

Total quality management (TQM) in higher education and relevance of accreditation

P. S. Mohan Kumar □

Total Quality Management in higher education means improving the quality of courses, input instructional process, resource management processes and structures as well as student support service output and linkages with world of work and other organizations

TQM is applied to business and industry; but it has been recently introduced and experimented in higher education. Many universities and colleges apply Total Quality Management as a tool to enhance the quality of higher education. The concept of quality is accepted by everyone and TQM literature in higher education is available in plenty. The student is considered as a customer since quality mean “conformance to requirements” of the customer. In a world of ever increasing competition, privatization and internationalization of education, many educational institutions in India and abroad apply TQM principles in education. The Round Table on Internationalization of Higher Education (2002) recommends an open door policy for education, academic restructure, cafeteria – type approach (choice of subjects and courses by the customer) and internationalization of curriculum. All this highlights the need for TQM in higher education. Internationalization of higher education has become a fact, just like Globalization. Inter-

nationalization should not be seen as an end in itself, but as a means of quality enhancement. Quality is the ability of the institution to fulfill its task and to achieve its goals. Hence, I satisfy the customers we have to be quality conscious.

Total Quality Management in higher education means improving the quality of courses, input instructional process, resource management processes and structures as well as student support service output and linkages with world of work and other organizations (Tulsi, 2001). Since it is holistic approach the support and co-operation of faculty and staff members are needed for quality improvement. Participatory team work of all in an institution occupies a critical place in the practice of TQM. Total quality is total in three senses —

1. Customer focus
2. Involvement of staff members
3. Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI).

The customer determines the quality. *The student is a customer since the student is buying Profes-*

sor course and has the unmistakable right to expect certain things for his/her money : Relevant course content, fairness, access, expertise and a reasonable learning situation (Sytsma 1996). The student both the customer and co-producer since learning is the joint effort of the professor and the student. Both the professor and the student jointly produce a product — learning. Broadly speaking it is the combine effort of students, parents, alumni, community and faculty. The customer is not the students alone, but all stake-holders. The terms *customers, public goods, non-merit goods*, in the context of education and not acceptable to a civilized class when it denotes to a commercial conditioning of *pay and use* concern since education is regarded as charitable. But the other practical question is whether every stake-holder including the student has a right to demand quality or excellence in education. Since education institution is by definition charitable, it is the duty of the Government or other funding agencies (as western countries) to

see that it is heavily subsidized with regard to cost and it is equally strongly the duty of the stake-holders to see that the quality is ensured, 'whoever may be the cost bearing group. There in lies the positive aspect of certification and accreditation. Commercializing and marketing a quite alien to progressive organizations and right thinking groups and hence *bete noire* to charitable concept, but not excellence. The stake-holders include both internal customers and external customers.

Internal Customers	External Customers
1. Students	1. Community
2. Faculty	2. Employers
3. Administrators	3. Universities
4. Administrative staff	4. Accrediting Agencies
5. Board of Directors.	5. Alumni
	6. Donor

All parties in the institution are customers. But the internal customer play a crucial role in the policies of the organization. The external customers have the freedom to choose their customers on the basis of quality. The TQM programmes of the following institution were taken for analysis to prepare broad guidelines for quality management in an educational institution (Tulsi 2001) :

1. IIM, Calcutta
2. Nagpur University and College of Engineering
3. Anna University, Chennai
4. Virginia Common Wealth University
5. South Bank University -
6. Fu Jen Catholic University (see also Shang-Shing P .Chou)

On the basis of analysis and conclusions derived, the suggested ap-

proaches for TQM in University and Colleges are summarized as follows (Tulsi,2001)

1. Identifying customer needs
2. Specific quality standards
3. Bench marking
4. Identifying gaps in the existing system.
5. Planning for improvement
6. Implementation of improvement plans
7. Monitoring and evaluation
8. Modification of plans.

The formation of Quality Circles is a prime step in TQM. The heart of quality management is improvement in teaching-learning process. Voluntary effort of all staff and faculty from "top to down "and from "bottom to up" levels are needed for TQM. Improvement in TQM is to be in all service areas viz. *Library. Academic, Administrative and Finance*. The following processes are suggested in the colleges and universities in Kerala for quality up gradation, to begin with :

1. Performance of teachers to be appraised by students
2. Class P. T. A meetings
3. Department meetings
4. Time Table which includes teaching hours, seminars, exam etc.
5. Student Faculty Forums (Quality Circle)
6. Faculty Administrative Forums
7. Class-room feedback services, viz. exam, quizzes, seminars, etc.
8. Alumni
9. Student support services cell-sports, counselling, library, etc.
10. Social Audit team-To inspect documents and performance in every six months

(Performance improvement reporting system).

Depending upon type level and nature of education institutions appropriate models may be adopted. But the quality systems adopted and all procedures must be in *pucca documented form*. It will help further tuning up of the system and refinement of methodology. The need for quality in higher education in the present context of globalization and cross border mobility of students assume much significance. Quality acceptable to all stake-holders (internal and external), an over-enthusiastic, and not an adumbrating approach, is to be developed when reform measures place so much stress on Government withdrawing its intervention in vital service sectors like education. It is an increasingly sad spectacle that education is being multinationalised in the name of globalization. Quality in teaching - learning process intricate threads that weave the fabric of education. Multinational (internationalization is a misnomer) education poses a great threat to marginalized units in the playground of higher education.

Internationalization of higher educations stresses the need for quality management and to enhance the quality of higher education. Articles XVII of GATS agreement which come under WTO treaty relates to all measures that modify the "conditions of competition" to the detriment of foreign suppliers of like services. This clause forces us to treat domestic supplier of services and foreign suppliers alike. Also as per MFN (Most Favoured Nation) clause of WTO a benefit given to any foreign University may automatically be extended to all other 143 members of WTO. The Government of India de-

cided to allow foreign universities to start offshore campuses in India with effect from 2005. Applications of such universities will be screened by the *Nodal Agency* set up for promotion of higher education in India. The only condition is that those institutions which are accredited in their respective countries would be allowed to apply for offering their programmes in India. There will be a torrential entry of foreign players in the coming days, which may even lead to large scale commercialization.

As per the Xth plan document on higher education universities and colleges should generate 25% of their budgetary requirements and matching grants will be provided in future (50% of total expenditure), for which NAAC accreditation is compulsory. Another major recommendation is the setting up of an *Internal Quality Assurance Cell* in all Colleges and Universities in India to ensure quality standards. The *cafeteria based system* suggested would also entail introduction of a credit-based system allowing students to *pick and choose* the subjects they want to take up. All stake-holders are compelled to *acclimatize* to the changing education scenario; be it good or not.

Accreditation or Certification by Outside Agencies are highly relevant in the context of increasing competition, since internationalization and privatization pose a great threat to economic, political academic and cultural fabric of our society. In this context one should understand that QUALITY should not be compromised in the field of higher education. Quality goes in hand with accreditation or certification by some outside agency. NAAC is an accrediting agency implementing the pro-

cess of Assessment and Accreditation (AA), which enjoys the acceptance and appreciation from Academia. But at present NAAC is not focusing on follow up procedure and further monitoring of the accredited institutions. The International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) also quadifies a set of practices that can be put in place by institutions world wide. Conformance to a set of uniform standards will ensure universal acceptance of our service. ISO set out standards to select performance indicators which can be used to asses performance against criteria. The ISO 9000 series developed a quality approach known as Quality Management System. The ISO set up a base level for TQM and is based on a documented quality system. ISO focus on follow up procedure and constant monitoring of quality. A surveillance audit is conducted in every six months and non-conformance of quality will attract cancellation of quality certification. ISO 9001 certified and NAAC accredited colleges and universities are probably head and shoulders above non-certified, non-accredited groups. NAAC quadifies the following practices to ensure and evaluate the performance of educational institutions.

1. Curricular Aspects
2. Teaching-Learning and Evaluation
3. Research Consultancy and Evaluation
4. Infrastructure and Learning Resources
5. Student Support and Progression
6. Organization and Management
7. Other Healthy Practices.

TQM need to be implemented in all colleges and universities even if there is no accreditation or certification, to take the bull of internationalization by the horns. The faculty and staff will be experiencing the pleasure of working in tight time schedule, whether accredited or not. Let us wait and watch to see whether TQM is a Panacea or Placebo. The leadership must not only "talk the talk" but also "walk the talk". (Sytsma, 1996).

References

1. P.K. Tulsi (2001), Total Quality in higher education, *Reforms and Innovations in Higher Education AIU, New Delhi*
2. Hansen, W. Lee (1993), Bringing Total Quality Improvement into the College Classroom, Higher Education
3. K.B. Powar (2002), Internationalization of Higher Education, AIU, New Delhi
4. K.B. Powar (2002), Internationalization of Indian Higher Education, AIU, New Delhi
5. Papers presented by Bryan R. Cole, Shang-Shing P. Chou, Paul Nugraha, Ellen Gunawan and Barry J. Banny in the Seminar on *Total Quality Management of Institution for Higher Education in Asia*
6. Krystyna Zoladkiewicz (2002), Total Quality Management in Higher Education: The Spanish Experience, siempre.unizar.es/relint/qa.htm.
7. Robert Cornesky et.al (2002), Implementing Total Quality Management in Higher Education. www.at.woodpublishing.com/books/46.htm. □