

Total Quality Management (TQM) is a management philosophy and practices that aims to harness the human and material resources of an organization in the most effective way to achieve the objectives of the organization. This descriptive study investigated the preparedness of public sector universities in Pakistan for ISO 9001:2008 implementation and proposed a TQM framework. The study was carried out in the backdrop of National Educational Policy 1998-2010 recommendations for implementation of ISO 9000 and Higher Education Commission (HEC) push for enhancing the quality of education.

The objectives of the study were to: (a) survey the presence of effective quality assurance processes in HEIs (b) explore the problems faced by HEIs to improve the quality of education (c) explore critical success factors for TQM implementation (d) explore correlation among different management practices in HEIs (e) find out the factors influencing Customer Focus and Satisfaction (f) propose a TQM implementation framework. It studied 25 HEIs through the perceptions of 25 VCs, 25 Registrars, 25 Deans, 500 Teachers and 1500 Students regarding the quality management practices.

The study focused on the core activities i.e. teaching, learning and research; and the aspects which had a direct impact on the quality of the educational product. ISO 9001 requirements were used as a survey instrument for Gauging Absence of Prerequisite (GAP) analysis for the implementation of ISO 9001. Descriptive Statistics, Correlation, Regression and ANOVA were performed to analyze the data. The findings indicated that HEIs were strong in the area of measurement, analysis and improvement but weak in resource management and their standing regarding QMS, as a whole, was above average which showed that more need to be done and improved. Customer focus and satisfaction was a dependent variable and a proxy to measure TQM level of implementation.

The study revealed management commitment, internal communication, work environment, infrastructure, teaching processes and assessment processes as significant predictors of customer focus and satisfaction. Moreover, all selected TQM factors were positively correlated to one another. The study proposed a TQM implementation framework. It also revealed insufficient financial and physical resources, lack of planning and lack of quality assurance at feeding colleges as top detriments to education quality in HEIs. The study adds to academic knowledge, provides a solid foundation for future research in the area of quality assurance and offers recommendations for quality assurance in HEIs.