

## TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND CUSTOMER CONCEPT IN EDUCATION

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### ABSTRACT

Total Quality Management (TQM) practices in the education sector are based on a customer-oriented perspective. Students are considered as internal customers and TQM aims for continuous development and quality improvement in educational institutions. Customer satisfaction is a critical factor affecting the success of educational institutions. The satisfaction of current students affects future student preferences. In order for TQM to be successful in education, the adoption of this approach by the top management, the motivation and co-operation of the instructors are important. It is important to define internal and external customers by considering the concept of customer in a broad perspective and to measure customer satisfaction through surveys and interviews. Customer satisfaction in education is related not only to education services but also to administrative processes and support services. In order to maintain customer satisfaction, the quality of education should not deteriorate, but meeting every request of the customer should also be avoided. Research shows that TQM offers a solid basis for quality management in the education sector.

**Keywords:** Quality; Education; Customer; TQM

### Quality

Standard, quality, quality control in the production and management of goods and services in the 1990s. Benchmarking. Concepts such as Total Quality Management are frequently used. Total quality management is an approach that focuses on processes instead of organisational functions and results, that increases the qualifications of all employees and bases management decisions on the analysis of healthy information and data collection, and that handles all material and immaterial organisational resources as a whole (Ersen, 1997).

In order to achieve quality in an organisation, everyone working in the organisation should think about quality. It should be recognised by everyone that quality is what leads to success. Quality should not be based on the control of the product after its production. It is not very important from an organisational point of view that some deficiencies are found or investigated after something is produced. The important thing is to produce something faultlessly while producing it. A team spirit should be created in the organisation. All members, individually and together, should contribute to the formation of this common culture.

### Total Quality Management

The main purpose of Total Quality Management (TQM) is to determine the quality requirements of the customer, to satisfy the customer by providing error-free output accordingly and to make continuous efforts to improve quality. The most important feature of TQM is not to leave the provision of quality products and services on the shoulders of a few people, but to share it with everyone in the system. This management philosophy, which has been successfully applied especially by the Japanese in industrial organisations, has been widely applied in service enterprises in recent years. Hospitals, supermarkets, transport companies and educational institutions see TQM as an alternative management in order to provide the service they expect to customers in an increasingly competitive environment.

### Total Quality and Management in Education

When quality in education is mentioned, it is the appreciation of the education system, its perfection, the knowledge and ability of people to follow innovations. Quality in education is the suitability of education for the purposes of use and the fulfilment of employer demands in the business world after graduation by students; student performance, experience and theoretical and practical knowledge. Quality in education is realised by providing the right education to the right people at the right time, in the right place, with the right training (Bulut et al., 1998).

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### **Müşteri Kavramı**

Customer, Service, goods, etc. who receives and pays a fee in return. The concept of customer, which is mostly used in industry and service sector, is not sufficiently accepted in educational institutions. In response to the necessity of defining students, institutional employees and other dyads as customers, instead of this concept, different concepts such as education buyer, education producer, education provider are proposed according to the position of the customer. Since there is no established concept yet, using the concept of "educational customer" for educational institutions instead of a general concept of customer may perhaps be seen as a solution for now. In educational institutions, students come to mind first as customers. However, according to the understanding of Total Quality Management, the customer is not only the people and organisations outside the workplace who use or consume the goods or services produced and sold. It can be people, employees, managers, departments, departments that work in connection with each other within the workplace. The common point of the definitions related to the concept of customer in Total Quality Management is that customers are considered as internal and external. Internal customers are those who buy products or services within the organisation and external customers are those who buy products or services outside the organisation. (Po\ver. 1996). In any case, the system approach to the educational initiative foresees the systematisation of the process.

The student is the *raison d'être* and basic input of the school. In terms of TQM, the student can be considered as a member (participant), customer and product of the school system. The student is the customer of the school and education. When conceptualised in TQM terms, the student can be considered as both internal and external customer. The educational staff taking part in the school and classroom environment must organise educational experiences that will meet these expectations by taking into account the expectations of the student as a customer.

The student is also a product and output of education. The student has to actively participate in the design and production of the product. It may be possible to evaluate the student as the output of the product. When we evaluate with TQM principles, it is necessary to see the student at the centre of continuous development and quality improvement studies since he/she is involved in the process for a long time.

Teachers are both the customer and the group that manages the process in the education sector. Instructors undertake the most important task in quality improvement studies. The most important of these is to ensure the motivation of students and increase their productivity (Jenkins, 1998). The most important indicator in quality improvement studies is the increase in the number of graduates and the decrease in the dropout rate of students. Another important fact that instructors should not forget is to teach students the philosophy of teamwork and co-operation in the education process and to provide education in accordance with this philosophy.

Another important customer group of the education sector is families (Oblinger, 1998). Families are the group that has to live with this product continuously throughout their lives and endure material and moral sacrifices for the education process. Although not in our country, they are the most important decision-making group in university selection abroad. In Turkey, families are more effective at the orientation stage than at the decision-making stage.

Another customer group, which is seen as the customer of the education sector, but which will give money to the student who graduates from this sector and will enable him/her to do useful work for the society, is the business environment. Although the business environment is one of the most important external customer groups of the education sector, it has the least contribution to the education process.

One of the customer groups of the sector is the society. In short, it is everyone in the society. Because education is not a process of entering and graduating from school. Education is an endless process that starts with the birth of a person and lasts until death.

### Customer Satisfaction

In order to understand that a quality education and training service is provided in an educational institution, it is necessary to measure customer satisfaction. In general, surveys and interview questions can be used to determine and measure customer satisfaction.

Customer Satisfaction is an important issue for an educational institution. If we talk especially for the university; In order for students to prefer private and foundation universities, existing students must first be satisfied. If the current students are satisfied, they will somehow tell their environment about their satisfaction. And students who will prefer the university in the new term will be among the universities to be considered by families. Unfortunately, this situation is not valid in many universities. Student satisfaction and complaints are not very important. And in this case, when students express their discomfort on social media, it is a bad advertisement for a university. Customer satisfaction should not be limited only to the education service provided. If we talk about universities in Cyprus; services used by schools, dormitories, accounting and student affairs, such as access to administrative units, etc. situations can be mentioned.

If these are not available, the student first tries to make a lateral transfer. Especially students coming to Cyprus from Turkey, whether they are satisfied or not, they first think of a transfer. When they are not satisfied, they try hard to realise these thoughts. Of course, when these things are not mentioned, students are not automatically dissatisfied.

The following should not be in educational institutions. In order to maintain customer satisfaction, the customer should not have everything he wants. The institution should not disrupt the quality of education.

In terms of Total Quality and Management in Education, William Edwards Deming (2000) examined the basic principles of total quality management and continuous improvement, Joseph M. Juran (1999) presented a solid foundation on quality management practices in the education sector in his quality management handbook, and Philip B. Crosby (1979) focused on the cost of quality and the importance of quality understanding in his study. Furthermore, Alpkan & Bulut (2006) examined the effects of organisational culture on financial performance. Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry (1985) tried to put forward a basic model on customer satisfaction and service quality.

### Conclusion

Customer concept: It means a person who receives services, goods, etc. and pays a fee in return. Customer concept has an important place in Total Quality Management in education. If the customer is not satisfied, this affects the potential customer. Since there is no customer satisfaction, the mission of the organisation will also be affected by this situation. However, while giving importance to customer satisfaction, the quality of education should not be given up.

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