

Factors for Improving Quality in Education Institutions

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Abstract

In this paper it has been tried to bring out a clear status of higher education and emergent needs to enhance the quality of higher education. In order to fuel the socio-economic development of the country, higher education is playing a more active role in our country and this requires a paradigm shift in terms of governance and service delivery. Higher education institutions must become more innovative leading to quality institutions of knowledge production and dissemination. Realizing the importance of higher education, a lot of innovative experiments are being done to improve the performance of this sector. Application of TQM concepts is one of such measures, which will go a long way in revolutionizing the higher education system. The paper attempts to theoretically conceptualize TQM in higher education.

1. Introduction

Survival in education industry requires healthy changes in the institution. Thus besides offering new degrees or putting up fancy ads, the term quality assurance is of great importance to the institution. It plays a major role on the configuration of the status of the institution in the education industry. Education institution is like a means of transport which requires quality fuel to run efficiently. Thus the quality of institution depends on its faculty, pedagogy, curriculum design, strategic planning, examination system, resources and policies. This paper would be covering all the factors related to quality of the institution.

2. Objectives Of The Study

1. Total Quality Management (TQM) should be unavoidably common factor that will shape the strategies of higher educational institutions in an efficient manner.
2. The development of higher education is correlated with the economic development.

3. Functions of Higher education

Traditionally, the higher educational services include the three fundamental functions:

- Teaching
- Research

• Extension

Teaching serves to transmit knowledge and skills from the teacher to the taught ones. The purpose of research is to explore new knowledge whereas the function of extension focuses on developing the application of the developed knowledge for addressing the common problems of the society.

The functions of the higher education can also be elaborated as under:

- To seek and cultivate new knowledge, to engage vigorously and fearlessly in the pursuit of truth and to interpret old knowledge and beliefs in the light of new needs and discoveries;
- To provide the right kind of leadership in all walks of life by helping the individuals develop their potential;
- To provide society with competent men and women trained in all professions who, as cultivated individuals, are inclined with a sense of social purpose;
- To strive to promote equality and social justice and to reduce social and cultural differences through diffusion of education;
- To foster in the teachers and students and through them in the society generally, the attitudes and values needed for developing the 'good life' in individuals and society;
- To bring the universities closer to the community through extension of knowledge and its applications for problem solving.

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4. Dimensions of Quality in Education

Quality in education has the following dimensions:

- **Consistency:** Here the educational processes involve specifications through zero defect approach and a quality culture. But the limitations are in achieving consistent standards and conformity to those standards.
- **Fitness to purpose:** fitting the customer specifications, minimum-based fitness for purpose and customer satisfaction.
- **Value for money:** through efficiency and effectiveness.
- **Transformative:** education is an on-going process of transformation that includes empowerment and enhancement of the customer.

5. Quality Management in Higher Education

Bradely, (1993) provided a model of application of TQM at the higher education. Here the trainees were the teachers. The faculty members were the first line managers, administrator as the middle and first line manager, the rector and board of education as the board of directors of the institution. The job description of the faculty is to educate the customer as facilitator, the admin has to use the plan approach, whereas the board of education and dean has to innovate and do long term planning. Eventually Brown, Hitchcock & Willard, (1994) claimed the six characteristics of TQM implementation are “spending times with customers; treating suppliers like partners; spending time interacting with workers; devoting time to professional development; spending time focusing on customer satisfaction, quality data, and financial data; and allocating funds to support TQM initiatives”. Thus interaction with the customer, inter communication in the institution and planning leads to the implementation of TQM. Oakland (2000) emphasized the importance of creating a “benchmark” in the market. Since once a brand is created the customers would eventually draw attention towards the institution. For the creation of benchmark, constant innovation of programs, upgraded system and proper long term planning is required. Concluding, the entire procedure of TQM is stress team work, efficient and effective methods with improving internal environment of the institution (Venkatraman, 2007).

6. Higher Education Commission

Now a day’s quality maintenance is the main goal of every institution. The Quality management processes in recognized institutions are regulated by

the HEC. According to high education commission, Quality is achieving of standards and reaching the maximum outcome. Quality caters to all dimensions in higher education, from structuring of the program to the hiring of faculty. Thus to maintain a standard it is essential for the institution to create an appropriate environment in the institution. According to Higher Education Commission “The key factors influencing the quality of higher education is the quality of faculty, curriculum standards, technological infrastructure available, research environment, accreditation regime and the administrative policies and procedures implemented in institutions of higher learning”.

7. Customers of Education

A customer is anyone being served. Customers may be both internal and external, depending on whether they are located within or outside the organization. Quality starts with the customers and is defined by the customers. So one must be able to identify one’s customers, to be able to meet their needs and satisfy them. In education, the criteria for quality and, therefore, the customer requirements, involves a much greater number of interested parties – students, staff, faculty, industry, parents and the society.

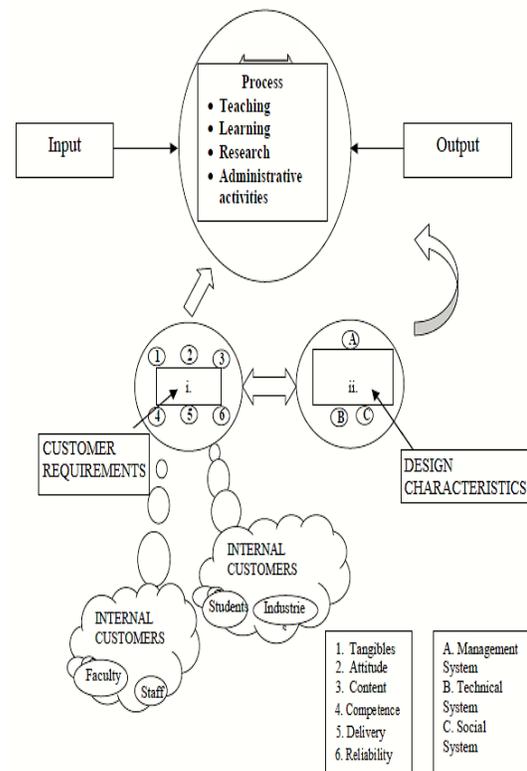


Fig: 1. Customers of Education

A customer is anyone to whom a product or service is provided, remark that the primary customer in an education system is the student; who is both an internal and an external customer. While in the system, the student is an internal customer, participating in the learning process; he becomes an external customer when he leaves the system. He then becomes the ultimate external customer, functioning effectively in the society. Figure 1 clearly indicates the whole system of internal and external customers with their requirements and characteristics. All employees are internal customers of one another each is a supplier and a customer to someone else, either within or outside the organization, refer to the different customers and classify them as input customers, transformation customers and output customers. While the parents and students are included as input customers, the faculty is the transformation customer and the corporations and the society are the output customers.

Spanbauer (1995) refers to the students as the primary customers, with the customer relationship being somewhat different – the student may not know what they need to learn and it does not necessarily mean that they must be given whatever they request. It is the faculty that can determine the needs of the students and balance those with the needs of other customers; namely, the employer and other educators who may later provide advanced instruction. The instructor is a customer or supplier for internal processes, too. The administrative staff/support staff is suppliers of services to the faculty and staff, and so the faculty becomes the customer of the administrative/support staff. Spanbauer, thus, remarks that customers are of two types: (1) External (students, employers, the community at large, taxpayers, other educators from different institutions); and (2) Internal (other instructors, service department staff).

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8. 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. TQM can be applied to higher education, but it must be modified to fully recognize some unique aspects of education viz education is a service industry with no visible, tangible "product". The development of higher education requires increase funds and even more for its maintenance. The World Bank document (1994) states, "The development of higher education is correlated with the economic development. Enrolment ratios in higher education average 51% in the countries that belong to OECD, compared with 21% in middle-income countries and 6% in low-income countries". Therefore, the first and foremost task for any nation is to expand its higher education system further in a planned way so as to cover as large a portion of the eligible age group as possible. For universities, mainly, selling point for a quality programme is the leaner budgets and higher efficiency and productivity inherent in certain quality programmes. As budget continues to tighten from Government higher education must be more vigilant and tenacious in its pursuit of providing quality education at lower cost. This is compounded by decreasing costs, decreasing enrolment totals, downsizing departments, and economic induces slashes in funding form govt. Therefore educational organizations are forced to resort to leaner and meaner approach. Be

enefits of TQM include heightened employee morale, better teamwork among departments, bridging faculty-staff functions, increased quality from customer viewpoint and continuous development of everyone who is part of higher education institution.

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