

# Total Quality Management in Teacher Education

Ishrat Naaz\*

Quality has been goal an eternal since the existence of human civilization. It has been the driving force for all human endeavours. Quality is the inspiration for transcendence from the mundane to the higher realms of life. It is the source of craving behind the unfolding human civilization through ages immemorial. Yet it has successfully eluded the dragnet of definitions proving the inadequacy of human intelligence. Quality lies in the perception of the consumer. What is "great" for one may not be good enough for another (Mukhopadhyay 2006, p.22). There are various well-known definitions of quality. Crosby (1979) defines quality as "conformance to requirement" while Juran and Gryna (1980) define quality as "fitness for use". Deming (1986) defines quality as "a predictable degree of uniformity and dependability at low cost and suited to the market". It is more towards quality in operation. Many organisations found that the old definition of quality, "the degree of conformance to a standard", was too narrow. Consequently, they used a new definition of quality in terms of "customer focus".

In the context of higher education, due to the intangible nature of its processes, there is a considerable discussion on the notions of educational quality (Green 1994 & Harvey 1995). Fincher (1994) describes how quality perspectives have evolved in education over the years by going through a shift from experience to technique, style and finally to process. Harvey and Green (1993) in their seminal work point out that quality is a relative concept. Instead of having a single definition of quality, Harvey and Green provide five discrete but interrelated notions of quality. Quality has a variety of meanings and its range of meanings does cause confusion, as each individual's perception of quality differs (Shields 1999).

Deming (1986, 49) does not define quality directly but in one of his popular fourteen points for management says: ...Improve constantly and forever the system of production and service.... Quality must be built in at the design stage.... It may be too late, once plans are on their way.... There must be continual improvement in test methods and ever better

understanding of the customer's needs and of the way he uses and misuses a product.... The quality desired starts with the intent, which is fixed by management. The intent must be translated into plans, specifications, tests, in an attempt to deliver to the customer the quality intended, all of which are management's responsibility.

The concepts of quality based on the above definitions reveal two important dimensions: *customer satisfaction and continuous improvement*.

## Total Quality Management (TQM): The Concept

Total Quality Management (TQM) is a well-known approach by organizations that strive to make quality assurance as their business culture. There are also various definitions by different writers. Oakland as quoted by Berry (1996) defines TQM as: ... an approach to improving the effectiveness and flexibility of business as a whole. It is essentially a way of organizing and involving the whole organization; every department, every activity, every single person at every level.

In the context of education, Harris (in Kwan, 1996) defines three common approaches to TQM, namely, customer focus, staff focus, and service agreement stance.

The theory of TQM rests on two tenets (Weaver, 1992). The first and most important is that customers are vital to the operation of the organization. Without customers there is no business definitely, and without business there is no organization. Consequently, it should be the primary aim of any group to keep customers satisfied by providing them with quality product (Deming, 1986). The second tenet is that management needs to listen to non traditional sources of information in order to institute quality. This is based on the belief that employees want to do quality work, which will be possible if managers listen to them and create a workplace based on their ideas (Deming, 1986).

There are a number of researchers who have formulated frameworks for quality improvements (Johnson 1993; Susan 1995). These frameworks are entitled as Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI), Strategic Quality Management (SQM) or Total Quality Management (TQM). Even though there might be some differences among these approaches, the term TQM

\*Scholar, Jamia Millia Islamia, Central University, Faculty of Education, (IASE), Maulana Mohammad Ali Jahur Marg, Jamia Nagar, New Delhi-110025. Ishrat.naaz@yahoo.com

Self attested  
Ishrat