

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS - THE SYNERGIES BETWEEN TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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Abstract

Total Quality Management (TQM) is an integrated management effort aimed at improving quality at any level to achieve excellence and corporate social responsibility, like most management concepts, has been gradually incorporated into the management practice of organizations. It is important that in order to effectively manage socially responsible business, the organization needs to define strategies, programmes and action plans. CSR and TQM can improve the institution efficiency, reduce bureaucracy by eliminating duplication of policies and procedures and provide the alignment of goals and processes. There is a strategic influence of CSR in everyday practice of quality. The implementation of TQM systems can facilitate the incorporation of CSR objectives and practices by operating changes in organizational culture. Because of the environment and complex structure of higher education, quality measurement and management have given rise to a number of challenges. In a higher education institution, as in any other organisation, on the road to achieve excellence, there must be management commitment, support from administrative staff and teachers, effective and continuous communication, review, verification, validation and constructive alignment of processes. Quality indicators on sustainable development for education have been of growing interest and for this reason the possibility of creating a model that fits the reality of higher education integrating total quality and social responsibility should not be overlooked. Therefore, with this thought in mind, this work analyses the relationship or synergies between Total Quality Management and Social Responsibility themes not only associated to organisations but also associated to universities/higher education institutions.

Keywords: Higher Education Institutions, Social Responsibility, Total Quality Management.

1 INTRODUCTION

Total Quality Management (TQM) can be defined as a management approach, identified by the definition of general and inspiring guiding principles and fundamental concepts, which represent the way the organisation should act to improve efficiency and flexibility that will lead to excellence ([23] [24] [37]).

[9] considered quality models as operational structures for Total Quality Management. TQM provides a set of methods and practices capable of being applied at all levels and areas of management. This allows the organisation to obtain feedback and evaluation in a permanent and integrated way throughout its activity cycle [22].

In 1999, Carroll stated that business ethics and social responsibility were themes to which considerable attention had been devoted in organisations and academic publications [13]. Employees, customers, suppliers, competitors and governments are placing increasing demands on management, expecting their participation in the debate on social problems such as unemployment, poverty or infrastructure, and to think proactively about the effects of business on society at large [35]. Social responsibility was a relatively recent management concept in 2007 [18].

In the debate on these two topics some organisational issues arise. Are TQM and Social Responsibility interdependent themes, do they depend on each other to exist or is there a sustainable relationship of coexistence? Do different management and evaluation models for Quality and Social Responsibility have to be applied in the management of an organisation? Is it possible to create an integrated model of quality management and social responsibility from individual and area-specific models? Which aspects are common to both topics and in which aspects do they differ?

This work aims at a non-exhaustive literature approach on Total Quality Management and Social Responsibility topics and to evaluate/identify the synergies between both themes associated to higher education institutions.

2 METHODOLOGY

This work has been structured in such a way as to present firstly the analyses of literature on the themes of Total Quality Management and Social Responsibility. The second point deals with the synergies that can be extracted from the common points that exist between the topics. In a third point, the applicability or relationship of the themes with Higher Education and its institutions is considered. Finally, some final considerations are made on the relationship between the two subjects in an integrated vision for higher education institutions.

3 AN APPROACH TO TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Based on aspects of the philosophy behind TQM identified by [23], several definitions presented below and also based on the perspectives of the organisation and the client, TQM can be defined as a management approach, identified by the definition of general and inspiring guiding principles and fundamental concepts that represent how the organisation should act to improve efficiency and flexibility, based on quality and participation of all its members and on targeting long-term resources for all members of the organisation and society through client satisfaction and benefits. It is a continuous process in which top management takes the necessary measures to enable everyone in the organisation to meet or exceed the needs and expectations of its customers, both external and internal, and to ensure that the organisation excels in all dimensions of products and services important to the customer.

Because of the environment and complex structure of higher education, quality measurement and management have given rise to a number of challenges. Around the world, higher education institutions (HEIs) have adopted various quality management practices, mostly designed from existing models applied to industry [7]. Using TQM in higher education makes sense [29], all the more so as, according to [37] (p. 54)

"From the empirical studies reported in the literature and analyzed by the authors, benefits related to the implementation of models as well as limitations were identified. The benefits included the adoption of a strategic approach to Quality measurement, management, and the identification of Quality enhancement priorities; limitations related largely to the dilemma of applying business models to Higher Education. Furthermore the authors refer that "the models are reported to have far greater applicability in measuring administrative or service functions within Higher Education institutions rather than the quality of research or teaching and learning".

[36] assume that the three potential areas for implementing TQM in higher education institutions are curricula, non-academic activities/functions and academic management.

As critical indicators of quality in higher education, [15] identify, based on their study applied to Taiwanese higher education institutions, a redefinition of processes, inputs, evaluation of research and development, innovation, human resources and knowledge management.

The increased demand from the client/consumer will lead universities to increase their level of institutional specialisation and the competition between them. The result will be higher quality products, a more diversified system and a growing capacity to respond to society's needs.

In general, the key instruments or elements of TQM that enable an organisation to endeavor to become a TQM organisation are, according to [18], the promotion of TQM's values and principles, the open and participative management style, the focus on the needs of clients, employees, society and owners, the delegation of responsibility and authority to lower levels, the harnessing of employees' creative capacity through active participation, continuous improvement and learning, teamwork, focus on processes rather than tasks, openness in terms of sharing and broad communication of information, two-way communication, human resource development, partnership development with key stakeholders, eliminating sources of error and designing systems that prevent these occurrences, and empowering all employees to solve problems and make decisions.

In higher education, the definition of client it is important. This definition can be based on the principle of Quality Management with the same designation, although it may be complex. For [20], Higher Education clients can be classified into 2 groups, primary and secondary, according to their position, i.e., internal or external, and the frequency of interactions that the institution maintains with them.

Although the elements of TQM are important in Higher Education, the critical success factors (CSF) of TQM in Higher Education are also very important and these can be different according to the context and level of development of the various countries [4]. [20] identified continuous improvement, leadership, external client satisfaction, people management, teamwork, process improvement, internal client satisfaction, resource measurement and prevention as CSF for UK higher education institutions. [4] identified the following CSF for higher education institutions in Pakistan: vision, measurement and assessment, monitoring and process improvement, resource allocation and programme design, focus on other stakeholders and leadership.

4 AN APPROACH TO SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Social responsibility is the recognition that the activities of organizations have an impact on society and that this impact has to be considered in management decision-making [31].

[10] consider that as a result of major and profound social changes in the 1960s and 1970s that affected the business environment, and among which the interest in minority rights, equal rights for women, safeguarding the environment, workers' safety and health, and consumer concerns stand out, the issue of corporate social responsibility has gained new interest. They emphasize that it is an ethical concept, which implies a new way of thinking about human well-being and a commitment to improving the quality of life.

[12] suggests the existence of four types of social responsibilities that constitute CSR: economic (maximising wealth or shareholder value), legal (compliance with laws and regulations), ethical (following standards of behaviour deemed acceptable by the parties concerned) and philanthropic (return to society). It also suggests that these four categories of CSR can be represented through a pyramid. Table 1 presents the components of each CSR category.

Table 1 - Components of Social Responsibility categories.

<i>Components</i>			
<i>Economic</i>	<i>Legal</i>	<i>Ethical</i>	<i>Philanthropic</i>
<i>(Responsibilities)</i>			
It is important to/that...			
perform in a manner consistent with maximizing earnings per share.	perform in a manner consistent with expectations of government and law.	perform in a manner consistent with expectations of societal mores and ethical norms.	perform in a manner consistent with the philanthropic and charitable expectations of society.
be committed to being as profitable as possible.	comply with various federal, state, and local regulations.	recognize and respect new or evolving ethical/ moral norms adopted by society.	assist the fine and performing arts.
maintain a strong competitive position.	be a law-abiding corporate citizen.	prevent ethical norms from being compromised in order to achieve corporate goals.	that managers and employees participate in voluntary and charitable activities within their local communities.
maintain a high level of operating efficiency.	a successful firm be defined as one that fulfils its legal obligations.	good corporate citizenship be defined as doing what is expected morally or ethically.	provide assistance to private and public educational institutions.
a successful firm be defined as one that is consistently profitable.	provide goods and services that at least meet minimal legal requirements.	recognize that corporate integrity and ethical behavior go beyond mere compliance with laws and regulations.	assist voluntarily those projects that enhance a community's "quality of life."

Source: Adapted from [12]

[17] concluded that by analysing the prospects for CSR and the growing demand from society in the future, organisational awareness of the implementation of the CSR strategy will increase and become a fundamental part of organisational culture and policies. Entrepreneurs will survive only if they are able to meet society's expectations and take into account the interests of stakeholders. They also state in their study that the quality management system provides a framework for the implementation of CSR policies, strategies, activities and culture, at all levels of management of the organization, creating the basis for the establishment of sustainable development policies and providing the overall commitment of employees and management and continuous improvement of the system. They state that the key to organizational excellence is the combination of focusing on quality at the process level and following the needs of stakeholders, making a valuable contribution to the well-being of society.

As viewed by [32] corporate social responsibility should be considered as a company's smart investment, a long-term investment that benefits the company. The 21st century can only be a "century of responsibility" for all types of companies.

[5] and [8] state that there are several reasons for a company to implement CSR: to provide a specific response to stakeholder requests, to improve business performance, to enhance corporate reputation, to generate customer loyalty or to anticipate legal sanctions.

[34] refers that the two definitions, one given in ISO 26000 and the one expressed by the European Commission allow to identify the key features of social responsibility, namely:

- ✓ It is a responsibility of organisations the negative **impacts (social and environmental)** they cause.
- ✓ This responsibility requires a form of management that seeks to **make society sustainable**.
- ✓ Social responsibility **is not beyond and outside the law**; it works in coordination with legal obligations.
- ✓ Stakeholders must work together on the basis of **co-responsibility** to find mutually beneficial solutions and to act on the negative impacts diagnosed.

To [34] the value of a good theory is to avoid wasting time at the practical application stage. According to this author the imperatives of social responsibility are very clear:

- ✓ Diagnose and manage the negative impacts generated by organisations;
- ✓ Do so in networks of co-responsibility that link us to all the actors who can help us reduce and eventually eliminate these negative impacts; and
- ✓ The ultimate goal is to work together to build a more just and sustainable society for the fellow human beings and distant descendants.

According to [28], universities, as centres for generating and sharing knowledge, play a very important role in solving the world's problems by ensuring sustainability.

In modern times it is highly demanded by stakeholders that public sector organisations, including universities, be cost-effective, as they cannot rely only on public funds. Thus, [27] assume that the "academic responsibilities" of universities are aligned with economic responsibilities, which has to a certain extent changed the pyramid, with these two responsibilities "coexisting at their base", considering them as primary responsibilities of universities [27].

Both the European Council and UNESCO are examples of bodies that emphasise the social responsibilities of higher education [30] [11].

As mentioned by [33] (p.11)

Institutional congruence is achieved through the alignment of the 4 university processes with the mission, as well as permanent vigilance to ensure that the direct and collateral effects of university activity do not contradict the proclaimed goals, but rather that they are realised and reinforced. To this end, it is necessary to involve the actors of the university community in a continuous self-diagnosis of the institutional work, with appropriate tools to guarantee transparency, participation, and the continuous improvement of the University towards its social responsibility, framed in the global search for a more human and sustainable development (Own translation).

5 RESULTS: TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY. WHERE ARE THE SINERGIES?

[18] identified a study from the 1990s of the United States Accounting Office, where it is revealed that by implementing TQM companies have performed better financially, improved employee relations, improved operating procedures and increased customer satisfaction. For these authors, the organisation is seen as a system of cultural interrelations, involving a set of tasks, processes and procedures.

Analysing the principles of CSR, it appears that there is consistency with principles of quality management, continuous improvement, organisational commitment and social and stakeholder needs [18]. [21] states that at the “heart” of both lies respect for the individual, integrity, decency and justice. Therefore, it’s possible to say that TQM and CSR have common ground in terms of their application in organisational management practices ([18] [26]).

There are elements of the CSR process that are common to or overlap with those of TQM and can therefore be implemented as part of TQM processes, which will require some adjustment and rethinking of the elements of TQM (Table 2).

Table 2 - Overlapping elements in CRS and TQM processes.

<i>Common elements of CSR and TQM</i>		
<i>CSR</i>	<i>TQM</i>	<i>Alignment</i>
Integrity	Promotion of TQM values and principles	There is an alignment between the diffusion of TQM values through the virtue of ethical theory where integrity has its basis.
Equity	Open and participatory management style	Both are based on justice
Benefit	Focused on considering the needs of customers, workers, society and owners	There is a focus on meeting the needs of stakeholders.
Voice (it is an element that appears superimposed on several elements of TQM)	Delegation of authority and responsibility to lower levels in the chain of command	There is a need for effective participation, with a concern for the delegation of authority and responsibility to lower hierarchical levels.
	Harnessing the creative capacity of workers through their active participation	Workers should have a voice on their impact on harnessing the creative capacity of the organisation.
	Developing partnerships with key stakeholders	A voice for those who do business with the organization.
	Empowering all workers to solve problems and make decisions	There is a focus on empowering or giving workers a voice
Transparency	Openness in terms of sharing and wide communication of information	Both elements deal with the issue of supply and full dissemination of information.

Source: Adapted from [18]

According to [2], Total Quality Management can be used to foster the development of an ethically sensitive corporate culture. On the other hand, [8] state that TQM is a widely recognized management philosophy that focuses on the process of continuous improvement of organizations, aiming to promote additional value to customers and meet their needs, bringing profit and productivity. Companies are thus encouraged to behave in a socially responsible manner.

[18] ensure that Total Quality Management and Social Responsibility have a common philosophical root and that the values they both advocates show significant overlap. In terms of TQM, the underlying philosophy is anchored in ethical considerations, in which human behaviour is based on the schools of thought of the social system and the school of thought of the system. Thus, the horizon of the organisation goes beyond economic performance. As far as CSR is concerned, its philosophy is based on ethical behaviour, based essentially on the social system of thought and less on the school of human behaviour. From the point of view of the two philosophies, and taking into account their common aspects, it is perceived that both concepts can operate together.

[25] further argues that TQM and CSR share similar ethical anchors. Although the elements of TQM and CRS overlap significantly, it should be noted that there are differences.

However, CSR will not happen just because the organisation has implemented TQM, and the issue needs to be addressed explicitly. It will therefore be necessary to extend the elements of TQM to explicitly include elements of CSR. It is important to integrate the concept of CSR with that of TQM and to ensure that CSR elements are explicitly addressed [18]. [19] believe that CRS could move faster if it could be incorporated into implemented quality management models and methodologies, rather than seen as an individualised phenomenon. This would be possible since Quality Management is already rooted in organisations, and management theory and practice are recognised as having a strong ethical focus, contributing significantly and simultaneously to the achievement of organisational objectives.

Models of excellence, quality standards and TQM principles can serve as a basis for implementing CSR in organisations [14]. For these authors there is a need to continue to evolve the management system towards more holistic models of organisations of excellence. [38] (p.201) quoted by [14] (p. 745) refers to this:

... CSR is very likely to build on the management systems as well. From a CSR point of view, the existing generation of management systems with their focus on rational control (= doing things right) can only be of limited use in the development of CSR. However, the preventive rationalities of management systems are important. Values and the principle doing the right things is extremely relevant for CSR. This goes far beyond the present generation of ISO type management systems; opportunities stem from building on TQM approaches like the EFQM Business Excellence model.

CSR can be considered a fundamental concept of quality and excellence [19].

Considering that CSR is normally associated to an approach to integrate social and environmental aspects into the activities of an institution, it is somewhat intuitive, that complementarity can be established between TQM and CSR.

In terms of Higher Education (HE) and its institutions, TQM and Social Responsibility (SR) have overlapping/complementary and divergent aspects as well, which are summarised in the following table (Table 3).

Table 3 - Elements of TQM and University Social Responsibility (USR).

<i>Critical Success Factors of TQM relevant to Higher Education</i>	<i>Elements of SR with relevance in Higher Education</i>
Leadership	Mission and values
Vision	Continuous improvement
Measurement and evaluation	Transparency and permanent participation
Involvement of working staff	Institutional continuous improvement process
Recognition and reward	Continuous self-diagnosis with stakeholders
Programme design and resource allocation	Motivation and education of the university community
Improvement of the quality system	Focus on students, teachers, administration and stakeholders
Monitoring and improving the process;	Planning
Education and training	Implementation
Focus on the student	Evaluation
Focus on other stakeholders	Communication

Source : Adapted from [20], [33], [6], [4].

Under the framework of TQM and CSR and in relation to HE, synergies can be seen like in any institution as complementary.

Corporate Sustainability (CS) has the objective to achieve environmental, social, and economic sustainability as well as linking these items in the decision-making process [1].

As mentioned before, CSR is normally associated to an approach to integrate social and environmental aspects into the activities of an institution. It is the recognition that the activities of organizations have an impact on society and that this impact has to be considered in management decision-making [31]. As mentioned by [16] quoted by [1] CS is the ability of a firm to cause minor or

no damage to the society and environment with their operations. Therefore, SR and CS are at least intimately connected.

Proceeding in a socially responsible manner, universities demonstrate their realisation of best practices to counteract current social issues, both through activities identified with community development, but also through academic projects that teach young people to become socially capable people and responsible members in bringing about constructive social change [3]. Taking into account the recognition of authoritative, educational, intellectual and social effects, to [3] universities should characterise four enunciated strategies of socially responsible administration. In any case, each university should expand these provisions in accordance with its own main objective, institutional ideals and vision. These core domains of the USR are constantly interwoven for continuous improvement and the fortification of efficient procedures and practices. A campus that is socially responsible projects an image of fair, ethical and environmental behaviour in line with institutional values. HEIs are typically linked to the usual stakeholders such as students, educators, staff, graduating classes and financial organisations. However, social effects also require universities to collaborate with different types of communities or work with enterprises [3].

With all that has been mentioned in this work, we can extrapolate that Total Quality, Social Responsibility and Universities, or more generically Higher Education Institutions, have a strong relationship when a continuous improvement of the management systems associated to this type of organisations is intended, within an increasingly demanding society.

6 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Organisations, regardless of their characteristics, the type of services they provide or the products they produce and/or market, stakeholders and customers, aim to increasingly improve not only their economic and financial performance but also their social and environmental performance.

In order to continuously improve towards excellence, organisations in general use management models that support this strategy.

The holistic approach to an organisation requires comprehensive and even simultaneous thinking of several dimensions such as quality, social responsibility, the environment and even occupational safety and health. Although there are individual ISO standards that regulate and standardise the management of these areas leading to certification, their construction and implementation enable integrated management of systems.

CSR will not happen just because the organisation has implemented TQM, and the issue needs to be addressed explicitly. It will therefore be necessary to extend the elements of TQM to explicitly include elements of CSR.

Total Quality Management and Social Responsibility have a common philosophical root and that the values they both advocates show significant overlap.

The principles of CSR, seems to be consistent with principles of quality management, continuous improvement, organisational commitment and social and stakeholder needs.

This work has identified overlapping elements in terms of TQM and CSR such as the integrity and promotion of TQM values and principles, equity and open and participatory management style, the benefit and focus on considering the needs of customers, workers, society and owners, having and giving voice, and finally transparency and openness in terms of sharing and wide communication of information. The alignment between these elements allows us to understand the connection between them.

Also at the level of higher education/university institutions it was possible to identify the synergies between TQM and RSU, and in this case we have associated to the institutional management bodies leadership, vision, mission and values; with regard to the processes, the need for continuous improvement integrated in a quality improvement system; focus on stakeholders, with their potential involvement/participation in management/development and organisational improvement; training and education; and measurement, evaluation and transparency.

The identification of the overlaps of the elements between TQM and CSR allowed us to verify that there is also some overlap between companies and universities with regard to the implementation/approach not only of TQM but even of CSR. This finding, which we consider

particularly interesting, could be the basis for future research, such as the creation of an integrated model for assessing social responsibility and quality management.

Nevertheless, as this is not an exhaustive investigation into the themes of Total Quality Management, Social Responsibility and University Social Responsibility, weaknesses and limitations emerge from this study, falling short of providing a deeper insight into the synergies (complementarity and overlap) between the three themes analysed.

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