



TQM in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

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Abstract:

Total Quality Management is a management system for a customer focused organization that involves all employees in continual improvement of all aspects of the organization. Present paper discusses the reasons for necessity of total quality approach to running the Higher education Institutions (HEIs). The "Soft" TQM Concepts Identified in Quality Management Literature comprise of the Total Employee Involvement, Continuous Improvement, Continuous Training, Teamwork, Empowerment, Top-management Commitment and Support, Democratic Management Style, Customer/Citizen Satisfaction, and Culture Change. The processes include teaching, learning, and administration. TQM is a general management philosophy and set of tools which allow an institution to pursue a definition of quality and a means of attaining quality, with quality being a continuous improvement ascertained by customers' contentment with the services they receive. Output of TQM in education include heightened students morale, better teamwork among departments, bridging faculty-staff functions, increased quality from customer viewpoint and continuous development of everyone who is part of education institution.

Keywords: *Customer Satisfaction, Continuous Improvement, HEIs, Total Quality Management*

1. Introduction

Education is the process of a major change. The education offered must be attuned to the economic, social and political changes. The importance of education for the development of excellence, expertise and knowledge leading to overall development in economy cannot be undermined. This has necessitated a sound strategy for the development of education in almost all countries of the world. Total Quality Management (TQM) is inevitably common factor that will shape the strategies of educational institutions in their attempt to satisfy various stakeholders including students, parents, community and society as a whole. A total quality approach to running the Higher education Institutions (HEIs) is now necessary for the following reasons:

- (1) Students live in an extremely dynamic world with depleting resources. Since HEIs have to equip students to function to their fullest potential in such an environment, then the HEIs themselves must be dynamic and flexible.
- (2) Expectations of students, community, parents, and the public in general viz. a viz. educational priorities, costs, accessibility, programmes, and relevancy, make it imperative for HEIs to undergo continual assessment and improvement.
- (3) Economic conditions have created greater concern about economic well-being and career flexibility. HEIs have to respond to this real fear of career obsolescence and career inadequacy.

- (4) Funding resources for education are diminishing at a rapid rate. HEIs have to find innovative ways of cutting costs without cutting quality. There is a false notion that quality is expensive.

According to the reasons mentioned above, it can be seen that for the total quality to ensure improvement of educational quality at all levels. The total quality management is one of the effective processes for the development of educational quality of HEIs. Administrators, teachers, and students must keep focus on educational improvement and ways to achieve TQM.

2. Definition of “Total Quality Management (TQM)”

Definition of Total Quality Management (TQM) varies from organization and from individual to individual.

Witcher (1990) explains that Total Quality Management (TQM) is composed of three terms: 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.

Joseph, I.N. (1993) states that Total Quality Management (TQM) is an integrative management philosophy aimed at continuously improving the quality of products and processes to achieve customer satisfaction. In addition Oakland (1989) states that Total Quality Management (TQM) is an attempt to improve the whole organization's competitiveness, effectiveness, and structure.

3. Principles of Total Quality Management (TQM)

TQM uses strategy, data, and effective communication to integrate the quality principles into the culture and activities of the organization. TQM can be identified into two important aspects that comprise TQM: management tools and techniques as well as management aspects. The techniques refer to what has been referred to as “hard” aspects of TQM, while the management aspects refer to “soft” side.

4. The “Soft” Side of TQM

The investigation of the “soft” side of TQM resulted in the identification of nine (9) key concepts most commonly found in quality management literature. The “Soft” TQM Concepts Identified in Quality Management Literature comprise of the Total Employee Involvement, Continuous Improvement, Continuous Training, Teamwork, Empowerment, Top management Commitment and Support, Democratic Management Style, Customer/Citizen Satisfaction, and Culture Change.

- (1) The first of these concepts is that TQM involves everyone in an organization. It is widely accepted that **the total employee involvement** or the increase of employees' participation in the overall quality strategy brings an increased flow of information and knowledge, and contributes in the "distribution of intelligence" to the bottom of the organization for resolving problems. The “total” element of TQM implies that every organizational member is involved in quality improvement processes.
- (2) The second concept is associated with **continuous improvement**. According to TQM theory the best way to improve organizational output is to continually improve performance. Quality improvement is not a task that has an end, as it is not static. The emphasis is on seeking improvement opportunities, not just holding the status quo. The focus is on planning, prevention, and anticipation.
- (3) A third concept of TQM is related to the **concept of teamwork**. Within the context of TQM, teamwork is an important outcome and a condition for continuous improvement.

Teams are generally viewed as more powerful and effective work entities than individuals. Teams, according to Lawler should be catholic, including employees from all the hierarchical levels, layers, and from all the departments of the enterprise. Teams are needed for all organizations in order to make them work more flexibly and to develop mutual trust among members.

- (4) Fourth, **empowering** the employee is another important concept of TQM. Empowerment is an environment in which people have the ability, the confidence, and the commitment to take the responsibility and ownership to improve the process and initiate the necessary steps to satisfy customer requirements within well-defined boundaries in order to achieve organizational values and goals.
- (5) The fifth basic concept of TQM is **continuous training**. Oakland (1989) believes that training is the single most significant component in trying to improve quality. He points out that “quality training must be continuous to meet not only changes in technology, but also changes involving the environment in which an organization operates, its structure, and perhaps most important of all the people who work there”. Continuous training contributes to the establishment of “a common language throughout the business”.
- (6) The sixth concept is **customer satisfaction**. In a total quality context customer satisfaction is the driving force for an organization to improve its performance. There are two different kinds of customers: the external that defines the quality of the service delivered and the internal (employees, different departments) that defines the quality of the processes associated with the delivering of services. Both external and internal customers have needs. A contemporary approach to quality such as TQM stresses the importance of satisfying those needs.
- (7) Seventh concept is the **top management commitment and support**. Top managers “have to take charge personally, lead the process, provide direction, exercise forceful leadership, including dealing with those employees who block improvement and maintain the impetus”. Senior managers need to define the quality objectives of the organization to provide direction and clarity and to communicate these continually within the organization.

Beyond management’s commitment and support to TQM, an open and democratic/participative management style is identified. Most authors argue in favor of a more **democratic management style** which is considered to be the eighth concept. The fundamental difference between TQM and other management approaches “is that it is more democratic”. The most appropriate style of management within a TQM context is the participative one, which “involves soliciting input from empowered employees”.

Finally, a **supportive organizational culture** is the common denominator of all the “soft” aspects of TQM. Organizational culture affects and alters employees’ actions and perceptions of all aspects of their work in order to include quality.

5. Total Quality Management (TQM) in Education

Total Quality Management (TQM) can be applied in both the corporate world as well as the education systems. 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. The benefits of student empowerment in the classroom must be weighed against the need for control to achieve minimum educational goals and adequate and fair evaluation. The processes include teaching, learning, and administration. Output includes examination results, employment, earnings and satisfaction.

The systems approach to education comprises of inputs, processes and outputs, all encompassed in an arbitrary boundary, and the environment. Inputs from its environment cross the boundary into the system: these are acted on within the transformation/production process and finally released from the system back into the environment as outputs. Educational process is a series of actions or operations leading to an educational end learning, training, and or scholarly activity. Transformation process for an educational institution consists of activities performed to disseminate knowledge, to conduct research and to provide community service. Process in the education system includes teaching, learning, research, administrative activities and knowledge transformation. Outputs are tangible outcomes, value addition (through examination results, employment, earnings and satisfaction), intangible outcomes (educated people, research findings and service to community).

5.1 Education Customer

Generally the students are considered as end customers. Customer can be defined “as one to whom we provide information or service”. Students who use the institute’s service and employers who are consumers of students are regarded as customers. Students as customers take four roles: (i) the product in process (ii) the internal customers for many campus facilities (iii) the laborers of learning process and (iv) the internal customers for delivery of course material need is determined by education mix. i.e. teaching, research and extension activities.

5.2 Teaching

Teaching forms the backbone of any educational system. The objective of teaching is the transmission of knowledge from the teacher to the taught ones. Apart from classroom lectures, more innovative teaching can be imparted through other modes including discussions, case study analysis, presentations, field projects, role play, simulation methods amongst others. Teaching methods in synchronization with the learning objectives will facilitate better teaching-learning process.

5.3 Research

Research focuses on exploration of the knowledge. In an educational system of any country, research has been stereotyped to be part of education system. It is generally associated with the university system whereby research is pursued after obtaining a post graduates level, though there may be need of research at lower levels of the educational system hierarchy. Research facilitates new insight into the subject matter. It is related to innovation.

5.4 Extension

Extension activities are primarily aimed on the application of the developed knowledge to address the common problems of the society. Educational system does not operate in isolation. There are many interfaces including sociological, cultural, economic, technological, political and so on. A good education serves to solve the problem of the society affecting these interfaces. It serves to promote local community development by involving the locals.

6. Conclusion

TQM is a general management philosophy and set of tools which allow an institution to pursue a definition of quality and a means of attaining quality, with quality being a continuous improvement ascertained by customers’ contentment with the services they receive. The system approach to education comprises of input, processes and outputs. Inputs are human, physical and financial resources, (students, faculty, administrators, and organizational culture). Processes are a series of actions or operations concluding to an end. A process transforms measurable inputs into measurable outputs under a value adding operations. Output of TQM in education include

heightened students morale, better teamwork among departments, bridging faculty-staff functions, increased quality from customer viewpoint and continuous development of everyone who is part of education.

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