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Proposing the Relationship Between TQM and Service Quality In Public University: A Framework

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ABSTRACT

Service quality considered as one of indicator to measure customer satisfaction in delivering of service. Hence, customer becomes an important actor due to they were expected satisfied during receiving the service. Whilst, the practices of total quality management (TQM) generally known through manufacturing industries rather than education sector. Indeed, the practices of TQM should be giving more attention in order to improve the quality standard in delivering the service. Hence, several dimensions of TQM were selected in order seeking better service performance and serve better quality of service. Thus, this article will proposed the relationship of TQM practices and service quality in public university.

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INTRODUCTION

The implementation of TQM has analyzed by Van Der Wiele, Williams and Dale [46] by proposing the concept of TQM using the “fad, fashion, and fit theory” in order to examine the TQM can “survive and become fit”. By implementing of TQM it can directly generate positive effect to the organization performance [17,2,40,4]. Generally TQM stated by Ho [22], explained that TQM has developed rapidly in order to manage the organization perfectly and play an important role in management practices.

Furthermore, TQM also known as “a strategy, a way doing business, a way of managing, a way of looking at the organizational and its activities” [5]. Whilst, another concept of TQM is, TQM as an umbrella of concepts and ideas in various contexts related to the quality field [13] and Dale [12] described that TQM as a mutual cooperation of every one in organization and associated business process in order to produce products and services which meet the customer expectation and needs.

Furthermore, Oakland [35] his point of view about the TQM as an approach to improve competitiveness, efficiency and flexibility for whole organization. TQM practices has been argue by various scholars due to various critical success factors (CSFc). Saraph *et al.*, [41] proposed that CSFs have eight factors such as: top management leadership, role of quality department, training, product design, supplier quality management, process management, quality data reporting and employee relations. However, Black and Porter [7] argue that TQM practices have ten dimensions that include people and customer management, supplier partnerships, communication of improvement information, customer satisfaction orientation, external interface management and teamwork structures for improvement, operational quality planning, quality improvement measurement system and corporate quality culture.

Service quality provides different perception of customer expectation on service delivery [49]. Service quality generally has been proposed by Parasuraman *et al.*, [37] and also Gronroos [18,19]. But, the widely used and acceptance by scholar is SERVQUAL instrument that developed by Parasuraman *et al.*, [37] that consists of five dimensions that is reliability, assurance empathy, assurance and tangible. Whilst, Nitecki *et al.*, [34], service quality defined as “meeting or exceeding customer expectations, or as the difference between customer perceptions and expectations of service”. Customer satisfaction is a function of the discrepancy between a consumer’s prior expectations and his or her perception regarding the purchase [11,36,45,48]. In addition,

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Parasuraman *et al.*, [38], defined that service quality as a comparative function between consumer expectations and actual service performance.

Problem Statements:

The achievement of total quality management (TQM) in higher education institution means the organization's ability to provide a high level of service quality excellence, whereas can meet the students' needs, faculty members, parents, employers and society and in a form which consistent with their expectations and requirements of the times and the environment of scientific and technological resources including achieving satisfaction and happiness to them. This is done through pre-established standards to assess the output and check the status of excellence [3].

Quality in service industry has a closely related to customer satisfaction. [37,28] SERVQUAL is based on conception of perceived service quality, defined as the discrepancy between what the customer feels that a service provider should offer and his perception of what the service provider actually offers. Implementation in TQM, is a management policy, whereas becomes a tool for utilization and exploitation of all human, finance and technology resources in educational institutions. The goal of educational organization management is to utilize staff capabilities that easily can achieve through TQM system. It means that TQM is by using physical and intellectual capabilities of staff in different level in organization. TQM uses employee capabilities in all activities and processes and makes cooperation practical and tangible.

Interaction with people which include teaching staff and such attributes as teaching methods, learning materials, lecturer communication and interaction with students and consultations' opportunities [44]. All these aspects will contribute to students' satisfaction as a measurement in service quality besides can improve the university quality of service.

The implementation of TQM still has a barriers to applying in higher education institution. Matthews [30], proposed that it related to the highly generic and idealistic mission of the institution. Furthermore, the lack of an agreement on the meaning of quality and academic freedom have resulted in an administration relatively limited control over key personnel. The difficulty resulting from the freedom, the staff seen as "do not view their work as contributing directly to their institution's output or to the satisfaction of the quality receiver (customer) as mentioned by Hansen [21]. Seymour [43], mentioned the emerging of this problem is the organizations operate like a random collection of elements driving off in different directions with no unifying propose and the lack of a strong authority, the number of constituencies and the autonomous spirit in universities are the factors that lead to leadership hard to practice [42].

Research Objectives:

In order to ensure the relationship that rely on TQM and service quality in public university context, this study proposed the research objectives as follows:

- To explore the relationship of the TQM that represented by selected dimensions towards on service quality in public university.
- To examine the combination of TQM dimensions practices to service quality in public university in seeking the quality improvement.
- To get better understanding the practices of TQM in public university towards service quality.

Literature Review:

TQM also the global and advanced approach in the area of quality [15] and as competitive advantage that widely used around the world [14]. Moreover, TQM practices objective to enhance customer satisfaction that involves a systematic method in order to continuous improvement of organizational process and serve high quality of product and services [47,8]. Pheng and Teo [39] views TQM as a way to achieve goal, process and people to ensure the right things done at first time by improving the effectiveness of the organization.

The practices of total quality management influenced the transformation of how organization worked was studied by Mann [29], it can lead to change at work, transformation of management style and organizational change. In this study, found that QC activities as an instrument of TQM practices will enhance attitudinal change at work, transformation of management style and organizational change. The adoption of TQM practices mentioned by McNabb [31], shows that government employees spent less time on management and more time in analysing and planning effectively.

Past study about service quality in Malaysian public service has been made by Aliah and Tarmize *in Ilhaamie*, 2010, was adapted the SERVQUAL measurement to comprising of 25 items that named as KualKhi in order to measure service quality provided by an income tax payment department in Malaysia. Researcher of this study has use convenience sampling technique whereas 300 copies of KualKhi questionnaire were distributed to the customers. The finding shows that it has existence of significant gaps between the expectation of tax buyers and the services they accepted such as reliability, responsiveness and empathy. Another two determination shows moderate but from overall service quality is high.

Firdaus [1] in his study, use comparing the reliability and validity elements of three instruments which is SERVPERF, HEDPERF and combination of the two instruments. In HEDPERF it contains of 41 items whereas 13 items were adapted from SERVPERF. This researcher has collected around 381 questionnaires from two public universities, one private university and three private colleges. Result from data collection found that HHedPERF is the best instrument in measuring service quality due to uni-dimensionality reliability and validity.

On the other hand, Arawati *et al.* [6] applying SERVPERF in their study in determining the relationship between service quality, service performance and customer satisfaction in 86 Malaysian public departments. The finding of their study, it found that they only can extract three dimension from nine of ten service quality dimensions proposed by Parasuraman *et al.* [38]. The labelled these three dimensions as responsiveness, access and credibility and they found out that all these three dimension are related to service performance and customer satisfaction.

Hypothesis Development:

Top management is a prerequisite for service quality and this commitment to ensure that the excellences and service recovery is must mainly for employees to achieve the goals [9]. Jenkins [25] mentioned that lack of top management commitment can lead to main reason of quality improvement, hence this argument was supported by Zemke [50] stated that if the management is fully committed to service excellence, any improvement efforts are doomed to failure from the start.

H1: There has positive relationship between top management and service quality

Secondly is, customer satisfaction seen as an indicator on how the customer perceives service quality. If the service performance meets the customer satisfaction or exceed customer's expectation, it showed that customer will satisfied by the services or product. It is necessary of an organization to maintain the relationship with customer and provide the customers' needs, moreover high level of customer satisfaction obtained by better service served [16,33]. Thus, in TQM practices it emphasize a customer focus approach to service delivery. At the same time, focus put on the scope of improve the quality of service that provided to customers in order to fulfil their needs and satisfaction.

H2: There has positive relationship between customers' focus and service quality

Furthermore, employee involvement plays an important role. The participation from employee can be defined as the employee in the organization engaged various quality management activities. The involvement in quality management, employee will enhance to get new knowledge, benefits of the quality disciplines and obtain an accomplishment by solving quality problems. Mitchell [32] mentioned that in order to achieving effective employee involvement, the employee should be committed on their job. Effective employee involvement, could be involved in decision making, planning and implementation that focusing on the goal that participants tend to it and also due to achieve common goal with others deal with assist interaction [10].

H3: There is a positive relationship between employee involvement and service quality.

Continuous improvement is one of the TQM practices that described by Deming as "improvement initiatives that increase success and reduce failures" [26]. Kossoff [27] proposed that total quality can be achieved constantly by engaging continuous improvement via involvement of workers or people from all organizational levels. Besides that, quality improvement as resources that needed to implement quality management [24]. By implementing ISO 9000 to ensure the organization keep pursuing quality system improvement in their firm [51]. Thus, in this study quality improvement establish due to the firm or an organization fulfil the requirement and standard of ISO 9000. By applying continuous improvement, automatically will increasing in quality and reduce rework and wasting time. By practices continuous improvement in organization, it will enhanced the improvement towards on service quality. Therefore, one hypothesis suggested through this relationship.

H4: There is a positive relationship between continuous improvement and service quality.

Methodology:

This study applied a quantitative approach to link the element in this study and to clarify the aims of the study. Besides that, all measured variables will be answered by testing the link of independent variable and dependent variable. Furthermore, data will be collect by using cross-sectional survey that enable researcher save the time and cost and all the variables are measured at the same time. Questionnaires will be distributed to undergraduate students by randomly due to researcher tend to use stratified random sampling technique. All the questionnaire collected will be analyze and interpreted by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0. Pearson correlation, used to describe the strength of linear relationship either the relation is strong or weak and also it's important when comparing the sets of data. In addition, multiple regression allowed to examine how multiple independent variables are related to a dependent variable that involving the dimensions of TQM (*i.e* top management, customer focus, information and communication, employee involvement and continuous improvement as independent variable) and service quality as dependent variable.

Conclusion:

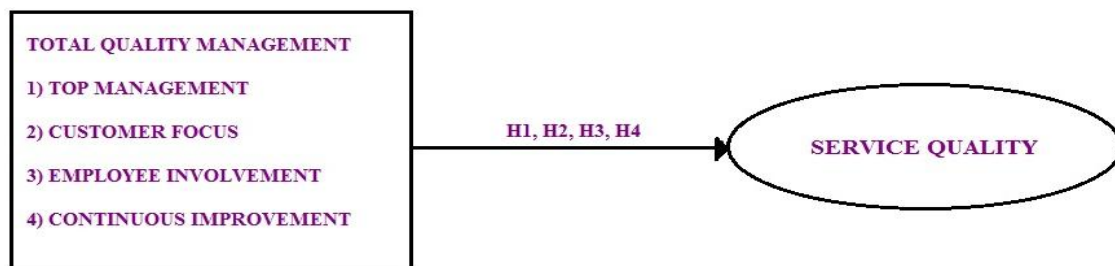


Diagram 1: Conceptual Framework of proposing the relationship of TQM and service quality in public university.

Diagram 1 above shows the framework of proposing the relationship of TQM and service quality in public university. In this diagram shows the dimensions of TQM that will be test their impact on service quality. Hence, in the total quality management practices in this study proposed five dimensions (*i.e* top management, customer focus, information and communication, employee involvement and continuous improvement). This dimension will be test in public university to measure the relationship towards on service quality.

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