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Total Quality Management in Higher Education

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Abstract:

Total Quality Management can be summarized as a management system for a customer-focused organization that involves all employees in continual improvement. It uses strategy, data and effective communications to integrate the quality discipline into the culture and activities of the organization. It is a management technique to long-term success through customer satisfaction. . 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. 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. More recently, the international commission on education in the 21st century in its report submitted to the UNESCO has also recognized the need for organizing education to foster the development of human beings. The implication of TQM in education then is ensuring quality management in education for the development of all the four planes of living.

1. Introduction

TQM is a management approach developed by Dr. W. Edwards Deming an American management thinker during the Second World War. At the end of the war, America undertook the re-building of Japan's Shattered Economy. Amongst the many Americans that were sent to Japan to support this effort, Dr. Deming, he was instrumental in convincing the Japanese to adopt the principles of industrial efficiency and thus the development of the TQM theory was born. He advocated a climate of continuous improvement. TQM is a management technique to long-term success through customer satisfaction. In a TQM effort- all members of an organization participate in improving processes, products, services, and the culture in which they work.

1.1. Definition

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 to and all the management functions in order to ensure total customer satisfaction.

Total Quality Management can be summarized as a management system for a customer-focused organization that involves all employees in continual improvement. It uses strategy, data and effective communications to integrate the quality discipline into the culture and activities of the organization.

The quality of a product or a service is the customer's perception of degree to which the product or service meets their expectations.

2. Essential Elements of TQM

2.1. Customer Focused

The customer ultimately determines the level of quality. No matter what an organization does to foster quality improvement-training employees, integrating quality into the design process, upgrading computers or software, or buying new measuring tools. The customer determines whether the efforts were worthwhile.

2.2. Total Employee Involvement

All employees participate in working toward common goals.

2.3. Process-Centered

A fundamental part of TQM is a focus on process thinking. A process is a series of steps that take inputs from suppliers (internal or external) and transforms them into outputs that are delivered to customers.

2.4. Integrated System

Although an organization may consist of many different functional specialties often organized into vertically structured departments, it is the horizontal processes interconnecting these functions that are the focus of TQM. Everyone must understand the vision, mission and guiding principles as well as the quality policies, objectives and critical processes of the organizations.

2.5. Strategic and Systematic Approach

A critical part of the management of quality is the strategic and systematic approach to achieving an organizations vision, mission and goals.

2.6. Continual Improvement

Continual improvement drives an organization to be both analytical and creative in findings ways to become more competitive and more effective at meeting stakeholder expectations.

2.7. Fact-Based Decision Making

TQM requires that an organization continually collect and analyze data in order to improve decision making accuracy, achieve consensus, and allow prediction based on past history.

2.8. Communication

During times of organizational change, as well as part of day to day operation effective communications plays a large part in maintaining morale and in motivating employees at all levels. Communications involve strategies, method and timeliness.

3. TQM in Higher Education

Globalization of higher educational services has become an area of key focus for many countries in post WTO scenario. 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. 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.

3.1. Reasons for TQM in Education

In contemporary education, educational institutions have turned to TQM for many of the reasons that businesses have instituted quality programmes. They are:-

- escalating number of students,
- Lack of constant leadership style,
- The Increasing need for accountability to the public
- Changing attitude towards universities
- Resource constraints and increasing pressures.

More recently, the international commission on education in the 21st century in its report submitted to the UNESCO has also recognized the need for organizing education to foster the development of human beings. The implication of TQM in education then is ensuring quality management in education for the development of all the four planes of living.

3.2. Quality in Education

Education is goal oriented. Accordingly, quality of education has been seen with reference to the following goals.

- 1) Excellence in education
- 2) Value addition in education
- 3) Fitness of educational outcome and experience for use
- 4) Conformance of education output to planned goals, specifications and requirements.
- 5) Defect avoidance in education process.
- 6) Meeting or exceeding customer's expectations of education.

Quality education focuses on the identification of the propensities of each individual and nurturing such propensities for the holistic development of individuals.

3.3. Taxonomy of Education

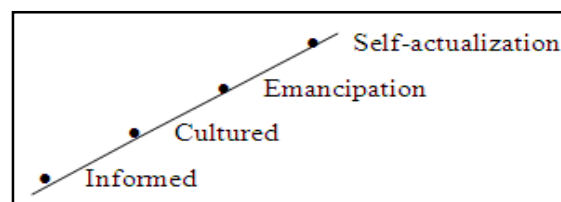


Figure 1

- Informed: The lowest in the hierarchy is being informed- either through formal or informal educational processes.
- Cultured: The second level is the level of being cultured. Culture represents an integrated personality that is well rounded, emits warmth and follows human values.
- Emancipation: One level ahead of culture is emancipation where individuals rise above the known artificial boundaries of religion, caste, creed, gender and linguistic or geographic belongingness.
- Self-actualization: Holistic development, it implies achieving the best in all four planes of life.

4. TQM Process in Education System

In 2001, there was extensive consultation and experimentation on TQM in different types of educational institutions in India. In many Indian universities, post graduate and doctoral research have been initiated on TQM (process).

4.1. Steps of TQM Implementation of Educational Institutions

1. System thinking and organizational micro analysis
2. Percener focus (customer focus)
3. Participative Management and Team Building
4. Human Resource Development
5. Leadership for building quality institutions.
6. Institutional assessment.

4.1.1. System Thinking and Organizational Micro Analysis

An educational institution as a system has - Inputs such as students, infrastructure, financial resources and instructional resources. The processes are admission, instruction, evaluation etc. while the outputs are the graduates and their behavioural, academic and physical qualities. As it is system, it obviously comprises several sub-systems. The basic approach to systems thinking is identifying the sub-systems and understanding their interrelationship and interdependence.

There are 10 areas or subsystem in an education.

1. Vision, mission and goals
2. Academics
3. Personnel
4. Finance
5. Infrastructure
6. linkages and interface
7. Student services,
8. Rules, regulations, methods and procedures.
9. Institution building
10. Managing people at work

There must proper interrelation and management between these sub systems.

Then conduct a micro analysis of each and every area

For eg. Academic Management: It constitutes five major components – admission, curricular. Planning and management, management of instruction, management of student assessment and planning and management of co-curricular activities.

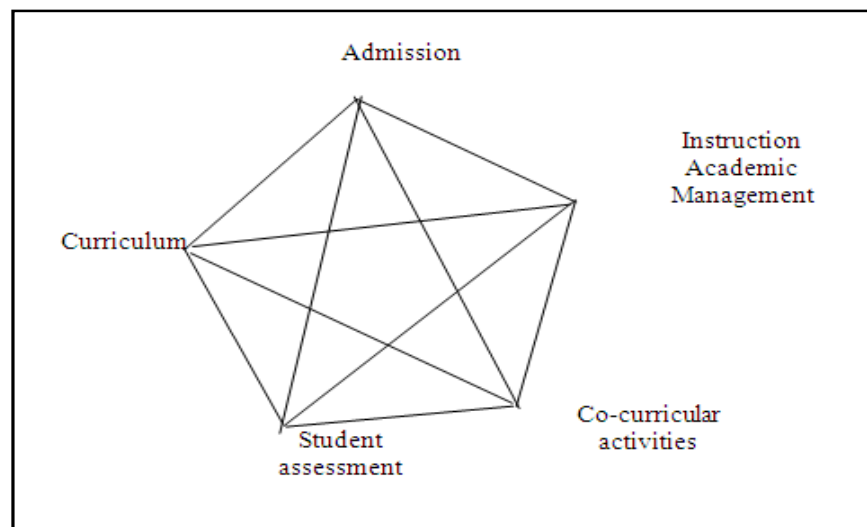


Figure 2

4.1.2. Customer or Percener Focus

Generally the students are considered as end customers. Harward University defines its customer “as one to whom we provide information or service”.

On the basis of percener orientation in TQM, there is a paradigm shift in focus from providers of education in the conventional system to the students in the TQM scenario.

In the conventional system, the highest importance is given to the principal and members of the Board of Governors. Here the students are on the receiving end-often passive. In the TQM culture, it is the perceners needs and wants that determine the educational programme. In other words, educational programmes are designed by teachers and managers on the basis of the perceners needs.

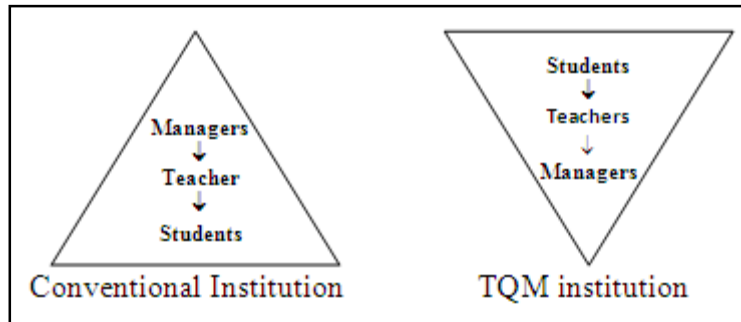


Figure 3

For TQM, there are atleast two kinds of perceners: External and Internal

External perceners are parents, employees, immediate community and the state government and the society at large.

Internal perceners are teachers non-academic staff, principal and educational managers.

Students are internal as they are not only part and parcel of the institution but also the very core of the institution. They are also external since they are the immediate customers of the day to day transaction of education in the school or a college.

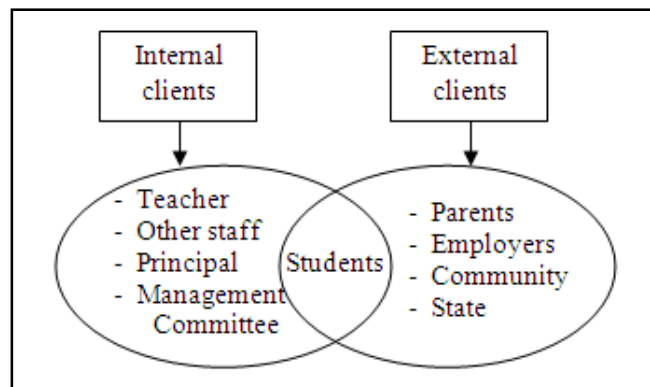


Figure 4

The need and wants of different percent are different. In TQM, the institutions provide more importance and consideration to students.

4.1.3. Participative Management and Team Building

For effectiveness of an institution, activities must be managed on participatory style. Democratic decision-making and participation exist as values in most educational institutions, through they have not become part of an institutional culture.

- Team Building: Team work throughout any organization is an essential component of the implementation of TQM for its builds trust, improves communication and develops independence. It is also necessary to share, test, and refine learning on a continuous basis.
- Development of Teams: Team development, from incubation to maturity is a long process. Important requirement and tools of team development and management are training, capability building of the team as a whole, and empowerment of its member.
- Stages of Formation of Team

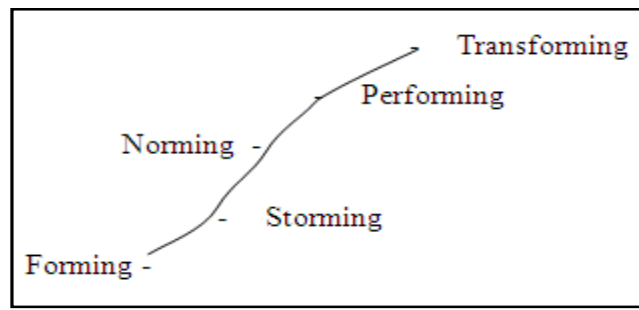


Figure 5

4.1.4. Human Resource Development for Quality Institutions

Educational institutions are knowledge enterprise. They perform the roles of knowledge creation, knowledge warehousing and knowledge vending. It probably begins with selecting the right kind of people for the institution – ‘the right people in the right jobs’. The agenda of HRD, of TQM and of institution building have to accommodate continuous upgradation of professional competence, commitment, motivation and inspiration.

- Approaches to HRD
 1. Induction
 2. On the job training
 3. Participation in training programmes
 4. Participation in open and distance education programmes.

4.1.5. Leadership for Building Quality Institutions

Leadership is all about influencing, motivating and inspiring people to creative vision and achieves it. A leader is ‘Some one who acts as a guide. Accordingly the principal is a guide for quality transformation.

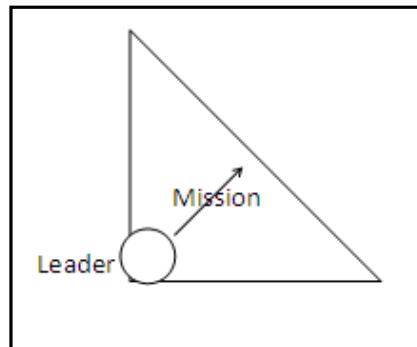


Figure 6

- Leadership in Quality Institutions
 - A leader in a quality institution should recollect the 3 major principles of TQM.
 1. Percener orientation
 2. Involvement of all
 3. Continuous improvement
- Percener focus (Attributes)
 - Conscious of responsibility to percener
 - Identifies various categories of perceners
 - Sensitive to their expectations
 - Makes deliberate efforts to ascertain and appreciate percener expectations.
- Involvement of all
 - Inspires colleagues
 - Involves all in developing vision and quality management.
 - Empowers colleagues to innovate and take risks
 - Promotes sense of equality
 - Removes bottlenecks
- Continuous improvement
 - Personally innovates
 - Demonstrates constancy of purpose towards quality
 - Walks the talk

- Plans long-term strategies
- Reviews and resets systems

4.1.6. Institutional Assessment

Every effort in TQM or change management in institutions must be preceded by institutional assessment primarily to diagnose strengths and weaknesses of the organization.

4.2. Methods of Assessment

- A. MIAS – (Mukhopadhyayas Institutional Assessment System)
- B. SWOT Analysis
- A. MIAS- It is designed as the 360- degree appraisal mechanism where an educational institution is assessed by the Principal and supervisors, teachers, parents and the community and students by using MIPQ (Mukhopadhyay’s Institutional Profile Questionnaire)

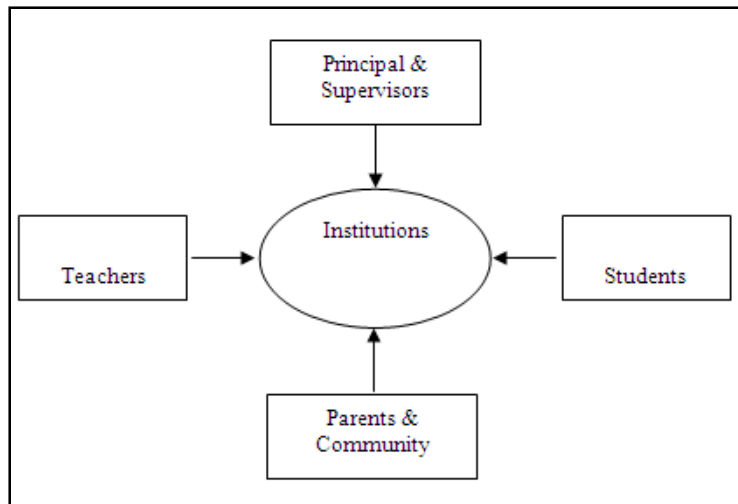


Figure 7

The MIAS covers the following perceptual areas:

1. leadership of the principal
 2. teacher quality- preparation, competence, commitment
 3. linkage and interface, communication with the environment.
 4. Students – academic and non-academic quality
 5. Teaching-quality of instruction.
 6. Office management – support services
 7. Relationship-corporate life in the institution
 8. Material resources: instructional support
 9. Examination – purposefulness and methodology
 10. Job satisfaction – staff morale
 11. Reputation
- B. SWOT Analysis

SWOT stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. It is qualitative technique can be used for organizational diagnosis.

The main thesis is that for quality improvement, the institution should

- Identify and encash on its strengths, and strengthen them further.
- Identify its weaknesses and initiate deliberate action to reduce them.
- Identify its opportunities, exploit them, and consist them in to strengths.
- Identify its apparent and potential threats and try to eliminate or reduce their intensity so that they may not harm it or aggravate its weakness.

5. Four Pillars of Total Quality Management

Besides Deming’s principles John Jay Bonsting in his article “The Quality Revolution in Education”, outlines the TQM principles. He believes these are the most salient to education reform. He calls them as ‘four pillars of TQM’.

1. Synergistic relationship
2. Continuous improvement and self evaluation
3. A system of ongoing process
4. Leadership

6. Benefits/Advantages of TQM

1. People feel better about themselves and their efforts on the job, and they take greater pride in their work.
2. Relationships among people in the organization are most honest and open.
3. Administrators often feel less isolated, misunderstood and burdened.
4. Productivity (result) goes up, as work processes are improved continuously.
5. Create opportunities for personal and professional growth.

7. Challenges in TQM Implementation in Higher Educational Institutions

According to Srivance (2004) critical issues in implementing TQM in higher education includes leadership, customer identification, cultural and organizational transformation, lack of necessary authority also makes it difficult to deploy their values and goals through layers of higher education institutions. Deep rooted traditions dating back to centuries, a rigid departmental model, inter departmental competition for resources, lack of market focus are the cultural and organizational reasons that makes it difficult to tune in with TQM transformation. Another challenge before TQM is resistance to change, role conflict, lack of training, lack of clarity of innovation, lack of technical competence, lack of access to guidance, workload, unrealistic time targets, etc. are some of the characteristics of individuals who tend to resist innovations.

8. Conclusion

TQM has emerged as a major technique in improving and sustaining quality in education, derived from industrial applications. TQM has been extensively and intensively adapted and experimented within education all over the world. The major spirit of activities in TQM in education occurred in the 1990s. TQM is a well tested strategy for the management of quality in education through continuous evaluation, monitoring and preplanning. But it must be modified to fully, recognize some unique aspects of viz., education is a service, industry with no visible, tangible product.

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