



Total Quality Management- The Key to Achieve Excellence in Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract: Total Quality Management (TQM) is the process of changing the fundamental culture of an institution and redirecting it towards superior product or service quality to scale to greater heights leading to stability and sustainability. At any point it should be focused on students as primary, then on the teachers and other stake holders and then the services it provides. It deals with issues pertaining to quality in higher education and moves on to identify variables influencing the quality. Benefits of TQM include increased student enrolment, greater students' performance, 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 the higher education institution and the institution as a whole.

Total Quality Management

Total Quality Management (TQM) is a management approach that originated in the 1950s and is becoming more known from the beginning of 1980s. Total Quality Management can be defined as a general management attitude and a set of tools which permits an institution to follow a definition of quality and a means for accomplishing quality, with constant progress driven by customers' satisfaction with the services they have received. The American Society for Quality describes a management approach to long-term success through customer satisfaction. When a TQM endeavor is adopted, each and every member of the institution involves in enhancing methods, goods, services and the ethnicity in their place of work.

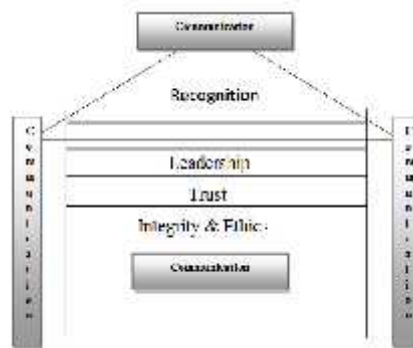
TQM - An attempt to redefine!

The author attempts to define Total Quality Management as a method of doing things effectively involving all the members with constant development in its processes and defects & waste eradicated totally from operations, with customer satisfaction as its prime focus adopting a quality culture. It is an approach that attempts to render its patrons with best of goods and services throughout their needs. It is a means that will satisfy their customers' needs and will involve all members of the institution. It is an effective approach rather than an efficient approach.

Key Elements of TQM in Higher Education Institutions

Total Quality Management has been labeled to describe a philosophy that makes quality the vigor behind each and every initiative in the system say it headship, planning, implementing, and progressive issues. For this, TQM requires the help of eight key elements. These key elements can be classified into four divisions based on their function as foundation, building bricks, binding motor and roof.

The author recognizes the focus on the following key elements in implementation of total quality management in higher educational institutions. A strong attention on each of this single element at any operational point will ensure progress and upward movement for the individual institution concerned.



I. Foundation

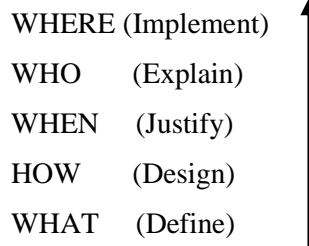
Ethics, integrity and trust form the foundation of TQM in higher education institutions. Quality Higher Educational Institutions establish a business code of ethics that outlines guidelines that all employees are to adhere to in the performance of their work and individual ethics that include personal rights or wrongs. HEI's should have internal and external customers who are totally integrated to the institution. Trust fosters full participation of all members. TQM in HEI's allows empowerment that encourages pride ownership and fosters commitment. It allows decision making at appropriate levels in the organization, promote individual risk-taking for continuous improvement and helps to make certain that efforts are undertaken to enhance the process and are not used to contend people. Trust is crucial to assure customer satisfaction.

II. Bricks

On the basis of the foundation, bricks are now placed to reach the heights of recognition. Managers / Heads are solely responsible for implementing TQM

within their departments, and training their employees the philosophies of TQM such as interpersonal, problem solving, decision making, job management performance scrutiny and upgrading, and scientific skills so that they can become effective employees for the institution. Depending on the situation institutions may form quality improvement teams, problem solving teams or natural work teams. Teamwork provides quicker and better solutions to problems, more permanent improvements in processes and operations as individuals feel more conducive in conveying issues that may crop up and can get help from other workers to find a solution and put into place. Team work divides the task and doubles the success.

A Collective effort towards TQM



Starts from the bottom level

Leadership in TQM has the manager to throw exciting ideas, craft tactical guidelines that are understood by all and to instill values that guide subordinates. The manager must first understand the difference between a boss and a leader. A boss is one who throws the work to the members and tells them to do it on the other hand a leader becomes part of the members in executing the work. To ensure TQM to bloom in an institution, the supervisor must be committed in leading his employees and must always be a part of the team. The supervisor should be ready to lead and understand the team at any point of time.

III Binding Motor

Starting from foundation to roof of the TQM house, everything is bound by strong mortar of communication which is an art and depending on need should allow for downward, upward or sideways. The success of HEI's demands leaders with good communication skills who can communicate with and among all the institution's members, suppliers and customers. Heads must keep open airways where employees can send and receive information about the QM process. It is very important that communication involves providing of right information to all those involved. For communication to be credible the message must be clear and the one receiving the message must understand the way it was meant to be.

IV Roof

The final element in the entire system of Total Quality Management is recognition that should be provided for both suggestions and achievements for institutions as well as individuals. A good leader strives to receive recognition for themselves and their institutions. Detecting and recognizing contributions is the most important job of a supervisor. Recognition comes in its best form at the right time meant for it. The member must be recognized immediately for the right act done by him which will enhance his confidence, achievement and being the quality way. Recognition can be in the form of incentives, promotions, increments, awards, appreciations, and the like. It has been a best practice observing steering committees throwing a thanks giving party to all those who were associated with its success thus recognizing the contribution of individuals concerned.

TQM in Higher Education Institutions by Quality Connoisseurs

TQM has been adopted as a management model by many organizations worldwide. Quality movement across the world initiates with quality progressive ventures at industries. But later it spread to other service institutions like non government organizations, medical, engineering, health, community work, banking, government and educational institutions. TQM models, based on the knowledge of quality connoisseurs, generally involve a number of “doctrines” or “crucial factors” such as

1. Customer focus
2. Employee involvement
3. Teamwork
4. Top management leadership
5. Continuous improvement in tools or services
6. Training &
7. Awards like Deming in Japan, Malcolm Balridge in USA; European Quality awards, Gurukul Jyothi Awards in India, etc are reflection of growing concern in this area.

Principles of TQM – reflections from HEI’s

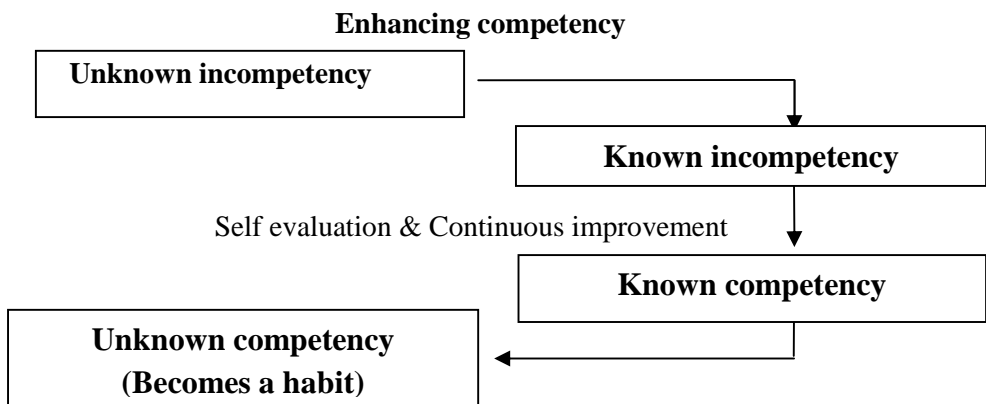
Many educators consider that the Deming’s concept of Total Quality Management gives fundamental principles for needed educational reform. John Jay Bonstingl opines that the quality management policies he holds are very important to education reform. He calls them the “*Four Pillars of Total Quality Management.*” *It is here that* the author tries to crack out her understanding associated with the pillars of TQM applied in Higher Education Institutions.

1. Synergistic Bond

According to this principle, first and foremost an organization must focus on its suppliers and customers. Synergy means two plus two is not four but more than four. The very application of the first pillar of TQM to an institution emphasizes the synergistic relationship between the “provider” and “clientele”. In this case, the clientele does not mean the students and the providers do not mean the teachers. But in a quality institution all are givers and takers since it involves systematic nature of work in which all of them are involved. The idea of synergy as reflected in HEI’s suggests that performance and production is upgraded by combining the talents and experiences of individuals. Quality HEI’s involve teamwork and collaboration that results in quality returns for the greatest number of people. The product of their successful work is the development of the students’ capabilities, interests, talents and character which will work along the vision of the institution.

2. Self Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

The second pillar of TQM applied to institutions is the total dedication to continuous improvement, singly and from the group. In a educational setting with quality, administrators work collaboratively with their clientele: teachers and students. Today it is important that we encourage everyone’s potential by dedicating ourselves to progressive enhancement of our talents and also those of the people with whom we work and live. Total Quality is, essentially, a win-win technique which works to everyone’s ultimate advantage. According to Deming, no human being should ever evaluate another human being. Hence, gone are fear, intimidation and an adversarial approach to problem solving.



Therefore, HEI’s emphasizes evaluating of one-self as part of a constant improvement process. In addition, this principle also laminates to the focusing on the strengths of single student, individual learning styles, performance of clientele

Total Quality Management-The Key to Achieve Excellence in Higher Education Institutions and different types of intelligences. The pictorial representation clearly shows how unknown incompetency can be made to unknown competency by the process of self evaluation which will lead to continuous learning. The teacher otherwise known as the felicitor must become conscious of his lacunae and must gear up to fill the gap by his self learning efforts.

3. A structure of ongoing process

The third pillar of TQM is the recognition of the institution as a system and the work done within the institution must be seen as an ongoing process. The basic preposition of this third principle is that individual students and teachers are less to be blamed for failure. It is the structure that needs to be made liable. Quality will be achieved if this structure is examined to identify and eliminate the flaws that allow its applicants not to do well. Since systems are made up of processes, the improvements added to the excellence of those processes to a good extent determines the quality of the resulting product. In the new paradigm of quality HEI's, continual improvement of learning processes based on learning outcomes replaces the outdated "teach and test" mode.

4. Headship

The last of the TQM pillar pertaining to HEI's is that the success of TQM is the responsibility of top management. Teachers must establish the system in which students can best achieve their potential. This can be done through continuously improving the methodology of teaching, nature of assignments given and mode of evaluation system for their students. Teachers who emphasize on updated good content learning material, sufficient laboratory hours and provide on hands training show the right leadership, framework, and tools necessary for continuous improvement in the learning process. Teachers in turn are mentored by efficient administrators who have the expertise to transfer their skill and understanding. These mentors must upgrade themselves through vigorous training exercises, first hand information, sound knowledge in their area and use of ICT mode of teaching learning.

According to the practical evidences, the TQM principles help the institutions in the following clauses:

- (a) Redefine the role, purpose and responsibilities of institutions.
- (b) Improve the quality in institutions as a "way of life."
- (c) Chart out comprehensive leadership training for educators at all levels.
- (d) Implement staff development activities that address the attitudes and talents of all staff.

- (e) Use research and practice-based information to guide both principles and procedures.
- (f) Develop broad student-development initiatives to be applied across institutions.

For an institution to attain the above as opportunities in the academic scenario, in addition to patience, considerate management besides dutiful and learned partners is crucial to the success of TQM in education. Each and everyone involved must recognize and appreciate the ideology. Some personnel who are committed to the principles of TQM can facilitate success in the system. Some of the essential traits for exultant implementation of TQM in HEI's on observation reveal that proficiency and expertise in headship, management, interpersonal communication, problem solving and creating collaboration are mandate.

TQM at Higher Education Institutions – Different focuses

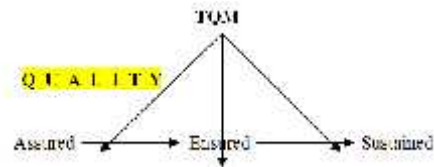
According to the reports of UNESCO and the World Bank, social and private returns of the higher education are less than those from primary and secondary education. It is estimated that social return from primary education is 25 percent against that of higher education which is only one percent. This has led to the thinking that the returns of higher education are largely personalized and therefore, subsidy on this should be reduced. There are three generic approaches to applied to TQM in higher education, First of all there is **customer focus** where the idea of service to students is fostered through good development initiatives that encourages student's choice and autonomy.

The second approach has a **staff focus** that is concerned to augment and enhance the contribution of all members of staff to the effectiveness of an institution's vision. Staff of high commitment and contribution in lines to the policies and priorities of the management is preferred. This entails a flatter management structure and the acceptance of responsibility for action by definite functioning teams. The third approach focuses on **service** agreements attitude. This seeks to ensure that certain key measurable points of the educational processes are attained. It is suggested that higher education institutions follow the above generic approaches to attain a high degree of satisfaction.

From the author's point of view, the first approach should be given top priority since it will ensure that the other two will be order. When customers are focused as in the case of higher education institution learners are prioritized by a management, all other issues will fall in line ensuring total quality in the system. Such a system is more likely to be very successful and will be a model for other higher education institutions to adopt. Such a system not only awards the students associated with it but also rewards the institution.

Quality Dimensions of Higher Education Institutions – A bird’s eye view of the current scenario

Higher Education Institutions wanting to bring in quality into their system has to follow total quality management. But let us bear in mind that the concept of Total Quality Management is not new to us. Maybe the term could be novel but the systems having been in place long. What we are trying to do is to bring in a scientific and systematic approach to the process that was existing unconsciously. Now for Institutions of Higher Learning to be more successful with the science of time, certain factors become significant to be practiced. These factors will over a period of time become an unconscious part of the day to day system meaning it would become a habit. In such quality institutions, one can observe that quality is assured, ensured and sustained.



1. Consistency

Here the educational processes involve specifications through zero defect approach and should involve uniformity, evenness and a quality culture. But the limitations are in achieving the standards and sustaining to those standards. Once consistency is attained, then the institution can lead progressively and can expand upwards smoothly. There should be consistency in the services provided which will ensure trust in customers.

2. Fit to purpose

The higher education institution must understand its purpose of establishment whether it is meant for teaching, research or for both. For this it is essential to understand the customer’s needs. By fitting the customer specifications, the institution can work towards satisfying its customers in which case it will become tailor made in its approach in the sense it will encampus activities only on contentment. This will make the institution to adopt ways proportional to the customers’ needs whereby it becomes fit for the purpose dedicating market potential students.

3. Value for money

One of the important dimensions for the higher education institution is to provide value for the money received from customers through efficiency and effectiveness in delivery of content at all times possible.. This can be done by following a holistic approach which will provide total satisfaction for the customer in the delivery of services and will benefit the customer, society and nation at large.

4. Transformative

Education is an ongoing process of conversion that includes empowerment and enhancement of the customer. The higher education institution must involve in production of customers who will further contribute to quality work force of the society and nation. It should include courses that will not only enable them a job within the boundary but also globally. Besides it should also include materials on value education to mould good citizens for the motherland.

5. Problem solving

The process involved should help the customers to understand the difficulty, analyse the intricacies and arrive at suitable conclusions accepted by the persons involved. The challenge that lies ahead today is the ability to solve problems and not run away from them. In this situation it is important to build human beings who are capable of handling any situation that comes up to them and the skill to fix the issues.

6. Human excellence

The services provided should benefit the learners to surpass their counterparts and be ahead of them professionally and at the same time develop into good human beings as well. The vision of higher education institutions should be to develop human excellence alongside professional excellence. For this reason, higher education institutions should give importance to discipline of its stake holders which include students and staff at all levels.

The importance of education for the attainment of human excellence, expertise and knowledge leading to overall development of the individual and reflecting to the added economy of the nation should be prioritized. This has led to the need for developing a good strategy for the development of higher education globally. Establishing leadership in the world is possible only when we develop systems of higher education in which effectiveness remains the sole criteria to evaluate performance. The higher education system is found successful only when it dedicates to the society committed, devoted and professionally sound human resources to decide the future of the nation. This is possible only when the doctrines of total quality management are included in every step of higher education.

Total Quality Management (TQM) is inevitably a common factor that will shape the strategies of higher educational institutions in their attempt to satisfy various stakeholders that include students, parents, industry and society as a whole. It is certainly a theoretical attempt to explain the application of TQM in higher education. But it remains a necessity for the time. TQM in higher education institution deals with issues pertaining to quality adopted in higher education and further advances to identify variables influencing the quality of higher education. It also ropes in a model for application of TQM in higher education.

The upcoming economic advancement theories have stressed the role of human resource as the key of economic growth and development of a nation. The recent study conducted by World Bank of 190 countries reveals that it is higher education that helps in enriching the quality of human resources thus developing the country. This makes higher education as a prime investment needed to enhance the overall quality of human life. The strong bond that lies between the two e's namely economy and education was not felt as now. It is the accessibility of employment in the market which makes the learners choose their area of study. But now it is felt that only degrees cannot withstand the labour market but it is quality degrees that will sustain which are a combination of academics alongside human excellence.

TQM in HEI's – Roadmap for future

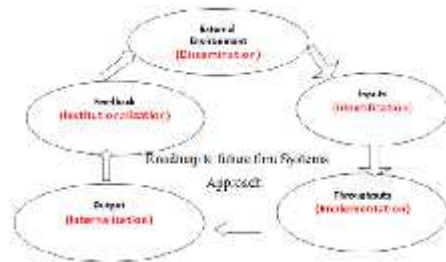
Issues of TQM in higher education institutions are being addressed, particularly as they relate from student enrolment till student employment. Those adopting TQM in higher education have varying outlook on the approach. Some view TQM as a administration method with customer or student satisfaction as the central factor. As of others, TQM is a philosophy fostering progressive change in educational institutions. Academic institutions should make use of both the approaches in applying quality management practices in higher education settings for the welfare of the institution and the student community.

When the issue of quality education is considered, it should take into account external environment in which the educational institutions operate. It should also consider the internal environment where learning takes place and the habitat of the learners. This learning will enable the administrators to understand where the quality systems have to begin and then move upwards. An application of the systems approach to quality higher education institutions may serve as guidelines in solving issues for mushrooming institutions. Systems approach comprises of inputs, processes and outputs all put together in a boundary and react with the environment. The author suggests the four I's and D model for adapting the Best Practices in to achieve quality in Higher Education Institutions.

Four I's & D model:

- Identification of best practices
- Implementation of best practices
- Internalization of best practices
- Institutionalization of best practices &
- Dissemination of best practices

Inputs from the environment cross the boundary and enter into the system. These are acted upon by the implementation (throughputs). Then they are finally released from the system into the environment as outputs. The pathway from the inputs, throughputs to the output indicates the flow of information, etc. First of all, there is need to identify the best practices followed in an institution such as enrolling interested students, recruiting innovative faculty, working with organized administrators, having refined organizational culture and the like.



Throughput process transforms measurable inputs into measurable outputs under a value adding operation for the quality purpose. The process of education involves a series of actions or activities leading to an educational learning, training, and or scholarly activity. Conversion process for an educational institution towards quality consists of activities undertaken to provide a favorable teaching learning environment to disseminate knowledge, to conduct research and to provide community service. Implementation of best practices include Value adding process in the education system like using ICT in teaching learning, online assignments, updated curriculum, effective examination systems, collaborative research, and demand based knowledge transformation.

Outputs are tangible outcomes like value addition through timely examination results, good employment of students in core companies, producing entrepreneurs to add to the economic upgrading of the country, students opting for higher education in institutions of repute, earnings and satisfaction, and Intangible outcomes are educated people, research findings that will help the nation and service to community. These outcomes serve as internalization to the parent institution meaning belongingness to the institution concerned.

The next component is feedback i.e. the outputs which are information about the system that will be fed back into the system as inputs. These are able to modify the system while the process is in progress, thus building the system more receptive to the needs in the environment and making the system flexible. The new information shall now serve to rectify the previously existing flaws. Once the modifications are known, then the same shall be institutionalized now (ie) made as measures to be followed time and again which will no doubt lead to effective functioning of the institution.

The institutionalized best practices of the higher education institution should now be disseminated to other institutions of higher learning in order to help satisfy the components of requirements of their stakeholders. Else the inputs would cease and further transformation ceases too.

Higher Education Institutions must now understand the journey of quality education which will enable them to be more successful in their delivery of goods to suit customers satisfaction. For easy understanding, the author tries to put in a nut shell this journey of quality higher education which initiates from fit and now has to move towards snugly fit to make quality things possible. We must first understand that gone are the days of board & chalk method and must roll on with the science of time towards ICT targeting heterogeneous global learners.

Journey of fit to aptly fit

Subject	Fit	Aptly Fit
Curriculum	Faculty centered	Learner centered
Syllabi	Centrally planned	Market planned
Students	Passive learners	Active learners
Delivery of knowledge	By Teaching	By Learning Experiences
Student belong to	Print	Digital generation
Learning of students	Black board	Plug method
Faculty	Pedagogy	Mentor/ Fecilitator
Education	Same place, same time	Any place, any time
Delivery location	University campus	Universal campus
Competition	Nil	National & International
Students need	Secondary	Primary
Teaching	School	To students and society through school
Guided by	Internal impulse	External impulse

In conclusion

TQM is a common organization attitude or culture which permits an institution to follow a definition of quality and a means of attaining quality. They attain quality with continuous improvement ascertained by customers' contentment. TQM when applied to higher education institutions must be modified to fully recognize some unique aspects of education. It must view education as a service industry. The development of higher education sector requires increased funds and even more for its sustenance. Therefore, the most important task for any nation is to identify measures to invest in its higher education system. This should be done in a planned quality way so as to cover a large portion of the eligible age group as possible.

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TQM applied to individuals- **introspection**

Quality begins on the inside... then works its way out

TQM applied to processes- **fine tune**

People forget how fast you did a job; but they remember how well you did it

TQM applied to organizations- **recognition**

The worth of what you do determines the quality of your life

As budget continues to tighten, higher education institutions must be more vigilant in its pursuit of providing quality education at affordable cost. For TQM to be successful, quality should be made the prime concern of all involved and not a few, owned by institutions and its members, readily transferable to other counterparts and add value to all its stakeholders. For attaining quality in higher education institutions, it should get the quality efforts of individuals, have quality processes in place and thus will land into a fully recognized institution. Benefits of Total Quality Management-The Key to Achieve Excellence in Higher Education Institutions TQM include increased student enrolment, greater students' performance, heightened employee morale, better cooperation among departments, bridging faculty-staff functions, and good services from customer viewpoint. It should facilitate continuous development of everyone who is part of the higher education institution and the institution as a whole. With the practice of TQM, Quality not only remains within the portals of one institution but becomes contagious across institutions benefitting many stakeholders.

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