The Implementation of Tqm with Service Quality From Students Perspective in Malaysian Public University

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Study on service quality is related to the customer satisfaction that involved with service provider and service receiver. Customer is the main focus in service delivery because their need to be fulfil in order to maintain the quality of services on the eyes of beholder. To achieve that, previous investigation shows that there have influenced by several dimensions from total quality management (TQM) such as continuous improvement, customer focus, top management, information and communication and employee involvement. Hence, this study aims to investigate the relationship of the implementation of TQM towards on service quality. This article presents to propose a study of TQM on service quality in the Malaysian Higher Education Institutions context.

INTRODUCTION

The development of total quality management (TQM) has widely spread being a major development in management practices. In western countries, they has been practiced TQM especially in manufacturing (Dean & Bowen, 1994). In order to serve the better quality of service or product due to demand by customer, organization claimed to adapt the practices of TQM in their operations (Musran, 2013). The consideration to quality can generates positive impact to business performance through both the impact on production costs and profit (Gasperz, 2005; Agus, 2005; Powell, 1995; Antony *et al.,* 2002) and TQM as an integrated company strategy for improving product and service quality (Waldman, 1994 *in Joiner, 2007*).

In past literature, many scholar has describe about the principles of TQM and discussed about the elements such as management, leadership, commitment, employee involvement, supplier partnership and continuous improvement. These principles will enhance towards achieving business successful (Dahlgraad*et al.,* 1998) and the implementing of TQM as a "tool kit" to a large firm (Powell, 1995).

However, other scholar has argue about the critical success factors (CSFs) in implementation of TQM such as top management leadership, role of the quality department, product design, training, supplier quality management, process management, quality data reporting and employee relations (Saraph*et al.,* 1989). But, Black and Porter (1996) argue that in implementing of TQM it have ten elements that is: customer management, supplier partnership, information and communication, customer satisfaction orientation, external interface management and teamwork structure.

Furthermore, Brah*et al.,* (2000) revealed that in his study there have 11 dimensions of TQM implementation which is top management support, customer focus, employee involvement, employee training, employee empowerment, supplier quality management, process improvement, service design, quality improvement rewards, benchmarking and cleanliness and organization.

While, in service quality it has various concepts but widely used and acceptance by scholar is the SERVQUAL that pioneered by Parasuraman*et al.,* 1988 and the functional quality framework by Gronroos (1983, 1990). Five dimensions to measure the service by Parasuraman*et al.,* (1988) that is reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangible while Gronross (1983) has applied two-dimension model that is technical quality and functional quality. In addition, Gronross suggested service quality is dependent on two variables: the customers' expectations of what the outcome will be, and the consumers' perception of the actual

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result (Dotchin& Oakland, 1994). The aims of this study to test the relationship between the implementation of TQM with service quality that involved selected dimension of both in TQM and service quality.

Problem Statements:

The crux of total quality management is to achieve customer satisfaction (Munro-Faure, Munro-Faure & Bones (1993) and retention (Deming, 1986). The implementation of total quality management aims to give the benefit to the customers through quality of products and services. At the organizational level, it can decrease the cost and improve operational efficiency. Quality programs and practices significantly increase the efficiency, effectiveness, customer satisfaction and organizational performance.

Customer satisfaction is one of the main focuses in the area of total quality management. In most cases, the previous research just focused on the external customer, while generally neglecting the internal customer (Gilbert, 2000). Internal customer satisfaction issues need attention as shown by Juran (1992), and Kanji and Wallace (2000). Dissatisfaction will affect ones perception of their own job quality and have an impact on external customer satisfaction (Heskett, *et al.*, 1994; Loveman, 1998). Kuei (1999) also found that in the service sector, external customer satisfaction is the result of excellent internal customer satisfaction. Although the relationship between the internal "purchaser-provider" is an essential requirement to produce the high quality level, but it is still less emphasized (Auty and Long, 1999; Frost and Kumar, 2001) and this relationship is often the most difficult to manage (Oakland, 1989). Therefore, the issue of internal customer satisfaction in the area of total quality management still has a gap in the available knowledge. Empirical research is needed in this area in order to enhance and further develop this theory (Auty& Long, 1999; Kuei, 1999; Gilbert, 2000; Varey and Lewis, 1999).

The awareness of quality increased in many organizations of developing countries, such as in Southeast Asia. Unfortunately, according to Thiagaragan *et al.* (2001) and Hurd (1992), there is a clear lack of empirical research in terms of quality outside of the developed countries. They stressed for the need of study towards quality management implementation that can give benefits to their managers. In addition, Dawson (1994) stated that the limitations, in term of research, from developed countries to developing countries due to different cultural factors. Hence, Zuraidah and Zainal (2000) and Tiagaragan *et al.* (2001) in their study of quality practices in Malaysia said that there are lack and gaps in theory and emperical research in the context of developing countries like Malaysia. According to them, a study on the implication of total quality management in Malaysia needs to be searched.

Total quality management have been implemented in Malaysian Public Service agencies since 1991 and they have been formalized by the government through three Development Administration Circulars. These circulars recommended that quality management systems should be applied by agencies at every level. However, very little is known about the progress or implications of quality management systems in those agencies and others. After almost more than 20 years, it is desirable to see to what extent the implications of quality management programs have been implemented in the public sector.

From the above statements, the main question of this study is to determine to what extent the total quality management can improve the internal customer satisfacfion generally in public sector, and specifically in tertiary education. This is relevant for tertiary education as an organization that provides services to the public. This institution is not exempted from the pressure of excellent quality provided to their customers and stakeholders.

Research Objectives:

This study proposed to investigate the relationship of the implementation of TQM towards on service quality based on students' perspectives. To identify the relationship, this study has three research objectives:
1.   To explore the link of the implementation of TQM to service quality in UUM.
2.   To examine the relationship of TQM dimensions towards on service quality.
3.   To investigate the most dominant element of TQM that impact to the service quality.

Literature Review:
Total Quality Management:

There are no consensus definition about the quality. Different scholar has given different interpretation of TQM. Kanji (1990), stated that it is the way of life of an organization to serve customer needs or satisfaction through continuous improvement. This is the way to secure market share, increase profit and reduce costs. TQM is the process to meet exceeding customers' expectations and reducing cost (Berry, 1991).

TQM also the global and advanced approach in the area of quality (Escrig-Tena, 2004) and as competitive advantage that widely used around the world (Dean & Bowen, 1994). Furthermore, TQM practices objective to enhance customer satisfaction that involves a systematic method for continuous improvement of organizational process and serve high quality of product and services (Waldman, 1994; Boaden 1997). TQM is the way to

achieve goal, process and people to ensure the right things done at first time by improving the effectiveness of the organization (Pheng&Teo, 2004)

It can conclude that, last previous empirical studies that made by past researcher regarding the linkage between implementation of TQM and organizational performance and quality as well shown positive result (*see* Flynn *et al.,* 1994; Ahire*et al.,* 1996 and Terziovski and Samson 1999). The theories derive from TQM pioneers Ishikawa (1972), Deming (1982), Crosby (1979) and Juran (1988) as a catalyst to improve overall quality including process of quality and service quality.

Kanji and Abdul Malek (1999), in their study western education system has applied and have been influenced the implementation of TQM due to successfulness of many large firm. In early 1990s higher education in US and UK started to implement TQM in their educational system and the result shows that in UK is rather slow. Even this problem occurred, these institution obtain benefit from TQM such as students performance, better services, reduced cost and customer satisfaction. In this study, the applying of ISO 9000 was mentioned by other scholar, but it was criticized by Buckingham (*Times,* November 1991)*in Kanji and Abdul Malek 1999,* stated this standards as a "straightjacket" because of if this standards applied to educational institution, the "confusion and consternation" will occurred. Oakland and Rooney *in Kanji and Abdul Malek*(1999), has objected this criticize says that there are not seen any case of failure of ISO 9000 in higher education (Oakland *in Times,* August 1991)*in Kanji and Abdul Malek 1999.* Kanji (1998a), proposed that this standard to improve quality by examining the organization's process.

The practices of total quality management influenced the transformation of how organization work was studied by Mann (2009), it can lead to change at work, transformation of management style and organizational change. In this study, found that QC activites as an instrument of TQM practices will enchanced attitudinal change at work, transformation of management style and organizational change. The adoption of TQM practices mentioned by McNabb (1995), shows that government employees spent less time on management and more time in anlysing and planning effectively.

Service Quality:

Service quality means an overall judgement similar to attitude towards the service and an antecedent of customer satisfaction (Parasuraman*et al.,* 1988; Zeithaml&Bitner, 1996). Service quality provides difference between customers' expectation and perceptions of service delivery (Zeithaml*et al.,* 1990). If the expectation are greater than performance, then perceive quality is less satisfactory and it will cause dissatisfaction (Parasuraman*et al.,* 1985; Lewis & Mitchell, 1990).

According to Suprenant and Solomon (1987), service are involved human interaction whereas customer and service provider have an important role during and after service delivery that it based on "interpersonal interaction" between organization and customer. Thus, service quality in all service will affected by perspective of both service provider (organization) and service receiver (customer).

The instruments of SERVQUAL have been used across an extensive array of industries. Walker (2000) made a survey in the hair salon industry towards a total of 239 individual consumers residing in either of two mid-sized college towns in two southern states. The finding of two service quality dimensions for the hair salon industry in particular suggest that consumers do not clearly differentiate the interaction aspects of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Consumers in this industry, indicating a general, overall attitude toward their interactions with their hairdressers. In other words, consumers appear to form a general attitude of liking or not liking their hairdressers. For example, a consumer who rates hairdressers high on empathy (caring, individualized attention) might be rated high on each of the other aspects of interaction quality.

Dean and White (1999) examined the dimensions of service quality in the hospitality industry by extending the SERVQUAL scale to include eight new items that specifically pertain to the hospitality industry, subsequently referred to as HOLSERV. A total of 1,000 questionnaires were distributed at five mid-luxury hotels in Australia during July to October 1998 and a response rate of 15.5 per cent achieved. Key findings of their study are that service quality is represented by three dimensions in the hospitality industry, relating to employees (behavior and appearance), tangibles and reliability, and the best predictor of overall service quality is the dimensions referred to as "employees". The findings also show that the one-column format questionnaire provides a valid and reliable, but much shorter, survey.The major implication for managers is that improvements in the behavior and appearance of their employees are most likely to enhance consumer perceptions of service quality.

Wisniewski (2001) used SERVQUAL to assess customer satisfaction with public sector service in Scotland. Wisniewski founded that among the dimensions of SERVQUAL, Reliability is ranked first, Responsiveness typically ranked second and Empathy last. Tangibles showed most variability in rankings.

The organization used by Farner *et al.* (2001)for their study were a large food and grocery wholesaler located in the Midwest region of the USA, servicing about 10,000 customers in a five state area. Specifically, the instrument was customized to reflect the most relevant dimensions of internal customer service that the salespeople require in this organization - reliability and responsiveness. These are two service dimensions (of

the five in the SERVQUAL instrument) that were deemed by management to most directly affect sales associate impact on external customers. The sales associates require the night-crew department be reliable in performing their tasks and respond to specific needs in a timely fashion. Tangibles, assurance, and empathy were not felt by management to directly affect the sales associates delivery of service to external customers in this organization. However, based upon the services this sales department provides to external customers, internal service from the night shift does affect external customer service on dimensions of reliability and responsiveness (i.e. dependable, prompt service).

Brysland and Curry (2001)used of the SERVQUAL instrument to improve both process management and strategic planning in North Lanarkshire Council in UK. They have founded the highest gap scores were for Reliability and Responsiveness. Brysland and Curry stated that is real cause for concern and provides a definite staring point for service improvements. The customer expects most from the Reliability dimension of the catering service. The relatively low importance of Tangibles could be attributable to the fact that customers are aware of the financial constraints which are typical in the local authority funding context, and simply do not expect much when it comes to aesthetics; instead, they attach more importance to the delivery aspects of the service. Customers allocated to Assurance the lowest weighting, indicating it to be of least importance to them, yet they expect most from this service dimension. This apparent anomaly is probably due to the fact that customers expect staff to be knowledgeable about the service and therefore they can see no reason for this dimension not to be achieved. It is assumed that for this reason customers have weighted this dimension lowest.

Methodology:

This study use quantitative approach. Quantitative approach is an approach that applied testing theories or concepts through the independent variable and dependent variable and performing data analysis procedure with statistical tools and aims to test the hypothesis (Sugiyono, 2008).

This study intend to investigate the relationship of the implementation of TQM towards on service quality in the context of Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM). Thus, the research is focusing on primary data that were collected through distribute self-administrated questionnaires to undergraduates students in UUM itself. Sampling method that use in this study in probability sampling. Thus, to this methods simple random sampling technique were applied.
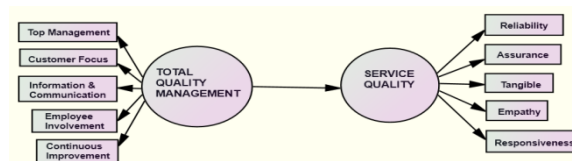
Conclusion:

Diagram 1:

Research Framework:

Diagram 1 above shows the relationship TQM towards on service quality. In this diagram it consists of five dimensions of TQM (*i.e.* top management, customer focus, information and communication, employee involvement and continuous improvement). Thus, this model will describe the relationship of two variables and this proposed model will give better understanding either the relationship will impact directly on the relationship between TQM dimensions towards service quality.

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