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A Sociological Perspective on Total Quality Management in the Higher Education Sector

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Received: 02/08/2025 ; Accepted: 04/11/2025 ; Published: 29 /01/2026

Abstract:

This study focuses on the importance of highlighting the role of the effectiveness of Total Quality Management as a strategic input to improve the academic performance of professors within the higher education sector, in light of the cognitive transformations that the sector is witnessing toward technology and digitalization. This is in order to strengthen performance effectiveness as well as the quality of higher education...

Accordingly, through this study, it is suitable for us to focus on a set of projections on which we will concentrate to know more about the extent of success in applying Total Quality Management in its theoretical aspect, and the investigative reading of the reality of Total Quality Management in the higher education sector, while valuing the active role of this approach for innovative development using modern methods to solve problems under the challenges of the new world.

We also refer, in the body of the study, to the obstacles that hinder the success of the application of Total Quality Management in higher education, which requires organizational

support, in addition to the enhancement of the culture of quality and continuous training for the different members of the higher education sector.

Keywords: Total Quality Management, Higher Education, Academic Performance, University Professor, Educational Quality.

Introduction:

Total Quality Management (TQM) is a methodology characterized by continuity and sustainability; it is not a station that ends with the completion of a specific program or at a certain time. Therefore, it requires more continuous training to solve problems and to think in innovative ways. It aims to achieve the satisfaction of the internal beneficiary in the educational institution, which is the student, the teacher, and the educational administration, while the external beneficiary is the satisfaction of the society regarding the quality of the educational product and the benefit that this educational product will bring to the society. Thus, one of the most important indicators of success for educational institutions is the quality

of the student graduating from those institutions and his ability to serve his community in the required way. The positive perception of society toward that institution gives it a kind of respect and appreciation, which leads to strong competition among different educational institutions to improve their various programs and objectives in order to obtain appropriate and adequate educational outcomes that serve and develop society.

Accordingly, Total Quality Management is one of the most important systems whose application leads to achieving effectiveness in university education, since strategic commitment to the principles of Total Quality Management contributes to improving the system's ability to adapt positively to the challenges of the new global environment.

First: Concepts of Total Quality Management in the University:

The concept of Total Quality Management is considered one of the modern concepts in management, and its objective is to improve and continuously develop performance through the organization's response to the client's requirements. Quality includes the original material or the good type, and it focuses on the "how" — that is, how the product is made — not on the "how much," which means the number of pieces produced within a certain period (Majd Fararja, 2016, online source).

In the higher education sector, there have been various interpretations in defining the concept of quality in the educational system and its elements and standards. It is seen that quality management in the university is "a strategic administrative process based on a set of values deriving its effectiveness from the data that achieves the most effective use of the learners' abilities and their talents in a creative way,

achieving continuous development of the educational institution."

Professor Graham Gibbs defines it as everything that leads to developing the intellectual and imaginative abilities of students and improving their level of understanding, comprehension, and their skills in solving issues and problems, as well as their ability to communicate information effectively (Issam Nofal & Abdeljawad, 2000, p.18).

It is also defined as "an integrated method applied in all branches and levels of the university to provide individuals and work teams with the opportunity to satisfy students and beneficiaries of education and scientific research, or the effectiveness of achieving the best educational and research services with the most efficient methods, least cost, and highest possible quality" (Farid Al-Najjar, 2000, p.07).

According to these definitions, we find that Total Quality Management in education seeks to achieve good interaction between the inputs of the formative process — curricula, mechanisms, students, professors, administrative processes, and evaluation operations — in a way that leads to achieving the highest levels of quality that are at the core of everyone's concern for an effective strategy and integrated standards.

Total Quality Management in university education is also defined as: an integrated approach applied in all branches and levels of the university to provide individuals and work teams with the opportunity to satisfy students and beneficiaries of education and scientific research, or effectively achieve the best educational and research services using the most efficient methods, lowest cost, and highest possible quality (Mariam Mohammed Al-Sharqawi, 2003, p.81).

Total Quality Management in university education is considered a general philosophy of management representing a long-term process that focuses on generating several changes within the institution, with the aim of combining these minor changes during a specific period of time until they produce significant transformation (Kazem Khudr Mahmoud, 2000, p.36).

Second: The Objectives of Quality in University Education:

Quality in university education is one of the means to improve and develop the type of education and raise its level. It is what institutions strive for in this era of globalization, which can be described as the era of quality. Quality is no longer a dream, but has become an urgent necessity imposed by the rapid changes the higher education sector is witnessing all over the world and dictated by the requirements of modern life...

Therefore, defining the concept of quality in university education in Algeria has become a great challenge because it requires viewing it in a more comprehensive way that aligns with the requirements and expectations of all the members forming this system, represented by: students, faculty members, and employers. Accordingly, the objectives of quality in university education can be summarized in the following points:

- Ensuring that quality, perfection of work, and good management are Islamic principles, and adherence to them is a religious duty that must be maintained.
- Developing a specific strategy for Total Quality Management in the university system with clearly defined long-term goals.

- Providing absolute and continuous support from the university's senior administration for the implementation of Total Quality Management in the university.
- Building an effective communication system based on feedback.
- Supporting teamwork among faculty members in various colleges of the university.
- Adopting effective developmental and training programs for all university staff in their different specializations and skills.
- Establishing a partnership between the university and local business and trade organizations for mutual cooperation in improving the quality of graduates and the educational process (Khaleef Al-Tarawneh, 2010, p.05).

Third: The Justifications for the Application of Total Quality Management in the University:

- The continuous and successive increase in the number of students entering higher education.
- The need to achieve high performance in the formative educational process.
- The extension of the need to continue learning and acquiring knowledge beyond graduation.
- The revolution of information and communication technology and its effect on the formative process.

- The continuation of delivering educational services in a way that does not meet the ambitions.
- The intense competition between educational institutions.
- The necessity to rationalize spending, set priorities, and assume social responsibility toward society (Adnan Al-Ahmad, 2004, p.38).

Fourth: Principles and Standards of Total Quality Management in the University:

The principles of Total Quality Management in the university that it seeks to achieve can be extracted through the standards that many researchers tried to establish, such as "Deming and Baldrige".

Most modern trends have also set standards that work to measure quality management in the university with a broad perspective to include all the attitudinal, cognitive, skill-based, and behavioral characteristics of the graduates and all the elements concerned with providing the educational service. The British Ministry of Higher Education in 1992 formed a permanent committee to evaluate the quality of those elements at the level of the first university degree in British universities, and in 1995 it created a higher council for evaluating the quality of study in the postgraduate stage in American universities. The two committees agreed on the standards that must be followed to evaluate quality as follows:

- In the scientific curriculum in terms of its suitability with the student's absorption capacity.

- The scientific reference in terms of the degree of its academic level and reliability.
- Faculty members in terms of their academic level and commitment to the curriculum.
- And the evaluation style (Mohammad Ali Shohaib and others, online site).

Fifth: Requirements of Total Quality Management in the University:

Adopting the Total Quality Management system in the university necessitates achieving the greatest possible cooperation in all its elements, which may allow organizational and practical commitment. The integration of this vision that achieves harmony can be expressed through the following requirements:

It is necessary to impose precise standards for selecting students and guiding them in specializations that suit their abilities, with their distribution according to the number of professors so that opportunities for discussion and dialogue are available to them, and the professor can follow them.

Preparing the teaching staff pedagogically does not only include knowledge of the academic subjects, but goes beyond to mastering the ways of delivering them to the learner and evaluation methods.

Therefore, the professor's task should not be limited to delivering the information only, but also to planting the sense of responsibility and seriousness in the student.

Working on integrating the contents of programs and curricula with development plans, and giving value to the certificate granted to the student, through the participation of all elements of the formative process in designing it.

Providing appropriate material facilities with regard to workshops, laboratories, and various working means, and providing financial support to encourage professors' participation in scientific and cultural activities.

The independence of the faculty and its liberation from bureaucratic and suffocating central pressures that shackle its movement, drown it in problems, and distance it from creative scientific activity. Here, effective administrative leadership emerges (Al-Hilali Al-Sharbini, online site, pp.12 and 13).

Sixth: Application of Quality Management in Western Universities:

Many developed and developing countries have applied Total Quality Management in their school and higher education institutions. We will limit (in this study) to the experiences of two advanced countries that are considered among the most developed and advanced countries in all fields, then a developing country in the field of higher education that tried to catch up with the caravan and develop.

The American University of Missouri North Quality System:

It is an American university with 235 faculty members, offering 12 undergraduate programs, 26 master's programs, and postgraduate specializations. It is supported by the American government. It began applying Total Quality Management in 1989 and submitted an application for the quality award in 1994, and actually obtained it in 1997. Total Quality Management was implemented in several steps:

- Excellence, by removing isolation between scientific departments and focusing on processes, and creating specialized and empowered teams with the necessary authorities.

- Economy, meaning strict economy in resources and using them for the fewest goals but the most important ones.
- Focus on the customer (the student), where it involved faculty members in designing and evaluating educational programs.
- Training, focusing on increasing training programs that cover all statistical control.
- Improving quality in classrooms through special models for training or skills.
- The students.

By using the principles of quality, its elements, and its organizational methods, customer satisfaction (the student) can be increased and costs reduced. The Total Quality Engineering model is also used in America, which incorporates Total Quality Management elements to direct its products. It offers the Malcolm Baldrige Award as a model and standard for the success of Total Quality Management. Total Quality Management for achieving results focuses on: (the customer, planning process, operational management, improvement).

Total Quality Management in Malaysia:

The Malaysian education sector underwent basic growth as a result of the efforts that made the Ministry of Education expand and view education as an industry and investment. Student enrollment in higher education institutions increased by (9%). In 1996, the number of students was (17,569), then increased in 1997 to (28,344) students after opening up greatly to higher education. The number of higher education institutions applying Total Quality Management reached (11) eleven public

universities and (6) six private universities. Allocation of (30%) of the budget to education began from 1997. The government also spends on (50) fifty thousand students studying outside Malaysia. Therefore, the Malaysian government allocated more than (100) one hundred million dollars to the National Education Union to support student studies in higher education institutions.

An American-European-Malaysian study concluded that there are success factors for Total Quality Management in Malaysian education, represented in:

Leadership, Continuous Improvement, Prevention, Measurement of Resources, Internal and External Customer Satisfaction, People Management, Teamwork.

Total Quality Management in Japan:

Initially, the Total Quality movement in Japan encountered many difficulties, until the emphasis on Japanese statistical tools increased through attention to top management. Thus, Total Quality Management became tangible, and people felt the impact of their efforts at work. The principles of (Deming)'s fourteen or Juran's trilogy, or Kaoru Ishikawa's thought, emphasize the existence of four pillars for Total Quality Management in education, which are:

- The organization's focus, and primarily on its customers in Total Quality Management. Students must live in the world of work as a collaborative team, where there is the teacher-student team, and the student is a customer to the teacher. Educational services care about the student's growth and improvement. The teacher and school are the suppliers for effective learning in the student's environment. The school is responsible for providing long-term

well-being to the student by teaching them how to learn.

- Every individual in the organization must dedicate himself to continuous improvement collectively.
- Schools that have adopted Total Quality Management, its principles, and uses invest basic resources in discovering new ways that help realize every person's potentials, where the system, processes, and improvements bear the largest share in quality.

The success of Total Quality Management is the responsibility of top management, which carries out continuous improvement for teachers in order to provide greater achievement from students. Educational leaders create school environments with comprehensive quality in the learning of students, teachers, principals, all employees, and with effective participation of local community elements, so that they contribute to defining their role and their required developmental needs, so that university education is not detached from serving its environment (Khalil and Al-Zuhairi: 2001, pp.320–330).

Seventh: The Importance of Its Application in Higher Education:

Organizations, including universities, information centers, and various higher education institutions, face a wave of challenges represented in decreased productivity, increased costs, lack of financial resources, adoption of ineffective methods to achieve desired goals, and low job satisfaction among employees.

Facing these challenges and overcoming them is of utmost importance, not only for these organizations, including libraries, to compete, but to survive. Therefore, there was a need for the correct and comprehensive application of the concept of quality management to improve quality levels and enable the organization to excel, through achieving a number of benefits, the most important of which are increasing productivity, reducing performance costs, and improving the level of quality of the product or service it provides to the beneficiary. However, the traditional view, represented by the perspective that improving quality conflicts with increasing productivity and contributes to increasing performance costs, makes many administrative organizations, including libraries, hesitate to invest in applying the concept of Total Quality Management, which has reflected in turn on the exacerbation of administrative problems, whether in the services provided, and thus not achieving the beneficiary's satisfaction with what is offered to him of products or services.

As for the importance of applying Total Quality Management in higher education institutions, some see that comprehensive quality is the set of characteristics/attributes that precisely and comprehensively express its essence and state, including all its dimensions: inputs, processes, outputs, and feedback. Applying Total Quality Management requires a solid foundation in all its organizational, administrative, and social structures within the organization to provide the appropriate climate and culture convinced of the possibility of its application. Therefore, there must be complete conviction among the top and academic administration in the importance of the Total Quality Management concept, the necessity of its application, placing it at the forefront of its strategies, and working to spread its convictions to all employees in it.

The connection of the Total Quality Management process to the comprehensive evaluation of the leads to:

- Improving the efficiency of managing higher education institutions.
- Raising the performance level of faculty members.
- Developing the administrative environment in these institutions.

From here, its importance comes through these institutions' striving to adopt modern administrative systems and philosophies to develop their work and update their methods to keep pace with the movement of change and development in the globalization era, where the world has become a small village, so that it can withstand the competition between institutions in the context of global markets that seek excellence and quality (Khaled bin Saad: 1998, p.74).

Eighth: The Cultural Factors Influencing Total Quality Management in Higher Education:

Total Quality Management is concerned with a philosophy based on a long-term strategy to achieve its objectives, and its results are not measured through a short period. This fact is considered one of the most important disadvantages of applying comprehensive quality, where the evaluation of results does not stop at a short period, and the evaluation is not limited to the institution's view of itself or from its own perspective, but there are other forces and factors that determine the quality of educational outputs, considering that educational outputs are a competitive commodity subject to continuous evaluation. To obtain a good and acceptable commodity (students), continuity in work with the same

spirit and motivation during the period of applying the approach is necessary. When we talk about a suitable educational product, which is the student, it is as if we are talking about community development, because that will naturally reflect on the entire society. The relationship between the university and society is a reciprocal interdependent relationship where each affects the other.

The application of Total Quality Management in all fields, including university education, is subject to a set of influential cultural forces during the application stage, in addition to future factors that must be anticipated. Among these factors:

1- The economic factor: where educational growth and development are linked to the prevailing economic situation in any country. "Economic factors affect education from two sides: the economic structure of society and the economic theory adopted by the state as well" (Aboud: 1990: 160). Education and economy are linked by an exchange relationship where each affects the other. The economic theory either shapes restrictions or imposes restrictions in terms of the amount of intervention in the educational field, where the impact differs according to the followed system. The capitalist system launches economic transactions without direct government intervention inside and outside the state, while socialist states participate in funding education and have more influence in the learning process. The Islamic system, if used correctly and properly, believes in the value of the individual and his ability to think and create. Therefore, the economic theory reflects positively or negatively on school educational management and higher education according to the used administrative system and the size of funding provided for the educational process.

The Palestinian economic situation suffers from

major setbacks and deterioration in all economic fields, which reflect on the level of life due to low income and increasing unemployment as a result of harsh Israeli practices that worked to directly destroy the Palestinian economy through the destruction it caused and continues to cause daily in the Palestinian economic infrastructure, making this economy directly linked to Israeli politics and economy.

2- The political factor: It relates to the ruling system followed in the state and the prevailing conditions associated with this political system and what follows from political stability. The philosophy of governance appears under democratic systems based on trust and respect for the individual, and that politics is the product of the individual's decision when expressing his opinion. This political philosophy reflects on educational systems to achieve the principle of equal educational opportunities for all individuals with a specific type of supervision over education to achieve unity and retain the state as a direct partner in the educational process.

The Palestinian society suffers from the lack of clear political stability as a result of the events passing through the Palestinian situation, and the inability of the National Authority to fully control educational and learning processes due to the occupation that tore the bonds of cohesion between parts of the Palestinian people. Therefore, the educational situation is directly affected by the difficult political situation experienced by the Palestinian people, due to the lack of educational stability in schools and universities because of the impact and practices of the Israeli occupation, which results in security instability for the Palestinian people.

3- The civilizational factor: "The civilizational progress in any society is based on three basic pillars: human power, organizations

and institutions that absorb human power, and the educational system, its policy, and philosophy" (Aboud: 1990, p.169).

The world is currently undergoing numerous changes that reflect on society's life and growth, such as the information revolution and the expansion and spread of material and administrative technology on society. This contributed to rapprochement between countries due to ease of technological communication and connection. Progress and development in the world have become linked to the extent to which countries use modern technology means and modern communication tools, and countries' ability to adapt and confront the globalization system while preserving their entity and ability to protect themselves and their various systems, including educational ones, from dependency on advanced countries.

4- The Social Factor: The social system in any country constitutes an important factor for the degree of social cohesion in the state, where each system is distinguished by social characteristics that differentiate it from others, and the social situation is linked to the prevailing political situation. The capitalist and Western socialist system, despite their political strength, are characterized by fragmentation and weakness of family cohesion, where individualism and personal interest abound, and weak belonging to the state and concern for personal interest prevail. However, the strength of the economic and military situation has hidden these manifestations for those societies. Whereas the social situation under the Islamic system applied correctly hides many negative manifestations, and shows cooperation, family and social cohesion, brotherhood, justice, equality, respect for the value of the individual and his entity, absence of personal interest, increased belonging, and other characteristics that reflect on the educational field and which

contributed directly to preserving the dignity of the individual and not being affected by negative external factors. This contributes to increasing his cohesion and love for development and change without dependency on any new system. Despite these influential forces in education, there are trends for future influential and potential forces due to the recent rapid changes in the world that will reflect on education. Therefore, the educational system in any institution must be able to know the future expectations resulting from the knowledge and technological explosion and the changes and cultural forces associated with these changes, with the ability to absorb them in the educational system and adapt to them, so that no gap or contradiction occurs in work. Among these potential forces (Al-Baz: 1996, pp.115-122).

Ninth: Obstacles to Implementing Total Quality Management in Higher Education:

There are obstacles facing higher education institutions when applying quality systems, but there is a difference in the degree of their importance. Studies have shown that "weak perception of the concept of lifelong learning (continuing education)" comes first among these obstacles, and this follows the group of educational and cognitive obstacles. In the second rank came "weak financial support provided for scientific research," which belongs to the group of scientific research obstacles. In the third rank came "weak library capabilities," which follows the group of organizational obstacles. In the fourth rank came "increase in teaching burden at the expense of scientific research," and in the fifth rank came "lack of participation of faculty members in partnership with global and local research centers," and these last two belong to the group of obstacles facing scientific research. In the second-to-last rank came the obstacle "weak communication channels between university departments and

administrations," and the last of these obstacles came "weak trust in faculty members," and both belong to the group of organizational obstacles.

From this, it is clear that higher education institutions are in dire need of reviewing their systems and building an administrative system based on the application of Total Quality Management in all its aspects, to improve performance and develop their university outputs.

Proposals for Advancing University Education in Algeria in Light of Total Quality Management

The first of these proposals is spreading the culture of quality to leaderships to convince them of the importance of change and improving performance and the importance of quality standards and academic accreditation. It has become clear from the results of studies that leadership aspects obstacles have high importance. Leaders must also convince the rest of the university staff, academics, administrators, and students of the importance of applying Total Quality Management so that there is a standard by which universities know their direction and progress.

Second: When implementing the comprehensive quality program in universities, it is necessary to start with the public services sector and administrative services as appropriate for working conditions, paying attention to libraries, providing clubs and sports halls. Many universities lack all these services, and they are considered the infrastructure for starting the university's operational (academic) work. Research results in the field of quality have shown that the biggest organizational obstacles are "weak library capabilities" and "lack of appropriate working conditions."

After that, universities must pay great attention to positive incentives (moral and

financial) for faculty members and consider justice and equality in opportunities to make them feel belonging and loyalty. A faculty member is an important party in the success of comprehensive quality programs, and if he is not motivated, how can the university ensure his cooperation in successfully applying Total Quality Management. Many studies have shown that weakness of financial and moral incentives is one of the biggest organizational obstacles.

Granting academic staff in universities the opportunity to participate in making important decisions. In this regard, studies showed that "weak trust in faculty members" was the lowest organizational obstacle, but it remains very high. Universities must also pay great attention to supporting scientific research by financially supporting scientific research and reducing hours for faculty member who accomplishes scientific research during the semester; it has been shown that weak financial support and increased teaching burden represent the highest obstacles in scientific research aspects.

It also became clear that there is neglect of community service programs and continuing education, which distanced universities from practicing one of their basic functions. Therefore, higher education institutions should appoint specialists to oversee the deanship of community service and provide them with the necessary support from delegating authority to financial support in order to link universities with society and benefit from faculty members in researching its issues, and then intensifying training courses and scientific programs that society needs at symbolic prices. In addition to providing consultations, educational lectures, and voluntary literary evenings for the public.

Despite universities starting to pay attention to comprehensive quality and academic accreditation, it is clear from the study results

that all obstacles identified by the studies represent high importance among faculty members, and it seems that universities lack qualified administrative expertise in this field. Therefore, they should select from among their members leaderships that possess administrative and academic experience in applying the comprehensive quality program, and if that is difficult for them, they can seek help from international expertise houses with long experience and established expertise in the field of higher education quality to supervise the application of comprehensive quality and train academic leaderships in the university.

Based on the state's responsibility for building human capital in all its forms, it is proposed that the state continue to provide opportunities for higher education to qualified citizens to join it. This does not mean that higher education institutions should be governmental only, because the most important requirement for the radical reform of higher education institutions is to liberate them from government control, and to establish them with independent boards of directors representing it (the state, business sector, academics). Working to improve the efficiency of exploiting resources of higher education institutions (Hanen Bushlagham: 2017, p. 81).

Conclusion:

And in conclusion, based on what was studied in the topic of Total Quality Management in university education, we reached that Total Quality Management is considered the gateway that can bring about radical change in the educational system and transform it from the traditional administrative style to the modern style that serves achieving a high level of quality for the product or service.

We also conclude that emphasizing the importance and necessity for university

institutions to apply the Total Quality Management system, considering it an effective entry and source for possessing competitive advantage in light of the challenges of the new environment, because Total Quality Management is considered a management philosophy based on several principles, foundations, and requirements that seek to achieve the goal of the educational institution.

There is no doubt that improving the quality of higher education in Algerian universities and raising it is achieving the extent to which higher education institutions can put effective hands capable of absorbing modern technological arts and work on thinking and analysis in all issues and problems facing it, interacting positively with society's concerns and aspirations, which is one of the noblest goals of higher education.

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