

ADVANTAGES OF IMPLEMENTING A QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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Annotatsiya: 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 recognized 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).

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On present evidence, there can be little doubt that education is being affected by the assault of globalization. With the continual increase of global and more and more powerful global multinational companies, more and more nations try to adopt their educational systems to cater for the needs of these global multinational economic giants. Nation states are in danger of becoming the servants of global markets with their educational systems providing the human resources to feed them.

Education should train one's powers of 'reflective thinking'. Genuine freedom, according to Dewey, is intellectual; it rests in the trained power of thought, in the ability to 'turn things over', to examine problems in depth. Reflecting thinking is based on five steps between recognition of a problem and its solution [3,4,5, and 6]:

1. Suggestions of a solution
2. Clarification of the essence of the problem
3. The use of hypotheses
4. Reasoning about the results of utilizing one of the hypotheses
5. Testing the selected hypothesis by imaginative or overt action.

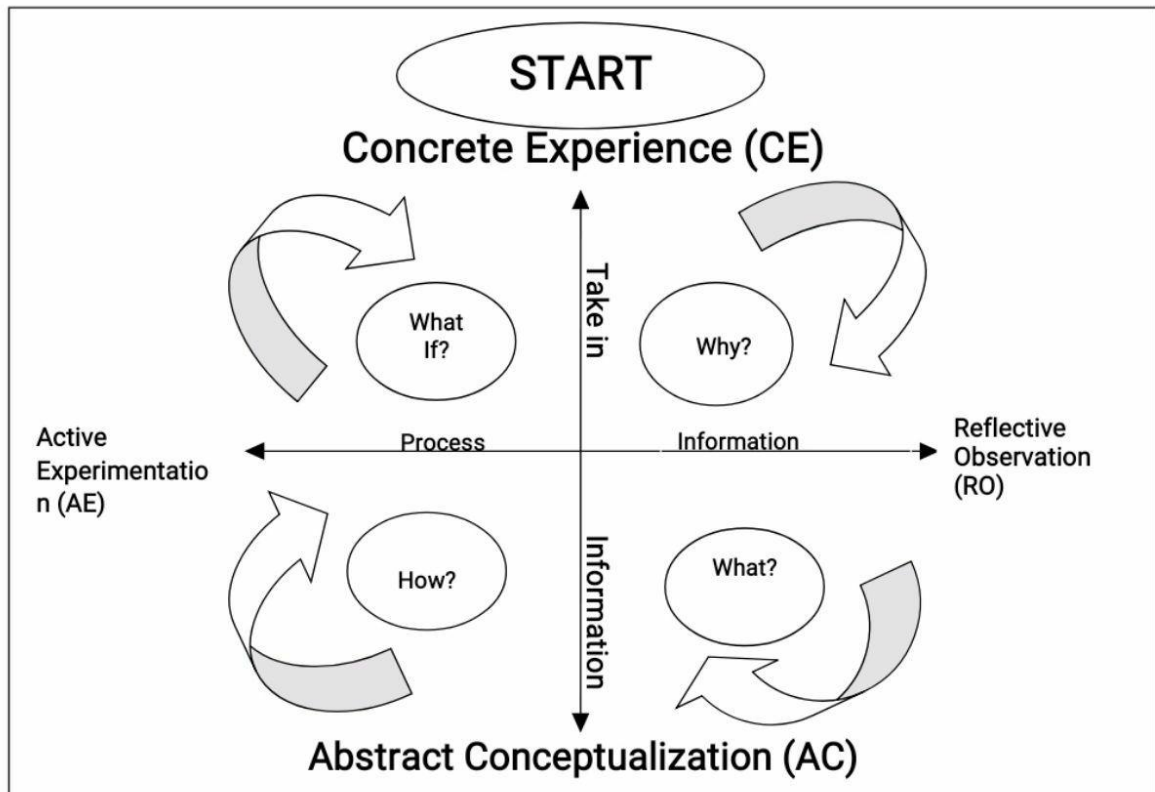
Mere imitation, dictation of steps to be taken and mechanical drill may give quick results, but they may have the adverse effect of strengthening traits likely to be fatal to reflective power. True learning of skills necessitates their acquisition as the results of the use of the intelligent powers of the mind.

There is a beautiful description by Michael Polanyi of the learning experience of medical students attending a course in the X-ray diagnosis of pulmonary diseases[7] and a number of factors emerge from it have been summarized[8]:

1. The discovery that we need to know something that we do not know,
2. Immersion in the problem,
3. Puzzlement,
4. Active engagement; obtaining information and testing of hunches,
5. Repeated exposure to the learning situation,



6. The presence of an expert who sets up the situation, acts as a model of competence and answers questions,
7. Periodic insights,
8. Pleasure in gaining insights,
9. Doubt that one will ever really understand, and
10. Faith that one will eventually understand.



Kolb learning model[10]

Effective teachers are by definition reflective practitioners. Continuous progress in their practice, the search for novel and better ways of engaging and challenging their students as well as themselves are second nature. They have been trained to analyse their performance as communicators and to objectively look for ways to make the difference, i.e. reflective practice is an established part of the teaching/learning culture or is it?

Nevertheless, if teaching is to be a meaningful activity, every teacher must be allowed the luxury of TIME and TOOLS to step back and assess their individual part within the educational context. This clearly will be a struggle and every struggle embodies a dilemma to which a balanced but optimised solution **must** be sought. It is only by reflecting on our own experiences that we can make the necessary changes; clarifying the vague, breaking through barriers, changing through positive experiences, gaining insight, learning, engaging our creativity, allowing our potential to flourish.



Ten tenets in TQM

1. TQM emphasizes 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 emphasizes team work

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

4. TQM emphasizes 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 emphasizes Human resource development

Every individual has potential; the need is to tap this potential. This process of HRD also improves self introspection.

6. TQM emphasizes action

7. TQM emphasizes continuous Improvement

One of the permanent quality objectives of an organization should be the continual Improvement of its overall performance.

8. TQM emphasizes long term planning

9. TQM emphasizes continuous and comprehensive evaluation

10. TQM emphasizes 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.1555)

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 Organization 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.

The concept of total quality management (TQM) is quite popular in management circles today. TQM refers to a set of philosophies that re-orient management systems to focus on the efficient achievement of organizational objectives in order to exceed customer expectations and maximize stakeholder value. In the last two decades, TQM have enabled... increase the companies



competitive advantage in costs and quality, and to consequently gain significant global market share in a number of variety of industries.

TQM in many ways is formalized common sense. Being customer-driven, it impacts on every process, job, and person in the organization. It becomes necessary to develop a systems approach to the organization taking into full consideration the nature of the interaction between departments. As such, facts and ideas generation, measurement and feedback systems, team work, cross-functional activities, customer interface, all become important beacons in the pursuit of excellence through TQM.

As in many other countries around the world, our institutes are not customer-driven; rarely consult the stakeholders in defining a mission; are highly departmentalized with the little communication across departments; place little value on the opinions of persons outside administrative circles, do not practice continuous improvement; rarely manage by facts; are inflexible; rarely strive for excellence; do not benchmark their performance against “the leaders”; and they manage through a system of control versus facilitation. What kind of performance can you expect from our universities?

A total quality approach to running our universities is necessary for the following reasons: 1) We live in an extremely dynamic world with depleting resources. Since schools have to equip learners to function to their fullest potential in such an environment, then the schools themselves must be dynamic and flexible. 2) The expectations of students, industry, parents, and the public in general vis a vis educational priorities, costs, accessibility, programs, and relevancy, make it imperative for schools to undergo continual assessment and improvement. 3) Economic conditions have created greater concern about economic well-being and career flexibility. Schools have to respond to this real fear of career obsolescence and career inadequacy. 4) Funding resources for education are diminishing at a rapid rate. Schools have to find innovative ways of cutting costs without cutting quality. There is a false notion that quality is expensive. Quite the contrary, quality programs are very cost-efficient.

There are several barriers to implementing total quality in education: 1) There is often a conflict between administration and academic functions. The two groups often form parallel worlds without a shared vision or mission for the school. A total quality approach requires that the two groups work together to meet customer expectations; 2) Within the academic group, there is often too much divisionalization – I belong to the science subgroup vs. the arts and languages subgroup. Identity with the entire school must take precedence over subgroup identity; 3) Most schools have entrenched cultural practices and beliefs that may create resistance to change. The teaching profession is highly individualistic vs. team-based. Schools often claim a uniqueness that exempts them from having to change. There is a tendency to place the responsibility for poor performance on individuals as opposed to the system. The teacher was terrible, the student was ill-prepared, the text was inadequate. TQM requires that the entire (management) system be accountable; 4) The concept of a customer may be difficult to adopt in an academic environment; and 5) The need for control, measurement, and feedback systems for the purposes of standardization is somewhat foreign to academic environments. There may be the fear of stifling creativity. TQM promotes creativity as well as the standardization of processes that will yield desired outcomes.

Don't be too quick to “shoot TQM in the foot”. With creativity and ingenuity, these hurdles can be overcome. To successfully implement a total quality approach to education we must do the following: 0) Obtain COMMITMENT to total quality from the Minister of Education; 1)



Recognize a school as a system with interacting subsystems, namely, a social/cultural subsystem dealing with human interactions and motivation, a technical subsystem involving the transformation processes, and a management subsystem that integrates the whole; 2) Identify all the customers and stakeholders; 3) Develop and communicate throughout the school a shared vision and mission that re-enforce the needs of its customers; 4) Analyze the behavior of the schools and universities; 5) Develop goals and objectives consistent with the vision and mission; 6) Study the impact of each major process on the ability meet the school's goals and objectives; 7) Develop measurement and feedback systems for each major process (such as curriculum development, student intake, teaching, etc.); 8) Form cross-functional teams to improve major processes. Ensure that all the customers of each process are directly involved in the improvement effort; 9) Train all teams in techniques consistent with the nature of their activity; 10) Implement systems to hold the gains that are made; 11) Document all improvement exercises; 12) Repeat steps 1-12.

What can be expect from a total quality approach to education? Increased customer satisfaction, improved programs, improved responsiveness to changes in the economic environment, costs reductions, improved student performance, increase teacher motivation, increased flexibility, improved cooperation between teachers and administration, greater parental and public involvement in our schools, and other too numerous to mention. You don't believe me? If you don't, I understand your cynicism, but first ask the Minister of Education to try it before you give up. Let us be one of the few, if not the first, to pioneer the Total Quality approach to education in the Caribbean. With the state of our economy, we cannot afford not to embark on what is along fruit-bearing term journey.

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