



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE, ECONOMICS AND MANAGEMENT

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A STUDY ON TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT & DEVELOPING A COMPREHENSIVE MODEL FOR QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The paper talks about the higher education and attempts to theoretically conceptualize TQM in higher education and the need to enhance the quality of higher education. Total Quality Management in higher education means improving the quality of courses, input instructional process, resource management processes and structures including with student support service output, linkages with world of work and other organizations. Globalization of higher educational services has become an area to be focused for many countries. Higher education is playing a key role in every country and this requires a paradigm shift in terms of governance and service delivery to enhance the socio economic conditions. Higher education institutions should be working more towards innovation which leads to quality institutions of knowledge production and propagation. Realizing the importance many innovative tests are being done for overall improvement and performance of educational sector. Application of TQM concepts is one of such procedures which will help in transforming the higher education system. Further the paper talks about the attempts to apply the Quality Management models from industry into higher education have not been successful. There is a rationale for separately addressing the service and education functions with appropriate sets of criteria. The effectiveness of any composite model in addressing the multifarious elements of higher education is dependent on the organizational culture. Such a Comprehensive Model for Quality in Higher Education can serve as the ideal to address the service, education and implementation aspects synergistically.

KEYWORDS

Total Quality Management, Quality in higher education, innovative models & learning communities.

INTRODUCTION

TQM is applied to business and industry; but it has been recently introduced and experimented in higher education. Many universities and colleges apply Total Quality Management as a tool to enhance the quality of higher education. The concept of quality is accepted by everyone and TQM literature in higher education is available in plenty. The student is considered as a customer since quality mean “conformance to requirements” of the customer. The importance of education for the development of excellence, expertise and knowledge leading to overall development in economy cannot be undermined. Internationalization of higher education has become a fact, just like Globalization. Internationalization should not be seen as an end in itself, but as a means of quality enhancement. Quality is the ability of the institution to fulfill its task and to achieve its goals by satisfying the customers, who are quality conscious. This has necessitated a sound strategy for the development of higher education in almost all countries of the world. Establishing leadership in the world is possible only when universities/organizations have a developed system of higher education in which efficiency remains the sole criterion to evaluate performance. This is possible only when the principles of quality management are inculcated in the system of higher education.

Total Quality Management in higher education means improving the quality of courses, input, instructional & resource management processes, including with student support service output and linkages with other organizations (Tulsi, 2001). Since it is comprehensive approach the support and cooperation of faculty and staff members are needed for quality improvement. Total quality is total in three senses —

1. Customer focus
2. Involvement of staff members
3. Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI).

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Research in TQM has been recognized as the collection of rules and principles which show the way for the increasing demand for a clear vision on how the process is to be executed in Higher education institutions. The paper is a theoretical attempt to explain the application of TQM in tertiary education. It deals with issues pertaining quality in higher education and moves on to identify variables influencing quality of higher education with a model for application of TQM in higher education.

Since educational institutions is by definition charitable, it is the duty of Governments or other funding agencies to see that it is heavily subsidized with regard to cost and it is equally strongly the duty of the stake-holders to see that the quality is ensured, who ever may be the cost bearing group. Therein lays the positive aspect of certification and accreditation. The strong linkage between the economy and education was never clear it is the availability of employment in the market that makes the learners choose their areas of study. The stake-holders include both internal customers and external customers. Internal Customers are Students, Faculty, Administrators, Administrative staff and Board of Directors. External customers are Community, Employers, Universities, Accrediting agencies, Alumni and Donor.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. Identifying customer needs with specific quality standards by bench marking and identifying gaps in the existing system to develop nations quality and social relevance of higher education.
2. Planning for improvement and implementation of plans followed with monitoring and evaluation.
3. Total Quality Management (TQM) should be compulsory common factor that will shape the strategies of higher educational institutions.
4. Study on different strategies for TQM in higher education and development of higher education is correlated with the economic development.

QUALITY

The word quality is derived from Latin word *qualis*, which means "what kind of". Deming defines quality as "a predictable degree of uniformity and dependability at low cost and suited to market". According to Juran "Quality is fitness for use or purpose". Crosby considers it as "conformance to standards". In general quality is which satisfies customer needs and continuously keeps on performing its functions as desired by customers with specified standards. The formation of Quality Circles is a prime step in TQM. The heart of quality management is improvement in teaching-learning process including with improvement in all service areas viz. Library, Academic, Administrative and Finance.

DIMENSIONS OF QUALITY IN EDUCATION

Transformative: Education is continues process of transformation that includes empowerment and improvement of the customer.

Reliability: Educational processes involve specifications through zero defect approach and a quality culture. But the limitations are in achieving reliable standards and conformity to standards.

Value for money: this can be achieved through efficiency and effectiveness

Fitness to purpose: fitting the customer specifications, minimum-based fitness for purpose and customer satisfaction.

Traditionally, the higher educational services include the three fundamental functions like Teaching, Research and Extension.

- Teaching serves to transmit knowledge and skills from the teacher to students.
- Research is to explore new knowledge
- Extension focuses on developing the application of the developed knowledge for addressing the common problems of the society.

TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT (TQM)

Feigenbaum, devised the term in 1961 and named as total quality control (TQC). TQM can be defined as a general management philosophy and a set of tools which allow an institution to pursue a definition of quality and a means for attaining quality, with quality being a continuous improvement ascertained by customers' contentment with the services they have received (Michael *et al.*, 1997). TQM implies the application of quality principles right from identification of customer needs to post purchase services. It refers to the application of quality principles to overall process and management functions in order to ensure total customer satisfaction.

Deming in Japan, Malcolm Baldrige in USA are reflection of growing concern in this area. TQM is the process of changing the fundamental culture of an organization and redirecting it towards superior product or service quality (Gaither, 1996). According to Witcher (1990) TQM is composed of

- Total: meaning that every person is involved including customer and suppliers,
- Quality: implying that customer requirements are met exactly, and
- Management: indicating that senior executives are committed.

Most of work of quality and TQM can be traced to the work of gurus W.Edwards Deming and Joseph Juran's teachings and statistics in Japan during the 1950's and the revolution that followed in the USA in the 1980s to meet or preferably exceed customer expectations.

TQM models, based on the teachings of quality gurus, generally involve a number of principles such as teamwork, leadership, customer focus, employee involvement, continuous improvement, training etc. Common theme in quality management includes consistency, perfection, waste elimination, delivery speed and customer service.

THE FUNCTIONS OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION

1. To build an organization that provides products or services that are considered as quality by those who use them and meets their expectations.
2. To bring the universities closer to the community through extension of knowledge and it's applications for problem solving.
3. To encourage teachers and students and through them in the society generally attitudes and values needed for developing the individual and society.
4. To encourage right way of leadership skills and helping the individuals to develop their potential in the work place.
5. To seek and develop new knowledge by engaging vigorously in the pursuit of truth and interpreting old knowledge, beliefs in the light of new needs and discoveries.
6. To provide society with competent trained professionals inclined with a sense of social purpose.
7. To strive to promote equality and social justice to reduce social and cultural differences through diffusion of education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Lawrence and Mc.Collough (2001) propose a system of guarantees designed to accommodate multiple stakeholders and the various and changing roles of students in the educational process. Their system of guarantees focuses on three customer groups students, instructors of advanced courses that build on prerequisite courses and organizations that employ graduates of the college. According to (Harris 1994) there are three generic approaches to TQM in higher education, firstly there is a customer focus where the idea of service to students is fostered through staff training and development, which promotes student's choice and autonomy, second approach has a staff focus and is concerned to value and enhance the contribution of all members of staff to the effectiveness of an institution's operation, to the setting of policies and priorities. This entails a flatter management structure and the acceptance of responsibility for action by defined working groups. Finally service agreements posture and seeks to ensure conformity to specification at certain key measurable points of the educational processes.

Gregory (1996) in his model of distributed leadership for managing change in higher educational institutions suggests four dimensions of institutional leadership, symbolic, political, managerial and academic. Leader embodies the whole institution by winning commitment of others to organizational goals, obtaining resources and presenting corporate image to the external world. Leaders managerial skills pertains to controlling, representing, staffing, structuring, setting goals and communicating apart from handling budgets, costs, information flow, employee relations, external funding and relations with validating and awarding bodies.

Michael *et al.* (1997) recommended that top leadership is the key to any TQM programme and driving force behind success and failure. Leadership must make the programme attractive and necessary to employees having good communication, proper training and using benchmarking and research on TQM philosophies and programmes can enhance the success rate. Roffe (1998) considers that due to open competition, students are becoming more customers as well as consumers and expected to pay a growing share of the costs of education. This leads to competitive forces that generate different programmers for different student groups. The conceptual problems include whether TQM in higher education should be people or problem oriented, difficulty in introducing the application and acceptance of TQM in higher education institutions, which have not embraced tenets of TQM, team Vs individual orientation towards TQM, maintaining the rate of innovation amongst others.

Osseo-Asare and Longbottom (2002) in their model for TQM implementation in higher educational institutions, proposes enabler criteria which affect performance and help organizations achieve excellence. These "enabler" criteria are leadership, policy and strategy, people management, resources and partnerships and processes. They also suggest "result" criteria including customer satisfaction and impact on society. Sangeeta *et al.* (2004) considers education system as a transformation process comprising of inputs of students, teachers, administrative staff, physical facilities and process. The processes include teaching, learning, and administration. Output includes examination results, employment, earnings and satisfaction.

Today, the internationalisation of higher education is viewed as an increasingly important factor, not only in the work of universities and other higher education providers but also as a direct result of increasing competition, globalisation and decreasing public funds for higher education (vander Wende, 1999).

MODELS EMPHASIZING QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

At a theoretical level, from time to time, there have been a number of attempts at a re-examination of the fundamental educational processes and a number of new models have been proposed for educational quality management in universities. Some of the well-articulated models proposed in the recent literature are as per following:

Transformative Model: Harvey and Knight (1996, ch. 1) present transformation model as the most appropriate learning-oriented model to quality here emphasis is on 'enhancing participants', 'adding value' to their capability and ultimately 'empowering'. There is a clear focus on student experience, this type of learning requires a *transparent* process, which is *integrated*, contributing to a rich and relevant Total Student Experience. *Transparency* means openness about the *aims*, *processes* and method of *attainment* of learning by the student. *Integration* means that such experiences are linked together into a cohesive whole. Learning is based on a *dialogue* between participant and providers. *Dialogue* involves the discussions between learners and teachers about the nature, scope and style of their learning. *Dialogue* also requires a dynamic exchange among the teachers about the teaching and learning process. Overall, the authors conclude that transformative approach is really about 'a *responsive* process that is explicit, integrated and based on a dialogue' (pp 40-41).

An Engagement Model of Program Quality: Haworth and Conrad (1997) developed an 'Engagement Theory' of program quality 'organised around the central idea of student, academics and administrative in teaching and learning (pp xii). Based upon an extensive interview of persons involved in Higher Education, the authors define 'high quality programs as those which contribute to the learning experiences for students that have positive effects on their growth and development' (pp xii). The theory maintains that in high quality programs the principal stakeholders academics, students and administrators invest in five separate groups of program attributes, each of which contributes to enriching the learning experiences for students.

- Assorted and Engaged Participants:** Academics, Students and Leaders.
- Participatory groups:** Shared program direction, Community of learners, and Risk taking environments.
- Interactive Teaching and learning:** Critical dialogue, Integrative Learning, Mentoring, Cooperative Peer learning, and Out of Class activities.
- Connected Program Requirements:** Planned Breadth and Depth of Coursework, Professional Residency, and Tangible Product.
- Adequate Resources:** Support for Students, Faculty and Basic Infrastructure.

In broad terms, the engagement theory advances a new perspective on program quality management that emphasizes student learning as the primary purpose of higher education, highlights the pivotal role that people primarily the academics, administrators and students play, and provides a template for assessing quality.

University of Learning Model: Bowden and Marton (1998) examine the organisational characteristics of Higher Education from educational perspective in all commonly perceived functions of a university: teaching, research or community involvement. Hence they argue that quality in a university context has a lot to do with the quality of learning and the quality of learning has a lot to do with qualities of different ways of seeing (pp 219), when the learner widens the range possibilities of seeing the same thing. The learners world grows richer and has more options for actions they begin to experience simultaneously the range of variation of the aspects. They begin to discern the aspects by differentiating among them to focus on one most relevant to the situation. The authors examine the organisational characteristics conducive to quality of its processes and derive the attributes of a 'university of learning'. They commit themselves to a deep exploration of the subject matter from the learners' perspective to develop alternative patterns of understanding. There is a synergistic involvement in developing, along with colleagues, a comprehensive view of student capabilities intended to be developed by the program experience. They explore the potential in the students for 'discerning relevant aspects of variations' thus, large interdependent groups of academics and administrators working in concert create the foundation of a 'University of Learning'.

A Model for a Responsive University: Tierney (1998) collated the views of a number of leading authors on Restructuring for High Performance, which together formed a model for excellence a Responsive University. The model is based on the premise that public will judge the university in terms of the quality of their relationships and the quality of the outcomes. Therefore to survive and thrive universities have to be responsive and be service oriented (p163). The emphasis is on development of new internal relationships through communication and partnerships as well as 'new external relationships including social partnerships with communities'. The academic staff should 'regularly review and take into account shifts in student demand, resource allocations, departmental goals and the evolving mission of the institution' (p165). The staff must develop a commitment to annual performance contracts determining the extent to which and the ways in which the institution will be responsive one. Partnerships with government will be necessary to transform institutional performance so that it is better aligned with public purposes (p170).

Developing a generic model for Quality Management in Teaching and Learning (QMTL) While each model cited has its own unique perspective on educational quality, it is necessary to examine more closely to see if they can be described by a generic model for quality management. At the outset, two focal points - issues that have received a common emphasis - seem to emerge from the models: **student learning** and a dynamic **collaboration** around it.

All the models have a common thrust on student **learning experience**, when one makes judgements about quality.

- The 'Transformative Model' of Harvey and Knight (1996) requires quality policies to result in 'a 'clear focus' on 'student experience'.
- The 'Engagement Model' of Haworth and Conrad (1997) maintains that the clusters of program attributes should contribute to enriching the learning experiences for students.
- In 'University of Learning' model, Bowden and Marton (1998) argue that quality in university context relates strongly to quality of learning.
- Tierney (1998) sees the responsiveness of a university to be coming from meeting the learning needs of students.

All the above models also emphasise **collaboration** at the education delivery level.

- The 'Transformative Model', requires the learning experience to be based on a *dialogue* between the learners and teachers about the nature, scope and style of their learning, and also among the teachers about the teaching and learning process.
- The 'Engagement Model' anticipates teaching and learning to be based on critical dialogue, mentoring and cooperative peer learning.
- The 'University of Learning' model highlights a synergistic involvement of academics in a course/ research team, developing a holistic view of student competencies and a collective consciousness of commonalities and complementarities.
- The 'Responsive University' model emphasizes communication, which requires new relationships and partnerships both internally and externally.

Therefore, it would be possible to develop a generic quality management model addressing a university's educational process. Some broad features are indicated below:

- Basis for Quality Management:** All the models clearly subscribe to the 'Transformative' approach to quality with an emphasis on 'enhancing participants'. Harvey and Knight (1996; pp 2) identify this by a range of interactions at the teaching interface. Haworth and Conrad (1997) seem to present the notion of enhancement as 'growth and development' of students identified by a range of characteristics at the teaching program design and delivery levels. Whereas Bowden and Marton (1998) seem to give a subtle academic interpretation of enhancement as ability in learners to 'discern relevant aspects of variation'. Identifying this is to be the key focus of the course teams. In the descriptions of 'Responsive University' enhancement seems to be subsumed within the notions 'quality of outcomes' when they are 'student centred' (Tierney, 1998; pp 163). From a quality assurance point of view, this should provide a rich range of elements for identifying as evidence for performance.
- Implementing the model:** Central to an effective 'Transformation Model' as described by Harvey and Knight (1996, pp118) is 'a quality system that drives improvement from the staff-student interface' governed by 'an academic professionalism that embraces openness, dialogue and transparency'. The senior management's role is to 'encourage and ensure' it 'whilst developing a sensitive but effective external monitoring process'. The Engagement Theory of Haworth and Conrad (1997, ch. 3) seems to fit well within the broad framework of the 'Transformation Model' as it elaborates and categorises the interactions at this interface among 'students, academics and administrators in enriching the learning experience for the students'. In the 'University of

Learning' (Bowden and Marton, In1998) model, the learning experience, considered as the 'ability to discern the relevant aspects of variation', is brought about by the synergistic involvement of academics in intersecting networks of program and research teams (Bowden et al, 2000). The 'Responsive University Model' (Tierney, 1998,) adds another dimension to this notion of transformation the nature of its social context, at student, community and national levels.

Thus at the implementation level, there is a clear complementarity among the models to develop a rich picture of the nature of the required actions. Overall the features of a **Generic Model** addressing the **Quality Management in Teaching and Learning (QMTL)**, based on preliminary set of models chosen above, can be summarised as a clear focus on 'transformation' of the learners and synergistic **collaboration** at the learning interface. Thus a clear basis for the specification of the features of the **Generic Model for Quality Management in Teaching and Learning (QMTL)** in higher education seems to be emerging.

CHALLENGES IN TQM IMPLEMENTATION IN HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

According to Srivanci (2004) critical issues in implementing TQM in higher education includes –

- **Leadership** - Unlike CEO's, Directors of Universities do not enjoy ultimate authority hiring and firing personnel and allocating resources. Institutional heads can set goals, organizational values and performance expectations. However since they lack necessary authority, it is difficult for them to deploy these values and goals through the layers of higher education institutions.
- **Customer identification** - In businesses, customer loyalty is very important because repeat buying by loyal customers has direct effect on profitability. However higher education is once in a lifetime activity. If students are considered as customers, this concept makes sense only when they make donations as alumni. However if employers are customers, repeat purchase means recruiting at same institutions every year.
- **Cultural and organizational transformation** - Many business organizations have adopted TQM and transformed their institution's culture into a total quality culture that involves elements such as teamwork, employee participation, customer and market focus etc. However higher education institutions have deep-rooted traditions dating back to several centuries and are resistance to change. For an instance, universities and colleges are organized on departmental units in adopting TQM culture, organizations move from product focus to market focus. But for faculty, particularly research faculty, primary loyalty lies in the academic field.

SOME OTHER CHALLENGES THAT ARE NOT ENCOUNTERED INCLUDE

1. Unlike business organizations, chancellors and heads of higher educational institution do not enjoy ultimate authority in hiring and firing of personnel and allocating resources.
2. Lack of necessary authority makes it difficult to deploy their values and goals through layers of higher education institutions.
3. Deep rooted traditions dating back to centuries, a rigid departmental model, inter departmental competition for resources, lack of market focus are the cultural and organizational reasons that makes it difficult to tune in with TQM transformation.
4. Ambiguity in customer identification also creates hurdles in TQM implementation.
5. Administrators tend to perceive students as customers of faculty in classrooms; many faculty staff resent this metaphor as being too commercial. Without a well-defined customer and a customer focus, quality efforts may be easily diffused.

FINDINGS & SUGGESTIONS

In the process of implementation of TQM there are many things that can be done to continuously improve the system process and a number of things to be avoided such as –

1. A continuous customer survey as they are the focal point for any service focusing on the main "customer" to be served.
2. Allocation of resources and sufficient time for the development.
3. Simplifying the rules and regulations that may flatten the hierarchy and reduce the cost wherever possible.
4. Do not force the programme on employees, leaders must make the programme attractive and necessary to the employees so that they will be willing to accept and follow it whole heartedly or the programme may fail.
5. Empower the employees and make them participate in the improvement of the system.
6. Differences in business and educational environment might lead to resistance from academic staff in higher education institutions.
7. Many of the institutions are affiliated to international awarding bodies this might lead to cultural differences.
8. Inadequate resources in many of the developing and underdeveloped countries also inhibit the process of implementation of TQM principles.

CONCLUSION

TQM is a general management philosophy and set of tools which allow an institution to pursue a definition of quality and means of attaining quality, with continuous improvement ascertained by customers' contentment with services. TQM can be applied to higher education, but it must be modified to fully recognize some unique aspects of education as a service industry with no visible, tangible product. The development of higher education requires increase funds and even more for its maintenance. Overall, the quality management model implemented on the principles of a 'learning communities' should provide a balanced approach among the ideals of the educational, service and behavioural excellence ethos in Higher Education such a model can be termed a Comprehensive Model.

As universities begin to take the initial steps towards a model for quality, a pool of experience begins to build upon which effort can be focused to critically explore and clarify the details and enhance the model. Thus, a comprehensive model for Quality Management in Higher Education has the potential for building a synergy between educational and organizational theories. Therefore educational organizations are forced to resort to leaner and meaner approach. Benefits of TQM include employee morale, teamwork among departments, association of faculty-staff functions, increased quality from customer viewpoint and continuous development of higher education institution.

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