



## Quality Culture at Higher Learning Institutions: Challenges and Strategies

Razmah Mahmud,  
Sharifah Zannierah Syed Marzuki  
Che' Asniza binti Osman

### ABSTRACT

*Government regulatory policy in higher learning institution systems is usually aimed at maximising the quality of higher education given a certain level of demand. Although higher education systems can be seen as buyer-seller markets where academic institutions sell academic education and students buy it, higher education has unique characteristics. It can be seen as a great public interest in the sense that society as a whole benefits culturally, economically and socially, from maintaining high-quality higher education. This is the usual justification for heavy subsidies given to public universities as well as for governmental involvement in controlling and structuring the system. Irrespective of any organisations that wish to embed quality, there are two things to remember: firstly, there must be challenges on implementing and secondly, guidance in which it is equally important to ensure its success. Similarly, when quality wants to be implemented by a university, quality enhancement models such as total quality management need to be fitted coherently with the organisation's culture and structures. Thus, this paper reviews recent research, literature and views of the authors involved in research on quality at higher learning institutions. It is hoped that through constructive criticisms and useful suggestions gathered from the many literature reviews referred, the organisation of UiTM Pahang may able to perceive a broader view of these information and, hence, continuously making effort for the enhancement of quality culture in teaching and learning process.*

**Keywords:** *quality, quality assurance, quality enhancement, quality culture, Total Quality Management (TQM).*

### Introduction

A growing number of organisations have implemented, or are attempting to implement quality improvement programmes. As cited in Carl (1999), many writers (e.g. Feigenbaum 1961; Juran 1964; Deming 1986; Reichheld & Sasser, Jr. 1990; Taguchi & Clausing 1990; Metford 1991) have discussed and provided several meanings for quality. In general, it means "an organization having a long-term commitment to ongoing improvement of quality throughout all its systems, with all employees at all levels in all subunits and subsidiaries actively participating (Feigenbaum 1961; Collard & Sivyer 1990). Quality also implies to "an organization that is producing goods and/or services which meet or exceed consumer's expectations at the lowest possible cost" (Crosby 1979; Deming 1986; Feigenbaum 1983; Imai 1986; Juran 1964), as well as doing things right at the first time (Harrington 1987).

According to Juran (1988), quality consists of two basic dimensions: "product performance that results in customer satisfaction" and "freedom from product deficiencies, which avoid customer dissatisfaction". The notion that all employees in an organisation can provide a service not only to the external customers but also to their colleagues is built into the quality concept. Therefore, a customer is anyone for whom a service is rendered – both inside and outside organizational boundaries (Collard & Sivyer 1990).

In the United States (US), the Baldrige Award was established in 1987 to provide a systematic national framework for assessing quality levels in US companies. In Britain, the concept of quality is described in British Standard 5750. In the European Union, ISO 9000 standards are used to define quality while in Malaysia the concept of quality is described by Malaysian Standard which is the responsible of the Department of Standards Malaysia for standardisation and accreditation activities. Labels such as quality improvement programme (QIP), total customer delight (TCD), total customer satisfaction (TCS), quality circle (QC), total quality control (TQC) and just in time (JIT) are sometimes used to describe the quality concept.

Not only organisations that are dealing with manufacturing activities, the service organisations are also concerned about quality matters and the enhancement of quality programs. Nowadays, higher learning institutions are growing in adopting this quality enhancement culture. According to Tuttle (1994), a growing number of universities are embracing TQM for the same reasons that led industry and government to embrace it. Among the reasons is: management systems are outmoded and can no longer ensure success in an increasingly competitive world.

Bresler (1993) explained that "TQM's practical process based approach is attractive to many higher education administrators who find themselves increasingly challenged to offer a higher quality 'product' at a more affordable price". Montano and Utter (1999) observed, "while implementing TQM and quality improvement endeavors at educational institutions can be difficult at best, the results can be extremely beneficial for all involved". TQM is widely practised in higher education and even the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, now has criteria for educational institutions.

## What is quality?

The word 'quality' has become a "central term in the lexicon of contemporary higher education and a major point of interest to various interest groups" (Newton 2002). Described in the Oxford English Dictionary as 'degree of excellence; general excellence; high social standing' it is clear that the word has positive connotations and is associated with excellence, or great worth.

Quality is one of the many concepts in the social sciences that are extremely difficult to define. Based on a thorough literature review, Garvin (1988) has classified the definitions of quality into five major groups. They are:

- i. *Transcendent definitions.* These definitions are subjective and personal. They are eternal but go beyond measurement and logical description. They are related to concepts such as beauty and love.
- ii. *Product-based definitions.* Quality is seen as a measurable variable. The bases for measurement are objective attributes of the product.
- iii. *User-based definitions.* Quality is a mean of customers' satisfaction. This makes these definitions individual and partly subjective.
- iv. *Manufacturing-based definitions.* Quality is seen as conformance to requirement and specifications.
- v. *Value-based definitions.* These definitions define quality in relation to costs. Quality is seen as providing good value for costs.

In time, the customer-based definitions seem to have come to prevail, but in reality, they all need to be integrated. Ideally, quality management can, thus, be a mean of bridging the gap between external quality management, starting with customer perceived quality and internal quality management focused on conformance (Gummeson 1999).

## Quality Dimensions and Criteria for Services

In service quality, the focus has been very much on satisfying the customer. The most well-known set of dimensions has been proposed by Parasuraman et al. (1985) and Zeithaml et al. (1990). The following dimensions were initially included.

- i. *Reliability.* The services are carried out in the way they were promised.
- ii. *Responsiveness.* The services were carried out promptly according to the needs of the customers.
- iii. *Competence.* The staff of the service providers have the knowledge and skills required for delivering the service in a proper way.
- iv. *Access* – This refers to concern, e.g. opening hours, physical location, etc.
- v. *Courtesy* – The staff are polite, friendly, respectful, etc.
- vi. *Communication* – This refers to keeping the customers informed in a language that they can understand and listening to them.
- vii. *Credibility* – The service provider is trustworthy, believable and honest.
- viii. *Security* – The means free from danger, risk or doubt.
- ix. *Understanding the customer* – The service provider makes an effort to understand the needs and wants of the individual customers.
- x. *Tangibles* – All physical objects that are needed for carrying out the service such as facilities, equipment, etc.

## Quality in Higher Learning Institution

Quality in higher education may even be more difficult than in most other sectors. Frazer (1994) argues that the first important step would be to agree internationally on terms such as levels, standards, effectiveness and efficiency. When discussing quality in higher education, Harvey and Green (1993) propose five discrete but interrelated ways of thinking about quality.

- i. *Quality as exceptional.* Quality is regarded in terms of excellence, which means something special or exceptional. High standards are exceeded.
- ii. *Quality as perfection or consistency.* The focus is on processes and specifications that are aimed to be perfectly met. Excellence, in this case, means "zero defects", i.e. perfection.
- iii. *Quality as fitness for purpose.* Quality has meaning only in relation to the purpose of the product. In traditional quality management, the "fitness for purpose" notion is related to the customers (Juran 1988). In higher education, however, Harvey and Green (1995) see the view of quality as "meeting customer requirements" as problematic due to the contentiousness of the notion of "customer" and the difficulty for, e.g. students to specify

what is required.

- iv. *Quality as value for money.* Quality is equated with levels of specifications and is directly related to costs.
- v. *Quality as transformation.* The process should ideally bring about a qualitative change, a fundamental change of form such as the phase transition when water transforms into ice as the temperature is lowered. This view can be found in the thinking of major Western philosophies as well as Eastern philosophies. In education, the transformation can take the form of enhancement and empowerment.

## Quality Assurance and Quality Enhancement

According to Laurie (2004), two major approaches to quality improvement are quality assurance and quality enhancement. Quality assurance addresses the issue of product or service non-conformance. The aim is to prevent poor-quality products or services from being produced or delivered in the first place by focusing on processes and emphasising prevention rather than cure. Generally, quality assurance has been regarded as a means of improving overall quality, but it is sometimes felt to give insufficient weight to teaching and learning (Middlehurst 1997).

Many people have commented that they are able to recognise quality when they see it, but find it almost impossible to define. This posed a major dilemma for higher education institutions as well as for those designing external monitoring systems. What exactly would they be assuring? According to Newton (2002), universities in the UK chose the notion which best suited their own particular institutional context. Thus, the elite institutions typically adopted the notion of 'quality as excellence' whilst access-driven, newly established universities opted for 'quality as fitness for purpose' (Stephenson 2003).

Clearly, quality existed in teaching and research, the evidence is to be found in the publications and the graduates of the times. It is also clear that, in the critical areas, quality was assured: collegial exchange of best practice, external examining and peer review have been integral parts of the academic system since universities were first established. The argument that formal quality assurance is necessary because of the massification of higher education, reduce state funding, new technologies and revised social priorities is difficult to refute (Stephenson 2003). However, in an enthusiasm to comply, it is imperative that the essence, the worth, the quality of higher education, is not abandoned by the roadside.

Quality enhancement is more transformative and it requires a deliberate change process – including teaching and learning – that is directly concerned with adding-value, improving quality (Jackson 2002) and implementing transformational change (Middlehurst 1997). For the individual lecturer, the enhancement is about improving their students' work based on the premise that they want their students to do well (Jackson 2002).

According to Laurie (2004), embedding quality can be considered as requiring the development of a culture within an academic department, faculty of higher education institution where staff needs to strive continually to improve the quality provision and where it is a naturalistic process with a desire for excellence being routine and commonplace. Yorke (1996) argues that attention has turned to quality enhancement rather than quality assurance because of the transformative nature of the enhancement process. Another reason has been that, to date, extra-institutional quality scrutiny has emphasised quality assurance that has tended to be associated more with enhancement. Also quality assurance is more concerned with the present and the immediate past rather than with a longer-term future prospective.

In order to embed quality, quality enhancement rather than quality assurance provides a surer way forward. Kember (2000) argues that using resources for quality enhancement activities can achieve significant improvements in teaching and learning. However, Williams (2002), argues that quality enhancement can also occur as a consequence of the quality management process. The suggestion is that, quality enhancement is an integral part of quality assurance by disseminating the mass of good practice collected through reviews and also by warning against the bad practice that is sometimes seen.

The book entitled *Five Hundred Tips for Quality Enhancement in Universities and Colleges* (Brown et al., 1997) would assist for searching the tips for quality enhancement. Examples of these tips include:

- value students by addressing students' expectations (tip 4);
- ensure that all training programmes are evaluated (tip 106); and
- assessment should be consistent, fair and reliable (tip 266).

## Embedding a Quality Culture at Higher Learning Institution

Since the turn of new century, there have been drastic impacts from economic globalisation, advances in information technology, international market competition, and rapidly increasing local social-political demands on nearly every country in the world. Facing up to these impacts and challenges, numerous education reforms have been initiated in the Asia-Pacific region and other places (Cheng & Townsend 2000). According to Cheng (2001), the world wide education reforms have been experiencing three waves since 1970s. The three waves of reforms are mainly based on different paradigms and theories of education effectiveness, and they result in the employment of

different strategies and approaches to changing schools and education towards enhancement of quality culture. Responding to concerning the accountability to the public and stakeholders expectation in the 1990s, the second wave of education reform emphasizes interface effectiveness in terms of education quality. Stakeholders' satisfaction and market competitiveness, with most policy efforts aimed at ensuring quality and accountability to the internal and external stakeholders (Yin 2003).

Recently, it has been doubted whether the effects of many initiatives of the first and second waves can meet the challenges the era of globalisation and information technology. Particularly, when knowledge-driven economy and information technology are strongly emphasised in the new millennium, people urge a paradigm shift in learning and teaching demand reform for the aims, content, practice and management of education at different levels to ensure their relevance to the future.

However, in order to measure the successfulness of the implementation of quality culture, Schein's (1997) simple model of organisational culture is helpful in identifying the three key aspects or organisational culture:

- i. tangible artifacts as buildings, décor and facilities;
- ii. beliefs and values; and
- iii. underlying assumptions

For example, great attention, with the attendant expenditure, can be given to the quality of lecturing facilities, but employees need to be committed to an underpinning philosophy, beliefs, values and basic assumptions if quality is to be embedded. It can be considered that there has been some success in embedding quality when there is little or no discussion about quality because it is a basic assumption of members of an organisation. Yorke (2000) notes that a quality culture in an institution has been created when there is an orientation towards the needs of all its stakeholders and there are clear, effective mechanisms to support its entire staff in endeavouring to achieve the organisation's objective. Essentially, there should be a commitment throughout the organization to quality and its continuous improvement.

There are numerous quality management models, such as TQM, ISO 9000, IIP or EFQM, which are designed to help enhance quality within organisation. The choice of quality management initiative will depend in part on a university's definition of quality. As well as the chosen strategy or strategies being appropriate for the organisation, the organisation's structures, and therefore, its communication channels need to be such that the initiative(s) can be disseminated effectively.

Laurie (2004) argues that a conducive organisational culture is required in order that new ideas can be discussed, assimilated, modified, accommodated and then implemented. Similarly, it is enough to restructure the organisation and focus on faculties rather than departments and schools. Nor it is likely to be enough to concentrate on changing culture without the impetus of an appropriate and relevant strategy allied to the required form of organisational structure. The inter-relatedness and interdependence of strategy, structure and culture mean that all three require the full and constant attention of senior managers and other institutional agents of change.

However, (Suthasri 2003) notes that at the same time, higher education institutions should strive for excellence through good governance, appropriate devolution within the institution and more autonomy in the handling of financial, personnel and academic affairs within the boundaries of accepted philosophy, roles and functions of higher education. On the other hand, (Rosmimah & Rashidah, 2003), whose research was conducted within the case of Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia in focus, argue that the higher learning institutions both public and private sectors should focus towards R&D in Malaysia. R&D activities are needed to boost the nation's competitiveness in the global arena especially in teaching and learning. The infrastructure required for effective research needs to be established firmly first and while this is still in progress, the issue of educational identity may have to be addressed effectively to allow more positive steps in changing present mindset of academic towards R&D.

Mahadzirah & Wan Norhayati (2003) suggested that the management of the university needs to develop an appropriate service mindset especially among lecturers that instil the idea of providing quality service is worthwhile and rewarding. The competitive situation within the Malaysian education industry is becoming more intense as the number of public and private higher education institutions have increased. As competition intensifies, perhaps the most useful weapon to distinguish one institution from others is through the contact personnel. It is said that satisfied employees would deliver satisfactory service because they are able to understand customer better – customer focused. They deemed to be the important source of product differentiation in many service organisations. Once all the necessary efforts are undertaken by the management, probably the staff service quality maturity level will improve and providing quality service will become a culture within the organisation.

### **Challenges of Embedding Quality Culture at Higher Learning Institution**

Embedding quality in a department or institution is a complex task that requires the commitment of all staff and the application of the leadership abilities of senior managers and change agents (Gordon 2002). Progress towards the achievement of this goal can be monitored by looking for the signs of a healthy learning organisation. From the literature reviewed, all of these factors considered as the challenges for the universities of embedding quality culture

in their organisation.

### Managing Change

If quality is to be embedded successfully in a department or a university, then high-level management and leadership abilities will be crucial in achieving this. Determining and then implementing the appropriate strategy, putting in place the complementary organisational structure and developing a conducive and supportive organisational culture are all problematic and present major challenges for senior staff. Barnett (1992) has some most helpful advice. He makes the important distinction between management *of* quality and management *for* quality. Management *of* quality, he argues, is associated more with the leadership style of an army general, whereas *for* quality requires the leadership style of a conductor of an orchestra. Just as a conductor brings in particular instrumentalists at certain times and determines the pace and volume of the music, senior managers need to lead the members of the academic unit sensitively and skillfully. Barnett advises them to employ and encourage the more subtle “two I” approach of inform and involve rather than the army style “two c” approach of command and control. Collegial discussion can assist greatly in a “two I” approach by “engaging the hearts and minds” of staff and resulting in broad agreement about how to process (Yorke 2000).

To embed quality, transformational leaders are required rather than just transactional managers. Such people are able to provide a guiding vision and gain commitment (Ramsden 1998) and have the personal qualities of passion, integrity, curiosity and daring. Transformational leaders innovate and originate, focus on people rather than systems, ask what and why (Bennis 1998) and play an active role in raising expectations (Gordon 2002). The transformative leadership skills of all staff involved in change will have to be of the highest order if behaviors, beliefs, values and basic assumptions are to be altered (Schein 1997; Fullan 2001).

### Customer Focus

Customer consists of two types, internal customer and external customer. For any higher learning education institutions, internal customers can be described as the students and staff while the external customers are among parents of the students, business suppliers and government. From the quality dimensions that have been identified and discussed earlier, the management of universities need to perform well on those dimensions if they want to satisfy their students (Stefan et al., 2004). The dimensions provide input for the development of educational prospectuses. Ideally, they can combine other methods of developing customer-based services such as quality function deployment (QFD) and conjoint analysis as proposed by Wiklund and Wiklund (1999). Students have their wishes, which need to be understood and fulfilled to as high an extent as possible. However, universities need to balance these dimensions with other aims and goals based on the need of the stakeholders. As Carl (1999) stated that if stakeholders are dissatisfied, they are likely to inhibit management’s ability to implement and maintain the quality culture enhancement. For example, if the stockholders are not satisfied, they may not invest in the organisation. If the employees are not satisfied, they may not be highly motivated to work in teams, to change, and to share information.

### The Cost of Quality

Harvey (2002) maintains that external monitoring is a costly lever for internal improvement, and his research suggests that the money spent on quality bureaucracies could have been better spent on improving internal systems and encouraging teaching innovation. But how exactly can the cost of quality in higher education are measured? If one considers a manufactured product such as an electronic device, one would take into account the cost of the material used, labour costs and time taken to design and produce the item, plus the cost of reliable back-up service.

However, university is providing a service rather than manufacturing a product and furthermore, the ‘customer’ or recipient of the service – the students – are active participants. Smout (2002) contends that “a high quality university is one that fully plays its role in delivering on its promises in terms of the range of services, facilities and opportunities it offers to its students”. This implies that every aspect of an institution’s operations is or should be involved in the pursuit of quality and once again, we are confronted with the enigmatic nature of the quality and the futility of trying to measure its cost. Even attempting to quantify cost the cost of quality assurance – the system by which an institution demonstrates it is meeting its promises – is highly problematic. Adding up the staff, space and operational costs of a dedicated institutional quality unit would only provide only a fraction of the real cost which is to be found mainly in the time devoted (ideally by all staffs as well as student leaders) to developing quality procedures, implementing and monitoring them and most importantly, reflecting on their effectiveness. In short, professional pride and individual responsibility do not come with a price tag, therefore, cannot be quantified (Stephenson 2003).

### The Future of Teaching and Learning

Many of the factors contributing to high quality education are related to particular teaching and learning. In the

MacFarlane Report ((Committee of Scottish University Principals) CSUP 1993), a case was cogently made for radical change in teaching and learning. Trends in student numbers and unit funding suggest strongly that, at a point in the future that will vary according to the institutional resource base, existing modes of “delivery” of academic programs will not be sustainable if the quality of provision is to be maintained, let alone enhanced. The report also argued that higher education cannot continue indefinitely with its existing patterns of teaching and learning: radical change is inevitable, sooner or later. There is a need to strike a new balance between quality scrutiny and quality enhancement which will accord far greater emphasis to the latter.

The empirical work of Lammers and Murphy (2002), who studied the delivery of sessions in a range of academic disciplines in a US university, indicated that lecturers have a role in giving information. However, the research indicated that they do not necessarily stimulate thought, change attitudes or develop behavioural skills that are necessary for complex interactions essential in higher education.

Furthermore, the concern is how quality and relevance of higher education can be continuously enhanced and ensured? We do not dismiss the notion that measures to enhance quality and relevance are to some extent constrained by insufficient financial resources. It is known that the quality of teaching, staff, infrastructure and research, for instance, require substantial financial support. However, it is also believed that putting in place appropriate policies and practices with regards to staff recruitment, rigorous quality assessment, appropriate use of technology and forward-looking management can contribute profoundly towards enhancement of quality and relevance in higher education (Johari 1998).

### **Strategies for Embedding Quality Culture at Higher Learning Institution**

There are several strategies that should be implemented as to overcome the challenges in order to embed quality culture in higher learning institutions. From the literature, researcher found that these could be as guidelines to meet the goals.

#### **Students' Perception**

Students' view on all aspects of their higher education experience are now being widely canvassed and regarded as essential to the effective monitoring of quality in universities (Yvonne et al. 2003). From their study, students gave these feedbacks:

##### *Quality of the lecturer*

*Delivery in the classroom* – students appreciated lecturers who knew their subject, were well organised and were interesting to listen to.

*Feedback to students during the sessions and in assignment* – students appreciated lecturers who were flexible in delivery of the subject and were sympathetic to their individual need for success.

*Relationship with students in the classroom* – students appreciated lecturers who were easy to be with and helped them to learn. Many students pointed that they highly valued lecturers who were encouraging, constructive and positive and transmitted enthusiasm for their subject.

#### **Student Engagement with Learning**

The students valued a curriculum that was related to their world and broadened their horizons. The good interaction between students and universities are considered to be democratic participation and transformative, collaborative and critical learning that values and encourages diversity.

#### **Social/Emotional Support System**

The students found support from college support systems, their peers and families. They wanted to be surrounded by a positive atmosphere that valued learning.

#### **Resources of Library and IT**

The students really appreciate if the university is able to improve facilities such as those provided by library and IT services such as university's support networks in order to cope with the rapid current technological changes and knowledge demand. These networks must be available and accessible for all students and personnel must be proactive with lecturers to ensure those in need are supported. The management should heed the view that some small group teaching is vital for students' survival in higher education. Furthermore, effective higher learning

institution involves the appropriate blend of physical factors such as the course characteristics and classroom arrangement and “instructor” factors such as enthusiasm, expertise and teaching style.

### **Organizational Member Participation**

To enhance quality culture in the university, the management needs the full commitment and participation from everybody in the institution. So, it is viewed as a shared responsibility among the organisational members, both centralised and decentralised. Whilst the management plays a major role in driving the university’s quality assurance system, all members are expected to strive for high quality in their activities, and all areas are subjected to self-evaluation and peer review, including the top management (Stephenson 2003). Participation should be enhanced from the top management, academicians, administration workers, non-managerial workers and students all together.

### **Rewards**

Individual teaching excellence needs to be promoted and then sustained by the academic department and the institution through its own resources or any quality department funds existed. These resources can be used, for example, to establish teaching awards that encourage innovative teaching and pedagogic research (Gibbs & Habeshaw 2002). Rewards for lecturers who are innovative and respond effectively to changes in the higher education sector are essential if excellence is to be maintained (Elton 1998). A university or higher learning institution should aim to “add value” to its excellent lecturers so that they can more easily continue to meet the needs of the institution’s stakeholders such as students, employers and the government (Yorke 2000). In-house learning and teaching programs can provide opportunities for lecturers to reflect upon their teaching experiences and general pedagogical issues and these programs can be supplemented and complemented by discipline-specific workshops which encourage the sharing of ideas amongst the participants (Clark et al. 2002).

### **Management Practices**

As management plays their major role to enhance quality culture in the university, there are several important things that should be focused and implemented as cited from <http://apps.emoe.gov.my/qad/main.html> (Ministry of Higher Education 2006).

#### *Setting the Standard*

The standard defines the expected level of attainment for each criterion and serves as a performance indicator. Standards are specified at two levels of attainment. The use of two levels is to acknowledge that universities are at different stages of development and to emphasize that quality improvement is a continuous process. Hence, there must be flexibility and desirability to nurture diversity in order to facilitate the creative growth of education.

#### *Internal Quality Assurance*

The higher learning institution should own the internal quality assurance processes as the most important part of the quality assurance system. The internal quality process is important because ultimately the quality education depends on the interaction between the lecturer and the student, and the collective integrity and professionalism of the academic community. It is the responsibility of each institution to offer good quality education and to ensure that appropriate standards are achieved.

The institution develops its own vision, mission, goals and learning objectives as well as the methods to achieve the goals and objectives within the broad framework of national criteria and standards. It, then, conducts periodic self reviews to assess the extent to which the vision, mission, goals and learning objectives are met and whether the curriculum design, methods of teaching and learning, the facilities, as well as the financial and human resources for delivery of the curriculum support the attainment of the vision, mission, goals and learning objectives. This process enables the institution to reflect and identify its strength and weaknesses, and to decide on areas of change.

#### *External Quality Assurance*

External quality assurance is practised in most countries through mechanisms such as accreditation, validation and audit or academic review. External scrutiny is needed to confirm that the institution’s responsibilities are being properly discharged.

The external quality assurance is managed and coordinated by the Quality Assurance Division for public universities. The external quality assurance processes are timed to coincide wherever relevant, with professional accreditation. The institution submits its self-study report and database to the Quality Assurance Division, which then constitutes a panel of 4-5 reviewers with a balance of expertise in the various disciplines that contribute to the program to be audited. A chairperson and a secretary of panel are usually appointed. Each member is responsible for reviewing specific sections of the institution’s report and to identify issues that need to be further clarified.

A visit by the panel of reviewers is usually arranged by the institution. The visit is sufficiently long enough (about three days) to enable the panel to understand the educational program, to visit the physical facilities and to interact with students, faculty, administrators and any other relevant people. The panel assesses whether the institution is operating within the guidelines for standards and is meeting its own objectives. Apart from observing first hand the activities and facilities in the institution, the other purpose of the visit is to clarify issues identified from the institution's self study report and database as well as to validate some of the information.

The visit is a peer review process and the decorum of the review panel is professional, collegial and positive, not punitive. The aim is to be helpful to the institution. An oral exit report is given to the institution by the Chairperson. The panel prepares an interim report, which is given to the Faculty for correction of errors of fact. On receiving feedback from the institution, a final report is then prepared for submission to the Technical Committee of the Quality Assurance Division

#### *Continuous Quality Improvement*

The most important purpose is continuous quality improvement by the institution. It is important that the assessment process as well as the nature of the feedback reinforce the continuous quality improvement principle. Self-evaluation and formulation of plans for change is a continuous quality improvement process. The feedback process in the form of the exit and written reports induce accountability and reinforce the continuous quality improvement process by validating the institutional strengths and areas of concern. Institutions are not given any numerical grading or ranking. Instead the report is narrative and highly informative. It recognises context and allows comparison over time but not cross- institutional comparison. It discerns strengths and areas of concern as well as provides specific recommendations for quality enhancement in the structure and performance of the institution, based on peer experience and the consensus on quality as embodied in the standards. Numerical grading is not used because it ignores context and assumes that - absolute good - can be defined and measured. Numerical grading also leads to league tables, uni - dimensional ranking and - score seeking - behavior that defeat the purpose of continuous quality improvement.

#### **Conclusion**

From the discussion, some of the challenges that institution of higher learning institutions need to overcome when embedding quality culture were listed. Together, the areas should be focused on either they are on quality assurance or quality enhancement. It depends on how these two will benefit the university and how they are viewed it able to contribute to the successfulness of the quality culture.

For every challenge there should be a way to overcome. From the literature reviewed, all vital strategies were compiled as the guideline to any university which is in the progress or plan to embed quality culture.

As Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) is one of the higher learning institutions in Malaysia which is embedding quality culture, it should adopt all the strategies stated earlier. As far as it is concerned, UiTM has overcome some of the challenges to meet their goals such as:

#### **Managing Change**

Organisational restructure through establishing few new units and department such as ILQAM, CADEM and Strategic Planning. Employees need to go for leadership training in order to hold the responsibility as a good lecturers as well as managers.

#### **Focusing on Customer**

Have greater demand from prospects and available students for providing new and marketable courses which is in the same time with the capability of the lecturers. Parents always believe that UiTM is able to fulfill their dream for their children because UiTM is known as one of the universities that is able to provide graduates who meet the market demand. As meeting the demand, UiTM has provided facilities for distance student (PJJ), such as electronic classes and a postgraduate centre.

The management is also concerned on the students' perception. Lecturers are continuously rated by students every semester to ensure that students are satisfied with the lectures delivered and able to help their learning process. In fact, lecturers should get students' feedback after the lecture delivered to measure the level of understanding among them.



### Cost of Quality

As to embed the quality culture, cost is one of the main factors. UiTM is able to manage all the financial matters efficiently because UiTM itself has 14 branches campus in addition to its main campus in Shah Alam. It has 22 faculties and all of them have been successfully ISO 9001:2000 certified.

### Future Teaching and Learning

UiTM is one of the universities which focuses on research and publication among the lecturers. Among a number of Malaysian researcher lecturers who had won medals at Exhibition of Inventions, New Techniques and Products at Geneva, Switzerland for year 2006 were from UiTM. UiTM has also provide a good environment and facilities for the lecturers and students for their teaching and learning process such as Technology Enabled Classroom (TEC) - rooms , computer laboratories, facilities for research, digital libraries, good infrastructures, and other facilities.

Lecturers are encouraged to further their studies in order to well equip them with the latest knowledge, research skill to face the global knowledge competitiveness. They might do this either on scholarship or on their own.

To recognize the staff contribution, UiTM always celebrates (the quality day) by awarding to the excellence staff either among academics or non-academics. Excellent students are also awarded with Dean's List reward so as to encourage them to be continuously good achievers.

It cannot be denied that to meet the goals, it needs commitment and participation from every organisation members. The effort and roles should not be left to the management without having contribution from others. Otherwise the success will be far away. In other words, in order to enhance quality in the university, everybody must work together in the good team spirit and should think and feel how important they are.

Management should not forget the staff's (especially lecturers' for this issue) contribution. They should be appreciated with rewards or any other way to show how important they are to the university. The good and conducive working environment will be developed if everybody is highly motivated and happy.

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RAZMAH MAHMUD, SHARIFAH ZANNIERAH SYED MARZUKI, Fakulti Pengurusan Perniagaan, Universiti Teknologi MARA Pahang. razmah@pahang.uitm.edu.my

CHE' ASNIZA BINTI OSMAN, Fakulti Pengurusan Perniagaan, Universiti Teknologi MARA Shah Alam