

# Chapter 7

## Barriers for Quality Management Implementation in Higher Education

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### **ABSTRACT**

*To survive in a highly-competitive higher education sector, institutions of higher learning are focusing on quality management principles. Therefore, a strong need emerges for a deeper understanding of quality management. Despite a substantial, growing interest from scholars, policymakers, and educationalists in quality management as a common phenomenon in higher education, many obstacles remain in the implementation process. This chapter captures the worldwide quality issues and a controversy related to implementation of quality management in higher education, identifies the barriers for successful implementation of quality management in higher education, reviews the key barriers that deter the efforts to effectively execute quality management in higher education so that quality management strategies can be formulated by the top management and policymakers accordingly, and presents directions for future research.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

In recent years, there has been a growing trend towards the adoption of quality management principles in the higher education context around the world. This emerged trend has heightened the need for a deeper understanding of the barriers to implementing quality management in higher education. With the dynamic and competitive nature of the higher education sector, institutions of higher learning need to continuously enhance the quality of their educational services so as to remain relevant and competitive (Prakash, 2018; Teeroovengadum, Kamalanabhan, & Seebaluck, 2016). It is worth mentioning that increased stiff competition, knowledge-based society and economy, cost-efficiency, globalization, rapid expansion of higher education, and accountability forced the institutions of higher learning to progressively swift their focus on quality systems so as to achieve a competitive edge (Al Mahdhoori & Ghani,

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2015; Dumond & Johnson, 2013; Kosloski, 2006; Prakash, 2018; Rodman, Biloslavo, & Bratož, 2013; Tavares, Sin, & Amaral, 2015). These factors pressurized the higher education institutions to import quality management models that are deeply rooted in the manufacturing systems. In this respect, the majority of these institutions are focusing on quality management as a strategic priority. In order to satisfy their external and internal stakeholders, the institutions of higher learning must develop and implement their quality management systems in harmony with their institutional vision, mission, goals and objectives, and values (Rosa & Amaral, 2014; Santos, 2011). In spite of some controversial issues related to the conceptualization of quality management in higher education, its fitness in the face of global competition epoch is well accepted (Sahney, 2016). Accordingly, driven by the struggle to survive, it is of vital importance that higher education institutions must continuously question their quality systems and practices to ensure that all internal and external stakeholders are satisfied.

There is no doubt about the significance of high-quality higher education when it comes to social and economic development. It is well accepted that the success of a country is directly influenced by the quality of its higher education system (Pavel, 2012). In this regard, it is salient to observe that higher education must address the social and economic needs of a country. Consequently, institutions of higher learning must enhance teaching and learning excellence so as to effectively and efficiently address the needs of society in general. It is common knowledge that societies expect institutions of higher education to play a leading role in accelerating economic development by producing knowledge workers and by developing new knowledge. Admittedly, investment in higher education is considered as an important issue when it comes to poverty alleviation, social justice, and social transformation. More interestingly, higher education is considered as a beacon of progress in a knowledge-based society. This demands the institutions of higher learning to provide high-quality education and to improve their processes continuously (Ardi, Hidayatno, & Zagloel, 2012; Clemes, Cohen, & Wang, 2013; Mehta, Verma, & Seth, 2014; Selesho, 2014; Tasopoulou & Tsiotras, 2017; Venkatraman, 2007). Nonetheless, scholars and educators have underscored their concerns about the quality of higher education given an emerged trend of mass education (Pham & Starkey, 2016). With this in mind, it is salient to observe that quality management appears to be a powerful technique for addressing quality issues emanating from all higher education stakeholders.

The implementation process of quality management systems is a more challenging task in the area of higher education but it is more associated with positive outcomes provided that the process is successfully carried out (O'Mahony & Garavan, 2012). Recent developments in the context of higher education have heightened the need for a better understanding of the obstacles for implementing quality management. In this respect, a plethora of obstacles to successful implementation of quality management systems continues to thwart momentous efforts of top managers to integrate best quality practices in the main processes of their institutions. The main processes include research, teaching, learning, and supporting activities (Manatos, Rosa, & Sarrico, 2018). Quality in higher education is a real concern in a knowledge-based economy and society of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In this regard, institutions of higher learning in both developed and developing countries are trying to put into action the central tenets of quality management. It has been noted that quality management discourse in higher education literature has gained momentum in times when higher education providers are continuously looking for best methods to deliver quality higher education so as to remain competitive (Sahney, Banwet, & Karumes, 2008).

The adoption of quality management systems is subjected to one or more barriers that negatively affect the expected outcomes of quality management systems. It is worth noting that a failure by top managers to effectively implement quality management systems has a significant cost implication for

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