



A review paper on the applicability of Total Quality Management in the student community of private institutes

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“Total quality management (TQM)” is responsible for improving the performance of an enterprise by prudently analyzing the touch points of an enterprise’s mission, vision, rules and regulations, and the customers, the enterprise is serving. The main argument to apply “Total quality management” in any enterprise depends on the customer’s satisfaction level. The well-known idea of “The customer is always right” is the motivating factor in “Total quality management” aspects to enhance the overall functioning of an enterprise. Customer satisfaction is the key of enhancing the effectiveness of any enterprise and it needs a huge amount of examination and implementation of different products, processes, marketing, etc. activities. The main challenge of convincing ourselves about the concept of “Student – as – customer” is quite applicable in the context of “Total quality management” of the Higher education domain. The primary idea behind writing this paper is to evaluate and understand arguments between 2 contradicting points of consideration. Many of us think that we should consider customers and the student studying in the private higher institute from the same viewpoint and some of us think that there is a basic difference between the two categories. But as per the present situation the private institutes/universities are similar to normal business organizations and for this reason, the concept of “Total quality management” can be applied to this community of customers also.

Thus, private institutes/ universities must take the necessary steps to satisfy the “Student – as – customer” by assessing the exact situation. Private education enterprises should explore and understand the correct options to satisfy “Student – as – customers”. The key task for these private institutes/ universities is to maintain the balance between two concepts “student–as–customer” and “student – as – learner”.

Keywords: “Total Quality Management”, “Student – as – Customer”, “Student – as – learner”, Private institute,

Introduction:

In the present era of private education in the higher studies domain has created a challenging environment internationally before all private institutes/ universities. Customers/ learners/ students are always expecting quality education from the service providers. The quality of education and the quality of other supportive facilities are the main concern for the student community in maintaining the quality of education. The role of private institutes/universities in governing the education environment has changed hugely and they also should consider the student as the prime stakeholder in any strategic decision-making process. Because the customer always thinks about the value for their money from all aspects. The industrialization of education has created the environment of delivering more quality education and that to be as per the demand of the situation.

It is true that the capabilities to handle globalization and effectiveness have empowered private universities to become more competitive players in the private education market. Private universities often have more resources available to them than public universities, which allows them to better handle the challenges of globalization and provide high-quality education to their students. The global student community always tries to find the best appropriate course from the available courses around all available options. The new demanding situation is created by the open marketplace and a new student community who know their rights and available resources. The new student community can also know the different aspects of quality with respect to the higher education in private institutes. The private institutes should also know different aspects of quality which are applicable for higher education in private institutes or universities.

Quality:

Quality is a concept of requirement through which a customer can realize the existence of legitimate, tangible, intangible requirements of a product, project, or service through which he/ she can be satisfied as a customer(Arditi & Gunaydin, 1997). Like in the construction industry, quality can be characterized as satisfying the owner and fulfilling the requirements of the owners, fulfilling the requirements of the architect the requirements of regularity authorities, and fulfilling the requirements of the construction agencies(Arditi & Gunaydin, 1997). In the manufacturing industry, maintaining quality is fulfilling the customer's requirements through the process improvement involved in the process. The quality of the product depends on all stages of the manufacturing process (Wuest et al., 2014). "According to Taguchi, quality is the amount of loss a product imparts to society from the moment of shipment."(Maghsoodloo et al., 2004) The quality concept is quite broad in nature and it does have different meanings for different domains of people. It can be considered as the subset of the whole productivity concept of a manufacturing industry. We claim that quality in manufacturing is related to the productivity of a manufacturing process in such a way that quality and productivity are inversely proportional to each other(Irshad Ali et al., 2011)

Retail industry customers measure the quality of a product as per the price of the product, availability, ambiance, and advertisement about the product by the company. In hypermarkets, products are available with numerous quality and price ranges to invite different levels of customers (Hassan & Rahman, 2012). In the retail industry, the quality term can also be perceived from the relationship point of view. It means how the seller maintains

relationship with the customers before and after the purchase and how committed are they to delivering all promises and this consideration can create trust between the customer and the seller (Menidjel et al., 2020)

In the service industry, quality is the major factor to determine whether a customer will become a loyal customer or not. In any hospitality industry, service quality can be measured from three aspects: The technicality of the services, the functionality of the service, and the goodwill of the industry. In the service industry, three different categories of agents are responsible for measuring the quality of service to customers, as they are management, staffs, and customers. But the measurement benchmarking of quality is different for different customers even if a particular is providing the same level of service to all customers (Ryan, 1991)

Quality is perceived quite differently in the core product industry and in the service product industry. For the core products, the quality is measured as the performance of the product with respect to its value. For the service, product, quality is measured by the interaction process with the service personnel. In the medical industry, the quality is realized from both points of view. Product performance will be considered from the point of view how all medical services like treatment, surgery, etc. are provided. From the service performance point of view, a patient can measure the quality by assessing the interaction with the service personnel in the medical industry (Han & Hyun, 2015). Different quality attributes have a different effect on the firm's overall performance.

In the context of supply chain and logistics domains, service quality is the dominant determinant of the success of any organization. In this domain, not only providing the product but also the service related to the event are essential. And quality does have two components, quantitative and qualitative, and these include factors related to supplier, manufacture, distributors, retailers, and end customers (Seth et al., 2006). In any Business 2 business, different authors have identified different aspects of quality viz. trust, cooperation, communication, atmosphere, customer satisfaction, service quality, etc. (Mohaghar & Ghasemi, 2011).

Quality in education has three levels. As per level one, classroom quality is the availability of adequate knowledge, learning skills, and attitudes to environmental demands. As per second level, education should serve the community in terms of economic delivery. The third level is concerned with the quality of the teaching-learning environment in the classroom and it is concerned with the socialization process existing between the teachers and students

Total Quality Management:

The concept of “Total Quality Management” was coined during 1930s in the USA Management professionals forum. The same is being used in the higher education domain for the last decade. We can say that “Total Quality Management” is the combination of some thought processes in the business management domain to sustain in the business environment (McShane–Von Glinow: Organizational Behavior: Emerging Realities for the Workplace Revolution, Fourth Edition II.). The “Total Quality Management” can also be considered as a business domain and a viewpoint which is a vital force for the regular improvement of any business organization. “Total Quality Management” considers quality as the output from all the actions normally taking place in a business organization. But to achieve the main objective of “Total quality management” all stakeholders of an organization should participate wholeheartedly (Razali et al., 2000; Rue and Byars, 2000). To discuss this topic, some principles of “Total Quality Management can be explained on the basis of Deming (1986). Quality is a

tactical concern for business management, and it is much more than mere operational excellence. Any “Total quality management” initiative involves innovation toward fulfilling customer requirements and achieving operational excellence. In essence, quality includes innovation, which is the search for more effective ways of meeting customers’ requirements, as well as improving the efficiency of existing operations. In any business organization, the management establishes the considered aspects of quality, determines the methods of quality administration and the techniques to be followed, offers assets, and creates a model for others. In any organization, quality improvement happens in two phases “Vertical Structure”, and “Horizontal”. “Vertical Structure” involves the activities within the departments, units of an organization. “Horizontal” deals with cross-functional coordination amongst different departments. People from different cross-functional departments coordinate their roles in providing quality products and services to the end customers (Trumbull, 1993). But to sustain in the current business environment, the top management should always think about the betterment of products and services through continuous innovation in process and products. Deming and Juran felt that 10 percent or less of quality issues in manufacturing operations can be confronted by lower-level/operational-level people (Kreitner and Kinicki, 2000). All stakeholders are directly involved in proving products and services should go through constructive procedures to identify problems and provide breakthrough solutions. It may include some statistical techniques, quality management processes, and some simulations (LaBarre, 1999). Another aspect of creating a better “Total quality management” approach, increasingly people should be involved to create a more socially approved process for better customer satisfaction. (Kreitner and Kinicki, 2000).

Students can be considered as customers:

For any business organization, we all know that customers are always right and they are the driving force behind any decisions with respect to the product, strategy, services, etc. (Tasie, 2010b). In today’s business environment, students are considered customers and the same is visible from the vision of any private institute or university (Tasie, 2010b). In any educational structure defining a customer is a very tough task. In any educational institute, the educational service or any other services can be considered as the product and the students along with their family members are considered as a customer. For any student/customer selecting an institute and paying the course fees are the major purchase decision of any student for their entire life. (Brennan & Bennington, 1998). We need to make the private educational institutes more customer oriented, and they also should define their own customer groups(Brennan & Bennington, 1998). As per the present situation, students are the direct beneficiary of an education system and as per Woodward (1993), three reasons are there which are responsible for considering students as customers. First: Students are investors in any academic program. Second: They are the immediate touchpoint from the recipient’s side. Third: Students do have many alternative options of courses and institutes from where he/she can select the best one. (Tasie, 2010b). In any educational institute, students are considered as the external customers and the institute staffs are considered as the internal customers(Brennan & Bennington, 1998). The faculty as the internal customer is responsible for satisfying the requirements of the external customer of the Institute(Debnath et al., 2008).

Students should be considered customers because they are part of a continuous agreement of getting appropriate education in view of their prospects like career, personality, etc., (Tasie, 2010). When we consider students as

customers, it gives an opportunity of providing more satisfaction and provides an opportunity to become more competitive (de Juan-Jordán et al., 2018). In many countries, students pay for their higher education but still, we can not consider students as regular customers. We only can consider some characteristics of regular customers as the characteristic of students as customers. Students also consider themselves as customers in very few categories like the explanation of grades and attendance, rules and regulations, and participation in non-academic activities(Azhar et al., n.d.).

While considering students as customers will require more moderation in case of providing services. Otherwise, the main objective of an academic system will be hampered(Eagle & Brennan, n.d.). Students should not be considered as customers only but as contributors or coworkers of the whole education system of the institute also.(Eagle & Brennan, n.d.).

All over the world, students are not getting higher education free of cost, rather they are paying high for their studies, and their admission to any course is considered as a commercial event and they are entitled to get their required qualifications or services We can say that in an educational environment where students are paying for their desired outcome, customers satisfaction is a major part of private education which is responsible for their retention during and after their education as an alumnus. (Eagle & Brennan, n.d.). Different departments of a private institute/university like the Registrar's office, Canteen, Medical facility, Library, and Accounts office are responsible for the attainment of student satisfaction(Mae & Borbon, n.d.). The loss of a Student will also create a loss of alumni who also can contribute in the future to the enhancement of services and quality of products for the Institute (Brennan & Bennington, 1998).

Conclusion:

The theory of customer satisfaction cannot be applied in higher studies, in the same way like other domains. It can create trouble as the concept of "customer is always right" cannot be applied to the student community where we can consider students as customers in any Private Institute/university who are attending to acquire higher education. In any private higher education system, students are customers as well as learners at the same time. We all know that students do attend private institutes/universities to prepare themselves for a better future and their parents and sometimes they are paying a high price and spend a large amount of time on it. efforts will have no positive result. But again, we cannot apply the concept of "customer is always right" in the education industry because students should not consider themselves as a core customer. In any education system, we emphasize on quality delivery, which is vital for achieving career goals on the student's/ customer's part. Because as soon as students will consider themselves as the core customers, it will be very difficult to deliver quality education on the institute's part.

In a privet educational institute, the concept of "Total Quality Management" can not be easily implemented because the education process involves a lot of pain points on the customer's/ student's part. Here we cannot consider the concept of "the customer is always right" as it is. Here, satisfied customers/students may question the learning environment and ask for comfort rather than a better learning environment. Students study through the intellectual transformation of knowledge that happens when they realize new ideas, new data, and new perceptions. Students learn when they are inspired to think aggressively about data that is different and primarily absurd or very intimidating. In such situations, a new kind of state may arise which can create a conflict between

known and unknown aspects of the learning condition. Sometimes this conflict of perception amongst the learners may create confusion about the quality of education.

A real student should be considered as a creator, not a purchaser of the knowledge he or she earns. In an education process, a student must take an active part in imparting knowledge from one end to another end. Otherwise, the concept of “Total Quality Management” cannot be realized properly. So we can say that the teaching-learning process is the immediate result of a learner’s endeavor and clearly the effort to provide quality education for the management of the educational institute. So although we should not say “Customer is always right” in an educational institute, but still the learner should expect an encouraging learning environment which may include; good academic delivery, a well-equipped library, and a laboratory, other factors directly involved with good quality education.

The learners should understand that the institute/university is not selling a product, but they are offering an appropriate environment for quality learning. The institute/university must provide all resources for achieving so.

The notion of “Total Quality Management” and the pertinency of the “student-customer” idea in an institute/university setup are complex in nature. Because who will define the purpose of education and who will be considered as the customer in an academic environment. However, this idea is quite applicable and does have a large possibility of improvement to offer in higher education. This concept will also initiate a never-ending responsiveness from private institutes in the long run to provide quality education. Every private institute/university should try to provide adequate resources for quality education which will satisfy the customers/students.

This way, both parties, “Students” and the “Educationalists” will understand the true meaning and effectiveness of real “Total Quality Management”.

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