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QUALITY MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

SHEETAL DUBEY
ASST. PROFESSOR
ACROPOLIS INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES & RESEARCH
INDORE

ABSTRACT

Education services are often intangible and difficult to measure, since the outcome is reflected in the transformation of individuals in their knowledge, their characteristics, and their behavior. Therefore, there is no commonly accepted definition of quality that applies specifically to the higher education sector. Quality means fitness for use. Fitness in Management education means education according to corporate need, or education which can produce entrepreneurs. In many countries and many cultures, the issue of quality management is firmly on the agenda for higher education institutions. Whether a result of a growing climate of increasing accountability or an expansion in the size and diversity of student populations (Oldfield and Baron, 1998), both quality assurance and quality enhancement are now considered essential components of any QMPs (Brookes and Downie, 2002). Despite the abundance of research on the subject, there is no universal consensus on how best to measure quality in higher education. Thus a variety of approaches have been adopted. This paper presents a review of current quality management practices within HEIs. This paper provides an analytical review of the different quality approaches adopted or tested in management education. This paper highlights the important factors considered for maintain quality in an institution.

KEYWORDS

Education Services, quality education, HEIs, QMPs, corporate.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of quality is hard to define precisely in the present era where education institutions have broad autonomy to decide on their own visions and missions. Various concepts have evolved to suit different contexts ranging from quality as a measure for excellence to quality as perfection, quality as value for money, quality as customer satisfaction, quality as fitness for purpose, and quality as transformation. Previous research reveals that quality in Higher Education can be (and is) interpreted and measured in a number of different ways (Cheng and Tam, 1997; Ponder, 1999). Quality has become the defining element of education in the 21st Century in the context of new social realities. Quality, as all of us are aware, makes education as much socially relevant as it is personally indispensable to the individual. In this sense quality becomes the defining element of education. In this context quality and excellence should be the vision of every Management institution. Acquisition of quality and excellence is the great challenge faced by all higher education institutions. The importance of education for the development of excellence, expertise and knowledge leading to overall development cannot be undermined. This has necessitated a sound strategy for the development of higher education in almost all countries of the world. 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.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Cheng and Tam, (1997); Introduces seven models of quality in education: the goals and specifications model; the resources input model; the process model; the satisfaction model; the legitimacy model; the absence of problems model; and the organizational learning model and concludes that these models can form a comprehensive framework for understanding and conceptualizing quality in education from different perspectives and facilitating development of management strategies for achieving quality in Higher Education.

Martens and Prosser, (1998) studied the evaluation and continuous improvement of the quality of teaching and learning in higher education and the focus is on ensuring that those teaching the subject, reflect on and make recommendations for further improvement of the subject.

Ponder, (1999), their response has been to borrow the quality concept from industry and place it at the centre of institutional performance assessment in higher education. The study highlighted the shortcomings of the quality concept particularly as a basis for the comparative assessment of institutional performance and also indicated a methodology for identifying concepts which may provide a firmer base than quality for such comparisons.

In addition, Avdjieva and Wilson (2002) suggest that HEIs are now also required to become learning organizations, where internal stakeholders also interpret and assess the quality of Higher Education provision. The emphasis for internal stakeholders is not only on quality assurance, but also on quality enhancement which aims for an overall increase in the actual quality of teaching and learning, often through more innovative practices.

Andaleeb (2003) analyzed seven issues crucial for effectively fostering higher education in Bangladesh, namely, teaching quality, method, content, peer quality, direct facilities, indirect facilities and political climate.

According to Aminuzzaman (2007) Quality education in universities will be achieved through changing the method of teaching and learning as well as assessment methods, renewing the curriculum continually, updating and upgrading professional knowledge and skills and improving the broader educational, administrative and resource environments.

Quinn et.al;(2009) This paper focuses on identifying and evaluating techniques used to take on the challenges of quality improvement in higher education and also examines two primary difficulties: first, definition of the customer; and second, measuring customer quality perceptions. An examination of representative historical applications of quality techniques was conducted as well as identification of the differences and similarities surrounding quality improvement efforts in each of three service areas typically found in higher education: academic, administrative, and auxiliary functions.

QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND IMPROVEMENT METHODS

TQM	A comprehensive management approach which requires contribution from all participants in the organisation to work towards long-term benefits for those involved and society as a whole.
EFQM excellence model	Non-prescriptive framework that establishes nine criteria (divided between enablers and results), suitable for any organisation to use to assess progress towards excellence.
Balanced scorecard	Performance/strategic management system which utilises four measurement perspectives: financial; customer; internal process; and learning and growth.
Malcolm Baldrige award	Based on a framework of performance excellence which can be used by organisations to improve performance. Seven categories of criteria: leadership; strategic planning; customer and market focus; measurement, analysis, and knowledge management; human resource focus; process management; and results.
ISO 9000 series	International standard for generic quality assurance systems. Concerned with continuous improvement through preventative action. Elements are customer quality and regulatory requirements, and efforts made to enhance customer satisfaction and achieve continuous improvement.

QUALITY MANAGEMENT MODELS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A number of HEIs have tested quality management models originally developed for industry. A key benefit of all the models is reported to be the requirement for institutions or departments to adopt a strategic approach to quality measurement and management. Though there is continued debate on the role of the student as customer or co-producer in the higher education system this has an impact on the measurement and management of quality in higher education when using these industrially developed models. When assessing the outputs, the models are reported to have far greater applicability in measuring administrative or service functions within the Higher education rather than the quality of research or teaching and learning. The management of quality needs to focus on the student learning experience. Researchers are also reporting on the corporatisation and managerialist cultures infiltrating Higher education institutes --This approach encourages academics to 'do more with less' to meet the growing demand for higher education and the accountability agenda, it fails to address the learning experience of an increasingly diversified student body. Current study argues that the quality of teaching and learning is actually decreasing under current approaches. Unless the quality of learning for students is maintained, the economic imperatives of many national governments will not be realised.

CONCLUSION

The key impacts of above discussion includes a drive for increased access to higher education resulting in diversified student populations and mystification, this is taking place in conjunction with increased accountability requirements and the necessity for enhanced efficiency. Many higher education institutes are testing or implementing quality management models developed for industry. Benefits to be gained from using these models, such as engagement in self-assessment by academic departments and a greater focus on a strategic approach to quality management, these are related predominantly to the efficiency and effectiveness of non-academic functions. Various concern has been reported regarding use of these models in that they may encourage a culture of managerialism in higher education institutes. It may be time to further rethink current approaches to quality management in higher education to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is not neglected.

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