

OBSTACLES TO THE APPLICATION OF TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT (TQM) IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN THE STATE OF KUWAIT

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Abstract

The aim of this study is introducing the obstacles of the total quality management (TQM) application in higher education institutions in Kuwait. To achieve the aim of this study , interviews were conducted with (20) members of the academic leaders in higher education institutions in Kuwait. After collecting the needed data and information, many obstacles were found out , namely: the lack of an integrated sample for the total quality management in higher education institutions, the lack of support and commitment of top leaders in higher education institutions in TQM, the lack of highly qualified professionals in the field of quality in higher education, the lack of knowledge of self-assessment mechanisms, the lack of knowledge of continuous improvement methods, the large burden on the TQM application, and the difficulty of self-assessment. The study has come out with a set of recommendations including: To set a sample for the TQM application in higher education institutions of Kuwait, holding training courses and workshops in the field of TQM application in higher education institutions and continuous improvement and self-assessment.

Keywords: Obstacles, total quality, higher education institutions, Kuwait

Background study

The Higher Education in its various dimensions of knowledge, technology and research is important for developed and developing countries alike, according to the developed ones is to maintain its leadership, and for developing countries to get along with developed countries, hence, the higher education institutions play an important role in building a good man, and an important tool to achieve progress and development through roles such like (teaching and scientific research, and community service) To achieve these roles effectively, the institutions of higher education must be with high quality.

Communities depend on universities in achieving its goals and aspirations, since universities are responsible for keeping the scientific heritage to be transferred to future generations, it is also responsible for the discovery of new knowledge in all cognitive aspects, as well as it is the main engine to the economic development and supporting the scientific and technological inventions (Jaafari, 2011), Arini and Otaibi (2010) refer to the development and modernization of education as an important way for the progress and development of societies, as the education has a vital and effective means for the growth of communities in all areas.

The importance of higher education has increased in the light of what the globalization introduces of new concepts and applications backed by the rapid developments of communication systems and information technology, resulting essential shifts to adapt to the knowledge of society, and the challenges among international markets between companies have moved to higher education institutions, and such challenge imposed any university seeking to global challenge to reconsider its strategies and systems and anything that would impact on their ability to gain access to global competition (Jerio, 2010).

Proceeding from the above, the development of university education should be irreplaceable necessity, asserting one's self, to spread the methods of right scientific thinking and to achieve the maximum possible of unleashing and innovation in science and technology and the development of national goals in an integrated system characterized as comprehensive and constantly developed, and aims to gain potentials and capacities as well as developing skills, making universities able to become a beacon of progress and renaissance to be able to engage in global competition (Mohammed, 2011).

The higher education through recent decades has witnessed a significant expansion accompanied by an increase in the number of students and academic members, but it is noted that this expansion has not been matched with an improvement in the quality of education, even though the education of both types public and higher was still the main progress of any nation (Bin tareaf, 2009).

According to Khatib (2001), the management of higher education institutions in the Arab world lacks the effectiveness, and suffer from a lack of independence, a magnitude of regulations and instructions, ambiguity and contradiction, and multiple management and hierarchical levels in writing reports, control and decision-making, and the neglect of the leaders role in management, middle and executive areas, and the loss of administrative control over the performance of academic members and administrators, as well as the administrative structures, organizational regulations and instructions adopted in higher

education institutions are characterized by being rigid and slow in procedures and decision-making, and spread the phenomenon of administrative bureaucracy presented by centralization , and the uniqueness of the senior management of decision- making with the absence of participation by academic and administrative members as well as students in the process of decision-making , and universities resistance to change and development and lack of excellence and creativity.

With the issue of rankings for top universities across the world (Academic Ranking of (World Universities, ARWU) as Shanghai's (Shanghai Jiao Tang International Ranking) issued by the Jiao Tong University Shanghai, China in 2009 for the first 200 global universities)) the only Arab university that was ranked as the (197) was King Saud University. And in the world rankings issued in the same year for the first 500 global universities)) King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals was ranked as (303).

The problems that higher education institutions are facing in addition to the low level of applicable academic standards as a result of its great, also its weakness to provide quantitative and qualitative outputs which the labour market requires, low government funding for education as a result of the financial crises, and the growing trend towards public accounting of institutions, and increasing competition among higher education institutions, and the growth of academic programs geared to the market; All these factors called for the need to provide a minimum standard of quality in higher education institutions; to meet these challenges, therefore, countries abroad focused on university accreditation as an entrance to quality assurance for the development of university education (Hawli, 2004).

The Total Quality Management (TQM) in the educational field is defined as a performance of work truly from the first time, according to a set of educational standards necessary to raise the level of quality educational product with minimal effort and cost achieving the educational goals and educational objectives of society and meet the needs of labor market of qualified cadres (Attia ,2008).

The concept of quality in education for all features related to education domain which shows the level of excellence and achievement, they translate expectations of students to specific characteristics as a basis for the spread of education service to be submitted matching up with their aspirations, and therefore the total quality seeks to prepare students with specific features making them able to experience the abundance of information and ongoing processes of change besides the tremendous technological progress, so this stage requires a human with certain characteristics to understand everything new and rapid to deal with it effectively (Al Ajez and Nashwan, 2005).

The quality of education is an administrative process to achieve the objectives of the labor market and students, that it includes all the functions and activities of the institution, which increases the satisfaction of students, and improves the level of institution locally and globally, as well as increase its share in the labor market (Omrani and Salem Walaykh , 2011).

The adoption of total quality management in the field of education can benefit the introduction of educational management methods in order to come out with educational outcome with high-quality, and double the benefits of students, and encourage competition to achieve the desired results (Alawneh, 2004).

The higher education sector has witnessed much attention in most countries abroad at all levels, as well as reformation processes have received a special care, because of its importance to improve society for better to keep up with the renewable needs in the communities, and the Total Quality Management TQM is one of the most important band that captured the attention of education leaders, researchers and academics, and many studies demonstrated that the application of Total Quality Management (TQM) has a positive effect on the performance of the organizations. According to higher education sector, this concept has been received much attention as many institutions that follow the Total Quality Management (TQM) are increasing whether in America, European countries, Japan, or the developing countries, nowadays the total quality management (TQM) are widely accepted by many because it encourages competition in attracting much students as well as outside interest from employers, and how it impact the development of quality in the performance of its business and its outputs.

The total quality management TQM is based on the application of advanced methods of quality management, aiming to improve the ongoing development and achieve the highest possible levels in practices, operations, products and services (Allam, 2003), and the focus of total quality management in universities mainly based on the field of evaluating the educational institution in order to get developed and improved, as this method is one of modern methods used in the evaluation of institutions in general and educational institutions in particular, applying the principles and ideas of total quality management TQM in higher education systems goes for the benefit of universities, and lays the foundation stone for a new philosophical vision related to the objectives and the mission of the university, and keep employees with high spirits giving them an opportunity to express, and changing their perceptions and attitudes towards the profession, putting the educational environment in a productive atmosphere (Al-Moussawi, 2003).

Many international, regional and national attempts were unveiled to improve total quality in higher education institutions through conferences, seminars and composing higher commissions in order to identify indicators and specific criteria to measure the level of quality in these institutions (Olimat, 2004).

Most of Arab countries started implementing programs and projects to ensure the quality and the academic accreditation by setting specialized units for this purpose through forming independent bodies for accreditation and quality assurance in education, where there were introduced so far about (13) bodies or an independent board of accreditation and quality assurance in some Arab countries, and many of them were challenging to sign agreements with international recognized accreditation bodies, and many of them got such certification (Obeidi, 2009).

Universities in general and Arab ones in particular are facing obstacles that may prevent the effective application of quality, including: failure to provide incentives and financial rewards as well as estimates to support the efforts of quality, the lack of necessary training for workers in the field of quality, the lack of sufficient time to carry out quality, the lack of financial allocations sufficient to the quality, the low level of awareness about the quality, resisting change, job rotation, poor support to senior leadership, and weak commitment to employees (Bani Ahmad, 2012).

The higher education institutions in the State of Kuwait are regulatory institutions which suffer from problems related to quality, a group of international and local reports related to higher education in Kuwait has pointed to evident problems in Kuwaiti higher education; This international report of education in Kuwait has unveiled a set of challenges related to the higher education, including: the future vision of Kuwait requires a university sector with a high level of quality and efficiency coming out with good outputs and good graduates empowered with real talents, whereas the current situation is one of the lowest levels of participation in higher education accompanied by a question mark on the quality and efficiency of higher education, moreover, the enrollment rates of higher education in Kuwait is still low compared to their economic situation, stating that these levels are very low compared to the level of income and development there, in addition to the need to keep up with challenges and demands of the future to the labor sector and current labor market service.

The jobs of public sector with good wages are providing sufficient incentives for students of all Kuwaiti citizens to complete their higher education, and for Kuwaitis who complete their educational university, they often specialize in the fields of business

management, financial and Arts, and very few of them specialize in engineering and medical sciences or other technical and scientific professions, which creates a severe shortage of professional skills which the country needs currently, and it seems there is no systematic dialogue or a joint planning between the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education and the shareholders in the labor market to reconcile between professional outputs with the needs of the market (Blair, 2011).

According to Kuwaiti situation experienced by higher education institutions in Kuwait, Kuwait is seeking to implement the quality standards to develop their outputs, and higher education institutions Kuwaiti is not isolated from other Arab institutions since they also suffer from the same problems, their efforts related to quality are still below the required level demonstrated by the international report on Kuwait, which previously mentioned, hence this study to identify the obstacles of TQM application in higher education institutions in Kuwait was come out.

Problem of the study

This study determines the problem of introducing obstacles of TQM application in higher education institutions of Kuwait, particularly; the study seeks to answer the following

Question

What are the obstacles of TQM application of in higher education institutions in Kuwait?

Procedures of the study

This study uses the analytical descriptive methodology through the use of interviews identifying the obstacles of TQM application in higher education institutions in Kuwait.

The study sample

The Sample consisted of (20) academic and administrative members chosen by the higher education institutions Kuwait (deans, vice-deans, heads of academic departments.

The tool of study

In order to achieve the aim of the study, the researcher conducted interviews with leading positions, who were (20) individuals, these interviews have included an open question: What are the obstacles of TQM application of in higher education institutions in Kuwait?

Analysis of interviews

An analysis was performed for the answers of the sample individuals adopting the idea unit, by time the analysis of interviews were proved by the researcher himself and with other researchers, and the agreement between the first and second analysis were measured upon Azaroff & Mayer formula. (Azaroff & Mayer, 1977).

Statistical treatment

Frequencies and the percentage of analysis of samples answers were counted.

The results and discussion of the study

After unloading the information of interviews results, it was presented as follows:

Results related to answer the question of the study.

What are the obstacles of TQM application in higher education institutions in Kuwait?

To answer this question, Frequencies and the percentage of analysis of samples answers were counted, then the obstacles of TQM application in higher education institutions in Kuwait were arranged upon the level of importance.

Table (1) shows the frequencies and the percentage of obstacles of TQM application in higher education institutions in Kuwait

Table (1)

The frequencies and the percentage of obstacles of TQM application in higher education institutions in Kuwait

Level of importance	Obstacles	Frequency	Percentage
1	The lack of an integrated sample of total quality management in higher education institutions.	18	90%
1	Lack of support and commitment from top leaders in the institutions of higher education in TQM	18	90%
3	Lack of highly qualified professionals in the field of quality in higher education.	17	85%
3	Lack of knowledge of the of self-assessment mechanisms.	17	85%
3	Lack of knowledge of ongoing improvement methods.	17	85%
3	Many burdens arising from the application of TQM.	17	85%
3	The difficulty of self-assessment.	17	85%
8	Lack of clarity in the concept of total quality in education.	16	80%
8	ambiguous understanding of the philosophy of total quality.	16	80%
8	Emphasis on form more than essence.	16	80%
11	Resistance of institutional assessment.	16	80%
11	Resisting against change.	15	75%
11	Poor coordination between employees and departments.	15	75%
14	Lack of interest in training.	14	70%
15	Expect immediate results.	13	65%
15	Weaknesses in information system.	13	65%
17	Weaknesses in information system.	12	60%
17	Instability of leaders and departments	12	60%
19	Rigid organizational structures.	10	50%
19	Realizing that the quality is for factories not for education.	10	50%
19	Lack of clarity in the role.	10	50%
19	Lack of commitment to employees' attendance.	10	50%

The table shows (1) that the first obstacle to apply the total quality was the lack of a comprehensive sample for the Total Quality Management in higher education institutions also the lack of support and commitment to top leaders in the institutions of higher education in TQM with the percentage of (90%), and that because of the absence of an integrated sample of quality in higher education institutions of Kuwait sponsored by a body or an institution or by the Ministry of Higher Education be applied by them but it lacks an integrated sample that can be applied with clear sequential steps, one of sample individuals said in his answer " Unfortunately Arab states adopt standards for the quality of education in higher education institutions, without providing an integrated clear and easy sample by which the quality can be applied step by step, and another one said that the application of total quality in higher education institutions either depends on external or internal consulting firms and these companies focus on the ISO and we see that there is a difference between the ISO and the application of quality standards in higher education institutions. As for the lack of support of top leaders in the institutions of higher education in TQM was due some leaders who are traditional and don't like to make change and other consider that the application of quality might affect their reputation in the institution as it can detect gaps in administration, and one of evidences on that of what the sample individual said "there is no leader accept any criticism in his institution because he considers it as an insult to his person, thus he just considers it a waste of time. The obstacles as the lack of highly qualified professionals in the field of quality in higher education, the lack of knowledge of self-assessment mechanisms, the lack of knowledge of ongoing improvement methods, the burdens arising from the application of total quality, the difficulty of self-assessment with the percentage of (85 %) all that can be attributable to the fact that these obstacles related to qualified members who lead the quality of the institution; in higher education institutions, you witness a limited insufficient number of qualified and experienced members of quality and many workers in these institutions lack the skill of self-assessment and lack the ability to prepare studies, documents and evidence of quality standards in addition to the lack of ability to use methods of ongoing improvement as the quality difference in addition to the administrative burdens resulted to employees of an organization that implements the quality standards to equip evidence and documents indicating they are moving in the right way, and one of the evidence, one of samples said " the higher education institutions lack qualified experts in the field of quality where they resort to hire foreigner experts with high salaries and whose culture is different from the Arab culture. Another one added that" the burdens resulted from the application of comprehensive quality are really heavy, and the problem is that what is

required from employees is not part of the corporate culture, but it is new business and additional burdens on them which need more so applying the quality is just like an additional burden on them" one more another added that " The ongoing improvement methods are still not clear to many people who work in the higher education institutions and be familiar with them may not mean you are capable of applying them effectively. " whereas obstacles as the ambiguity in the concept of Total Quality in Education, the limited spread of quality, the hazy understanding of total quality philosophy, focusing on form more than essence with the percentage of (80%) all these may be attributed to the ambiguity of the total quality concept among many workers, they just want to obtain a certificate of quality assurance rather than ongoing improvement, some institutions consider that obtaining such certificate of quality assurance is just a goal, and pay much attention to the form rather than the essence. One of sample individuals said "the quality just become in buildings, devices, and equipment and all that is just fallacy deceiving people, they in fact never reflect the real high level of quality of outputs."

According to the other two obstacles, resisting against institutional assessment, and resisting against change got the percentage of (75%), that may be attributed to the belief of some that the institutional assessment related to quality shows defects and thus it reflects a bad impression about leaders and departments, one sample said "one of the most prominent obstacles to apply the quality in higher education institutions is that leaders of these institutions are sensitive toward the institutional assessment; they consider it as a criticism for themselves and their personal efficiency", as for the obstacle of resisting against change may be due to the fact that some leaders are still very traditional and work with a specific patterns for many years, thus they consider any change a threat to their status. One of individuals said "Some leaders and workers consider any change a threat to their status and roles so they stop against any change without hesitation and some of them say the quality should not be applied to universities but to factories, and the cost of quality is high but unrewarded in reality"

As for the lack of coordination between employees and departments got the percentage of (70%) and that due to some departments still operate in a traditional manner without any coordination between them and workers which hinders the quality in work.

And as for the lack of interest in training and expecting immediate results came with the percentage of (65%) and that due to the fact that some institutions start applying TQM without interest in training on quality requirements, thereby that hinders activating quality, and some expect immediate results of the quality and such way may fight the quality and it does not positively affect the work one of individuals said " Expecting immediate results is

one of prominent obstacles, some believe that the quality magic wand turning institution to excellence and creativity once applied and when they do not find these rapid changes pour anger and application of quality ... "

And for the two obstacles, the lack of information system and the instability of leaders and departments got the percentage of (60%) and that due to the information systems in higher education institutions are still weak and the quality trusted information, changing leaders and departments reflect negatively on the application of quality because the quality standards will change accordingly.

Whereas the obstacles of, rigid organizational structures, the conviction that quality should be for factories not for education, the lack of clarity, and the lack of commitment to working-time got the percentage of (50%) and that due to the rigid organizational structures contradict with the quality; the quality needs to regulatory structures that can be changed and developed, As regards the conviction that quality should be for factories not for education, this because of the traditional leaders who refuse any change or any thing new, but with regard to the clarity of the role, some believe that the functions to apply quality are restricted to specific individuals and the rest just are spectators, one of individuals said "Some believe that the application of quality depends on specific individuals and it is not a collective responsibility," With regard to the lack of commitment of workers attendance at work may be due to the fact that some workers in higher education institutions, particularly, the academic lecturers believe that their work time is confined to lectures and office hours only, and that hinders the application of quality because it needs writing which takes a long time from workers. One also said that "some academic lecturers do not adhere to official attendance within specific hours, they just adhere to specific times of their lectures and their office hours, thereby hindering the efforts of quality"

Recommendations

In light of outputs, the study recommends the following:

- Setting a sample for the TQM application in higher education institutions in Kuwait.
- Providing the higher education institutions with qualified members in the field of higher education quality.
- Holding training courses and workshops in the field of TQM application in higher education institutions and ongoing improvement and self-assessment.
- Promote to the concept of quality in higher education institutions before adopting.
- Providing financial and material support for supervisors dealing with the application of quality.

- Seeking to stabilize the leadership and the departments involved in the field of quality.

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