Educational quality is a serious concern in every stage of education all over the world and is absolutely essential for the healthy present and bright future of the nation. The government and other educational agencies are in a relentless pursuit of improving the quality of education as is evident from the introduction of a number of quality improvement programmes and schemes in every stages of education from primary to higher education. Far reaching changes have been brought about in the curriculum, through the introduction of the learner centered, activity oriented system of teaching and learning, as part of the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) brought into effect through the National Education Policy (NPE), 1992. Accordingly, examination reforms were also envisaged through the introduction of evaluation as an ongoing process. Professionalism among the teachers was also stressed by providing training and education through “clusters” of teachers formed as quality circles which also pave way for serious academic deliberations and interactions among teachers.

A close examination of these initiatives unveils the change in the educational policy towards one, that is, customer focused, achieved by constantly and continuously improving teaching, learning and evaluation; through the participative efforts of one and all in the education system; effected through teamwork. All these quality improvement initiatives could be brought under the broad spectrum of Total Quality Management (TQM). Nomenclatures may be different but the intentions are nevertheless the same, which is to satisfy the customers of education by constantly and continuously improving educational service, through the whole hearted efforts of everybody involved in the process, which is absolutely the true essence of total quality management.

The researcher found it extremely interesting to examine the extent of total quality management practices in the higher secondary school education. The researcher was herself working as a higher secondary school teacher for 8 years and had observed that even though the systemic improvements were indispensable for achieving quality in education, there were flaws in the implementation of these initiatives in the envisaged manner due to lack of
understanding of the implementation process and inadequacy of inculcating into the teachers the philosophy of total quality management as applicable to education. This study pursue into the assessment of the extent to which characteristics of Total Quality Management are present in the higher secondary school education in Kerala, by eliciting the opinion of the teachers, students and parents in the government, aided and unaided higher secondary schools, coming within the statutory framework of the state, under the Directorate of Higher Secondary School Education, Kerala. The study also highlights the problems faced by the teachers to implement the total quality initiatives in the higher secondary school education in Kerala.

Since, this study has provided some valuable and useful insights with respect to the status of application of Total Quality Management in Higher Secondary School Education in Kerala, it would be an eye opener for the authorities to recognize and remedy the problems and constraints in the implementation and would also be useful to policy makers, researchers and other interested persons.