

Total Quality Management is Very Essential Tool for Improving Quality in Higher Educational Institutions

Rallabandi Srinivasu¹, G. V. S. R. Anjaneyulu²

Associate Professor, St. Mary's Group of Institutions, Hyderabad, Telangana, India.
Research Scholar in Rayalaseema University, Regd. No. PP STAT 0184 C, Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh, India

Professor, Acharya Nagarjuna University, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, India
Research Guide, Rayalaseema University, Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh, India

Abstract: *The paper gives a overview on Higher Education statistics and challenges that are being faced by Higher Education Institutions and finally tries to bring out some suggestions to improve the Quality in Higher Education. Quality in higher education is a major concern as it is a complex phenomenon and is difficult to measure. Higher education in India is in such a phase where quality has to play a vital role. TQM enables better control of processes in planning, design, distribution and contributes to greater flexibility. This paper highlights the essence of TQM and explains how higher education institutions can improve the quality by implementing TQM principles. This paper provides an overview of the Higher Education in India. Present paper focuses on the concept of Total Quality Management (TQM) in higher education. It discusses the need of Total Quality Management (TQM) in higher education and also the challenges and issues related to Total Quality Management (TQM) in Higher Education with special reference to Indian Education System.*

Keywords: Total Quality Management, Higher Education, Higher Educational Institutions, Quality, Statistical Tools, Continuous Improvement and Principles of TQM

1. Introduction

As we know very well that quality of education leads to a prospective future and quality improvement is a never ending process. Hence, a prime focus needs to be given to quality of education. The quality of higher education is everybody's concern today. Various studies and commission reports at official level has recognized the same and given recommendations for its improvement. Total Quality Management (TQM) aims at exchanging knowledge instead of one-way transmission and seeking sources of knowledge in the outside not in the classroom. It also promotes the constant tracking of the latest achievements in science and technology

and encourages students to explore and failure not to condemn but to encourage re-attempt. Practical application of TQM in education is primarily to establish free dialogue with students instead of the formal relationship between teachers and students.

The speed of change is driven by multiple factors. Demands from industry, information-age mind set of the students, increased competition and the renewed quest among academic community are some of the factors driving this change. To ensure that higher education, particularly professional education, is able to deal with market and technological changes coupled with global requirements, it is important for institutions offering higher education to use appropriate curricula, course materials and teaching methodologies that are not only up-to-date, but also effective from learner's point of view.

Total Quality Management (TQM) represents a systematic approach to management with a view to continually improving quality that will exceed client expectations. This approach is based on the participation of all employees in order to meet the needs of the clients and thereby achieve the long-term success of the organization. The application of TQM to educational institutions through measurement, analysis, achieving student satisfaction, continuous improvement and upgrading of the system leads to the excellence of such organizations. Compared to conventional concepts of education, TQM has great advantages in developing the education system and in creating qualified individuals that can respond to the demands of society.

Need for Quality in Higher Education:

Higher education cannot function properly unless there is high quality in the standard of teaching, materials available, teaching methods and proper evaluation of students in the program. The assessment of quality teaching is an ongoing, multi-dimensional process which should be based on process and product. Successful implementation of any education program and the effectiveness in achievement of set goals depend very much on adequate materials and resources available. Input on individuals and institutions of learning can determine to a large extent the realization of the philosophy of higher education.

There is the need to have teaching standards and develop challenging examinations to document and recognize accomplished teaching. Quality assurance is an essential tool required to ensure efficient higher educational programs in our institutions for the achievement of manpower development and skill acquisition in our societies.

TQM implementation in education has been useful both on administrative as well as academic side. Wild, (1995) has reported that the implementation of TQM at the institution has resulted in debugged administration, motivated staff to take responsibility for innovation, sharing of ideas regarding teaching, mutual problem solving approach, customer focused course contents, increased student's enrolment and marked overall performance improvement.

According to Ronald Barnett (1992) there are four predominant concepts of higher education.

- 1) Higher education as the production of qualified human resources
- 2) Higher education as training for a research career
- 3) Higher education as the efficient management of teaching profession
- 4) Higher education as a matter of extending life chances

Concept of Quality: Quality has been defined variedly in different contexts. Juran (1989, p.58) defines quality as "fitness for use". Deming (1986, p.5) advocates that quality "should be aimed at the needs of the customers, present and future". Crosby (1979, p.2) talks about "Conformance to requirements set by consumers". Edward Sallis (2002, p.12) has tried to explain the term quality in relative and absolute term. He says ".....absolute quality it is similar in nature to goodness, beauty and truth".

TQM in higher education: Total Quality Management (TQM) - TQM is about creating a quality culture where the goal of the staff of the institution is to delight their customer, and where the structure of the institution allows them to do so. Deming and Juran are those people who developed a comprehensive philosophy and strategy for total quality management. Deming's experience during the World War II played a vital role in developing TQM. Total quality management means that the organization's culture is defined by and supports the constant attainment of customer satisfaction through an integrated system of tools, techniques and training. This involves the continuous improvement of organizational processes, resulting in high quality products and services. In simple terms TQM is a comprehensive and fundamental rule or belief for teaching and operating an institution aimed at continually improving performance over the long term by addressing the needs of all customers. Total quality management is a holistic approach and consist three essential components.

- 1) Customer focus
- 2) Employees' involvement ,and
- 3) Continuous improvement

In the 1970s and 1980s, many American firms experienced economic difficulties and found themselves becoming less competitive with a variety of competitors (most visibly, automobile and consumer electronics producers) from Japan. Undeniably, many firms had lost the international competitive edge they had enjoyed in the 1950s and the inevitable result was declining market shares, sustained losses, unemployment, and massive soul-searching by firms. Driven by such forces as increasing global competition and the struggle to survive, increasing costs, demands for accountability and rising customer expectations about quality, a number of US corporations

such as Intel, Hewlett Packard, Xerox, IBM, Motorola, etc. undertook quality initiatives. Koch and Fisher (1998) report that many of the American firms turned for advice to Deming, Juran and other disciples of the "quality movement".

A similar situation is being faced by the higher education world more recently due to rapidly changing technology, increasing costs, accountability by accrediting associations, legislatures, funding agencies and the public (Fincher, 1994, Green, 1994, Johnston, 1996, Shields, 1999). There is also a growing international competition with regard to student enrolments, faculty expertise and research achievements. Johnston (1996) argues how these get addressed when there is quality in teaching. Owlia and Aspinwall (1996), in their survey, have reiterated that economic and legislative forces are pushing higher education into a new environment and in such an environment, adopting TQM is a "natural" phenomenon. In higher education, TQM is considered as a process-oriented approach to increasing productivity, decreasing costs and improving quality of service (Johnson, 1993; Fincher, 1994; Green, 1994).

In the context of adopting TQM in higher education, Lawrence and Robert (1997) have warned that many US firms abandoned TQM in the face of the recession of the early 1990s since they did not believe the advantages outweighed the costs. Further, Kohn (1993) has strongly expressed that to talk about learning in terms of buying and selling not only reflects a warped view of the activity but contributes to the warping as well. Quality of education is becoming important in the world of competitive environment. There is definitely a need to adopt change in the educational processes in order to improve and stay healthy in the business of education. Realistically, in higher education, TQM appears to be a systematic and a streamlined philosophy for quality management and management of change.

Main Features of Indian Higher Education System

- Highly bureaucratized system with multiple controls and regulations exercised by Central and State Governments, statutory bodies (University Grants Commission (UGC), All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) and others), university administration and local management.
- System is heavily subsidized by the Government. Up to 90per cent of the operating costs are paid for by the state. The efficiency of fund utilization is very poor due to internal rigidities.
- Salary and compensation for teaching staff is poor and, therefore, higher education institutions are unable to attract and retain qualified and trained teachers. Besides unattractive compensation packages, recruitment procedure is lengthy and working environment not conducive to retention. As a result, a substantial proportion of high ranking students who could fill up such assignments prefer to work elsewhere or go abroad. In a recent move UGC has further damaged the pay and promotion prospects of college teachers by reducing promotional grades thereby creating more stagnation and frustration amongst college teachers.

- Most institutions offer outdated programmes with inflexible structures and content. While course content has been updated and restructured over time in the world's best institutions, Indian university curricula have lagged behind.
- Infrastructural facilities range from inadequate to dismal. Classrooms are often unattractive and laboratories inadequately stocked, leading to poor teaching. It is estimated that barely 20 per cent of the institutions have the basic minimum laboratory equipment. Steady electric power supply is not available. Laboratories are poorly stocked and computerization, where it exists is generally dependent on poor communication lines (Kaul, 2006).
- A sound higher education sector plays an important role in economic growth and development of a nation. Higher education, in terms of its relevance and importance, enjoys a significant position in the education system as it equips people with appropriate knowledge and skills to be gainfully employed. India has one of the largest systems of higher education in the world offering facility of education and training in almost all aspects of human creativity and intellectual endeavour. In the context of current demographic structure of India where the majority of population is below the age of 25 years, the role of higher education is critical.

Suggestions for improving of Total Quality Management in higher education:

- 1) Need for review of course content
- 2) Diversification, new courses, etc.
- 3) Proliferation of courses
- 4) Sisterhood programmes
- 5) Industry-Institution Collaboration
- 6) Improvement of teaching methods
- 7) Integration of practical training with the institutional courses
- 8) Simplification of procedures
- 9) Clarity in Responsibilities
- 10) Committee Management
- 11) Effective Leadership

2. Conclusion

The implementation of TQM in student education results in optimization of all processes, both in the teaching and in the management and support processes. The application of effective management for work procedures allows for solving a number of problems: developing academic programs for reasonable and competitive compensation in the education market; the ability to meet student needs, the ability to attract more applicants, the development and implementation of innovative information technology for education and document management optimization for planning and lecturing.

Total Quality Management has qualifications that will significantly contribute to global competitiveness. In order for TQM to be successfully implemented in educational institutions, all knowledge carriers and management members are the first to be educated in this area and most importantly, they must have a strong motivation to apply that knowledge. Continuous improvement of the process based on student needs leads to improvement of the

educational system as a whole. TQM tools allow predicting opportunities in the future and finding adequate solutions to overcome the current problems.

The higher Education system needs to be strengthened which will be capable of honing the system to attain all-round, multifaceted personality; to acquire leadership qualities, to sharpen communication and interpersonal skills, to acquire knowledge of the latest trends in technology, to have exposure to industrial climate and to gain confidence to face changes in the highly competitive and ever changing world. Taking it for granted, achieving the principles of total quality management does not come suddenly, but takes time and more effort. It also requires the full commitment of all members of the institution. The total quality management does not mean quick remedies and changes that can be easily done in the organization on a day, but the process takes a long time.

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