



# TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA: A CASE STUDY

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*Eighth International Conference on  
Assessing Quality in HE (Higher Education),  
Pan Pacific Hotel, Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia.  
14th - 16th July, 1996*

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**TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA:  
A CASE STUDY**

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**Introduction**

Almost everyone agrees that quality is a performance standard to be practised at all times for the purpose of a continuous effort to improve; but, not everyone agrees on the criterion, standards and indicators (including performance and knowledge indicators) used to measure the quality of services, especially related to the standard of human performance. One of the main reasons is that the concept of "quality" is changing over time, context and with people (i.e. culture) who define the term. The term has long been recognised by the true followers of David, Moses, Jesus and Mohammed for a long time (e.g. the Total Quality of Individual, the Total Quality Family Management and the Total Quality of Society). But, with the emergence of new technologically-developed countries, the concept of Total Quality Management (TQM) is beginning to change. The model and the concept of TQM has also been applied to the Malaysian Higher Educational system. Malaysia as one of the fast developing nations believes that through the highly advocated Vision 2020, one day she might become another industrialised country. With this view in mind, all institutions of Higher Learning are trying hard to develop indicators for success and excellence in Education.

The crux of the ISO 9000 is to produce a consistent service which meets the needs of the customer or client. Its basic assumption is that quality should be built into the systems and procedures of an organisation

The efforts to adopt an ISO 9000 standard as part of Total Quality Management in a few departments have been received with positive responses from the departments concerned. The civil servants should reform their attitudes to be more customer-focussed, performance-oriented, accountable, innovative and responsive to meet the challenges for better services to the customers as taxpayer.

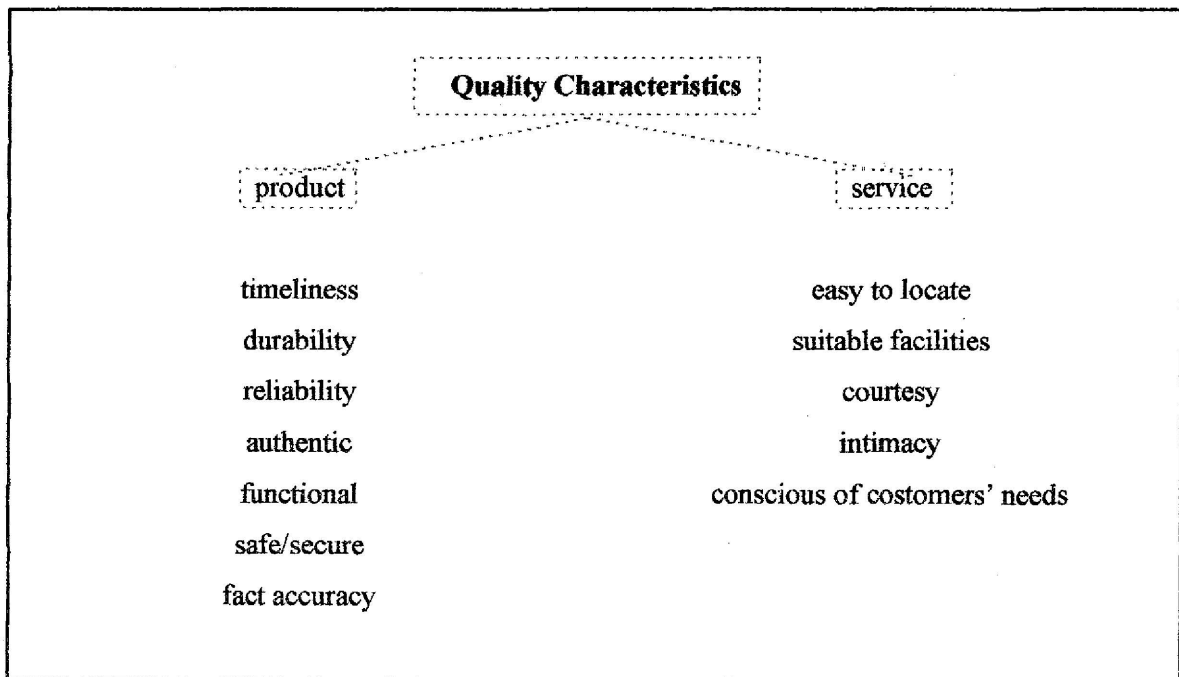
<b>Elements of ISO 9000:</b>	
1. Management Responsibility	12 Inspection and Test Status
2. Quality System	13 Control of Nonconforming Product
3 Contract Review	14 Corrective and Preventive Action
4 Design Control	15 Handling, Storage, Packaging, Preservation and Delivery
5 Document and Data Control	16 Control of Quality Records
6 Purchasing	17 Internal Quality Audits
7 Control of Customer Supplied Product	18 Training
8 Product Identification and Traceability	19 Servicing
9 Process Control	20 Statistical Techniques
10 Inspection and Testing	
11 Control of Inspection, Measuring and Test Equipment	

(Sun, 23 rd. June 1996. p. 18)

Beside the ISO 9000, Kamaruddin Harun (The Star, 19th. June 1996), the Excel Communication Sdn Bhd Managing Director said, internal co-operation within organisations is vital in the pursuit of high performance target. He said, there was a close correlation between high performance organization and high teaming. Each organizations should stress more towards promoting the spirit of team building within the organization. The team building spirit is essential to become internally co-operative and at the same time being externally competitive. The member of the organization should know clearly the mission of the organization. If the people within an

Ranjit Singh Mahli (Sun Sunday 23rd June 1996), the Principal Consultant of TQM Consultants Sdn Bhd said quality is basically an attitude of the mind and quality begins with the individual. People must be empowered from within to do quality work. To him few companies made an error of going directly into quality improvement effort without first conducting quality awareness programmes for the staff. He was of the opinion that we need to realise that for the ISO 9000 to succeed in the civil service, adequate training should be given, as we could not impose practices when the people do not even understand the basic concepts.

Quality is a philosophical concept. Definitions of quality vary and to some extent, reflect different perspectives of the individuals and societies. There is no single “right” definition of quality. Basically, quality is a fulfillment of customer’s satisfaction arising from the following characteristics; of products and services:



(Zainal A. A. & Dzulkifli A. R. 1995), p. 21)

## **Total Quality Management in the School of Educational Studies (SES), USM.**

In the early 1996 the USM started to expose the idea of TQM to its staff by stages. The approach of the Total Quality Management (TQM) is to ensure quality by involving everyone in active concern for it. Consequently, total quality is assumed to mean in the industrial sense that the processes by which the 'product' is produced, become the assurance of the quality of the product. As such the quality of the product of HEI should be maintained through high quality teaching. Besides, the quality of management system is also playing its roles to reinforce high quality teaching. So are the contributions of the lecturers, students, employers and institutional managers. This means training and facilities should be available. Efforts should also be made to continually upgrade the existing training programmes and facilities.

Prof. Dzulkifli A Razak (1995) in the School of Educational Studies TQM Workshop, has mentioned that TQM is an operation which emphasizes commitment on quality to fulfill customer's requirements, through continuous improvement process and commitment of all members in the organization. The total involvement of everyone in the organization is needed to ensure the organization will achieve its mission:

*"The school of educational studies USM undertakes to lead in the advancement and dissemination of knowledge through instructional and research innovation for producing excellent educators by offering quality programmes and firm commitments to the society, nation and world".*

(School of Educational Studies, 1996)

In a TQM workshop conducted for the staff members of SES, the staffs have agreed that TQM in the School of Educational Studies USM should maintain and promote the quality of SES through these five areas:

1. Teaching
2. Research
3. Publication

Each of the above components has its own:

- 1) objectives
- 2) manpower & customers
- 3) core business (instruction, research, publication and partnership)
- 4) strategy of implementation
- 5) quality assessment (performance indicator)

### **Total Quality Management in the School of Medical Sciences (SMS) , USM.**

The TQM plan of action in SMS started with socializing its member toward an “Academic Culture” which allows everyone to identify his/her role to cater for the excellence of the organisation. A series of discussions were held to let the SMS’s staffs realise how to contribute towards excellent product. All ideas would be presented at board meetings for discussion and further action. The academic culture was also specially created for supporting staffs.

Academic Culture of the Supporting Staff is based on the following characteristics:

1. efficiency
2. trustworthy
3. cleanliness
4. discipline
5. patience
6. positive attitude
7. knowledgeable

SMS also developed “ Quality Work Culture” (QWC). The concept of QWC includes the total involvement in decision-making, the total motivation and commitment, sharing of ideas and support from higher-ranking administration. The SMS would also encourage its members to communicate to each other to prevent miscommunication. Staff members enjoyed Wednesday afternoons as free from teaching and research for the purpose of communication. The QWC created for supporting staffs contain the following elements:

- 1) Happy and peaceful family
- 2) Conducive working environment

efficiency, trustworthiness and “leadership by example” should be practiced, not just preached. The activities of superior officers should be monitored to ensure “leadership by example” is practised. An inspectorate might be established to monitor them to discourage power abuse which would result in unfair treatment towards the subordinate members of the organisation.

The predominant culture of going to great lengths towards unquestioned loyalty to fulfill the needs of superior officers should be suppressed, if not abolished altogether. This is because service standards may suffer, since the subordinates would developed feelings that their major customer is their superior officers and not the actual customer! However this seems to be very difficult because this practice is commonplace due to the fact that the subordinates feel the superior officers hold the power of promotion.

Lastly, team-building is another critical factor in successful implementation of TQM. Total quality is contributed by each person as a team. In relation to this, it should be noted that the ideal situation of recognition would be to reward the team as a whole; not to individual persons. Current practice, however, is to reward the person as individuals based on administration, publication, research, teaching and social services.

## **Conclusion**

TQM in HEI may be a vision through building the areas, principles and structures. However, this may not be a promise of success. A more critical factor involves the way of implementation of TQM such as team building, recognition and accountability. In addition to these, that humane values, norms, attitude and ideology of individual members of the organization need to be fine-tuned towards quality academic and work cultures.

The Star, (1996). Good team building essential to succeed, says expert.

The Malaysian Newspaper 19th June 1996. p 8 - 9.

Zainal A. A. & Dzulkifli A. R. (1995). Trainer's guide for Total Quality Management. Penang.  
University of Science Malaysia.

Footnote:

A word of thanks:

We hereby acknowledge and appreciate the contribution by Associate Professor Dr. Mohamad Daud b. Hamzah in guiding us during our preparation of this conference paper.