Possibilities of TQM (Total Quality Management) in the Higher Education in India

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ABSTRACT   *It is well recognised that higher education plays a crucial role in motivating economic growth and social solidity. With changes in higher education scenario, newer demands pose fresh challenges to the established education systems and practices in the country. Thus the need of the hour is over howling the existing system of higher education with total quality management (TQM). The concept, borrowed from industrial sector, is gaining grounds and is perhaps the most suitable externally imposed internal quality improvement model in managing the system and raising its excellence.*

KEYWORDS: Quality, TQM, Higher education, human resource.

Introduction

Today, the world economy is experiencing an unprecedented change. New developments in science and technology, media revaluation and internationalization of education and the ever expanding competitive environment are revolutionizing the education scene. It is well recognised that higher education plays a vital role in driving economic growth and social cohesion. Higher education is reported to have grown dramatically with more than 17,000 higher education institutions in the world (Giannakou 2006, p. 1). India is not far behind where, a paradigm shift has been noticed in higher education now a days, from 'national education' to 'global education', from 'one time education for a few' to 'lifelong education for all', from 'teacher- centric education' to 'learner centric education' (UGC report 2003, p. 16). These changes make new demands and pose fresh challenges to the established education systems and practices in the country. Because of interdependence and integration of world economy in recent years, the Indian higher education system has a new role and a challenge to provide to the nation and the world at large, skilled human power at all levels, having breadth of knowledge and confidence to effectively confront the social and economic realities.

Need for superior management of higher education

Higher education (HE) is now increasingly viewed as an international business (Baker 2002, p. 3) and thus, the need of the hour is maintaining quality in higher education. Quality in Higher Education environments is a complex and multi-faceted aspect (Cheng & Tam 1997, p. 23; Becket & Brookes 2006, p. 124). As a result, the measurement and management of quality has become a challenging task. Besides in lesser-developed countries, like India, private institutions are opening to meet student demand thereby creating competition with publicly funded Higher Education Institutions. In some instances, national governments may encourage this practice in order to realise the immediate economic benefits of keeping students in their own country (Sohail, Rajadurai & Rahman 2003, p.143) and the long-term benefits associated with qualified students remaining in the country and contributing to the economy of the nation (Mok 2005, p. 278). Whether competing or collaborating, higher education institutions are all seeking to serve the same student markets.

What and why TQM?

Of many models, mostly practised in industries, Total Quality Management (TQM) is best suited for Indian higher education systems. This model is also internationally favoured (Motwani & Kumar 1997, p. 132; Cruickshank 2003, p.1161). TQM 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. It can also be defined as a management approach of an organisation, centred on quality, based on the participation of all its members and aiming at long run success through customer satisfaction and benefits to all members of the organisation and to society (Wiklund, Wiklund & Ed-

vardsson, 2003, p. 99). The most commonly used critical TQM enablers cited in the literature are Placement, Infrastructure, Students\Faculties, Supporting staff, Curricula/Courses, Administration, Innovation/ Research activities (Chaudhuri, Ghosh & Mukhopadhyay 2010, p. 47). In a study undertaken by OECD (2006, p. 107), it was found that students' demand for Higher Education is driven by a number of factors, although the most important is frequently considered to be future potential earning power. In the same study it was found that the earning power for graduates was 8-20% higher than others without a degree. As such, a good job is associated with a good (read effective) degree, which in turn is associated with accountability (Welsh & Dey 2002, p.18; Mutala 2002, p. 110; Cruickshank 2003, p. 1161; Sahney, Banwet & Karunes, 2004, p. 147; Freeman & Thomas 2005, p.155). However, this expectation will only be realised if they leave higher education with the requisite skills demanded by employers, which in turn will help to encourage national economic growth. Burbules &Torres (2000, p.4) stated that these accountability pressures have led to the imposition of stringent quality assurance model in higher education institutions and hence the need for implementation of TQM. In Indian context, in terms of TQM, works of Thakkar, Deshmukh, & Shastree 2006, p.54-74 ; Popli 2005, p. 17-24 and Sahney et al. 2004, p. 145-159 are noteworthy.

Ten tenets in TQM

1. TQM emphasises systems thinking
An organization's effectiveness and efficiency in achieving its quality objectives are contributed by identifying, understanding and managing all interrelated processes as a system.

2. TQM emphasises Management by facts
Effective management is based on effective decisions which in turn are always based on the proper data analysis and information.

3. TQM emphasises team work
The effectiveness TQM relies predominantly on a team-based approach.

4. TQM emphasises participatory management
People at all levels of an organization are the essence of this tenet. Their complete involvement enables their abilities to be used for the benefit of the organization.

5. TQM emphasises Human resource development
Every individual has potential; the need is to tap this potential. This process of HRD also improves self introspection.

6. TQM emphasises action

7. TQM emphasises continuous improvement
One of the permanent quality objectives of an organization should be the continual improvement of its overall performance.

8. TQM emphasises long term planning

9. TQM emphasises continuous and comprehensive evaluation

10. TQM emphasises on effective leadership
Leaders of an organization establish unity of purpose and direction of it. They should go for creation and maintenance of such an internal environment, in which people can become fully involved in achieving the organization's quality objective (Swanson 2006, p. 115).

Conclusion
Challenges in higher education are no longer nation centric. They have already attained global dimensions, particularly after trade in services has been brought under the purview of the World trade Organisation regime and hence the need for implementation of TQM. TQM, hopefully, will help institutes in creating new knowledge, acquiring new capabilities and producing an intelligent human resource pool, through challenging teaching, research and extension activities so as to balance both the need and the demand of higher education.

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