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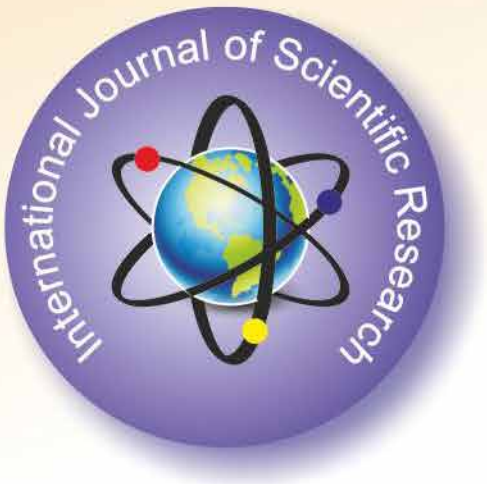

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Research Paper

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The Role Of Total Quality Management In Higher Education

Education

KEYWORDS :

Ramesh B. Sakhiya | M.A. (Eng.) , M.Ed. (Uni. First), PH.D.

ABSTRACT

Total quality management (TQM) is a management philosophy. The TQM philosophy helps an organization to achieve its objectives. Although TQM was developed for industrial purposes after the 1990's, TQM began to attract the attention of academics in higher education who saw its potential to increase the efficiency of the education offered in universities and colleges. This paper aims to show how higher education can benefit from the advantages of TQM and how it can be implemented.

1.0 Introduction

Total Quality Management is a topic of great consequence in business and academic circles. The philosophy of TQM (Total Quality Management) was developed by W. Edwards Deming to improve the efficiency of flexible work teams in US industry before the second- world war. Over the years Deming condensed TQM philosophy into 14 points which became a "top action item" for managements to adopt. Although TQM was originally intended for the industry sector, Deming expressed that his management principles could be applied equally to service sector, which also includes education. The issue of quality in higher education has been on the agenda for at least sixteen years in the USA.

2.0 What is TQM

Total Quality Management is a way of managing a business. The broad goal of TQM is continuous improvement by improving effectiveness, efficiency, cohesiveness, flexibility and competitiveness. TQM is an evolving concept that changes as new concepts and methods are developed, so there are many definitions of TQM. For example, Lord Tobin defines TQM as "the totally integrated effort for gaining competitive advantage by continuously improving every facet of organizational culture". Feigenbaum defines TQM as the "total quality control's organization." Philip kotler defines TQM as organization wide approach to continuously improving the quality of all the organization's processes, products and services. Strickland defines it as: TQM is both a philosophy and set of guiding principles that represent the foundation of continuously improving organization. TQM is the application of quantitative method and human resources to improve the materializing services supplied to an organization, all the process in an organization, and the degree to which the needs of the consumer are met, now and in the future.

3.0 Principles of TQM

TQM relies an soft concepts like leadership, respect, integrity, trust, honesty, commitment, customer satisfaction, openness and high ethics, clarity of vision, problem solving, continuous improvement, total involvement, training and education, ownership of problems, reward and recognition, error prevention, team work, instinct motivation, consistency and good communications. Reviewing literature one can see that there are many principles or concepts, sometimes with different words explaining the same idea. Here, these concepts are classified into three core principles. These core principles are customer focus, participation and team work and continuous improvement and learning.

3.1 Focus on the customer

The modern definition of quality centres on meeting or exceeding customer expectation. Thus, the customer is the principal judge of quality.

3.2 Participation and team work

Full use of the knowledge and creativity of the entire work force has to be developed for quality achievement. That is, everybody should be activated in some way so that they can feel that they are part of the project. Studies have shown that those people who have participated in the project are most positive, but those who have not had the possibility to participate may show negativity. To increase employee participation in projects it is necessary to establish on effective communication network system. This system should provide speedy and correct job related information to all personnel when it is necessary. Delivering TQM depends on all member parts of the organization working together.

Another important element of TQM is teamwork. TQM provides every one with an opportunity to be a part of team. Team work focuses attention on customer supplier relation and encourages the involvement of the total workforce in attacking systematic problems, particularly those that cross functional boundaries. Actually, TQM encourages people to educate and develop themselves to work in teams, to think for themselves and believe that things can be continually improved.

3.3 Continuous improvement and learning

Continuous improvement and learning should be an integral part of the whole system and its process. Continuous improvement refers to those improvements which may be either small and gradual or large and rapid. Improvement may take forms such as, enhancing value to customers, reducing errors, waste and cost, improving productivity, effective use of all resources and improving responsiveness. Major improvements in response times may require simplification of work processes and a simultaneous improvement in quality and productivity may also accrue.

Learning refers to adapting to change which leads to new goals and approaches. Learning takes place via feedback between practice and results. Good leadership, combined with the participation of everyone in the team, is the key success factor of TQM. The TQM approach is human recourses oriented management. All employees must be totally committed to TQM, from highest level of management to the lowest strata of the work force. For the successful - implementation of TQM, the total commitment of top management is necessary.

4.0 5.0 TQM in Higher Education

The TQM concept applied to higher education embraces all fields and levels of education and has an effect on the following : physical facilities (buildings, sport complexes, open field etc.), Academic infrastructure (laboratories, library, documentation, communication, information infrastructure etc.), Curriculums, examinations and evaluations systems, supplying academic and administrative personal and their improvement systems, research and publication, Institutional development plans (strategic planning), university – industry- society relations. Deming claimed his production system can be applied to service organization as well as to manufacturing organizations. TQM applies Deming's production model to higher education. This system depends on the answers to these main questions. Who are the stakeholders (customers and suppliers) ? What are the inputs and outputs ? What are the key processes ?

4.1 The stakeholders

The stakeholders are the customers and suppliers. The stakeholder groups can easily be extended beyond the members shown in the groups as customers and suppliers. Suppliers include families, high school, colleges, and business. The cus-

tomers include the business community, state sector, graduate school, society, student, and families, the students as the customer. Universities have a large number of different customers. University management should consider the relative importance of each customer group and balance and reconcile the interests of these diverse groups. Standford University defines its customers as "the student customer". Harvard University states that "the customer is defined as anyone to whom we provide information or service." Oregon- state- University stated that "our students are our purpose of existence." Nortwest Missouri State University bases its customer focus as "in the class room, the students anlong with the instructor are suppliers who produce a product (knowledge) that future customers' (employers or graduate school) will evaluate." All the above statements mentioned 'students', as being customers of higher education. Students as consumers of knowledge and services are considered to be "the main customer." Accepting students as an important group of customers can be taken as a revolutionary change in the management of quality in higher education. That group of students, as the consumers of education, should include potential students, existing students and graduate students. The university has different priorities and services for each group of students who make up the main customer group and attempts to satisfy their different needs, for example introductory courses for potential students, student counseling for existing students and alumni associations for graduate students.

4.2 The processes

Processes include all facets of teaching, student counseling, and scientific research. The first process is to assess the educational needs of students in terms of their existing knowledge, future career opportunities, and the needs of the community and its future development. Other processes to be followed are planning curriculum for courses, including allocating resources, arranging facilities, administration and support, and finally teaching and learning. The quality of all these processes must be effectively and visibly assured. Like manufacturing systems, educational systems can include a means by which costumer research can be conducted to evaluate and improve supply. For example, by observing students, analyzing test results, and using other resources from student feedback, instructors can assess their own effectiveness and develop strategies for improvement. Some colleges and universities survey their graduates and their graduates' employers to assess consumer satisfaction with their product. Feedback such as that mentioned, helps colleges, departments, and individual faculty members to redesign curriculum, improve course content, and improve services such as academic advising.

4.3 Inputs and Outputs

While industry usually has a product or service, educational institutions do not have perceived "products" in the generally accepted sense. Education has many outputs and inputs but the results from the process stage are often difficult to quantify in the short term. The inputs to the educational system are students, faculty, support staff, buildings and equipment and other facilities. Outputs include people with new knowledge and abilities and research findings.

4.4 Quality, Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement in Education

A university provides a service to students, parents, future employers of students, and to the community. The quality of that service is the combination of specified characteristics in a product or service. Quality can be measured by the degree of a customer's satisfaction with the product and of company services and the company's ability to deliver on time. Measurement of the quality of education is complex as the results of education are often intangible. Students quality is a perception which a lecturer, institution or an institution customer might have of the output product (the output product here being the student). That perception might be positive or negative depending on the quality criteria which are being measured.

The quality of education as measured by the main stakeholders, the students, albeit that the measured results may be based on subjective judgement, might include criteria such as their participation and influence in education programs, development of curriculum, classroom activities, the pedagogical ability and subject knowledge of lecturers, the amount of modern technical equipment available, suitable educational systems, social environment, physical factors such as fresh air, clean premises and absence of allergenic substances.

Quality of learning, on the other hand, could be seen as a quantitative measurement of student retention, mastery and application of knowledge over a given period of time. Quality of learning can be measured more objectively and problems in education can be solved by simple quality control methods, such as the "seven tools of quality control." These are pareto diagrams, cause and effect diagrams, stratification, check sheets, histograms, scatter diagrams and graph and control charts. The university assures students, their parents, and the community that it will create situations which allow its graduates to be high achievers through the quality of its educational services. This quality arises from the hard work of teachers, administrators and students. A University must try to convince students of the value of successful learning wherever possible.

Quality assurance and quality improvements are essential parts of TQM. Quality assurance by the university meets and creates expectation in the mind of the student. The perception of satisfaction is decisive phenomenon. Quality assurance needs to be documented and implemented to substantiate the quality assurance and to facilitate responses to feedback from the student. Quality control activities are performed by a voluntarily organized small group called quality control circle. This small group is an organization for continuous mutual self development and control. All stakeholders in a university, especially principals and academics, probably agree that there is always scope for the improvement of quality. A University must identify the quality gap, that is, the difference between "where we want to be" and "where we are now." For quality improvement to be successful everyone has to have a challenging and motivating role. Measurable progress in closing the quality gap indicates quality improvement.

The concept of TQM can indeed be applied to higher education but it must be modified to recognize some of the unique aspects of education. "Quality" is what the customer says it is, in the case of education, because the product in higher education is not a visible and tangible product in the same sense as a manufactured product. If customers are happy with the product and services, then the quality is acceptable. Lecturers can continuously improve their teaching techniques to more effectively, educate, train and influence their students. TQM can guide such efforts. Lectures must be open to ideas, constantly evaluate the processes they use, and innovatively apply TQM elements to their own teaching. TQM, basically "…. stress improvement in work processes."

6.0 How to apply TQM

Any educational institutions, which want to implement TQM, should develop its own model. Generally models developed for higher educational institutions consist of 3 steps.

Here the proposed model for universities consisted of nine steps. These are identifying, deciding, preparing, education and training, initiation, expansion, recognize / reward success, evaluation improvement and continuous learning. The first step is identifying. In this step, the top management must develop a complete understanding of what TQM is. The second step is deciding. It is relatively easy to make top management aware of the need for change, but it is difficult to get top management commitment. A change in commitment requires corporate behavioural change. So top management must decide to apply TQM and accept a corporate strategy "to provide quality education, research and related services to continuously satisfy the needs of stakeholders and achieve excellence through TQM." The third step is preparation. Here, the institution must identify "who are the stake-holders ?" and determine the relative importance of each stakeholder. Identifying the main customer is a time con-

suming process. The institution must identify specifically each of its customers and focus on the main customer to be served. When the stakeholders are defined their needs must be determined by customer surveys. An institution should determine its goals and objectives according to needs of the customer. To realize its goal and objectives the institution should establish an implementation team. The key task of the implementation team is to design a documented TQM implementation plan and to educate key personnel in TQM philosophy. In this step, management and administrative structural changes may be necessary to facilitate the flow of communication between and within the different levels of the organization.

The fourth step is educating and training. After educating and training of key personal, education of all personal is necessary. Without adequate training, employees will not be motivated or empowered to implement TQM and programs will fail. Education also develops a common language for easier communication between departments and level of groups etc. After the end of the education step, the implementation team should evaluate the education program and document the positive developments from understanding TQM.

The fifth step is initiation. This step is the key step in ensuring success. Care must be taken in choosing the first quality improvement project. After choosing the pilot project a pilot team must be formulated. This team must be include a representative from every level of the organization. Measurement is also necessary to check if the TQM performance standards set by the university are realistic or need amendment, bearing in mind that these standards were set in consultation with customers and with the staff responsible for the delivery of these standards.

The sixth step is expansion. Once the pilot project has been successfully completed, the project can be implemented through the whole organization. In this stage training and education will continue and new teams and quality control circles will be formed. Specialists can be hired to aid the success of the implementation of the project. The seventh step is recognition / reward success. This step is necessary to maintain employee morale and self interest. Successfully motivated people will encourage other departments to pursue TQM. Reward systems must be managed carefully. Monetary rewards should only be given to those employees who demonstrate that they have contributed to the successful implementation of the TQM program. The eighth step is evaluation. This should be carried out annually. In this stage any problems and obstacles which inhibit the success of TQM are identified, and possible suitable solution should be found and consensus building should be established. The last step is continuous improvement. TQM is a continuous, unending process of improvement. After evaluating the program, corrective actions have to be taken to narrow the gap between current situation and the proposed goals. Information on TQM progress should be reviewed and disseminated to levels of employees on a regular basis. For the continuous improvement of the 'stakeholders needs' a forward plan should be developed which includes the education and training of all personal involved in the TQM program.

7.0 Conclusion

TQM as a way of achieving and maintaining excellence is used in establishments of higher education. Many higher educational institutions have adopted total quality management. Through TQM methods, institutions have gained improved communication, raised employee morale increased productivity, improved process efficiency, and reduced waste and costs. The effects of using TQM in higher education are positive. Therefore it is advisable for all universities to adopt TQM to derive similar benefits. Every higher educational institution can design its own model according to its own circumstances. It is not necessary to introduce TQM across the whole institution. It can be applied to individual institution units. If administrators seriously and creatively apply the essentials of the TQM philosophy to management and teaching, they can positively satisfy the needs of the 'stakeholders' and increase their own potential as administrators.

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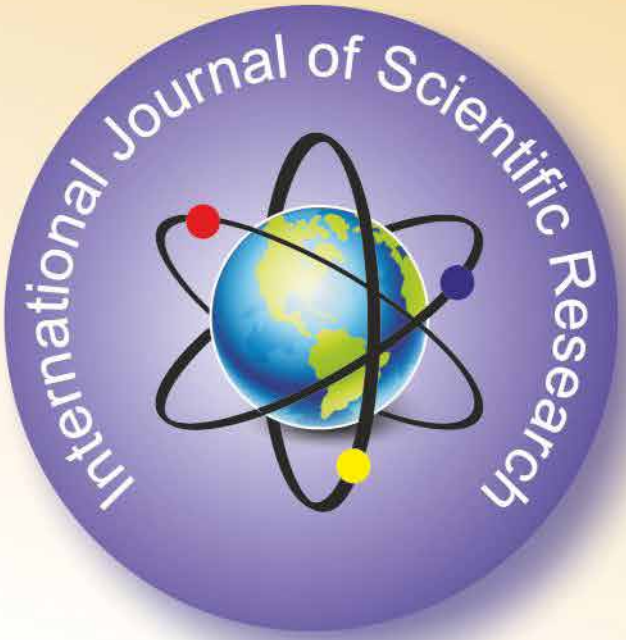

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