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Total Quality Management Culture and Productivity Improvement in Ethiopia Higher Institutions

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Backgrounds and Justification

The desire of all parents is to have qualitative and functional educational programs for their children from nursery school to the university level. This is in conformity with the general belief that a sound education is the only permanent legacy that parents can pass on to their children to ensure their future. However, what we see nowadays is that many countries' education system is turning out unemployable illiterates. Hallak (1990) emphasized that the quality of the education system depends on the quality of its teachers. Alloy Ejiogu (1990) stated that the quality of education in any given society depend considerably on the number and the quality of its personnel. David (1995) affirmed that the need for administrative training program in education is crucial to the success and quality of the new educational system which currently lacks visible subsystem of administrative training program. It therefore becomes highly necessary that school administrators address themselves to those managerial activities that would lead to improvement of performance, thereby leading to academic excellence in schools. In fact, recent surveys have it that members of the public hold the opinion and accuse school administrators of being more interested in their personal welfare of entertaining visitors than in the programs meant for improvement of academic standards of their schools. Teachers are equally being accused of lack of commitment and dedication to duty. Parents are not encouraged enough to participate in the school management and in the same vein, the local schools boards have not been fully responsible for daily administration, management and quality control of schools with respect to certification and materials development techniques of teaching and evaluation. Abugbe (2002) affirmed that, a functional educational system is the cry of educationists the world over. This is because, we are inclined to believe that educational advancement and innovations can only come forth from disciplined and committed minds, which operate within an enabling work organizational culture, a culture pervaded by quality consciousness. Therefore, there is an urgent need for an organization wide approach and commitment to quality improvement since no one organization can boast of holding franchise to the development and delivery of quality products/services; many organizations have embraced the total quality management concept as a way of survival.

In view of the strategic position of the university education, there is need for the introduction of total quality management that will involve all the stake holders especially the principal, teachers, students, parents and even the community. It must be emphasized that the success of education rests in no small measure on informed planning, efficient organization and dedicated leadership; just as learning cannot take place in a classroom manned by ill-prepared and unskilled teacher, no educational system can rise above the quality of its administration. The diversified nature of our society demands a different, more creative solution to our basic education problem. (Ojo, 2007)

Total quality management is a management style based upon producing quality service as defined by the customers and suppliers. TQM is an organizational wide approach to quality with improvement undertaken on a continuous basis by everyone in the organization. Dale and Bunney (2003) defined TQM as a quality centered, customer-focused, facts based, team-driven, seminar-managements led

process to achieve an organization's strategic imperative through continuous process improvement. This is why TQM principles are also being referred to as total quality improvement, world class quality, continuous quality, improvement, total service quality and total quality leadership.

Statement of problem

Based on the fact stated above, the study sets out to examine the extent to which quality management system and quality assurance measure is in place to assure a quality production in the University system.

Methodology

The study was designed to ascertain the level of awareness the practice of total quality management (TQM) system within the institutions of higher learning in the country. The subjects of the research were one hundred senior academic and management staff. The instrument used was a standardized evaluation questionnaire for total quality management system. Data collected were analyzed using a simple descriptive statistical method i.e. frequency tables and percentages for the response of the respondents to each of the twelve items on the questionnaire.

RESULTS

In this section, the respondents' response to the evolution questionnaire for TQM system were analyzed and discussed. Twelve questions were raised and the analyses are presented below.

Q1: Management emphasis

Subjects were asked to give their opinions on the management's emphasis on production. 78.3% of the total respondents affirmed that their university's management placed emphasis on the quantity or mass production of students; 16.9% of the respondents said the management emphasis is on both the quality and quantity of the students they produced while only 4.8% agreed that the university is emphasizing quality of production.

Q2: Ethiopian policy on education

On the managements adherence and conforming with the Ethiopian Educational policy, 36.1% of the total respondents said they do not have the policy, 56.6% said the university authorities are following the laid down policy on higher education while 7.2% of the respondents said, the rules are being bent to suite their own purpose.

Q3 Standards for academic achievement

Since the primary purpose of any educational enterprise is to produce quality students who will keep the society going; this question was included to know if there is any standardization of academic achievement. It was discovered that 57.8% of the total respondents said, there was tacit standard for such, 28.9% said there is but not documented while 2.4% of the respondents agreed that there is a genuine standard for education and measuring of students academic performance of the students being produced year in year out.

Q4: Quality checking /quality control:

63.9% of the total respondents said only the final results are strictly checked while 28.9% said several checks are being carried out before the results are finally sent to the senate for approval and 7.2% responded that the university has several quality check points before a final approval by the senate.

Q5: Tools for teachings and reporting

51.8% of the total respondents agreed that, the tools are available, but they are not being used; 22.9% denied any knowledge of these tools (may be due to lack of orientations) and 21.7% says the tools are available but, only a part of them are being used.

Q6: common language (spirit de corp) in the schools:

26.5% of the total respondents said it does not exist while 51.8% agreed that they are well aware of this but they are not just very serious about the use where as 21.7% agreed that they have and it is well respected.

Q7: Communication system

7.2% of the respondents are of the opinion that management meetings are held regularly and resolutions arrived at are passed to the entire school populace promptly; 9.6% percent agreed that management meetings are held monthly and 83.1% said meetings are held only when it is necessary.

Q8 Suggestion system

The respondents' response to this all important aspect of an organization is 63.9% percent saying that such a system or means does not exist while 32.5% agreed that suggestion system exists but not in use, where as a fragment of the total respondents i.e 3.6% agreed that there is a well organized system of suggestion within the institution.

Q9: Employees motivation

27.7% percent of the total respondents agreed that their salaries are very adequate; 66.3% said the salary being paid to them monthly are barely enough to meet their daily demands while 1.2% of the total population agreed that every worker within the university are well motivated in all areas.

Q10: Training opportunity (at home and abroad):

While 37.3% percent of the total population said that there are no provisions for this, 43.4% said there is provision but only for the privileged few but a total of 19.3% of the population in disagreeing with the others said, the provisions are there for every one without any bias.

Q11: Total quality management culture

On the awareness of the total quality management culture and applications, 20.5% of the respondents said, they accept it as a global program and as a result welcome it in to the university and they practiced it, while 4.8% said the university did not only welcome it but has put in place a well organized system for an enduring culture of quality within the system. However a total of 74.7% percent of the

population disagreed with this, saying that such a culture does not exist.

Q12: On quality cycles

66.3% agreed that the institution does not have but it will be good if this can be instituted; 26.5% of the population said the cycle exists but are not being given any recognition and 7.2% agreed that it exists and well recognized.

DISCUSSION

The results presented above are quite revealing; they have been able to point to one fact i.e. the need for total quality control or management with a focus. Results have shown that the management seems not to really understand what quality actually stands for. Every manager of education should know that the onus rests on them that they should have a total commitment to quality and that all aspects of production should focus on the consumer. This is because the consumer is the most important part of production; once the products are rolled out, it is usually very difficult to recall them; take for example, a badly trained medical doctor or nurse can only kill one patient at a time but a poorly trained teacher is potentially dangerous, for he can kill generations.

Crosby (1984) in agreeing with this study stated that quality is established in the marketplace and not in executive suites. The principle of doing a task right the first time has to be established as “doing a task well” in order to measure up to societal demands no education. Within the education set up where the products are humans, producing a mass unemployable illiterate’s will take any country nowhere; therefore, the present practice of mass production of graduates, good or bad has to be reviewed.

Secondly, the present school policy on learning within the university system should be given a serious re-think. The present practice of “group achievement or group success” must be abolished for “individual performance”. This study found that most graduates, graduating students and the general students’ body find it difficult expressing themselves in good English (both oral and written). Teachers still teach their subjects in the local language regardless of the educational policy on the language of instruction at the higher institutions. In other words, policy should be taken seriously and standards set for achievement.

It should be emphasized at this point that quality does not come from mass inspection of results after an examination has been conducted at the end of a semester, teachers do better when at every stage, there is quality check on every work done.

For total improvement to be achieved in the University, the fourteen principles of Deming can be adopted as a working philosophy for the school. (See Schmoker and Wilson, 1993)

Administrators must stop focusing upon the judgment of results instead must start focusing upon the improvement of process-learning teaching, and doing whatever tasks which needs be done (Fullan, 1991).

Conclusion and recommendation:

In light of the discoveries in this study, the following suggestion and recommendations are made.

- (i) To create awareness, the federal government should introduce Total Quality Management as a course in all tertiary institutions in Ethiopia. The course should be a compulsory course for all disciplines. This will enable every Ethiopian graduates to have a good grasp of TQM.
- (ii) The management of the University should be more committed to TQM culture within the school's set up.
- (iii) Staff training and development serves as a veritable tool to successful implementation of total quality management; funds should be made available and staff should be encouraged to go for conferences, seminars, workshops and short courses.
- (iv) The government should encourage practitioners and consultants who have developed a wealth of experience in the area of TQM and its implementation to share their experiences by writing books or articles that can be read and learned from.
- (v) The ministry of Education as the governing body on Education should set up an enlightenment campaign on the need for all institutions to embrace and enforce TQM principles in their organizations or schools.

Further research could be conducted on motivation, performance improvement and practice among the teachers in the university. A study can further be initiated to conduct a research into the quantity and quality of teachers within the university and the rate of teachers turn over in the total economy of Ethiopia.

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