

Total Quality Management in Higher Education Institutions: A Sociological Reading of the Concept and obstacles

Touati Soumia *

University- El Oued (**Algeria**) touati-soumia@univ-eloued.dz

Laboratory of Social Development and society Service University- El Oued (**Algeria**)

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Abstract:

This article aims to provide a sociological and analytical reading of the concept of Total Quality Management (TQM) in higher education institutions, emphasizing its importance in enhancing academic and administrative performance, and improving the quality of educational outcomes in line with the requirements of development and the modern labor market. The article also discusses the main motivations for adopting this administrative model, which include accelerating global transformations, intensifying competitiveness, and the growing need to improve the quality of higher education outputs.

It further examines the essential prerequisites for implementing Total Quality Management, such as the presence of supportive institutional leadership and the establishment of an appropriate organizational and formative environment. The article then outlines the key stages of implementing this administrative approach, starting with planning, followed by implementation, and finally evaluation and monitoring.

The paper concludes with an analysis of the main obstacles that may hinder the successful implementation of Total Quality Management, foremost among which are: weak organizational structures, the absence of a quality culture within institutions, and institutional resistance to change.

Keywords: Total Quality Management, Higher Education Institutions, Motivations, Quality of Outputs, Implementation Constraints

* Corresponding author

I- Introduction :

Higher education institutions worldwide are undergoing profound transformations under the impact of globalization, the expansion of the knowledge economy, and the intensification of competitiveness at both local and international levels. These developments have made it more necessary than ever for such institutions to reconsider their management models and operational mechanisms. Within this context, Total Quality Management (TQM) has emerged as a strategic option aimed at improving institutional performance, ensuring the effectiveness of academic and administrative activities, and enhancing the quality of higher education outcomes in accordance with the requirements of development and the labor market.

The concept of Total Quality Management is based on an integrated philosophy that seeks comprehensive and sustainable improvement in all aspects of work within higher education institutions. This is achieved through the active participation of all stakeholders and the establishment of an organizational culture grounded in continuous improvement and transparency. The adoption of this model has become a necessity imposed by several factors, including rapid global transformations, the need to enhance institutional efficiency, and the growing challenges related to the funding and autonomy of universities.

However, the successful implementation of Total Quality Management does not occur automatically; it requires a set of essential prerequisites, such as the presence of effective administrative leadership supportive of change, a flexible organizational environment, the adoption of strategic planning, and the development of skills and competencies within higher education institutions. The application of this model proceeds through integrated stages beginning with diagnosis and planning, followed by implementation, monitoring, and continuous evaluation.

Despite the developmental opportunities that TQM provides, its implementation in higher education institutions faces a series of obstacles, most notably the weakness of the quality culture, the absence of a clear institutional vision, resistance to change by some stakeholders, and limitations related to infrastructure, organizational structure, and available resources.

Starting from these challenges, this article seeks to provide a sociological and analytical interpretation of the concept of Total Quality Management in higher education by addressing its meaning, identifying the motivations for its adoption, specifying the requirements and stages of its implementation, and analyzing the main challenges and obstacles that hinder the achievement of its intended objectives.

II– Total Quality Management in Higher Education Institutions: An Attempt at Understanding:

Total Quality Management is one of the concepts that emerged as a result of intense global competition among production institutions. Due to the remarkable success achieved in this field, interest in its application has extended to educational institutions in many countries. The definitions proposed for TQM vary depending on the epistemological and administrative

perspectives of researchers, and several definitions have been provided, among which are the following:

TQM in higher education institutions has been defined as “directing all academic, administrative, and financial activities and operations at all levels within the higher education system to satisfy labor market needs through continuous development and improvement.” (Halima Khraz, 2024, p. 51)

Al-Moussawid defined it as “a comprehensive philosophy of life and work within educational institutions that determines the method of administrative practices with the aim of achieving continuous improvement in educational processes and outcomes, based on teamwork, in a way that ensures the satisfaction of professors, students, parents, and the labor market.” (Khaled Ahmed Al-Sarayreh, Laila Al-Assaf, 2008, p. 10)

TQM in higher education is also defined as “a system through which inputs—individuals, methods, and equipment—interact to achieve a high level of quality, whereby staff members actively participate in the educational process and focus on continuous quality improvement to ensure beneficiary satisfaction.” (Ben Al-Aaria Hussein, Abdelrahman Abdelkader, Mahjoubi Zineb, p. 190)

Another definition describes TQM as “an integrated approach applied across all branches and levels of the educational system to provide employees and working teams with opportunities to meet the needs of students and beneficiaries of the learning process, or as the effectiveness of achieving the best educational, research, and consulting services using the most efficient methods, at the lowest cost, and with the highest possible quality.” (Dahmani Younes and Abou Moussa Ziad, 2014, p. 9)

Based on the above, Total Quality Management (TQM) in higher education institutions can be operationally defined as follows:

Total Quality Management in higher education institutions is an integrated administrative approach applied to all academic, administrative, and financial activities. It aims at the continuous improvement of academic and administrative performance, as well as of processes and outputs, through teamwork and strategic planning. This ensures the satisfaction of all stakeholders—students, academics, and faculty members—by providing high-quality academic, educational, research, and even consultancy services that are efficient, effective, and responsive to the needs and expectations of all parties involved, at the lowest possible cost and through the most effective means.

TQM in higher education institutions is therefore a comprehensive management approach that applies to all academic, administrative, and financial domains, aiming to continuously improve both institutional and individual performance—at the levels of processes and outcomes alike. This is achieved by adopting teamwork and strategic planning as key tools to ensure sustainable development.

Moreover, this management approach seeks to achieve the satisfaction of all stakeholders—students, academics, and professors—by providing educational, research, and consultancy services

characterized by high quality, efficiency, and effectiveness, while striving to meet the needs and expectations of all parties at minimal cost and through the most effective methods.

III .The Importance of Total Quality Management in Higher Education:

Adopting the principles of Total Quality Management in higher education offers numerous benefits, the most significant of which include:

- Increasing student satisfaction with the quality of the educational services provided.
- Enhancing societal satisfaction with the level of university knowledge and output.
- Raising the satisfaction of the labor market with the efficiency and effectiveness of higher education graduates.
- Contributing to solving many of the problems that hinder the educational process.
- Creating a competitive advantage for higher education institutions within local, regional, and international arenas.
- Fostering a spirit of competition and initiative among various higher education institutions (Samir Abiche, 2018, p. 251)

The importance of applying TQM in education also lies in the following aspects:

- Regulating and structuring the administrative system within educational institutions through clear role definition and precise assignment of responsibilities.
- Enhancing students' development in all physical, intellectual, social, psychological, and spiritual aspects.
- Increasing the competencies of administrators, teachers, and staff members in educational institutions and improving their performance.
- Promoting an atmosphere of understanding, cooperation, and positive human relations among all employees within the educational institution, regardless of its size or type.
- Strengthening awareness and a sense of belonging among students and the local community toward the institution.
- Fostering cohesion and integration among administrators and staff to work with team spirit (Radhia Rabah Bouziane, 2014, p. 170)
- Creating an environment that supports and sustains continuous development and encourages the participation of all employees in the process of improvement.
- Establishing a comprehensive and well-studied system that positively influences student behavior and promotes healthy and fair competition among them.
- Implementing TQM encourages both the institution and its employees to work collectively and collaboratively in pursuit of shared goals (Dahmani Younes and Abou Moussa Ziad, 2014, p. 4)

Based on the above, it can be stated that Total Quality Management holds increasing importance in higher education institutions, as its application contributes to achieving the satisfaction of students, faculty members, and all stakeholders through the provision of high-quality academic and administrative services. It also plays a pivotal role in improving institutional performance

efficiency and enhancing the quality of educational outcomes in line with the demands of the labor market.

Furthermore, this management approach contributes to advancing the educational and research processes and to strengthening a culture of teamwork and self-assessment within the institution, which positively reflects on the overall effectiveness of institutional performance.

Total Quality Management (TQM) represents an effective tool for enhancing the competitiveness of higher education institutions, both locally and internationally, through the consolidation of performance standards and transparency. This, in turn, contributes to building a distinguished academic reputation for the university.

Moreover, the application of TQM within educational institutions contributes to the optimal use of resources, the improvement of both the work and learning environments, and the reinforcement of public trust in the university's role as a central driver of development and innovation.

From a sociological perspective, Total Quality Management can be regarded not merely as an administrative technique, but as a *social practice* that redefines the university's relationship with its social and economic environment. It establishes an educational environment grounded in participation, openness, and active responsiveness to the needs of society.

IV -Characteristics of Total Quality Management in Higher Education Institutions:

1. Regulating and developing the administrative system in higher education institutions, with clear and precise definition of responsibilities.
2. Enhancing the academic and personal levels of students.
3. Increasing the competencies of both academic and administrative staff members and improving their performance.
4. Providing a suitable environment characterized by a culture of understanding and positive human relations.
5. Raising awareness and fostering loyalty toward the university among its beneficiaries.
6. Promoting teamwork, which strengthens cohesion and integration among all employees.
7. Adding greater appreciation and respect for institutions that adopt quality systems locally, regionally, and globally.
8. Continuously improving the educational process and its outcomes, and creating an environment that supports and sustains ongoing development.
9. Completing tasks correctly from the first attempt and minimizing errors.
10. Developing the skills and knowledge of both academic and administrative staff members.
11. Achieving stakeholder satisfaction (students, parents, employees, and the community).
12. Providing the best possible educational, research, and consultancy services. (Khaled Ahmed Al-Sarayreh, Laila Al-Assaf, 2008 , p. 16)

V. Justifications for Implementing Total Quality Management in Higher Education Institutions:

The reasons that have motivated higher education institutions to adopt the principles of Total Quality Management and ensure its successful implementation—after it was previously confined to the industrial sector—are numerous. Among these reasons are:

- The declining share of national institutions in the global market due to the limitations of their human resources.
- The prevalence of administrative bureaucracy characterized by excessive centralization, unilateral decision-making by university administrations, and the absence of participation from academic, administrative, and student bodies in decision-making processes.
- The phenomenon of *educational inefficiency*, meaning investment in education without adequate returns, as educational outputs fail to meet effective demand in the labor market.
- The lack of involvement of producers, administrators, and professionals in the design of educational programs at all levels.
- Difficulties faced by administrators in managing the performance of subordinates and new employees, as well as the challenges encountered by graduates and new workers with their supervisors—both groups suffering from the deterioration of education and production quality (Asma Ameera, 2013, p. 56)
- The rising unemployment rates among graduates of national universities.
- The oversupply of university graduates compared to labor market demand. (Dahmani Younes and Abou Moussa Ziad, 2014, P10)
- The continuous changes in the needs and requirements of the labor market, which necessitate conducting the educational process through new and innovative methods.
- The tendency of many university graduates to work in fields unrelated to their original areas of specialization (Asma Ameera, 2013, p. 56).

Additional justifications for implementing Total Quality Management (TQM) in higher education have been identified at both the international and local levels, as follows:

1. At the international level:

- The globalization of systems, which represents one of the defining features of the modern era.
- The close relationship between total quality and productivity.
- The comprehensiveness and inclusiveness of the total quality management system.
- The successful implementation of TQM in numerous educational institutions across many developed countries.

2. At the local level:

- The ineffectiveness of certain existing administrative systems and practices in achieving the desired level of quality.
- The integration of TQM with the comprehensive evaluation of education within educational institutions.

- The decline in teachers' motivation to teach.
- The decline in students' motivation to learn.
- The increase in complaints from all parties involved.
- The educational deficit, as educational outputs fail to meet the effective demand of the labor market at the required level.
- The widening gap between education and production, as current education does not provide training for some professions required in the labor market, while certain graduates also struggle to find suitable employment opportunities.
- The rising cost of education.
- The absence of competitiveness of university graduates in global markets.
- The deterioration of productivity across various fields among university graduates. (Abdul Hakim bin Al-Muhsin Ababtain, Rida Helmi Ahmad Samour, 2019 pp. 59–60)

In light of what has been presented, it can be said that there are many justifications that have contributed to the tendency of higher education institutions to implement Total Quality Management (TQM). The most prominent of these are the pursuit of improving the quality of education and its outcomes, enhancing institutional performance efficiency, and responding to the rapid transformations in knowledge and the labor market. In addition, there is the need to achieve beneficiary satisfaction, strengthen the universities' positions in national and international rankings, and obtain academic accreditation — all of which represent the main motivations for adopting this management approach.

VI. Principles of Total Quality Management in Higher Education :

The principles of Total Quality Management in higher education do not differ much from the basic quality principles applied in the industrial sector; however, the focus here is on the humane element — that is, inputs, outputs, and the educational process. These concepts can be discussed in more detail as follows:

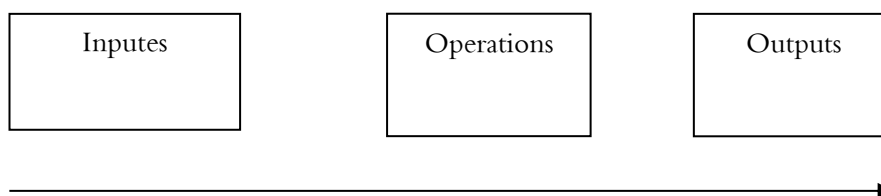
Inputs in Higher Education: Inputs are fundamental to improving the quality of education. Competent faculty members, well-equipped classrooms with educational technologies, laboratories with proper facilities, and students who possess motivation and financial willingness to study all play a significant role in achieving high quality in higher education institutions. It is often understood that quality in higher education is primarily concerned with the quality of inputs.

The Educational Process: Improving the quality of inputs corresponds in essence to improving the quality of the educational process, which is a specialized form of production represented in teaching and training. These are complex activities since the processes involved are intangible and difficult to measure.

Outputs: The quality of educational outputs relates to the well-known and widely accepted traditional concepts such as learning standards, skills, and cognitive development. Educational outputs are among the concepts that can be measured. The term “outputs” here refers to the relative relationship between the student's initial state and cognitive level upon entering the program and their final state after completing the program (Jaafar Abdullah Musa Idris, Ahmed Othman Ibrahim Ahmed, et al, 2012, p. 46)

That is, Total Quality Management (TQM) is viewed as an integrated open system, which can be illustrated through the following diagram:

figuer (01): Total Quality Management as an open system



The Source: Ali Al-Salmi, *Universities of the Future in the Era of Excellence and Globalization*, International Publishing and Distribution Group, 2024, n.p.

Based on the preceding figure, it can be stated that the principles of Total Quality Management (TQM) in higher education do not significantly differ from those applied in the industrial sector. However, the focus here is primarily placed on the humane element, as it constitutes a fundamental component of inputs, processes, and outputs. Total Quality Management, in this context, operates as an integrated open system in which quality begins with the inputs: qualified faculty members, adequate infrastructure, and motivated and well-prepared students, thereby providing the foundation for improving the educational process.

The educational process itself represents an intangible and complex activity that requires the integration of teaching, training, and continuous assessment to ensure its effectiveness. The quality of outputs is then measured through the extent to which these processes have achieved cognitive and skill-based transformation in students. In other words, the outcome reflects the difference between a student's level upon entry into the program and their level at graduation, which ultimately indicates the effectiveness of the educational system as a whole.

VII. Requirements for Implementing Total Quality Management in Higher Education Institutions

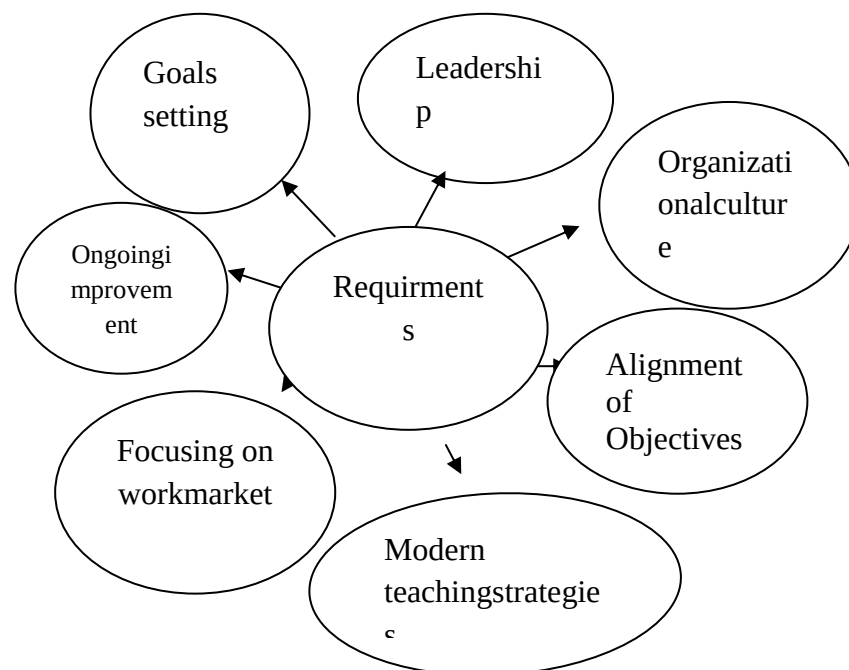
The key pillars for implementing Total Quality Management in higher education institutions include the following:

1. Establishing firm conviction among university leadership when adopting the TQM approach, making it a top strategic priority, and disseminating this conviction among all partners to ensure mutual understanding and collective commitment.
2. Clearly defining objectives with precision to allow for the development of detailed implementation plans, the establishment of a permanent structure, and the allocation of necessary resources for applying this system. It is also essential to specify the organizational and qualitative procedures of the educational process and to prepare an informational bulletin outlining the department's vision, goals, and degree of commitment to them.

3. Promoting an organizational culture and climate conducive to quality within the educational institution, enabling individuals to feel free to share ideas, solve problems, and participate in decision-making.
4. Aligning objectives with curricula, ensuring that curricula are not detached from defined goals and that they are reinforced through linkage with the directives and policies of educational institutions.
5. Identifying appropriate learning strategies by adopting educational plans that align with and adapt to technological developments, while fostering the competencies necessary for effective work performance.
6. Focusing on labor market requirements, which makes the educational process more open to its social and economic environment, continuously striving to align academic content and programs with the evolving needs of the job market and its rapid transformations.
7. Ensuring continuous development and improvement, as the concept of Total Quality Management should not end with the outputs of the educational process or with quantitative measures of outcomes, but must persist through the ongoing pursuit of the best methods and approaches that guarantee sustainability and competitiveness. (Mettata Moussa and Zineb Abdelnouri, 2020, p. 81)

These pillars can be illustrated in the following figure:

Figure(02): requirements for total quality management



The Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the preceding information

It can be concluded that the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) in higher education requires the provision of a set of fundamental pillars to ensure its effectiveness. The most important of these are leadership commitment, the participation of all staff members, the provision of continuous training, the establishment of an effective evaluation system, and ensuring stakeholder satisfaction. In addition, the use of technology and the improvement of the

organizational structure constitute essential foundations that support the achievement of comprehensive quality in higher education.

VIII. Stages of Total Quality Management in Higher Education Institutions

1. Preparation:

This stage involves clarifying the concept, principles, and components of quality, encouraging staff participation, identifying quality needs and standards, outlining the necessary steps, allocating financial resources, and providing the required information and data.

2. Implementation:

During this phase, tasks and responsibilities are distributed, authorities are defined, and all employees undergo the necessary training.

3. Evaluation:

This stage includes continuous and systematic review of performance by comparing it to established quality standards, assessing outcomes based on these benchmarks, and subsequently redirecting actions as needed. (Khaled Ahmed Al-Sarayreh, Laila Al-Assaf, 2008, p. 22)

IX. Main Dimensions of Total Quality Management Standards in Higher Education:

Among the main dimensions whose specifications can serve as measurable standards and indicators of institutional performance are the following:

- **Student-related standards:**

The student represents the core of the educational process and serves as a positive indicator when the institution applies sound admission policies at the undergraduate level—the first step toward ensuring quality in higher education. Universities should therefore establish specific admission standards for all faculties, based on competitive principles according to students' academic averages. Admission should also rely on the results of aptitude tests taken by students, as meeting minimum academic criteria alone is not sufficient; students must possess particular competencies that qualify them to enter specific programs.

- **The student-to-faculty ratio** : is an important factor in achieving quality, as it enables professors to perform their duties with maximum efficiency and at minimal cost.

- **Student service**: can also serve as positive indicators of institutional quality—such as the provision of healthcare, housing, financial aid through subsidized rates, and guidance and counseling services, among others.

- **The percentage of graduates** and the proportion of those enrolled in postgraduate programs serve as positive indicators of the institution's quality.

- **The alignment between graduates' specializations and labor market needs**—in terms of timing, quantity, and competency—is another indicator of the university's quality performance. (Naima Yahiaoui and Amer Issani, 2014, pp. 13–14)

- **Faculty-related standards:**

The success of the educational process has become increasingly dependent on the quality of the teaching staff and their academic qualifications. The most notable indicators include:

- The **adequacy of faculty numbers** to cover all methodological aspects of each specialization.
- The **extent of faculty use of international information networks** and other measurable indicators of total quality within higher education institutions. (Halima Khraz, 2024, p57).

- **Program quality standards:**

These pertain to all levels of training and formation. Educational programs should be characterized by seriousness, originality, and responsiveness to real-world needs. They should prepare students to acquire high-quality knowledge and ensure the production of competent graduates who meet the demands of the labor market.

- **Quality of Teaching Methods:**

Effective teaching methods are characterized by their consideration of course objectives, the expected learning outcomes of the subject, and the students' intellectual level. (Samir Abiche, 2018, pp. 254–255)

- **Quality of Financial Resources:**

Among the indicators of financial resource quality in higher education institutions are the following:

- Expenditure on higher education as a percentage of the Gross National Income (GNI).
- Expenditure on scientific research as a percentage of total higher education spending.
- Expenditure on modernizing university administration as a percentage of total university education expenditure. (Halima Khraz, 2024, p56).

- **Physical Resources:**

Universities possess various facilities such as buildings, libraries, laboratories, and workshops. The flexibility of these structures and their capacity to provide the necessary adaptability are crucial for fostering interaction among all elements of the educational process. Furthermore, the adequacy of facilities to accommodate the student population, the usefulness of libraries in providing references and books, and the availability of equipment and laboratories all represent vital indicators of institutional quality. (Mettata Moussa and Zineb Abdelnouri, 2020, p. 82)

- **Standards for the Quality of University Leadership:**

University leaders are required to possess a set of skills enabling them to perform their roles effectively. These include the ability to ensure quality in the planning process through setting clear objectives, employing appropriate administrative methods in university operations efficiently utilizing available resources, and expanding the institution's network of relationships with societal organizations, production sectors, and both local and international higher education institutions.

- **Extent of Availability of Effective Self-Evaluation Programs:**

Another key indicator is the extent to which universities provide periodic and productive programs for self-assessment of institutional performance, as well as the degree of participation of higher education stakeholders in the evaluation process. (Halima Khraz, 2024, p57).

- **Quality of Research:**

Research represents a vital component in preparing students for the labor market. Emphasizing scientific research, prioritizing technology-based work, and giving precedence to research policy for developments significantly contribute to the advancement of universities.

- **Quality of Performance Evaluation:**

Universities should have mechanisms to assess the performance of faculty members, councils,

committees, teaching programs, and instructional methods in order to evaluate the extent to which institutional objectives are being achieved.

- **Quality of Community Service:**

One of the primary purposes of universities is to foster positive relations with the local community and to provide services that meet its needs—such as direct assistance, participation in community events, implementation of development projects, road rehabilitation, park construction, and training initiatives. (Samir Abiche, 2018, p. 255)

X. Obstacles to Implementing Total Quality Management in Higher Education

Many institutions have encountered difficulties in adapting their programs to the requirements of Total Quality Management and academic accreditation. Among the main obstacles are the following:

1. Outdated administrative structures and the persistence of entrenched administrative and cultural values that hinder innovation and prioritize bureaucracy over intellectual initiative.
2. Excessive reliance on centralization and merely symbolic delegation of authority.
3. Dependence on individuals rather than on teamwork and collective decision-making.
4. Administrative dominance over the academic sector.
5. Low administrative competence and weak leadership among some academic administrators.
6. Resistance to change and slow decision-making processes.
7. An instructional approach focused on rote learning and memorization rather than analysis, inference, and creativity.
8. Conducting research primarily for promotion purposes or financial gain.
9. Community service aimed at improving the institution's public image rather than addressing real societal needs and resource deficiencies. (Mohamed Saleh Hassan Al-Batri 2020, p. 8)

Furthermore, Dabbab noted additional obstacles to quality in higher education, including:

- Insufficient funding allocations for implementing Total Quality Management programs.
- Administrative bodies' lack of conviction in the philosophy of TQM and their failure to adopt it due to skepticism about the benefits of change.
- Commitment to slogans without actual implementation of TQM principles.
- Rigid administrative systems, bureaucracy, and corruption in management policies.
- Centralized decision-making in educational policy and university governance.
- Shortage of qualified personnel in the field of Total Quality Management.
- Neglect of faculty competence when assigning specific tasks.
- Limited diversity of educational resources within the university.
- Inadequate classroom space to accommodate student numbers.
- Lack of emphasis on students' self-directed learning. (Wissam Imad Abdul-Ghani Al-Shammari , 2012, p. 86)
- Absence of communication and feedback systems.
- Adoption of TQM approaches that are inconsistent with institutional contexts and lack of understanding of statistical methods.

- Mismatch between the quality of educational services provided and the expectations and needs of students—particularly concerning textbooks, faculty performance, assessment methods, and the efficiency of service delivery and student support.
- Weak collaboration between universities, local and international institutions, and research centers (Amina Al-Hayoul and Malika Frimish, 2020, pp. 572–573).

In light of the foregoing, it can be concluded that a range of obstacles hinder the effective implementation of Total Quality Management in higher education institutions. These challenges are diverse—organizational, cultural, and human. Among the most prominent are weak infrastructure, limited financial and technological resources, and the absence of qualified specialists in quality management. In addition, a lack of awareness among staff regarding quality concepts, the absence of a culture of continuous assessment and improvement, and internal resistance to change represent major barriers. Centralized decision-making, weak interdepartmental coordination, and the lack of incentives further impede active engagement in quality implementation. From a sociological perspective, weak institutional affiliation, conflicting interests, and low levels of organizational trust create an environment ill-suited for adopting quality as a comprehensive and sustainable institutional approach.

XI- Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be stated that Total Quality Management (**TQM**) represents one of the fundamental factors that directly influence the performance of higher education institutions and their ability to address contemporary challenges. The rapid changes in the educational environment and the increasing competition require universities to adopt advanced methodologies that focus on improving quality and enhancing efficiency and effectiveness across all academic and administrative operations.

The comprehensive application of TQM principles contributes to building an educational system capable of achieving sustainable development by ensuring the satisfaction of all stakeholders and promoting a stimulating learning environment characterized by excellence and quality. Accordingly, the adoption of TQM should not be regarded as an option but rather as a strategic necessity that enables universities to respond effectively to both local and international changes, align with global standards, and ultimately enhance the level of education and scientific research thereby strengthening the institutional standing of universities nationally and internationally.

Therefore, the commitment of higher education institutions to the principles of Total Quality Management constitutes a foundational step toward achieving institutional excellence, ensuring the continuity of development, and maintaining competitiveness in an era characterized by constant change and increasing complexity.

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