

TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT WITH EDUCATION SERVICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Fatma Bolac

Institute of Management Business and Law, Business Administration, Doctoral Student,
Rostov On Don
Mersin University, High School Secretary, Mersin
e-mail: fatmabolac@mersin.edu.tr

ABSTRACT

In recent years there is intense competition among the local and foreign educational institutions as observed in other fields as well. In this competition, raising qualified students to meet the expectations of business world who will employ the graduates, becomes important. If higher education system becomes unsuccessful in raising qualified graduates (output), the cost of this failure shall be met by the enterprises by their providing training for their staff and by producing unqualified products and services. If it is desired to raise graduates having certain skills to meet the expectations of business world and having organizational culture and loyalty, higher education institutions should focus on studies relating with quality concept just like the enterprises. In the adjustment of Total Quality Management (TQM) to the higher education system, while student not obtaining training yet, forms the input of the process, the educated student graduating at the end of the training he obtains, forms the output of the process. Educated students also represent the product with all of the information and skills that are loaded during the process. Therefore, the purpose of Total Quality Management in higher education is to raise students meeting the predefined educational targets aiming to fulfill the expectations of people to whom services shall be provided while students, families of students, companies or institutions where students will work could be seen as the customers. The purpose of this study is to make the concept of Total Quality Management (TQM) be well understood and to examine its being adjusted for the educational services while making contribution to the development of quality of education. This is a study based on examination and investigation of literature aiming for the concept of Total Quality Management to be well understood and for making contribution to the quality of education by adjusting it for the educational services. It is thought that with Total Quality Management, contribution will be made for continuous development of higher education system and for improving the production power of country by graduating qualified students.

Keywords: Education, Educational Service, Higher Education, Quality, Total Quality Management

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays the quality topic is seen as being one of the concepts which is mostly mentioned and discussed. It is required for the individual to have quality in his daily life and to adopt it. Individuals who are conscious about the quality topic and who understand its importance, are able to take quality to the institutions and associations where they work and to contribute for the formation of qualified communities (Özgür et al, 2013). Students who are newly starting their higher educational lives, prefer institutions that provide more qualified educational service and enable qualified graduates to find jobs more easily (Ekinci and Burgaz, 2007). For this reason, the mission of higher educational institutions should be to have quality and to raise qualified people for the community and the business world. In order for the higher educational institution to attain sustainable excellence, it is aimed for it to set measurable targets and to works within the frame of EFQM excellence model with the support of all of the employees and top management (Sakarya, 2003).

Erasmus and Sokrates Student Exchange Programs that are being carried out as European Union Projects at higher educational institutions, have enabled for the quality topic to be felt more and for the total quality studies to be examined as currently. EU Educational and Youth Programs arrange collaboration at higher educational level. Its fundamental purpose is to improve the quality of higher education in Europe. At the same time with the purpose of establishing a European Educational field that is reputable, preferred worldwide and has high competitive power by making European Higher Educational Systems harmonize with each other, the studies carried out during Bologna process are being applied at the higher educational institutions. At the end of these studies, it is expected from higher educational institutions to improve the quality of education, to evaluate teaching, and to inspect quality issues (Penny, 2003).

This is a study which is based on investigation and examination of literature aiming for the concept of Total Quality Management to be well understood and for making contribution to the quality of education by adjusting it to educational services.

The purpose of this study is for the concept of Total Quality Management to be well understood and to examine the contributions made for the development of educational quality by adjusting it to the educational services.

EDUCATION

Education forms the attempt of a community to control its future by recreating its human resources and the fundamental of its shaping its future as being development focused marking its efforts to change its future. For the individual, education is the awareness of knowing where, when and why to use the information obtained (Özgener, 1998). Education is a process that exists all life long without being limited with school. The important future of this process being realized with or without being aware of it, is that it is continuous without having an end. The main important point is to get what is more correct and more quality during the interactions. Education has a contribution in development of communities and individuals.

In today's educational understanding, teacher is not the sole source of knowledge and the student is not a passive receiver of knowledge. School is transforming into an institution where information is being continuously reproduced where teacher and student take an active role in the production process of information. The purpose and rules of the institution are being determined by the common participation of all parties or partners being effected by the education. Therefore, the purpose and content of education is being constantly reviewed, updated and changed. At the same time, collective learning, project groups, and team works gain importance and importance is being attached to the concept of learning more than teaching and to learning strategies more than the educational methods (Şişman and Turan, 2002).

Types of education; 1. Formal education; organized/formal education and common-public education (formal education outside the school) 2. Non-formal education (informal education)

In the usage and production of information, the boundaries are eliminated while individuality, genuineness, flexibility, group sharing, common decision making, and especially the quality concept came to the forefront. The viewpoint being composed of these factors have made the quality concept come to the forefront. Quality search in education has turned into the effort of raising people who live by considering the environment, circumstance and the features of individuals in all conditions, and who change themselves and their environment (Paykoç, 1995).

QUALITY

The word quality was derived from the word "Qualitas" meaning how something is formed and it originates from Latin language. Attribution being the dictionary meaning of quality, is defined as how something is and the features distinguishing it from the other creatures (Doğan, 2002; TDK, 2015). Quality concept means the positive features as per the purpose of usage. At the same time, quality consists of excellence of a product or a service, compliance with

specified conditions or all of the features being related with the ability to meet the probable requirements (Öner, 2007; Koçel, 1999).

When higher education is considered, it is quite difficult to make the definition of quality or to find a single definition of quality that is accepted (Hamalainen, 2003). Quality in higher education is a multidimensional, multilayer and dynamic concept as it is not only related with the specified standards of a specific system, institution, program or discipline but it is also related with situational conditions of educational model, institutional tasks and targets. Therefore depending on these below mentioned particulars, quality could bear different meanings (Vlăsceanu et al, 2004):

- a) Various interest approaches of different beneficiaries or partners in higher education (student/university discipline/labor market/community/quality requirements being determined by the government),
- b) References of quality: Inputs, processes, outputs, missions, targets etc.
- c) Qualities and features of academic world which are worth evaluating,
- d) Historical period in the development of higher education.

Different definitions as regards to academic quality are (Vlăsceanu et al, 2004):

1. Quality as being excellence: According to this traditional and selectable academic approach, academic quality can only come out with the best standards.
2. Quality as fitness for purpose: This concept emphasizes mainly the accepted standards. (For example standards of an accreditation or a quality assurance institution).
3. Quality as being fitness of purpose: This concept focuses more on whether the institution has adequately realized the target and mission defined for itself or not instead of conformity with external standards.
4. Quality as improvement: This concept focuses on continuity of a permanent improvement effort and it emphasizes the responsibility of institution to use the corporate autonomy in the best way.

Higher Education Accreditation Committee defines quality as “compliance for purpose” (CHEA, 2001).

TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT (TQM)

Competition that develops towards globalization and increases in every field in our time and business and management approach directs institutions towards new searches. One of the points reached at the end of these searches is “Total Quality Management”. As we look at the words forming “TQM, the word “Total” denotes each unit, each function and each process relating with that product and service. As “Quality” concept depends on perception it differs from one individual to other. In general sense it means production of a product and service in accordance with predefined purpose and standards. “Management” denotes production of a product or a service with a method and leadership system that is accepted by all members. It contains all of the resources required for excellence and technical principles being applied for activities (Numanoğlu, 2001; Yıldırım, 2002; Şişman 2002; Doğan, 2002).

It is accepted that TQM has two fundamental principles. First important principle is meeting the request of customer for providing quality service and the second one is enabling the participation of customer while providing quality service.

Basic five elements of TQM are (Yıldırım, 2002; Budak ve Budak, 2004);

1-To be customer focused: To adopt the approach that customer defines quality. Customer satisfaction is divided as internal and external. Satisfaction of external customer is dependent on the satisfaction of internal customer.

2- Continuous Development and Improvement (KAIZEN): It is a Japanese term. It denotes continuous development. Its logic lies in that the outcome of developments realized uninterruptedly with small steps will be big.

3- Full participation: It means that everyone shall be responsible from quality. It is team work with top management leadership. Besides improving the quality of work with the creativity of staff, it also denotes making important contributions to motivation and improving efficiency.

4- “First Human” Approach: Giving value to people in the management of enterprise, shall improve labor force efficiency, the quality of work and the efforts made for the enterprise. The fundamental principle of TQM is “Do it right in the first place and avoid any failures before they occur.”.

5- Management Leadership and Responsibility: Belief of top management in TQM will enable the fulfillment of their responsibility.

SERVICE QUALITY IN EDUCATION

Quality in education is defined as compliance of educational services produced with the expectations of community or the degree of meeting the expectations of community (Saran et al, 2004). Furthermore, quality in education could also be defined as meeting the purpose and functions of education and realizing its functions as well as form and degree of success.

Quality in education could be investigated both as quality in design and as quality in process. Quality in design is both related with output (for example an academic program that meets the requirements of students) and process (for example curriculum, tools and equipment, other factors having impact on planning and program). Quality in output means succeeding with obtaining the desired outcomes (Özdemir, 2002).

There are two factors influencing quality in education. Internal factors are manager, academic personnel, educational programs, education environment and the other employees. External factors are service areas, application areas, technological developments, public requirements, families and upper educational institutions (Numanoğlu, 2001).

Service is defined as all kinds of activities being realized by others to meet the requirements in general as having the consumption aspect as it is produced (TDK, 2005).

Service quality is the degree at which the service provides the desired outcome. Service quality covers the skills of employee, speed of service process or the product attained at the end of service provided and the satisfaction had by the customer. This situation is directly related with fulfillment of customer expectations.

Features of service quality are (Eroğlu, 2004); reachability, reactivity, timeliness, correctness, professionalism, reliability, understandability, continuity, flexibility, environment, and appearance.

Service quality in education is a relative concept depending on the perception of those receiving the services. For quality in education, the inputs are highly important. Importance of inputs is seen in their reflection on design, process and output.

TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN EDUCATION

When it is mentioned about quality in education, one of the concepts that first comes to the minds is “Total Quality in Education”. Total quality management in education can only be possible with a management approach having students at the center. Student centered education, enables the student to show all of the potentials he has got and to become successful. Therefore in student centered education, it is needed to concentrate on the real requirements of the students. It is aimed for the higher education institutions to understand the requirements of students well and to reflect them on academic program and the course curriculum. Basic features of student centered education: (Şişman ve Turan, 2002; Bridge, 2003).

- 1- To set high standards and expectations for all students.
- 2- Not to forget that students have different learning methods.
- 3- To give priority to active learning.
- 4- To have an idea about the learning process and learning capacity of students by evaluating the outcomes of educational process.
- 5- By defining the expectations of students and families, to try to eliminate the deficiencies in learning.
- 6- To help the students during the stages of all educational process and even during their being employed in a job.

In the educational service provided to students, it is important to measure the level of quality perceived and the level of performance perceived. These variables are extracurricular activities, physical conditions, education and learning, support units, and participating in the decisions relating with education and university (Yenen and Gözlü, 2003).

Factors having impact on the perception of academic lecturers are working conditions, education support units, internal physical conditions and external physical conditions. Besides, expectations of academic lecturers from the university and the government are also perceived as effective factor. Another factor is work environment as being an important element as regards to quality aspect (Yenen and Gözlü, 2003).

When evaluated in general it is considered that the quality aspects in higher education shall have impact on graduation ratios, employment of graduates and their salary levels, ratio of students continuing with higher education, grades obtained in standard exams, efficient usage of resources, timely reporting, written accountability, attainability of education by those who want to benefit from education, class attendance and ratio of teaching members/students, evaluation based on education, development of students to apply the new information they learned in the class, promoting learning all life long, professional development opportunities for education members, benefit of learning for the students, developing active citizenship skills and habits, developing critical awareness, to create common respect among teachers and students and a mutual learning environment, as providing academic freedom for students and education members.

As a conclusion, quality is the philosophy of giving value to people and to develop and renew continuously. Quality is closely related with the concepts of change, development, reform and restructuring. In the reflection of quality on individuals, its features as continuously searching ways to solve problems, being creative, not being self-focused when realizing the areas of interest and purposes, acting fairly, being democratic and genuine in human relations, and being flexible and complementary in sociocultural topics (Bakioğlu and Baltacı, 2010). Quality in higher education is evaluated in various ways with respect to individuals and everyone perceives quality from their viewpoint. Depending on this situation, the individual either has belief in quality or shows resistance to it. However, none of these changes the reality of maintaining and developing quality. If the quality process of educational service is at excellent level, the success ratios of students and their being employed gets improved. As the quality perspective gets improved in higher education, institutions can realize the expectation of employers for qualified human resources. Because higher education institutions make the graduates gain their employment skills. These institutions are also the collaborators of research and education. Those building systems, following up, correcting, applying, developing, reevaluating, and competing with high standards to provide quality education service in the higher education institutions where TQM is taken as basis, make qualified students get graduated and they make contribution to the production force of their country.

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