Quality Facets in Educational Process for Enhanced Knowledge Creation

Neeta Baporikar, HP - GSB, Namibia and Doctoral Guide, University of Pune, India

ABSTRACT

Education is a complex business with many interacting facets of quality in many varied contexts. To understand what is going on it is necessary to have a way of conceiving these varied facets or variables involved. What does quality mean in the context of education? Many definitions of quality in education exist, testifying to the complexity and multifaceted nature of the concept. Incessant assessment and improvement can focus on any or all of the facets. The extent to which indicators of quality have shaped both the politics of higher education and institutional priorities is not a new phenomenon. Through grounded theory and content analysis this paper will examine quality facets in educational process for enhanced knowledge creation which is the need of the current hour. It is important to keep in mind education’s systemic nature, however; these facets are interdependent, influencing each other in ways that are sometimes unforeseeable.

Keywords: Creation, Dimension, Education, Examine, Excellence, Influence, Learning, Student, Teaching

INTRODUCTION

Educational institutions like other organizations are realizing the significance of customer-centered philosophies and are turning to approaches such as total quality management to help manage their businesses (Sahney, et al., 2004). The terms efficiency, effectiveness, equity and quality have often been used synonymously (Adams, 1993). Considerable consensus exists around the basic dimensions of quality education today. What does quality mean in the context of education? Many definitions of quality in education exist, testifying to the complexity and multifaceted nature of the concept. US first required institutional accrediting organizations, for quality assurance in higher education, to review institutional practices with respect to the assessment of student learning outcomes (Ewell, 2010). However, definitions of quality must be open to change and evolution based on information, changing contexts, and new understandings of the nature of education’s challenges. New research — ranging from multinational research to action research at the classroom level — contributes to this redefinition. Systems that embrace change through

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data generation, use and self-assessment are more likely to offer quality education to students (Glasser, 1990). Much that affects quality assurance has changed in the ensuing two decades including a steadily increasing focus on undergraduate teaching and learning in the academy generally, transformed modalities for instructional delivery, and the fact that higher education quality assurance has become trans-national (Ewell, 2010).

However, continuous assessment and improvement can focus on any or all dimensions of system quality: learners, learning environments, content, process and outcomes. The extent to which indicators of quality have shaped both the politics of higher education and institutional priorities is not a new phenomenon (Patrick and Stanley, 1998). Through grounded theory and content analysis this paper will examine dimensional facet of quality for higher education in the current scenario. It is important to keep in mind education’s systemic nature, however; these dimensions are interdependent, influencing each other in ways that are sometimes unforeseeable. Moreover, impacts of these changes on quality assurance have rendered the process more intentional, more focused on undergraduate teaching and learning, and far more transparent. But the goal of providing adequate evidence of student learning remains elusive (Ewell, 2010).

Nevertheless, quality education includes: Learners who are healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate and learn, and supported in learning by their families and communities; Environments that are healthy, safe, protective and gender-sensitive, and provide adequate resources and facilities; Content that is reflected in relevant curricula and materials for the acquisition of basic skills, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy and skills for life, and knowledge in such areas as gender, health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS prevention and peace; Processes through which trained teachers use child-centered teaching approaches in well-managed classrooms and schools and skilful assessment to facilitate learning and reduce disparities; Outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes, and are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society (UNICEF, 2000). This definition allows for an understanding of education as a complex system embedded in a political, cultural and economic context. This definition also takes into account the global and international influences that propel the discussion of educational quality (Motala, 2000; Pigozzi, 2000), while ensuring that national and local educational contexts contribute to definitions of quality in varying countries (Adams, 1993). Including relevant stakeholders is a means to establishing a contextualized understanding of quality. Key stakeholders often hold different views and meanings of educational quality (Motala, 2000; Benoliel, O’Gara & Miske, 1999).

However, definitions of quality must be open to change and evolution based on information, changing contexts, and new understandings of the nature of education’s challenges. New research — ranging from multinational research to action research at the classroom level — contributes to this redefinition. Systems that embrace change through data generation, use and self-assessment are more likely to offer quality education to students (Glasser, 1990). Continuous assessment and improvement can focus on any or all dimensions of system quality: learners, learning environments, content, process and outcomes. The extent to which indicators of quality have shaped both the politics of higher education and institutional priorities is not a new phenomenon (Patrick and Stanley, 1998) and the proliferation of quality-assurance agencies is being followed by a mushrooming of qualifications frameworks and the growing pressure to accredit everything, even if it is a poor means of assuring quality and encouraging improvement (Harvey and Williams, 2010). Through grounded theory and content analysis this paper will examine quality facets of higher education for enhanced knowledge creation, which the need of the current hour. It is important to keep in mind education’s systemic nature, however; these dimensions are interdependent, influencing each other in ways that are sometimes unforeseeable.
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