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IMPACT OF TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT (TQM) IN EDUCATION

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RESEARCH PAPER IN EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

Quality is a word familiar to everyone; it has a variety of meanings. It is used to signify 'excellence' of a product or service. It also means professionalism, reliability, consistency meeting customer requirements. Quality is both a user-oriented and a production oriented expression. Total Quality Management (TQM) is the organization-wide management of quality. Management consists of planning, organizing, directing, control, and assurance. Total quality is called total because it consists of two qualities: quality of return to satisfy the needs of the shareholders, or quality of products. TQM implies the application of quality principles right from identification of customer needs to post purchase services. The objective of TQM is to build an organization that produces products or performs services that are considered as quality by those who use them. The quality of a product or a service is the customer's perception of the degree to which the product or service meets their expectations. TQM is the process of integration of all activities, functions and processes within an organization in order to achieve continuous improvement in cost, quality, function and delivery of goods and services for customer satisfaction. TQM a management philosophy developed for industrial purposes is now attracting increasing attention in the field of education. In the context of education, this may lead to continually improving the quality of instruction in order to encourage students to become critical and creative thinkers in a fast-changing technological world. The present paper emphasizes on the impact of TQM in education.

KEYWORDS:
Total Quality Management (TQM), Elements of TQM, Barriers of implementation of TQM in the higher education, strategy of TQM approach in the higher education, Advantages of TQM.

INTRODUCTION

Quality is a word familiar to everyone; it has a variety of meanings. It is used to signify 'excellence' of a product or service. It also means professionalism, reliability, consistency meeting customer requirements. Quality is both a user-oriented and a production oriented expression. Total Quality Management (TQM) is the organization-wide management of quality. Management consists of planning, organizing, directing, control, and assurance. Total quality is called total because it consists of two qualities: quality of return to satisfy the needs of the shareholders, or quality of products. TQM is a business management strategy aimed at embedding awareness of quality in all organizational processes. TQM a management philosophy developed for industrial purposes is now attracting increasing attention in the field of education. TQM aims at improving the quality of the production system in order to produce a quality product with "zero defects". In the context of education, this may lead to continually improving the quality of instruction in order to encourage students to become critical and creative thinkers in a fast-changing technological world.

MEANING OF QUALITY

The word quality is derived from Latin word qualis, which means "what kind of". It connotes a variety of meanings and implies different things to different people. According to Juran "Quality is fitness for use or purpose". Crosby considers it as "conformance to standards". Deming defines quality as "a predictable degree of uniformity and dependability at low cost and suited to market". In general quality is one, which satisfies customer needs and continuously keeps on performing its functions as desired by customers as per specified standards. The British Standard Institutions (BSI) defines quality as *"the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs"* (BSI, 1991). Green and Harvey (1993) identified five different approaches to defining quality:

- in terms of exceptional (exceeding high standards and passing a required standard)

- in terms of consistency (exhibited through "zero defects" and "getting right the first time", marking quality a culture)

- as fitness for purpose (meaning the product or service meets the stated purpose, customer specification and satisfaction)

- as value for money (through efficiency and effectiveness) and

- as transformative (in term of qualitative change)

Dictionary has many definitions: "Essential characteristic", "Superior," etc. The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and the American Society for Quality (ASQ) define quality as: *"The totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bears on its ability to satisfy given needs."*

Some definitions that have gained wide acceptance in various organizations: *"Quality is customer satisfaction," "Quality is Fitness for Use."*

WHY WORRY ABOUT QUALITY

Some of the issues are,

- *Competition:* We are entering a new regime, where competition among educational institutions for students and funds will be highly significant. With globalization and the GATS (Global Agreement on Trade in Service). The educational environment will be seized by increased competition. In order to survive in such a situation, educational institutions need to worry about their quality.

- *Customer satisfaction:* Students, parents or sponsoring agencies as customers of the educational institutions are now highly conscious of their rights or getting value for their money and time spent. They are now demanding good quality teaching and receiving employable skill sets, and thus we should constantly worry about the relevance of our courses and programs to the needs of the labor market.

- *Maintaining standards*: As educational institutions, we are always concerned about setting our own standard and maintaining it continuously year after years. In order to maintain the standard, we should consciously make efforts to improve quality of the educational transactions as well as the educational provisions and facilities.

- *Accountability:* Every institution is accountable to its stakeholders in terms of the funds (public or private)

used on it. Concern for quality will ensure accountability of the funds utilized and inform the stakeholders about taking appropriate decisions. Thus, quality can be considered as a monitoring mechanism.

- *Improve employee morale and motivation:* Concern for quality as an institution will improve the morale and motivation of the staff in performing their duties and responsibilities. If a quality system is in place, the internal processes would be systematic making every department completing each other service domain and helping in developing internal customer satisfaction leading to high morale and motivation.

- *Credibility, prestige and status:* Concerned about quality, continuously and not once in a while, it will bring in credibility to individuals and institution because of consistency leading to practice, status and brand value.

- *Image and visibility:* Quality institutions have the capacity to attract better stakeholder support, like getting merited students from far and near, increased donations/grants from philanthropists/funding agencies and higher employer's interest for easy placement of graduates.

TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT (TQM):

TQM has been adapted as a management paradigm by many organizations worldwide. Quality movement in across the world starts with quality improvements project at manufacturing companies. But later it spread to other service institutions including banking; insurance, nonprofit organizations, healthcare, government and educational institutions. TQM can be defined as *"the process of integration of all activities, functions and processes within an organization in order to achieve continuous improvement in cost, quality, function and delivery of goods and services for customer satisfaction".* It refers to the application of quality principles to overall process and all the management functions in order to ensure total customer satisfaction. TQM implies the application of quality principles right from identification of customer needs to post purchase services. TQM models, based on the teachings of quality gurus, generally involve a number of "principles" or "essential elements" such as teamwork, top management leadership, customer focus, employee involvement, continuous improvement tool, training etc. TQM is the process of changing the fundamental culture of an organization and redirecting it towards superior product or service quality (Gaither, 1996). 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). According to Witcher (1990) 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,
Management: indicating that senior executives are committed. TQM may also be defined as; doing things right for the first time, striving for continuous improvement, fulfilling customers' need, making quality the responsibility of every employee etc.

The objective of TQM is to build an organization that produces products or performs services that are considered as quality by those who use them. The quality of a product or a service is the customer's perception of the degree to which the product or service meets their expectations. *TQM is defined as a strategic architecture requiring evaluation and refinement of continuous improvement practices in all area of usefulness.* TQM is

management approach or strategy aimed at embedding awareness of quality in all education institutions processes, on which education institution must strive to continuously improve these processes by incorporating the knowledge and expertise of students. TQM is the process of integration of all activities, functions and processes within an organization in order to achieve continuous improvement in cost, quality, function and delivery of goods and services for customer satisfaction.

PRINCIPLES OF TQM

According to Sadgrove. K. (1996) quoted the five principles of TQM

- **CONCENTRATE ON THE CUSTOMER –** be customer focused. Customer of the education system could be students, parents, industry, NGO etc.

- **DO IT RIGHT-** there is no scope of for trial and error. One has to figure out how to do things right from the word go. Constant effort at improvement is necessary and the attitude of quality must be developed.

- **COMMUNICATE AND EDUCATE -** The entire personnel in the organization must be taken into confidence while planning for TQM. They will have to be constantly trained and re-oriented.

- **MEASURE AND RECORD -** Performance appraisal must become an integral part of the organizational work. Maintenance of records, measurement and evaluation will have to be stressed.

- **DO IT TOGETHER –** The commitment to the goals of the organization must commence with the top management and go all the way to the lowest rung of the hierarchy. The personnel must be empowered to discharge their duties to their potential. Building teams is essential and teamwork holds the key to organizational success.

STRATEGY TO IMPLEMENT TQM APPROACH IN EDUCATION:

1. Need of commitment to TQM.
2. Recognize a school as a system with interacting subsystems, namely, a social/cultural subsystem dealing with human interactions and motivation, a technical subsystem involving the transformation processes, and a management subsystem that integrates the whole;
3. Identify all the customers and stakeholders;
4. Develop and communicate throughout the school a shared vision and mission that re-enforce the needs of its customers;
5. Analyze the behavior of the school;
6. Develop goals and objectives consistent with the vision and mission;
7. Study the impact of each major process on the ability meet the school's goals and objectives; Develop measurement and feedback systems for each major process (such as curriculum development, student intake, teaching, etc.);
8. Form cross-functional teams to improve major processes. Ensure that all the customers of each process are directly involved in the improvement effort;
9. Train all teams in techniques consistent with the nature of their activity;
10. Implement systems to hold the gains that are made;
11. Document all improvement exercises;
12. Repeat Steps 1-12.

BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENT THE TQM IN EDUCATION:

1. There is often a conflict between administration and academic functions. The two groups often form parallel worlds without a *shared* vision or mission for the school. A total quality approach requires that the two groups work together to meet customer expectations;

2. Within the academic group, there is often too much divisionalization - I belong to the science subgroup vs. the arts and languages subgroup. Identity with the entire school must take precedence over subgroup identity;

3. Most schools have entrenched cultural practices and beliefs that may create resistance to change. The teaching profession is highly individualistic vs. team-based. Schools often claim a uniqueness that exempts them from having to change. There is a tendency to place the responsibility for poor performance on individuals as opposed to the system. TQM requires that the entire (management) system be accountable.

4. The concept of a customer may be difficult to adapt in an academic environment; and

5. The need for control, measurement, and feedback systems for the purposes of standardization is somewhat foreign to academic environments. There may be the fear of stifling creativity. TQM promotes creativity as well as the standardization of processes that will yield desired outcomes.

ADVANTAGES OF TQM:

According to the practical evidence, the TQM principles help in the following:

❖ Redefine the role, purpose and responsibilities of schools.

❖ Improve school as a "way of life"

❖ Plan comprehensive leadership training for educators at all levels

❖ Create staff development that addresses the attitudes and beliefs of schools

❖ Use research and practices-based information to guide both policy and practice.

❖ Design comprehensive child-development initiatives that cut across a variety of institution.

❖ TQM can help a school or college provide better service to its primary customers--students and employers.

❖ The continuous improvement focus of TQM is a fundamental way of fulfilling the accountability requirements common to educational reform.

❖ Operating a no-fear TQM system with a focus on continuous growth and improvement offers more excitement and challenge to students and teachers than a "good-enough" learning environment can provide. Therefore, the climate for learning is improved.

❖ Focuses on meeting owners'/customers' needs by providing quality services at a cost that provides value to the owners/customers

❖ Is driven by the quest for continuous improvement in all operations

❖ Recognizes that everyone in the organization has owners/customers who are either internal or external

❖ Views an organization as an internal system with a common aim rather than as individual departments acting to maximize their own performances

❖ Focuses on the way tasks are accomplished rather than simply what tasks are accomplished

❖ Emphasizes teamwork and a high level of participation by all employees.

CONCLUSION

Total Quality Management (TQM) is the organization-wide management of quality. Management consists of planning, organizing, directing, control, and assurance. Total quality is called total because it consists of two qualities: quality of return to satisfy the needs of the shareholders, or quality of products. TQM implies the application of quality principles right from identification of customer needs to post purchase services. TQM is a 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. TQM is management approach or strategy aimed at embedding awareness of quality in all higher education institutions processes, on which higher education institution must strive to continuously improve these processes by incorporating the knowledge and expertise of students. TQM aims at improving the quality of the production system in order to produce a quality product with "zero defects". In the context of education, this may lead to continually improving the quality of instruction in order to encourage students to become critical and creative thinkers in a fast-changing technological world.

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