

Total Quality Perspective in Professional Education For Achieving Excellence

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Abstract

The emergence of Total Quality as a distinct field of study is of rather recent origin, which has made a significant impact on the institutions as well as nations worldwide. Attaining it is a big achievement, but it is just the start. Under the era of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation (LPG), the role of the government in financing higher education is decreasing gradually. As a result of this policy, a number of private colleges/universities have opened to cater to the needs of target customers. As per the norms of WTO, higher education is treated as a commodity, so product-mix decisions are crucial. The institutions for higher education have to consider suitable HR strategies, to gain competitive advantages for long-term benefit... QIP, IQC and other similar systems are introduced to enhance the overall quality of services. Therefore, a customisation approach to both—internal and external customers— will work in getting competitive advantages. However, the main lacuna is academic leadership, which needs to be addressed through total quality approach for rationalisation.

*“Institutions exist in a society for the purpose of satisfying people in that society. This is the reason for their existence and should be their primary goal. Management which recognizes this and works on this principle is known as **Total Quality**. Institutions which ignore these realities cannot last for very long. “*

- Prof. Kaoru Ishikawa

Introduction

At the time of independence there were only 21 universities and 636 colleges affiliated to the universities all over India. The students enrolments were 241996. However, recently it has been reported that India is operating as the world's third largest system of Higher Education (H.E.) next only to those of USA and USSR; numbering to more than 365 universities, 26150 colleges and 9731000 student population. In India, knowledge and education is the second largest organised human enterprise. India is the third largest scientific or technical manpower in the world. Thanks to the contributions made by its H.E. system, the world today gives credit to India as a nation contributing to the knowledge revolution. It has contributed value-added quality human power to the world, particularly in the last one decade, which has given us the new identity.

Keywords

*Quality, Total Quality
Management, Sustainable*

Categories of H.E. and their Control System

H.E. in India can be divided into:

- Professional Education
- Technical Education
- Teacher Education
- General Education

Studies related to medicine, law, management, advanced cost accountancy, etc., fall in the category of professional education. Those related to engineering, technology, computer etc., fall in the category of technical education. Education

making people qualified for teaching is termed as teacher education. Those sections which do not fall into any of the above three categories are known as general education in arts, science, and commerce studies. The bulk of the colleges in the country come under this category of general education.

Furthermore, they are governed by apex bodies like AICTE, UGC, NAAC, NBA, ICWAI, ICAI, etc. All these monitoring bodies are vested with quality control.

Perspective on Management Education

Every management institute should have a perspective plan. It should do good deal of human resource planning. A management institute, big or small, located in a metropolis or town should have a personality of its own. Professional development need of the faculty can be identified from two angles, that is,

- i. **From the angle of making him/her a better management teacher and**
- ii. **From the angle of contributing to the personality of the institute.**

Institutions complain that the management faculty is generally not stable. They keep on changing the institutions. A faculty who is nominated for a long-term faculty development programme should be under obligation to remain with the nominating institution for a reasonable period of time. Even if a management faculty changes from one institution to another institution, it still remains in the profession and in the society. Ultimately industry and the nations get the benefit of a good faculty.

A senior and experienced faculty should develop juniors in their own institutions. Senior faculty should be large hearted and kind enough to train the juniors in the profession. Experienced faculty can offer in house development programmes in their own institutions. Owing to professional rivalry and feeling of insecurity, the senior faculty generally does not come forward for such a kind of in-house programme. Institutions in their own area of expertise and strength can offer faculty development programmes for other institutions. HM and other institutions of national importance are doing good service by organising specific or general faculty development programmes.

There is a dearth of good faculty in management. Institutions are, therefore, reluctant to spare faculty members during the academic sessions. It will be better if faculty development programmes are offered during vacations. A long duration faculty development programme may be offered in two or three parts so that the institutions are not deprived of the faculty resources for a long time.

Faculty development helps the faculty as well as institutions. Therefore, in all fairness the cost of faculty development programmes should be shared by both. A major part of the cost should be shared by the institutions but some part of it should be borne by the faculty also. Only then willing and motivated faculty will come forward for faculty development programmes.

The Changing Times and Management Education

What is of concern today is the ability of the business schools to make the best response to ensure

competitiveness. B-schools may know the apple cart is moving, but they don't realise it is about to topple over. The danger that seems to be lurking is that many business schools may still not have understood the new demands being placed upon them. There appears to be a growing criticism of both the credentials of business as a subject for serious academic pursuit, and of the ability of the business school to satisfy either the demands of academia or of the world of business. Nevertheless, business schools have become a significant part of the economic landscape. However, if the academic world is not more responsive to the needs of business and society at large, B-schools, in particular, may find themselves marginalised.

Thirty influential opinion-forming senior managers who were interviewed by Taylor (1994) considered the challenges to the millennium to be:

- Business schools are not seen to either compete or collaborate. They were accused of providing similar course content without attempting to combine their expertise, or alternatively differentiate the services they offer.
- They need to become more proactive in becoming the transformational organisation that the best businesses around them aspire to become.
- They need to improve their own learning approach to sustain themselves. Exemplify best practice, and remain at the leading edge.

Management Education in India: Formal management education was introduced in India in 1954. Management education in India is currently witnessing a higher than ever before demand resulting in a significant gap between supply and demand. This deficit has been well recognised as a business opportunity and a number of institutes have been set up to offer management education. Of these, at least some B-schools are of high quality. In the best business schools, as much as 50% of the academic material and content used, such as technical notes, problems and exercises, are of Indian origin. Classroom teaching is increasingly becoming relevant to management issues. The better Indian B-schools are also international in focus. However, there is a wide qualitative gap between the top schools and the rest and even among the top ten management schools; there are considerable variations in quality (Business World, 1994).

There remain nagging problems about educational quality, relevance to the need of 'customer', inadequacies in pedagogy and subject areas and, mismatch between the career aspirations of management students and the management needs of the country (Khandwalla, 1996). Ahmad, as far back as in 1988, proposed that, the gap between the desired objectives of management education and what was achieved by them in reality, in the Indian context, was, due to lack of emphasis on professional values and a heavy stress on quick, upward movement and personal career orientation, heavy reliance on lectures and imparting knowledge while ignoring important skills, attitudes and values for professional management. Major orientation to private sector business and little emphasis on other sectors such as

public systems, public sector, voluntary agencies, etc.

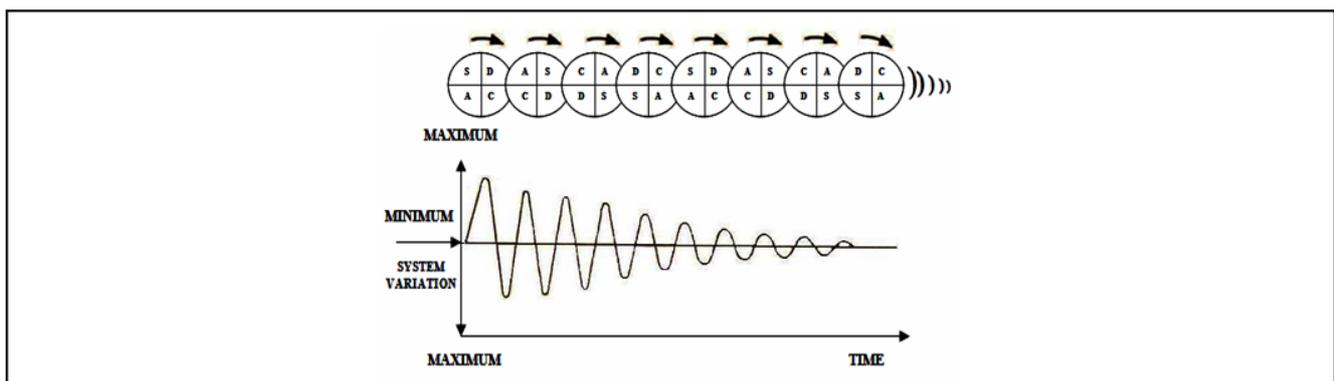
Even though management education in India has evolved considerably over the years, there still remain several challenges to be faced. A major challenge, except in the top schools, was the lack of relevance of what was taught in these schools, to what was needed on the job stressed that management graduates were deficient in the areas of leadership, team spirit, and managerial personality. Furthermore, Khandwalla (1996) pointed out that the programme content of business schools suggested an inadequate awareness of the operating context in India, and of the international business environment and globalization strategies.

Variations in Teaching–Learning Pedagogy

Most B-Schools offer a wide spectrum of teaching–learning pedagogy with a high degree of variations from Institute to Institute across the nation. Teaching–learning like Case Studies, Lecture Method, Assignments, Presentations, Management Games, Group Discussions, Seminars, Role Plays, Class Test, Simulation Exercises, Industrial Visits, Quizzes, Term Paper & Mock Interviews etc., offer a true blend of

education and training to all MBA aspirants. To minimise the gap we need Total Quality Approach in the interest of the student community at large. Total quality is performance superiority in delighting customers. The means used are people, committed to employing organisational resources to provide value to customers, by doing the right things right the first time, every time.

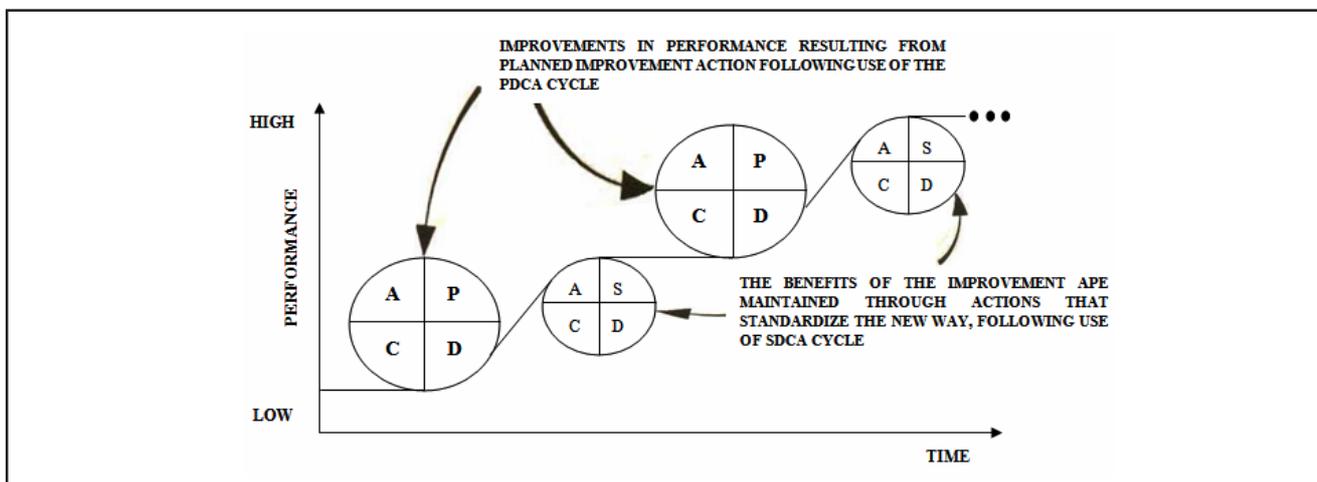
The Standardise, Do, Check, Act (SDCA) as developed by W Edwards Deming is a continuous cycle that has to be ‘rotated’ perpetually in order to assess the effectiveness of the system even after it has been standardised by documenting it and ensuring compliance. Thus, after the system has been brought to a stage of stable control, it is to be ‘operated’ and run to provide the desired output. This is the ‘do’ phase. The output is then ‘checked’ to determine whether or not it conforms to the specifications that were planned for. If it is, then all is well, and the standard system developed can be adopted without changes. This will remain until such a time when a change might be needed, on account of changes in the output that have to be incorporated, or variations in the system itself; and in that manner the SDCA cycle needs to be kept rotating, time after time to minimise the variations.



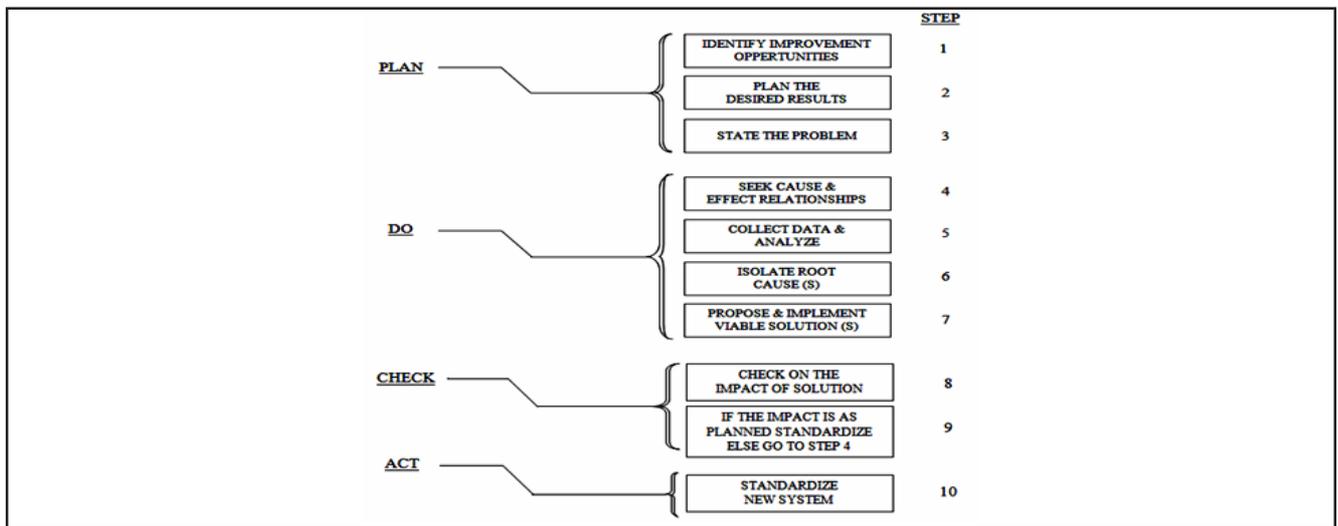
(The SDCA cycle and its impact on reducing variations)

There are many different quality experts who provide apparently different approaches to improvement. However, as long as the process of improvement is not seen as a mere ‘programme’, or a ‘drive’ that lasts for a little while and is then abandoned, the process of improvement has to go through the stages that are broadly

described by the PDCA cycle. Specific actions within each of the four phases may differ somewhat, depending on the nature of the performance improvement that has to be made, but even then the 10 broad steps would conform to those described above, as mentioned below:



(PDCA and SDCA cycles and their impact on continuous improvement)



(Typical steps in performance improvement)

Problems of Financing to H.E.

Traditionally H.E. in India is funded by central and State Govt. local bodies and also by the contribution of private sectors. However, due to the changing scenario and compulsion of the diversion of funds to other areas, a sizeable reduction in investment in H.E. has been noticed. As it is clear with the 5-year plans, during the first plan, 22% of the plan outlay was earmarked for H.E. In the fourth plan it was 38%, in the sixth plan it was 33%, seventh plan it was 25% and subsequently it was reduced. Thus, financing from the Government sources is drying up in the context of the new economic or industrial policies. In addition, there is a need to spend more on primary education to bring about social and economic equality. This calls for privatisation and a decreasing role of the Government in H.E. Moreover, in view of the increasing cost of H.E. it is desirable that the students should pay more for their H.E. Therefore, the fee-structure has been increased. Hence, there is a need to look for more funding from other sources and devising innovative strategies for attracting funds.

Strategies

1. Faculty selection recruitment and placement
2. Training and Development QIP/FIP/MDP
3. Appraisal, Evaluation and Reporting
4. Remuneration, Incentives and Reward system
5. Employees Grievances Mechanism, organizational Climate & work culture
6. Social – linkages
7. Product - Mix Strategies

Owing to heavy rush for H.E. in general faculties, education and professional as well as in technical education, a number of private education institutions have started delivering H.E. to those target groups who can afford H.E. This leads to competition in the market of H.E. Therefore, wisdom lies in seeking long-term competitive advantages, for whosoever playing in this domain.

The Students too are Consumers and Education is a Commodity

As per the norms of WTO, H.E. is treated as a commodity. So product-mix decision is crucial in the field of educational service. Moreover, the students' role is dual: one as a customer and second as a raw material in the system of production of teaching-learning interactions. Hence, to gain competitive advantages for a longer time the institutions for H.E. have to be considered as suitable strategies. Success or failure of any educational institution depends upon its right kind of human resources and HRM strategies. Therefore, following strategies relating to HR area are of great importance:-

Core Concepts

- Best fitted employees or right types of jobs. Sound policies for this work.
- Holding in-house and out-side training progress follow-up of training inputs.
- 360° Appraisal system. Feedbacks or communicating
- Work-based quality-based perks + other incentives for better productivity.
- Accountability and responsibility under a specific hierarchy. Overall policy for better and healthy works culture.
- S.U.P.W. and Social- beneficiaries Institution - Industry partnership
- 1) Innovative Course Design.
- 2) Innovative Learning - Teaching - Testing Processes.
- 3) PDP and strategic placement services.
- 4) Sound support-service-system and healthy ambiance and other related facilities.
- 5) Uniform fee-structure.
- 6) Local-Global approach.
- 7) Quick and factual communication for mass-idea diffusion system.

Facilitating Sustainable Competitive Advantage

The value chain provides a basis for assessing the competitive advantage of any organisation. Such an advantage arises from an organisation's choice of a target-customers group including geographic location and its spread (markets), its distinctive competencies and the pattern of resource deployment including the HRM system, technological system and other infrastructure. Besides this the support services and activities make it different from that competitor's approach. Basically the competitive advantage of an institution should translate into some perceptible benefits to the ultimate service—receivers. In addition, it should be sustainable over a period of time. That means no competitor can easily make matching types of product/services. Through R&D M.R. and O.D. mechanism an institution must constantly strive for competitive-oriented sustainable advantages over a period of time. This is because of the capacities of the people in the institutions and team building activities. In-short competitive and sustainable advantage can be obtained in the following ways:

1. The institution can offer service-features and its benefits that competitors are unable to match.
2. The institution can match service features and benefits of competitors at reasonable price that the competitors are unable to match.

KRA in HR for Self-Financed Private Educational Institutions

1. Only minimum educational qualification standards are not enough but actual performance standards are to be considered. Therefore, there is an explanatory note about relaxations clauses under recruitment rules.
2. Only pay-packages and other perks for teachers are not enough but constructive work culture and healthy work environment of an institution play an important role in developing the institution.
3. The number of working hours of a college/institution is not important but contact hours between the students and faculty members should be considered a vital force.
4. "Judge the person by results and not by the talkative nature" so the end outcome is considered to be important.
5. The placement ratio is more powerful than examination results.
6. The number of books in a library is not enough but the utilization of the books by the rich readers is of paramount importance.
7. Internal customer's satisfaction is a base for external customer's delightfulness.
8. A leader is a dealer in hope, ambition and expectation. Therefore, an effective leadership style is important than a nominal leader.

CONCLUSION

The prime role of the self-financed educational institution is to build a sound base of holistic personality of the students with a view to enhance a young person's prospects in the job market. Therefore, some techniques and theories of management science may be applied to the education field, including effective leadership styles, vision and mission etc.

Quality has become the buzzword in almost all walks of life. Slackness in maintaining quality has proved to result in definite failure. More importantly total quality approach coupled with effective and innovative human resource strategies in every aspect of higher education shall ultimately lead to performance improvement in the 21st century towards accomplishing excellence.

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