Ignorance Of Total Quality Management In Higher Education In The 21st Century

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ABSTRACT

This article attempts to look at the range of contributions of total quality management. The higher education system is one of the key elements in the realization of sustained total quality management and socio-cultural development policies. University research centers and higher education institutes are in charge of training expert personnel and scholars while providing qualified services. Therefore, through its output, the higher education system paves the way for development. India needs to examine its concern with making its institutions qualitative and competitive by world standards. Thus, both the students and industry have become quality conscious. Quality improvement involves statistical tools, consumer research, goal-setting, teamwork, problem-solving, human recourse development, and strategic planning. A vision statement communicates key values for today as well as for the future. Implementation of a quality management system should be done, preferably with the help of a consultant to ensure success. In other words, higher education should prove its efficiency by responding to the needs of the country's development and by offering relevant outcomes.

Keywords: Total Quality Management, Higher Education

INTRODUCTION

$\mathcal{Q}$uality and relevance have come to be the centre of focus of higher education in India. However, most literature on the issue relates to contributions made by the University Grant Commission, universities and scholars. The contributions of higher education quality and management have been either ignored or side-lined. This paper attempts to look at the range of contributions of Total Quality Management.

The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) came into being in India in 1994 as a result of deliberate government intervention to help institutions be proactive, to identify their own strengths and weaknesses, and to motivate them to integrate quality initiatives for attaining equity, excellence, and efficiency. The National Assessment and Accreditation Council's vision is to make quality and relevance the defining elements of higher education through a combination of self and external quality evaluation, promotion, and sustenance initiatives. The National Assessment and Accreditation Council has assigned a comprehensive role for the management of institutions to achieve excellence, efficiency and equity.

Clarity and transparency in the process of admission and recruitment of faculty members serves best to ensure excellence and efficiency. Management has the following saying about the admissions policy and practice: "Whom and how to admit a student depends on what the management philosophy is all about."

The most crucial factor in ensuring excellence of teaching, learning, and evaluation is the quality of the faculty members. Management has a role to play in recruitment, and if no other influences are involved, it will automatically ensure outstanding academic performance.

Without the tacit support and participation of management, the head of an institution is unable to insure reward and punishment and various promotional mechanisms to bring out the 'best of the faculty and students. One of the weakest areas in the majority of affiliated colleges in India is research and consultancy. There may not be many teachers qualified and interested enough in research for self-improvement or for guiding students and taking

up research projects. Research and consultancy are not mandatory like teaching and evaluation.

The quality of student's learning is assumed to improve when education is well-managed. If aims and objectives are clear, if resources that assist the achievement of those aims are properly distributed, and if other matters that bear on relationships, self evaluation, assessment, planning, and reporting are thought out and carefully put into practice, students will be better educated.

To achieve this, information has to be shared among several participants. The importance given to better education and training differs from country to country. In a comparison carried out by the National Economic Development Council and Manpower Services Commission, it was said that the concern for sound, basic education is voiced strongly in three countries; namely, the United States, Japan and Germany, as it is in England, but nowhere more so than in the United States. Americans think they have lost more ground than others and are now making great efforts to catch up. Competency testing in education is rapidly growing. A recent study suggests that Germany's basic education leads to better examination and performance than British and Japanese education systems, which have always insisted on high achievement in the basic subjects. What must be considered is that success has been related to demonstrated achievement in a set of interrelated subjects.

NEED AND IMPORTANCE

As many as 90,000 students in 2007 went to the United States, England, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, or other European countries for higher education. The trend is increasing because higher education in India is not for everyone and the quality in foreign education is simply available, but at a high cost. Each student spends around Rs 15 lakh (about $35,000 US dollars) per year, yet they are going. India needs to examine its concern with making its institutions qualitative and competitive by world standards. This is essential to avoid brain drain and to fulfill the dream of becoming a developed nation by the year 2020, which has been suggested by former Indian president Dr.Abdual Kalama, the father of Indian missiles and the atomic bomb. India can fulfill the aspirations of a younger generation if and only if it leads to quality, research, innovation, international relation patenting, and hi-tech start-ups to make, use and sell.

Both students and industry have become quality-conscious and they are willing to pay the necessary cost. People expect more, but universities are not able to give. They put the blame on the financial deficit. Truly, they are spending resources unproductively. Many institutions have five-star infrastructures, but the academic culture is obsolete. For example, the capacity utilization of installed facilities in most of the institutions is too low. Most of them open at ten in the morning and close at five in the evening whereas the counterpart institutions in developed countries open at eight in the morning and close at eleven at night, or sometimes later. Some of the facilities (libraries, labs) in developed countries, like the United States and England, are open 24 hours, and in these countries, the libraries remain open 24 hours year round. Indian institutions are spending money, effort and time, but fruitlessly because there is almost a complete lack of scientific approach in governing (controlling an institution), which is the theme of this paper.

The Total Quality Management approach emphasizes quality assurance by providing quality inputs. It has made a change in the performance of organizations around the world. The Japanese economy became a powerhouse by using Total Quality Management. Dr. Deming, one of the pioneers, is practically adored in Japan. The best institutions of higher education in the world are using Total Quality Management, by virtue of which they have reached a high rating, and it can also bring about a change in institutes in India. It is necessary for the governing boards to prescribe Total Quality Management. They should provide visible undeniable support for its implementation, and it is necessary to have an alignment of all people in the organization to have a world-class vision. The curricula need to be matched with the requirements of tomorrow and the day after.

There are professors and staff who like to contribute in the best way to improve quality, but there are circumstances that prevent them from reaching their full potential. What kind of circumstances? Total Quality Management identifies them. It is for policy makers sitting in "All Indian Council for Teaching Education" (AICTE) and "University Grand Commissions" (UGC), without any delay, to initiate steps for installation of quality assurance cell. Accreditation will become meaningful only if the cell for quality is set up.

IMPERATIVES OF TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Quality can be improved by external agencies, such as All Indian Council for Teaching Education and University Grand Commissions, through inspections. It has, however, to be supplemented by internal efforts within the institution. It is here that quality assurance plays a key role. Having resources, enthusiasm, and common sense is good, but having scientific quality assurance is essential.

The students in both private and public institutions deserve the best possible quality to fulfill the national dream of Indians becoming a super power, and it is the duty and professional responsibility of governing boards of trustees (top management) to provide best possible education.

Professors and administrators have to be using management systems competent by international standards and they ought to have a professional commitment and obligation to employ the best practices.

The competitive imperative stems from competition prevailing in education. The best students and the world faculty members can be attracted only if the institute is professionally managed; therefore, the institutes can remain on the top.

Institutes have to be accountable to the government and society, which Total Quality Management (TQM) enables them to do.

The cost of ignoring quality assurance is too high. It is letting the nation lag behind in the world's brain race, resulting in a low standard of living. As a result, the institutions tend to lose the best university professors, teachers, students, and reputation.

Total Quality Management can't be purchased; it has to be practiced step-by-step and developed by conscious efforts. This cannot happen overnight, as it has not happened in developed countries. It does not provide instant success. It will bring up new difficulties and challenges. It is a slow process, but the benefits are long-term. Total Quality Management enables institutes to develop a self-assessment culture, so it is essential to be progressive on a sustained basis.

PRINCIPLES OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Quality assurance believes that "prevention is better than a cure"; for example, eating good food is essential for good health. With this logic, the method prescribes control on inputs. The Traditional Quality Control concept is obsolete. It is the lack of application of scientific systems that hold up quality, not the shortage of resources.

Efficiency of the system is at the root. In institutions with qualified systems, people tend to work more efficiently. Bad systems are found to cripple the innovative people.

1. Quality is a continuous improvement. It is the system that matters. System improvement is not a one-shot affair; it is an unending journey. It requires a deliberate and persistent attempt in a systematic way.
2. Quality does not come by chance or by accident. People are not the problem, but the system is.
3. Quality is everyone's job from top to bottom.
4. Quality is continuous improvement (Kaisen); i.e., working slowly and steadily, like the tortoise that won the race.
5. Quality comes when the leaders are passionate.
6. Quality comes through strategy of better human resource development.
7. Quality comes when every professor succeeds in igniting the minds of students.
8. Quality is empowering professors.
9. Quality is fear reduction in the minds of employees.
10. Quality is recognition and reward.
11. Quality comes through better teamwork.
12. Quality is measurement of input and output by using statistical methods.

13.   Quality is systematic problem-solving.

14.   Quality comes through opinion surveys for understanding customer's needs by statistical methods.

15.   Quality comes through benchmarking; i.e., by comparing, preferably with the best of the world, the following:

- What the counterpart institutions elsewhere in the world are doing and how they are doing.
- What the teachers in the best institutions do.
- Finding out if they are passionate about teaching and research.

16.   Quality comes when everyone does the work right in the first instance. It requires hard work, but essentially smart work.

17.   Quality is meeting or exceeding the students' needs. If you do not satisfy the students, someone else will. If institutions do not offer better education, students will go somewhere else.

INSPECTION DOES NOT IMPROVE QUALITY

1.   Quality improvement involves statistical tools: consumer research, goal setting, teamwork, problem-solving, Human Resource Development (HRM), and strategic planning.

2.   Quality goes beyond accreditation. Accrediting agencies, program reviews, standing committees, local inspection committees, and control-minded governing boards and well-intentioned task forces, by themselves, will never be able to improve quality. Most of these quality-causing mechanisms view quality from an inspection perspective, which is defeated scientifically.

Inspections do not result in the decrease in the number of defects. In fact, they increase it. Accreditation measures quality, like a thermometer.

Impressing prerequisites of quality on the minds of people, government, and people's representatives is necessary. If quality is important, it must be well articulated so that legislators can make it obligatory.

ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTATION

1.   It requires creation of a cell in the institution.
2.   It requires a team of leaders to develop a vision and office of quality assurance.
3.   It requires an implementation team.
4.   It requires internal and external networking.
5.   It requires an advisory team.
6.   It requires support from the top.
7.   It requires planning and designing questionnaires and feedback from customers.

The word total in Total Quality Management stands for "total number of systems, total number of persons, students, activities, customers, stakeholders, and inputs and outputs."

Satisfy all of the students and quality follows. Some of the customers are:

1.   Students
2.   Faculty members
3.   Alumni
4.   Industry
5.   Staff
6.   Government
7.   Society
8.   etc.

The aim of the institute should be to satisfy each and every student without exception. The institute has to

respond to a multi-student environment. Satisfying students is a representation of quality and total Quality Management makes the institute preferable.

The leadership of an organization must, by words and good deeds, convey the message that student satisfaction, through a process of continuous improving quality, is the responsibility of every member of the organization. Inappropriate systems create problems, regardless of a person or persons. Therefore, systems should be tended to with utmost care. Incentives should be given to remove deficiencies.

Remove the barriers which take away people's working pride. Do not ignore anyone, for ignoring is demoralizing. Make sure that expectations are clear and well understood to create a positive environment. The expectations must become important and humorous. It is impossible to feel ignored if someone is paying attention.

A quality circle is a mechanism that involves all from top to bottom. Small groups of people analyze and evolve solutions to current problems. Solving-problems in such a way that they do not continue to occur is the essence of Total Quality Management. Reacting to crisis, known as the "fire-fighting approach", is not good.

A little praise goes a long way in keeping most people proud. Individuals are like flowers, which need watering regularly; without it, they wither. People become mediocre without encouragement and by abandonment. If maintained proudly, they deliver quality.

There were two stonecutters. One was emotionally involved in building a temple and he was found doing a fine job. The other stonecutter was rather sour, and disgruntled. He was also involved in building the temple, but he was not doing his job as fine as the other. He was seen as unhappy because he did not know the noble cause for which he was working.

A systematic approach to quality management is necessary. This is given by Total Quality Management. Institutions need a new approach to managing human and fiscal resources. Quality management is not a one- shot affair, but an on-going journey.

Increased funding will not improve quality if we do not allocate resources wisely. This demands Total Quality Management. If we do not use funds to promote distinctiveness, and if we are not able to create students' satisfaction, the investment will be unproductive.

DIMENSIONS OF SERVICE QUALITY

*Access***:** Maintaining student-driven office hours is desirable and effective communication with students is important. Providing efficient telephone and e-mail service provides easy access.

*Keeping student informed***:** Explain, in writing, what services will be provided by the institution, what the costs are, and the short- and long-run visions of the institution. Assuring the customer of the intentions of the organization is essential.

*Competence***:** The institution should spell out and justify how it is competent, having the necessary skills and knowledge. It should demonstrate its excellence in its teaching job through an analysis of results. Appropriate indicators should explain the research capabilities.

1. **Courtesy:** Treating students with dignity and honor. Extending equal treatment to all is desirable.
2. **Credibility:** Honesty, trustworthiness, having fair policies in recruitment of deserving candidates.
3. **Reliability:** Consistency of performance and dependability. Getting rid of incompetent employees, reducing billing errors.
4. **Responsiveness:** Returning phone calls, replying to letters, and resolving complaints on time are the usual strengths.
5. **Security:** Freedom from risk, danger, doubt, assuring physical safety, protecting individual's privacy.

6.   **Tangibles:** Physical evidence of service and maintaining campus grounds.   Acquiring appropriate technology deserves greater attention.
7.   **Knowing the student:** Paying attention to individuals, developing a means to listen, and obtaining feedback at regular intervals.
8.   **Student Focus:** Institutions must change their attitudes in favor of students rather than being ignorant.

There can be no culture of quality without consistent and persistent distributed leadership throughout the organization.

AUTONOMY IS ESSENTIAL

An institute needs a considerable degree of autonomy and flexibility so that it can have the freedom to teach. It should also be free to research, without political or any other kind of interference, so that creativity and imagination are encouraged and that resources, including the time and energy of faculty, staff and students, are used effectively. The institute also needs the involvement of state as a force for meeting the public needs, for change, and for accountability. The problem, therefore, is not to eliminate the state's role, but to make it perfect.

1.   As a leader or professor, do you listen to the students?
2.   Do you only issue circulars or obtain feedback? Feedback loop is essential.
3.   Do you meet employees formally and informally?
4.   Do you conduct students' surveys to assess how satisfied they are?
5.   Do you simply talk on quality or engage in deeds?
6.   Are the curricula fit for tomorrow and the day after?
7.   Do you charge the minds of employees with new ideas every time you meet?

VISION STATEMENT

Vision statement ought to be stimulating, unifying, guiding, and distinctive. It is the foundation on which the "house of quality" is built.

What is the unifying distinctive vision? It is a vision that touches the hearts of people, inviting their emotional involvement. It provides an organizational rallying force. It evokes a meaning with reference to the institution proper. It allows an institution to enjoy a unique position in the higher education environment.

A vision statement communicates key values for today, as well as for the future, and it provides a sense of purpose for which the institution exists.

A vision Statement of a Typical World-class Institute states:

1.   It needs to be recognized internationally.
2.   The institute wants to be the world's best place to study and work.
3.   It intends each student to learn at least one additional language, to have three months of experience in a foreign country, and to show tolerance towards culture, beliefs, and faiths of others.
4.   The institute wants faculty to have international experience and to increase international research projects by 50% within the next five years, as well as to involve students in each of them.
5.   The institute wants to know what clients expect ten years from now and they want to excel their expectations.
6.   The institute wants employees to understand not only how to perform their jobs today, but how to significantly improve in the future.
7.   The institute wants to solve problems and meet challenges by a team, regardless of their job level.
8.   The institute aims at producing leaders and pioneers in technology.
9.   It intends to produce start-ups in high technology, raising the target from 20 to 40 in the next two years.
10.   The institute today obtains 150 patents every year. It intends to raise the target to 200 in coming years.

11.   It wants to discover newer technologies for the welfare of human kind. It intends to expand its net to the countries in Asia, Africa, Middle East and China.
12.   Existing vision statements in most of the institutes in India are meaningless because connecting links between vision and operating systems are missing.
13.   Top people must articulate quality in speeches and weave it with public relations. Top management should make their institute unique by becoming outstanding at all levels, nationally and internationally.
14.   Everyone needs to connect his duties and responsibilities with others within and outside the institution.

SOLVING PROBLEMS

Each university president is a magnet that attracts problems. The buck stops there.

Solving problems is not the answer to improving the quality. The solution lies in understanding and continuously improving the processes that give rise to problems.

In the first place, take in hand processes for improvement that are easy, then attempt difficult processes in due course. Do not attempt all at a time.

RULES

1.   Eighty-five percent of what goes wrong in an institution is due to poor systems. Only 15% fault is attributable to individuals.
2.   The process is incomplete without closing the result, known as "feedback satisfaction".
3.   The responsibility for quality in higher education does not lie at the top alone, but with everyone in the organization.
4.   It is essential to empower people within the organization to improve quality. If you do not empower people to improve quality, you can lose both the student and employee.
5.   If you do not empower people, you encourage and reward sloth.
6.   If you do not empower people, you will become inundated with bureaucrats and manuals.
7.   The organization becomes a collection of under-achievable goals.
8.   Quality Management needs to be viewed from others who receive higher educational services, rather than from those who provide them.
9.   Make a five-year quality improvement plan. Motivation alone is not enough to generate change.
10.   It essentially requires academic freedom to maintain a distance from a whole host of evils, both real and imaginary.
11.   The implementation team should consider preparing a Quality Manual, Quality Policy, Quality Procedure, and Quality every year.

STEPS INVOLVED IN IMPLEMENTATION OF TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT

1.   Conduct awareness programs.
2.   Make a survey of expectations of the students through well-designed questionnaires; then assess how satisfied they are.
3.   Discuss the results of the survey openly.
4.   Prepare a vision statement with the involvement of all students and employees.
5.   Identify the processes and systems inside and outside the institutions.
6.   The systems are:

Internal Systems for:

- Admission
- Teaching theory and practical
- Examination
- Practical training, Recruitment of faculty and staff

- Promotions
- Pension benefits
- Dealing with unions
- Finance and Account system
- Purchase system
- Campus maintenance
- Hostels, etc.

External Systems for:

- Interaction with industry
- Interaction with international institutes
- Industry
- Research
- Commercial exploitation of findings of research
- Links with university
- Links with government
- Fund raising etc
- Each of the processes needs thorough examination. Questions need to be raised
- How well is the existing process doing
- Why does the process exist
- How does it compare with the processes else where, preferably with the world's best institution
- Who benefits from the process
- Do the students benefit
- What are the inputs and outputs
- Who is their quality
- What are unfulfilled expectations
- What are the barriers in improvement
- What incentives are needed
- Do you celebrate success at each step
- What are opportunities and strengths
- What are the threats and weaknesses
- Have you prepared vision statement in joint meetings
- Have you conducted interviews with the people who are benchmarks

Each system has:

   a. Inputs
   b. Processes
   c. Outputs

To improve the system, one has to make analyses, benchmark, and use the "Planning-Development-control- Action (PDCA)" cycle on a continuing basis for each input, process, and output. Histograms, flow charts, pie charts, and other statistical methods are strongly suggested. Decisions should not be based on intuition, but on statistics.

CONCLUSION

The future of our children and grand children will be bright only if the institutions are professionally managed by using Total Quality Management. Therefore, good education is the product of good management. There are ample claims that reflection, proactive planning, and defensible allocation of resources lead to improvements in teaching and learning. Management is described in terms of change more often than in terms of standstill or

consolidation. Change is perceived in different ways by teachers, professors, governors, and parents. A considerable part of the manager's task is to reconcile and be reconciled with other people.

Total Quality Management is essential for survival and growth. If they do not do so, the authority of education in India will be labeled outdated and inefficient. Indian education may fall into the hands of foreign universities (American, French, British, or German).

Implementation of quality management systems should preferably be done with the help of a consultant; this ensures success.

Professors and staff should be trained and empowered.

Total Quality Management is made compulsory in England for all those organizations that draw financial aid from the government. Should this be a hint for India?

Total Quality Management enhances capacity utilization. Cost per unit of output is reduced and economic rate of return on investment is increased.

The Indian academic community should take initiative.

India does not have an institution among the 100 world's best universities. MIT, Wisconsin, Harvard, Oxford, and Cambridge are all using Total Quality Management, so they are considered world class universities.

Many institutions in India are spending money far in excess, but due to the lack of using the Total Quality Management approach, they do not excel.

Implementation of Total Quality Management does not require money; it results in savings. The members of legislature and governing boards should immediately take initiative to use Total Quality Management. Should the National Knowledge Commission prescribe Total Quality Management? Yes. The responsibility for using Total Quality Management lies with the policy makers in the governing boards of "All Indian Councils of Teacher Education" and the "University Grant Commissions" (AICTE and UGC).

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