

# Total Quality Management in Higher Education Institutions

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**Abstract** - The quality of higher education is everybody's concern today. Various studies and commission reports at official level has recognized the same and given recommendations for its improvement. Government and other constitutional agencies are taking necessary measures. But these alone, will not serve the purpose unless institutions and faculty take proactive initiatives and measures. A challenge of foreign institutions entering the Indian higher education is going to pose the threat of even survival of poor performing institutions. The advantages of Total Quality management have been valued by many companies around the world. Many organizations have achieved excellence and competitive lead by putting into practice TQM policy. Most of the principles of TQM can be implemented in the area of education and training. This paper highlights the essence of TQM and explains how higher education institutions can improve the quality by implementing TQM principles.

**Keywords** - Higher Education Institutes, Total Quality management, Product dimensions, Service Dimensions, Quality dimensions

## I. INTRODUCTION

Academic institutions offering higher education in general and those offering professional education in particular are undergoing a process of change similar to what business organizations have undergone a few decades ago when they were confronted by competition. The speed of change is driven by multiple factors. Demands from industry, information-age mind set of the students, increased competition and the renewed quest among academic community are some of the factors driving this change. To ensure that higher education, particularly professional education, is able to deal with market and technological changes coupled with global requirements, it is important for institutions offering higher education to use appropriate curricula, course materials and teaching methodologies that are not only up-to-date, but also effective from learner's point of view. The exponential growth of knowledge, exploding instructional technologies, enhanced access to practices of premier institutions, accessibility to knowledge, globalization of education etc require educators and faculty members to continuously evaluate themselves and improve upon their effectiveness. Higher education imparts in-depth knowledge and understanding so as to advance the students to new frontiers of knowledge in different walks of life (subject domains). It develops the student ability to question and seek truth and makes him/her competent to critique on contemporary issues. It broadens the intellectual powers of the individual within a narrow specialization, but also gives him/her a wider perspective of the world around. According to Ronald Barnett (1992) there are four predominant concepts of higher education.

1. Higher education as the production of qualified human resources: In this view, higher education is seen as a process in which students are counted as "products" absorbed in labour market. Thus, higher education becomes input to the growth and development of business and industry.
2. Higher education as training for a research career: In this view, higher education is preparation for qualified scientists and researchers who would continuously develop the frontiers of knowledge. Quality within this view point is more about research publications and transmission of academic rigour to do quality research.
3. Higher education as the efficient management of teaching profession: Many strongly believe that teaching is the core of educational institutions. Thus, higher education institutions focus on efficient management of teaching-learning provisions by improving the quality of teaching, enabling a higher completion rate among the students.
4. Higher education as a matter of extending life chances: In this view, higher education is seen as an opportunity to participate in the development process of individual through a flexible, continuing education mode.

Interestingly, all these four concepts of higher education are not exclusive; rather they are integrated and give an overall picture of higher education. If we look at the activities of colleges and universities, we will realize that teaching, research and extension form the three main functions of higher education.

## II. ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE SOCIETY

Higher education is generally understood to cover teaching, research and extension. Scientific and technological advancement and economic growth of a country are as dependent on higher education as they are on the working class. Development of indigenous technologies and capabilities in agriculture, food security and other industrial areas are possible because of our world-class higher education infrastructure. Higher education also provides opportunities for lifelong learning, allowing people to upgrade their knowledge and skills from time to time based on societal needs. The Kothari Commission (1966) listed the following roles of the universities (Higher education institutions in the modern society)

- To seek and cultivate new knowledge, to engage vigorously and fearlessly in the pursuit of truth, and to interpret old knowledge and beliefs in the light of new deeds and discoveries;

- To provide the right kind of leadership in all walks of life, to identify gifted youth and help them develop their potential full by cultivating physical fitness, developing the powers of the mind and cultivating right interests, attitudes and moral and intellectual values;
- To provide the society with competent men and women trained in agriculture, arts, medicine, science and technology and various other professions, who will also be cultivated individuals, imbued with a sense of social purpose;
- To strive to promote quality and social justice, and to reduce social cultural differences through diffusion of education; and
- To foster in the teachers and students and through them in the society generally, the attitudes and values needed for developing the “good life” in individuals and society.

### III. REASONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS SHOULD WORRY ABOUT QUALITY

As teachers, principals, heads of the department and policy makers in education we should worry about quality of teaching, programmes, and institution because of the reasons

1. **Competition:** We are entering a new regime, where competition among educational institutions for students and funds will be highly significant. With globalization and GATS (Global Agreement on Trade in Services), the educational environment will be seized by increased competition. In order to survive in such situation, educational institutions need to worry about their quality
2. **Customer satisfaction:** Students, parents or sponsoring agencies as customers of the educational institutions are now highly conscious of their rights or getting value for their money and time spent. They are now demanding good quality teaching and receiving employable skill set and thus we should constantly worry about the relevance of our courses and programmes to the needs of the market.
3. **Maintaining standards:** As educational institutions, we should always concern about setting our own standard and maintaining it continuously year after year. In order to maintain the standard, we should continuously make efforts to improve quality of educational facilities
4. **Accountability:** Every institution is accountable to its own stake holder in terms of the funds (public or private) used on it. Concern for quality will ensure accountability of funds utilized and inform the stake holders about taking appropriate decisions. Thus quality can be considered as a monitoring mechanism.
5. **Improve employee morale and motivation:** Concern for quality as an institution will improve the morale and motivation of the staff in performing their duties and responsibilities. If quality system is in place, the internal process would be systematic making every department complementing each other's service domain and helping in developing internal customer satisfaction leading to high morale and motivation. Credibility, prestige and status: If institutions are concerned about quality, continuously and not once in a while. It will bring credibility to institutions and individuals because of consistency leading to practice, status and brand value.
6. **Image and visibility:** Quality institutions have the capacity to attract better stake holder support, like getting merit students from far and near, increased donation / grants from funding agencies and higher employer interest for easy placement of graduates. Credibility, prestige and status: If institutions are concerned about quality, continuously and not once in a while. It will bring credibility to institutions and individuals because of consistency leading to practice, status and brand value.
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### IV. CONCLUSION

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