CHAPTER 8

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, AND POLICY
IMPLICATIONS

“Education is a progressive discovery of
our own ignorance”

Will Durant.

Introduction

Quality is the buzz word that we hear, see, and sense anywhere and everywhere, today. Total Quality Management (TQM) is a Management Concept originated first in Japan and had been popularized and disseminated by the famous management schools and popular universities in the world. The concept of TQM is not confined in the management world alone, but its utility has been widespread in every walk of life, now. Total Quality Management is essentially a philosophy of continuous improvement rather than a once-for-ever affair. It envisages ‘zero-defect’, ‘nil-waste’ and assuring ‘maximum Quality’.

Higher Education in India has seen sufficient growth but if we look at the quality aspect of it, it comes out to be something below the expected standards and is not comparable with many other systems in the world. Drawing attention towards the sad plight of higher education in the Country, the Kothari Commission had observed that “there is a general feeling in India that the situation in higher education is unsatisfactory and even
alarming in some ways that the average standards have been falling and that rapid expansion has resulted in lowering of quality”. A similar and rather more serious concern for quality of higher education was again expressed in the government of India’s document “Challenge of Education – the Policy Perspective (1985)”, even after a lapse of about two decades of the observations made by Kothari Commission and it stated that “the whole process of higher education has warped, disoriented and become dysfunctional, producing a number of unemployable young men and women”.

Being an integral part of the higher education in India, the plight of higher education in Kerala is also the same. The trends in higher education in Kerala deserve careful monitoring. Total Quality Management is the panacea for the ills of higher education in the Country and the state.

Defining Quality in education is difficult. Like ‘Freedom’, ‘Equality’, ‘Justice’ etc., ‘Quality’ cannot be defined properly well but can only be experienced. The quality of any product can be quantified, measured and compared with other products. But it is difficult to quantify and measure the quality of education as it is a service. Quality in educational context refers to the achievement of desired learning at the level of mastery, and desired learning, in turn, refers to a variety of competencies in different areas of learning and life. It relates to what the learner has actually learned. So, in the ultimate analysis, quality resides within the learner himself or herself and not outside. What is outside is a set of measures that aid and promote in the acquisition of quality and act as pre-requisites. These outside measures or elements include the curriculum, the text books and other materials, media,
teaching learning process, buildings, equipments, IT network, institutional climate and so forth.

The concept of “Total Quality Management in Higher Education” can be defined as “a philosophy of continuous improvement which can provide any higher educational institution with a set of practical tools for meeting and exceeding the needs, wants, aspirations, and expectations of the present and future customers”.

Creating quality consciousness among all concerned with the educational institutions, namely, management, faculty, students, parents, and the society at large is a pre-condition for quality education. A total commitment of the management of the educational institutions, be it government, university, or a private body, is a pre-requisite for assuring TQM in higher education.

In ‘literacy’, Kerala ranks first among the Indian States. Even it comes pari passu with the standard of America, Japan or Britain. According to 2001 Census, the literacy rate for Kerala is 90.92 per cent as against the All India average of 65.38 per cent. Kerala’s male literacy rate at 94.20 per cent and female literacy rate at 87.86 per cent is unique feature compared to the corresponding national averages of 75.85 per cent and 54.16 per cent respectively.

In spite of the near-total literacy and the only leading state in the Country in Universal Adult Education Programme, Kerala displays a very sad predicament in case of ‘Quality’ of Higher Education. It ranks only 22nd in quality-wise rating of Higher Education in the country.
The reasons are many. We can ferret out many reasons for the very dismal standard of higher education in the state and the reasons on a ‘macro level’ can be put under the following headings for an easy analysis:

Political,

Economic,

Social, and

Cultural.

‘Political’ let-loose in educational institutions, even in prestigious professional campuses, spoils the very broth of higher education in the state. It is seemed that the political parties give importance to primary and school education and leave the higher education as their workshops and moulding centres. The ‘Economic’ outlay of the state on education, though it goes ahead of the National Average, is insufficient to converge at the galloping demands of the state. Though the state spends about 27 per cent of its total budget on education, the third largest in India after Delhi and West Bengal, the demands outweigh the budget. The ‘Social’ fabric of the state is so salubrious that the young generation gets lazy and lethargic. The endurance and hardworking character have been ebbed away. The ‘Cultural’ factors of the state reveal that the state has been turned as a Consumption state rather than a Production one. The inflow of money from abroad, particularly from the Gulf-Countries, boost up the consumption pattern of the state and it ends up in a luxurious life style. All these factors kill the enterprising character of Keralites and directly and indirectly it lessens the quality and importance of higher education.
Some ‘micro-level’ and ‘specific’ factors are also there to affect the quality of higher education in Kerala. Poor infrastructure, obsolete curriculum, lack of autonomy, lack of extra curricular activities, deteriorating professoriate, poor school education, lack of commitment and motivation, poor training, marketing and commoditization of education and such affect the very Quality of Higher Education in Kerala.

To recover and to establish quality, along with the quantity expansion of higher education in Kerala, we must apply the internationally accepted and time-proven management concepts to our higher educational sector. The present study is such an attempt and the researcher believes that the only panacea to bring back the de-railed and quality-degraded higher education in Kerala to the track is the application of the management concept of “Total Quality Management” in our higher education.

The relevant studies relating to the topic have been undertaken mainly by the various commissions and committees appointed by the governments – central and states - from time to time. These attempts spread across Indian independence – both before and after. Also some isolated attempts have been made by individual researchers interested in the field. The reports of the various learned commissions and committees provide invaluable information and insights. Though they are not directly related to the topic, they were of immense help for pursuing the project.

The university news published from New Delhi, by the Association of Indian universities; the statutes of the universities in Kerala, particularly the university of Kerala, university of Calicut, and Mahatma Gandhi university,
Kottayam; the encyclopedia of higher education (rightly called the *magnum opus* of higher education); the NAAC NEWS (a quarterly newsletter of the ‘National Assessment and Accreditation Council’, Bangalore, India); the universities Handbook, 28th edition Jan 2000, 29th edition Jan 2002, and 30th edition Jan 2004; UGC Schemes (a manual for universities, colleges, and research institutions), fourth revised edition 2003, UGC, are the treasures which touch the topic sparsely.

**Significance of the Study**

Today, the Indian higher education system is one of the largest in the world not only in size, but also in the varieties of courses offered and in the levels of attainment in different sophisticated subjects. Every eighth student enrolled for higher education in the globe is an Indian. The growth of higher education has been exponential and as impressive as in any other field of national activity such as agriculture, industry, banking or transport.

The most literate state in India is Kerala. Being at the top of the educational pyramid, higher education in the state has a key role to play not only for academic pursuit and augmentation of knowledge, but also for national development. It has been observed by several educationalists and academics that though the number of higher educational institutions has increased by leaps and bounds, the qualitative expansion has been accompanied by qualitative deterioration and the standards have declined enormously.

The structure of higher education in Kerala is not different from that of the Country as a whole. Kerala has laid high emphasis on quantitative
expansion in terms of number of institutions, students and teachers. Deterioration of standards is the main criticism leveled against the system of higher education in the state. The report on higher education by the ‘high level committee on education and employment, Kerala’ has identified many reasons for the falling standards.

In spite of the near-total literacy and the only leading state in the country in universal adult education programme, Kerala displays a very sad predicament in case of quality education. To recover the situation and to establish quality along with the quantity of higher education in Kerala, we must apply the internationally accepted and time-proven management concepts to our higher education. There lies the significance of the present study.

The present study throws light upon such an attempt that the much valued management strategy of “total quality management ” could be very well applied to cure the illness of the present day higher education in the country, particularly in the state of Kerala, so that the de-railed and the quality-degraded higher education shall be brought back to the right track.

The available literature reveals that no empirical or comprehensive study on the topic has been made so far in Kerala. Hence, here it is an attempt to throw some light up on the present status of higher education in the state of Kerala – both quantity-wise and quality-wise, and to suggest certain measures for rectifying the maladies of higher education so as to ensure quality. Higher education cannot be a ‘hit and miss’ exercise. Higher education is required to be “high” enough.
Many universities and colleges apply TQM as a tool to enhance the quality of higher education in India as well as abroad. The concept of quality is accepted by everyone and TQM literature in higher education is available in plenty. In a world of ever increasing competition, privatisation, and internationalisation of education, many educational institutions in India and abroad apply TQM principles in education. The Round Table on Internationalisation of higher education 2002 recommends an “open door policy for education, academic structure, cafeteria-type approach (choice of subjects and courses by the customer) and internationalization of curriculum”. All these highlight the need for TQM in higher education.

Objectives of the Study

The overall objective of the study is to examine the standard of Higher Education in the state and to spot the gray areas in higher education where we must concentrate, so that, we can perpetuate the very essential ‘quality in higher education’. The specific objectives of the present study – “total quality management in higher education in Kerala”- are:

- To examine the trends and pattern of higher education in Kerala,
- To analyse the reasons and causes for the present status of higher education in Kerala.
- To discern the factors determining the ‘quality of higher education’.
- To identify the impacts of ‘quality education drive’ in Kerala.
- To study the various reasons for the present scenario of higher education in Kerala and to suggest the ways and means for rectifying the maladies.
• To define the role of government, management, parents, teachers, and of the students in imparting quality higher education.

• To assess the contributions of beneficiaries of higher education in the attempt of imparting of quality higher education in Kerala.

Since it is a holistic approach, the support and co-operation of members of faculty and staff are highly required for quality improvement. A participatory team work of all in an institution occupies a critical place in the practice of TQM. Total Quality is total in three senses –

1. Customer focus

2. Involvement of Faculty and Staff

3. Continuous Quality improvement (CQI).

A total and undivided commitment of the management of the educational institutions - be it the government, university, or a private organization - for rendering quality education is the basic requirement. Consider the students as the sovereign authority to get quality education and create a feeling amongst the faculty that the institutions exist for the students and not for the staff. Setting up strategic plans – short term as well as long term – for improving the quality of education and prepare plans of action for achieving the goals; provide effective and dynamic leadership to the higher educational institutions, monitoring the quality improvement programmes and motivating the staff to work with undivided enthusiasm and dedication; assuring zero-waste in running higher educational institutions via the
introduction of management techniques in managing institutions of higher learning are all but unavoidable factors assuring quality in higher education.

The customer determines the quality. The student is a customer since the student is buying the very valuable services of teachers and has the unmistakable right to expect certain things for his/her money: Relevant course content, fairness, access, expertise and a reasonable learning situation. The student is both the customer and co-producer since learning is the joint effort of the professor and the student. Both the professor and the student jointly produce a product – learning. Broadly speaking it is the combined effort of students, parents, alumni, community, and faculty. On this count the customer is not the student alone, but all the stake holders. The stake-holders INCLUDE BOTH INTERNAL CUSTOMERS AND EXTERNAL CUSTOMERS.

Methodology

The study is related to the higher educational network of the arts/science/ and commerce colleges in Kerala. There are about 344 arts and science colleges spread under four universities, namely, university of Kerala, university of Calicut, Mahatma Gandhi university, and Kannur university. Of the total colleges, 38 are government colleges, 148 are private aided colleges, and the rest 158 colleges are private un-aided ones. To be more precise, about 82 per cent of the ‘affiliated-aided colleges’ remain in the private sector, and 18 per cent remain with the government. The present study covers the under-graduate and post-graduate courses run by the affiliated-aided colleges in the state. The professional courses do not come under its purview.
The study covers the entire state of Kerala, instead of any particular district or districts in the state. The study may, however, throw light upon the secondary education offered by high schools in the state, wherever it is required, because the secondary education is the real bedrock for higher education. Similarly, the study may touch universities and professional colleges also, wherever it is so necessary.

The study mainly focuses on the quality side of higher education in the state with the particular emphasis on the reasons for the deterioration of quality, the ways and means for improving it, especially from the government, teachers, management, stake-holders, and the public.

Only very few studies were conducted by researchers on the topic, though some related works are there as is mentioned in the review of literature. The study is related to the total net-work of arts, science, and commerce colleges in Kerala. So the population size for samples is fixed at the entire arts, science, commerce colleges which are aided and affiliated to the university of Kerala, university of Calicut, Mahatma Gandhi university, and Kannur university in Kerala. The affiliated but un-aided colleges in the state do not find place in the study.

The sufficient primary data were collected from students, teachers, parents, and private managements who run higher educational institutions in the state. Schools, colleges, and universities were also the potential centres for primary data. Extensive personal interviews were conducted to collect information. Questionnaires, opinionnaires, personal letters, and telephonic interviews were resorted for collecting primary data. The sample units were
selected at random. An equal parity was maintained in selecting sample colleges under various managements and universities.

The secondary data were collected from the publications of University Grants Commission (UGC), All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), and various universities in India. Official publications of central government and state governments were very helpful. Magazines, calendars, and news letters published by various colleges and universities were other sources of high-value data for the study. The Directorate of Collegiate Education, Kerala and the Planning Board of Kerala were the authentic sources for secondary data.

The theses submitted and published by researchers, the project reports submitted at universities, papers submitted at seminars conducted at colleges and universities were very helpful. The reports of the famous commissions and committees appointed by the government of India, state governments, UGC, universities, and students organisations were refereed to collect very valuable information.

The university news, the statutes of the universities in Kerala, particularly the university of Kerala, University of Calicut, and Mahatma Gandhi university at Kottayam, the encyclopedia of higher education, the NAAC NEWS, the universities handbooks, UGC schemes 2003, UGC etc., mentioned in the review of literature were the authentic sources of secondary data for the study. Books, journals, magazines and periodicals, and newspapers were highly depended on for the secondary data. The UGC sponsored seminars the researcher attended at various institutions were the real
fountains of information. The national and international seminars attended at CUSAT and Chennai university were really eye-openers.

For the analysis of data collected, the researcher followed the simple arithmetical and statistical measures and methods.

Major Findings of the Study

In spite of quantitative expansion higher education in Kerala remains stagnant in quality. Moreover, the rapid increase in enrolments and institutions has not helped to reduce the unequal opportunities of access.

The Kothari commission wanted to transform the educational system “so as to related to the life, needs and aspirations of the nations” the goals of education were set to include not only knowledge and skills in the individuals for future use in the production process but also socialization, national integration, development of political awareness of individual character. In the basic laws that are practiced often declaration is made that the finer human qualities are superior to every consideration, but in allocating funds, priorities often get reversed. The low priority in fund appropriation is the curse of higher education in Kerala. The financial resources allocated to higher education is no longer sufficient to meet the requirements created by rapid increase in enrolments. This situation of relative decline in allocation of funds is besetting quality of higher education in Kerala. The low budget provision causes deterioration in infrastructure facilities at higher education institutions. The financial crunch in higher education pulls down our higher education institutions to the quagmire of low quality.
Inefficient management of higher education is another lacuna found. Comparatively the private management especially the Christian management is sound in the state.

The universities and colleges have teaching functions while research activities are relegated. Much conducive conditions should be created to motivate the faculty and to develop facilities for encouraging research and consultancy services. This, in turn would improve both quality and relevance of higher educational programmes in the state. All the functionaries of higher education system should be committed to improve quality which should be reflected in their policies, programmes and actions.

Lack of autonomy to higher educational institutions beset quality. It affects the individuality and performance of at least the genuine, qualified and well managed institutions in the state.

The outdated curriculum and the obsolete teaching methods and aids, the free play of power politics in the campus, lack of commitment from all sides, commercialization and commoditization of higher education, absence of innovation and strategies are all contributories to the degradation and deterioration of quality in higher education in the state. Vigorous efforts are required to promote higher education.

Politicisation has done havoc to university education in Kerala by drastically reducing effective working days and leading the students astray. The student community is influenced and directed by a multitude of political parties each with its own student wing to cause disturbances for political ends. Depoliticisation is, therefore an urgent necessity. It beholds the state to
device ways and means for bringing about this much needed reforms through a consensus at the political level.

Paradoxically enough, education, after independence, has failed to inculcate the wisdom and the basic tenets of our ancient culture and the basic values relevant to our plural society into the young generation. Human development is a much more complex and all encompassing affair than a mere commercial syndrome. Economic development is only a part of a whole and it has to thrive organically and systematically side by side with educational, psychological, ethical, cultural, and spiritual development of mankind. During the colonial period, and unfortunately during the post independent period as well, the educational system and the media in general neglected the great ancient wisdom of India. Along with the falling standard, this lacuna has had a very adverse and debilitating effect on a whole generation in the country and the state. The erosion of these values in our present higher educational system adds insult to the injury of quality deterioration.

Hypotheses

Based on the objectives of the study, five hypotheses have been formulated, viz.,

- The quality of higher education highly depends upon the quality of faculty. There is a significant relationship between the quality of teachers and the quality of the taught.

- The quality of higher education is judged mainly by the strength of ethical and pedagogical principles it embodies.
Quality assurance is not a mono-act by faculty, but it is the aftermath result of a synergistic relationship of all concerned with the educational institutions namely the faculty, students, parents, management, and the government.

Quality of higher education is not a “once-for-ever-attempt”, instead it is a continuous process of improvement and change.

The issues of higher education in Kerala are many: dwindling finance; lack of autonomy; outdated syllabus and curricula; lack of accountability of faculty, ministerial staff, and that of management; and political free play in the campus. All these affect quality of higher education in Kerala.

However, these hypotheses have not been tested statistically. The non-availability of data-base on higher education in Kerala is a serious challenge for a researcher. Accessability of dependable data is a sine-qua-non for a sound statistical test of hypotheses. Here the researcher has followed only a logical establishment of the hypotheses and it is proved that the hypotheses held are in agreement with the findings.

**Policy Implications**

The logical test of the hypotheses of the study limelight certain policy implications. They are:

- It would be highly beneficial if we go for an all India service – “Indian Educational Service (IES)” - for education as envisaged by Kothari commission way back in 1966. Such a central service will attract bright young blood to higher education and it will strengthen
educational administration through constructive supervision and ultimately it will fetch quality. An alternative for IES is “All India Higher Education Service (AIHES)”.

➢ There must be a common “Faculty Recruitment Board (FRB)” for Kerala for the recruitment, training and posting for the faculty in higher education. The board should be an independent body of experts with integrity and proven credentials. More than 80 per cent of colleges in Kerala are privately managed but funded publicly and it is quiet paradoxical in having a system of recruitment and postings of faculty by a private manager and their training and all the pecuniary liabilities are of the government. Many a time the private management goes for negative considerations in recruitment of faculty and merit takes the backseat.

➢ There must be an independent Regulatory Authority for Higher Education (RAHE) in Kerala. The opportunities available at present are insufficient compared to our needs of higher education. A regulatory authority for a quality governance of higher educational institutions would be an assistance for the quality drive in higher education.

➢ Higher education cannot be left to ‘market forces’. Commodification of higher education will be at the cost of our long cherished values, ethos, and principles. As our Vice Chancellors held unanimously at their conference at the Infosys campus, Mysore (south zone vice chancellors conference 8-10 August, 2006), “making higher education
subservient to market forces will lead to erosion of academic freedom and excellence”.

- Our educational system is starving financially. Primary, secondary, tertiary, and the professional education as well are alike in this respect. A specialized financial institution – “National Bank for Educational Development (NABED)” – like NABARD, ICICI, or IFC, with a sole portfolio of extending financial assistance to educational institutions and students would bring a rich dividend.

- Sufficient autonomy for higher education institution must be provided forthwith to make them accountable and responsible to the students and the society. The accountability of educational institutions will bring forth quality in higher education.

- Credit based semester system is a powerful weapon in the anvil of higher educational authorities to establish discipline on the campuses. It will reduce the waste of time and resources in educational institutions and in turn, it will enhance quality.

- All higher educational institutions must have a proper vision. The mission of an institution is to achieve the vision. The vision must be correlated to the macro aspects of national integrity and development.

- Depolitisisation of campus will be a contributory to the campus discipline and the resultant quality of higher education.

- ‘Campus Intelligence’ may be a panacea for the epidemic of raging and the resultant evils on campuses.
A reconstruction and a re-engineering of higher education in Kerala is the need of the hour. Every system must undergo a periodical revelation for a better change. It must imbibe the recommendations and suggestions given by the major commissions and committees on higher education constituted by the state and the central governments.

The orthodox and the barren affiliation system must go. Autonomy in higher education is a pre-requisite for ensuring quality. Financing higher education to the tune of the recommendation of the Kothari Commission is vital. Access to and social justice in higher education are to be assured.

**Contribution of the Study**

The present study may throw light upon the relevant problems and illness of higher education sector in Kerala. It is an endeavour in finding the real picture of higher education in the state focusing basically on the quality aspects. The hypotheses have been held approved and as such the main reason of the deterioration of quality of higher education in Kerala is the lack of quality of its teaching fraternity. Unless we improve the quality of teachers of higher education all other attempts in enhancing the quality will be in vain and will be futile exercises. The study also reveals the poor infrastructure and poor funding of higher education adding impetus to deterioration in quality of higher education. De-politicisation of campuses and the establishment of measures for value education are other suggestions of the study to improve quality of our higher education.
Areas for Future Research

This is a study of higher education in Kerala. Based on the present study an inquisitive scholar can conduct a similar study on school education, higher secondary or plus-two education, or on professional education in the state or the country. Accountability in higher education, Human Recourse Development (HRD) in higher education, funding of higher education, SWOT analysis of higher education, causes and remedial measures for the problems of higher education, and such are the areas for future research based on the present study.

Conclusion

The present system of higher education in Kerala is not the result of a considered or organized set of relevant ideas. Nor is it the product of evolution, responsive, in its growth, to the changing needs of the society it serves. It was made elsewhere to meet the needs and aspirations not our own. It was modeled on the British curriculum of ancient times when kings and nobles had to be educated on the basis of the philosophy of liberal education.

The absence of an appropriate philosophy of education is one of the lacunae of higher education in Kerala. It lacks the touch of the wealth of our tradition, rich literature, art and culture. Our curricula and pedagogy do not represent them. Fossilized or irrelevant curricula, ineffectual pedagogy, absence of accountability among the constituents of the educational enterprise and non-performance on the whole are the ills of present day higher education in Kerala. An educational philosophy addressing itself to such needs is yet to be evolved.
We often look back nostalgically at the Guru Kula system of education. Rabindranath Tagore attempted to capture such a vision of education at Shanthinikethan. Accepting spiritualism fully and leaving materialism wholly may not be suitable for the modern era. Jawaharlal Nehru, hence, advocated the integration of scientific temper with spirituality in devising a system of education for India, for the 20th century. For the 21st century India what we need is a re-look.

The rigor of intellectual inquiry, re-inforced by the importance of scientific temper, on the bedrock of values, faiths, and spirituality shall be the salient features of our higher education. As Dr. S. Radhakrishnan propounded, “Vidya gives Viveka”, education brings in a sense of balance to discriminate between right and wrong. The Oxbridge and London models lay emphasis on “intellectual inquiry”, sometimes at the expense of faith and spirituality. The American model of the “community college system” looks upon the education of the youths as preparation for life in the immediate technological and commercial context. The Japanese and Chinese models keep up their traditional and cultural values along with the changes of modernity.

As Dr. Steven Muller, the president, John Hopkins university opined, “universities are turning out highly skilled barbarians, because we do not provide a framework of values to young people, who more and more are searching for it. With a high caliber faculty and an excellent infrastructure we can promote academic excellence, absolute discipline and sound practical exposure. This is very essential to train the youths to be the leaders of
tomorrow with apt skills, deep rooted sense social responsibility, strong ethical values, and with a global outlook to face the challenges of the changing world. The purpose of education is to replace an empty mind with an open one.

The total quality management is a philosophy of continuous improvement and a technique for zero waste. The Japanese management principles like Kaizen and Kanben are the weapons of TQM. By taking these practical concepts and actionable approaches, and making them part of our curricula we can turn fresh and cutting edge thinking into real world of innovation in higher education. The students, the faculty, the parents, the management and the government of higher education in Kerala must be ready to accept these time proven management strategies in our higher educational sector so as to enable it to improve the quality of our higher education. It is not a mono act from students or faculty or parents or management or the government. It is a combined endeavour for a common cause.

Universities are the organs of our civilization; colleges are the nerve centres of our culture. Our temples of higher education should maintain the academic character of their works on a level recognised as adequate by the higher educational institutions of international repute across the globe. They are our national institutions and to keep up our national prestige. Our degrees must be such as to command international recognition and India and Kerala must be heard by the higher education they pursue...’ into that heaven of freedom, Lord, let my country awake”.

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353