03           | 4.05           | 3.95           | 4.27           | 4.08                  | 0.69               |
| X7             | 4.37           | 4.30           | 4.24           | 4.24           | 4.18           | 4.28           | 4.26                  | 0.70               |
| X8             | 4.16           | 4.01           | 4.20           | 3.53           | 3.85           | 4.32           | 4.00                  | 0.81               |
| X9             | 4.02           | 4.09           | 3.93           | 3.58           | 3.71           | 3.92           | 3.92                  | 0.83               |
| X10            | 4.06           | 4.02           | 4.03           | 3.70           | 3.94           | 3.96           | 3.95                  | 0.72               |
| Mean of HR-TQM | 4.17           | 4.06           | 4.08           | 3.78           | 3.96           | 4.06           | 4.02                  |                    |

Table 2 shows the values of alpha (i.e. reliability coefficient) computed for each factor. The high alpha coefficients indicate that since inter-item correlations are high, there is evidence that the variables are measuring the same underlying construct of factors specified. The low variance of mean given by the output supports the research evidence that the items used have minimum variability of scores. According to Black and Porter (1996), alpha coefficients above 0.60 are acceptable. Therefore, statistically, all ten factors identified as the critical HR-TQM factors can be used for further analysis.

**TABLE 2: INTERNAL CONSISTENCY RELIABILITY ANALYSIS FOR HR-TQM CSFs**

| HR-TQM CSFs | Cronbach's $\alpha$ | $\alpha$ value | Standardised item $\alpha$ | Variance of mean |
|-------------|---------------------|----------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| X1          | 0.8981              |                | 0.8977                     | 0.0025           |
| X2          | 0.7562              |                | 0.7563                     | 0.0261           |
| X3          | 0.8302              |                | 0.8323                     | 0.0210           |
| X4          | 0.6454              |                | 0.6652                     | 0.0850           |
| X5          | 0.6393              |                | 0.6381                     | 0.0460           |
| X6          | 0.7026              |                | 0.7090                     | 0.0358           |
| X7          | 0.7234              |                | 0.7318                     | 0.0928           |
| X8          | 0.8639              |                | 0.8655                     | 0.0097           |
| X9          | 0.7835              |                | 0.7797                     | 0.0465           |
| X10         | 0.7606              |                | 0.7665                     | 0.0062           |

**TABLE 3: IMPROVED INTERNAL CONSISTENCY RELIABILITY ANALYSIS**

|    | Cronbach's $\alpha$ | $\alpha$ value | Variance of mean | Standardised item $\alpha$ | Cronbach's $\alpha$ | $\alpha$ value |
|----|---------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| X5 | 0.6393              |                |                  |                            |                     |                |
| X6 | 0.7026              |                | 0.0363           | 0.7377                     |                     | 0.7485         |
| X4 | 0.6454              |                |                  |                            |                     |                |
| X7 | 0.7234              |                | 0.0914           | 0.7795                     |                     | 0.7895         |

**TABLE 4: HR RELATED TQM – DEGREE OF IMPORTANCE**

| HR-TQM CSFs                    | Average mean | SD   | Degree of Improtance |
|--------------------------------|--------------|------|----------------------|
| Quality teamworking            | 4.16         | 0.49 | 1                    |
| Customer focus orientation     | 4.12         | 0.58 | 2                    |
| Visionary leadership           | 4.07         | 0.74 | 3                    |
| Staff selection and competency | 4.02         | 0.48 | 4                    |
| Education and training         | 3.99         | 0.72 | 5                    |
| Innovation and creativity      | 3.95         | 0.55 | 6                    |
| Recognition and motivation     | 3.78         | 0.76 | 7                    |
| Effective communication        | 3.80         | 0.71 | 8                    |
| Mean                           | 4.02         |      |                      |

The new factor was renamed as quality team working. This evidence supports the work by Silos (1999) and Wong and Sohal (2002). The summary of the review is shown in Table 3.

The findings testify the degree of criticality of eight HR-related CSFs in ensuring successful TQM implementation, as shown in Table 4. Quality team working, customer focus orientation and visionary leadership are the three most critical factors of implementing successful TQM in the Indian HE context.

**CONCLUSION**

The theoretical discussions justify ten HR-TQMcritical factors, which are relevant to quality initiatives in the HE context. They are visionary leadership, customer focus, effective communication, congruent objectives, staff selection and deployment, competent staff, teamwork spirit, training and education, recognition and motivation and innovation and creativity. The mean scores suggest that quality teamworking, competent staff, customer focus orientation, and visionary

leadership are the four most important HR-related factors that are critical to ensuring successful TQM implementation. The survey suggests that the highly critical HR-TQM factors (at 80.4% mean scores) are the critical determinants of successful quality initiatives in a Malaysian HE context. Furthermore, the reliability internal consistency test suggests that all of those factors are acceptably reliable enough to be used in a similar research context. The improved internal consistency of Cronbach's alpha suggests that if research were to take a relatively high reliability coefficient (that is, above 0.70) the critical HR-TQM factors that can be considered are reduced to eight. It is suggested that staff selection and congruent objective be reviewed, as they carry low mean scores. The other option is to combine those variables and justify on theoretical grounds, and supported with further statistical analysis, with the resulting variable necessarily renamed. The findings suggest that quality teamworking, customer-focus orientation and visionary leadership are the three most critical factors in implementing successful TQM in the Indian HE context. For further research, even though measurement instrument's reliability is necessary, it is not enough, which means that it must really measure the concept or the phenomenon that it was designed to measure. Further analysis using content and construct validity tests are appropriate to test the goodness of measures as a common validity testing. EFA and multiple correlation analysis are the common statistical tools for that purpose. Mediating factor(s) such as employee involvement and commitment can be considered to validate integrated HRM-TQM relationships in the process to produce performance excellence.

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