Book Reviews / Comptes Rendus

Sims, Serbrenia J., & Sims, Ronald R. (Eds.). (1995). *Total Quality Management in higher education: Is it working Why or why not?* Westport CT: Praeger Publishers, 224 pp. $55.00
Reviewed by Elizabeth A. Meuser, Ph.D. Candidate, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto.

The history of total quality management (TQM) in higher education is recent, arising predominantly from efforts at implementation in colleges and universities in the US (Calek, 1995). Much of the early TQM literature (for example, see Seymour, 1993) deals with defining, describing and arguing for adoption of the philosophy and for application of the methods of TQM in institutions of higher learning. As a result of this early work, a case for TQM has been made in many academic institutions, and, due to the efforts of many US colleges and universities, higher education literature has recently begun to reflect the experiences of those in the academic community who have adopted a TQM management strategy (Roberts, 1995).

By weaving theoretical knowledge with experiential knowledge, Total Quality Management in Higher Education offers the reader a broad understanding of the philosophical foundations and the applications of TQM. This book moves beyond surface arguments and underscores not only the importance of the promotion of TQM in higher education – concerns over quality, "competition, costs, accountability, and service orientation"

(p. 10) – but also includes valuable insights into how effectively to integrate TQM into the way the university goes about its daily business.

Two significant case studies highlight one important 'lesson learned' concerning institutional integration. In Chapter 5, "The Campus Administrative Improvement Program," Annie Woolridge writes about the administration's experience with implementation at George Washington University (GWU). The initiative was undertaken in late 1991 as the "Campus Administrative Improvement Program." Contrast this experience with Chapter 6, "Quality in Education: A Case Study of the Road to Total Quality Service In the Houston Community College System (HCCS)," and one can clearly see how an in-depth understanding of TQM and its impact on institutional culture is fundamental to a successful implementation. TQM is not a managerial 'add-on' as in GWU's program model; it is 'built into' the fiber of the institution's structures, planning and decisional processes, and human relations—personal and political. The danger of a 'program' approach is that TQM tends to be seen as the 'flavour of the month' and that momentum may be difficult to maintain over the long haul.

One of the most significant lessons learned from GWU's program model is that the "cornerstone" for successful implementation is prior "profound knowledge of the institution" (p. 84). This requires a committed senior administrative team, financial and human resources, mindful planning based on the customer's voice both internal and external to the institution, and knowledge about the institution's cultural environment.

HCCS's initial step was to conduct a survey that encompassed full- and part-time employees and students in all four colleges. The results "provided a baseline level of information upon which later quality projects were developed" (p. 94). The juxtaposition of these two chapters is very useful for gaining insight into the problems particular to each approach. The variety of case studies offered throughout the book repeatedly demonstrates that successes and failures dwell in execution, not in philosophy.

Generally TQM initiatives are begun in the non-academic areas such as administrative and support systems (e.g., libraries, and in the academic arena most frequently in schools of management/business). In *Total*

Quality Management in Higher Education, Sims and Sims have empha-
sized the processes of TQM as appropriate for the classroom. Their
appreciation of TQM as a tool for university faculty shifts the emphasis
of application of TQM principles and methods from administration and
support services into a new dimension for consideration by the professo-
riate. In fact, the book succinctly outlines the concerns and reservations
of faculty as TQM becomes more apparent as the preferred administra-
tive strategy in post-secondary academic governance.

In Chapter 3, the "opportunities and obstacles" of TQM implementa-
tion are fully developed by Bonvillian and Dennis. These include:
"defining quality in the academic enterprise, defining students as cus-
tomers, implications on traditional organizational structures and the role
of the faculty, rewards and recognition for quality performance, and
measuring individual and organizational performance" (pp. 37-38). The
experience of the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) provided
insight into these factors. The authors detail RIT's changes in organiza-
tional structure from an individualistic and disciplinarian structure to one
that embraces a team approach. The ripple effect of this structural
change meant adjusting faculty's and administration's narrow lens to
focus more comprehensively on both individual and team performance.

Changes in RIT's tenure and promotion norms now reflect the
broader focus which makes it possible for higher education to encom-
pass team activities and to identify them as worthy of pursuit. A shift
toward teamwork has implications for the activities of scholarship. For
example, the individual activity of teaching was shifted toward a team
approach in curriculum planning (cross-disciplinary design teams for
new curriculum). As well, RIT's traditional reward system was
redesigned to accommodate team performance rewards ("a proportion of
the college's merit increase money"[p. 47]). In this way, faculty retain
independence and self-management while faculty and administration
together, with input from support staff and students, manage the environ-
ment in which scholarship occurs.

In addition to a team model, TQM emphasizes customer service as a
predominant goal for both manufacturing and service industries.
Although Bonvillian and Dennis find no problem in distinguishing the

student as a customer external to the institution, Wheatley, like many others (Helms & Key, 1994), encounters some confusion over this distinction (see Chapter 7). Wheatley's confusion between student as internal or external customer arises from an error in apprehending mutuality in the meaning of partnership in TQM philosophy and within the context of the university and student relationship. The student is indeed the external customer who receives the final hand-off of the educational product and services – learning.

Customer knowledge is fundamental to the provision of quality and the fulfillment of the educational mission. Students are neither "external customer[s] simply wanting an education to broker however they see fit" (p. 59), nor the final customers upon whom "the total quality mission, vision, and processes should be focused" (p. 59). To appreciate fully a partnership, everyone involved must attend to the roles of customer and supplier in a on-going communication and feedback. In truth, suppliers need to listen to the voices of their customers in order to meet their needs and expectations. Students and other customers, such as parents, taxpayers, governments, and future employers must be willing to state their needs and expectations to those on whom they rely for products and/or services. In this regard, customers become suppliers and suppliers become customers.

A partnership requires continuous communication of information and data concerning the customer's needs and expectations and the supplier's capability to meet these. Feedback from all the university's customers is used to improve the quality of goods and services, even though the diversity of customers' voices may at times compete.

Wheatly is appropriately cautious in his view of students as the only customers and hints at the difficulties inherent in a system wherein students alone define course content. However, students do have a voice in the quality of course materials, teaching methods, and so on. In addition, it is incumbent upon teachers to design and deliver courses that accommodate the multiple ways that students learn, the learning needs students perceive for having registered into the course, and the learning outcomes each hopes to acquire from it. This not only requires continuous communication, but also that student feedback be given serious attention.

One of the major acknowledgments of Total Quality Management in Higher Education is that TQM has a place in the classroom as well as the administrative and support areas of the academy. Because Sims and Sims have not only attended to a sound theoretical basis, but have also clearly demonstrated the application of theory to practice, this book offers much insight into what works and what does not work when implementing TQM into an academic environment. The real strength of the book, however, is the way in which the principles of TQM are continuously being worked and reworked in diverse settings. Sims and Sims have managed to demonstrate clearly that TQM is not 'just another fad' or a 'prepackaged management program' but that it must be implemented mindfully, according to each university's strengths and weaknesses, climate and culture, and that no two universities are alike. ✤

References

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Seymour, D. (1993). *On Q: Causing quality in higher education.* Phoenix AZ: Oryx Press.

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Centra, John A. (1993). *Reflective faculty evaluation: Enhancing teaching and determining faculty effectiveness.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, pp. xx-244. $38.95 (Cdn).
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This volume updates and greatly expands Centra's 1979 bestseller *Determining Faculty Effectiveness* (Jossey-Bass). It is a highly readable, very useful addition to the small literature in this area. The author is professor and chair of the Higher Education Program at Syracuse University