



**TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING IN KENYA (CASE OF SELECTED UNIVERSITIES IN NAIROBI COUNTY)**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The general purpose of the study was to investigate the effect of total quality management practices on customer satisfaction in institutions of higher learning. The specific objectives were to examine the effect of customer focus and management commitment on customer satisfaction in institutions of higher learning in Kenya. The findings were expected to be significant to all the stakeholders of higher learning institutions. The target population comprised of the undergraduate students pursuing Bachelor of Commerce in the Private and Public Universities. The scope of the study targeted selected universities in Nairobi County with a focus of KCA University and University of Nairobi. The study used a descriptive research design. The unit of analysis in this study was registered Bachelor of Commerce degree students in University of Nairobi and KCA University. The study was based on primary data. The data was collected through a semi – structured questionnaires targeting full time and part time degree students in the two universities. The study found customer focus to take the lead as the most significant variable for customer satisfaction. The analysis indicated that the study variables were predictors of customer satisfaction. The study concluded that the two independent variables of the study should be considered in the decision making of the institutions of higher learning with more emphasis on customer focus. The study recommended that higher learning institutions should strive to focus on the conformance to customer requirements and continuous improvement in order to gain customer satisfaction.*

**Key Words:** Customer Focus, Management Commitment, Customer Satisfaction

## INTRODUCTION

Total Quality Management has been received as administration paradigm by organization countrywide. Rawlins (2008) indicated that, TQM primary target is to change the general culture of the organization by dispensing with the view that mistakes are inescapable and that examination and firefighting are regular existence in day to day. TQM is a method for figuring out how to enhance adequacy and adaptability of an organization. Total Quality Management suggests that organizations are fixated in meeting or surpassing client desires, with the goal that their clients are delighted. With a specific end goal to win new business and continue existing business, it is fundamental for organizations to comprehend their client needs and desires (Besterfiled, 2003).

Customer satisfaction has been characterized as a person's sentiments of delight or dissatisfaction coming about because of contrasting performance of the product in connection with his or her desire (Kotler and Keller, 2006). Customer satisfaction has also been characterized as the outcome accomplished when management reacts to customers' requirements and when the organization meets or surpasses client's desire (Juran, 1991). Bolton and Drew (1991) portrayed customer satisfaction as judgment influenced due to a particular product experience. The Higher education sector is one of the biggest developing ventures in Kenya (Economic Survey 2012). Higher education foundations in Kenya includes open and private colleges, polytechnic and institutes of technology. Total Quality Management Practices in Higher education sector is of incredible significance for guaranteeing customer satisfaction and retention.

Total Quality Management is a philosophy that embraces all efforts that guarantee adjustment to

the clients' needs and accomplishment of the hierarchical goals in a productive and powerful way by boosting the capability of all employees with a drive for development. TQM is an upgrade to traditional way of doing business. It is a demonstrated method for ensured survival in a focused market. TQM is an art that manages the entire organization to accomplish goals which helps in achieving the business plan of action (Besterfiled, 2003). Total Quality Management focuses on creating a culture that constantly improves customer satisfaction with minimal costs.

Customers of higher learning institutions are divided into internal and external clients. Internal clients work towards the fulfillment of outside clients. The external clients include the organization's partners such as existing and potential students, managers, government and industry (Oakland, 2009). Higher education institutions are starting to concentrate on meeting students desires as well as to surpass their desires until the point when they are enchanted. In the current years, the fulfillment among students in regard to how the service is offered has turned out to be more critical for instructive establishments (Molesworth, 2009). It is essential to track, keep up, and enhance the service quality of the offered instructive units. Training establishments must comprehend the angles that can be utilized to convey large amounts of customer satisfaction.

Higher education institution in the Kenya contains public and private colleges, polytechnics, institutes of technology. The first Kenya institution of higher learning set up in 1956 was Royal Technical college. This establishment was later renamed Royal college of Nairobi at that point moved up to University of East Africa. Every nation later centered around building up their own public and private colleges and disbanded the college of East Africa (Ngome, 2006). Through an act of parliament, the university

college was later renamed University of Nairobi in 1970. The act was additionally responsible for the conceptualization of Kenyatta University that became independent in 1985, later Jomo Kenyatta University college of Agriculture was established (Davis and Eisemon, 2003).

In Kenya, Private higher education can be traced to the colonial time frame when missionaries built up schools and universities for their Converts. St. Paul's United Theological college (1955) and Scott Theological College (1962) were the first private institutions of higher learning. In 1970, the United States International University (USIU) set up grounds in Nairobi. The university offered degrees from the parent universities abroad. The government did not offer accreditation to these private colleges and universities. However, in the 1990's the expanded interest for university education drove the government to empower the foundation and accreditation of private colleges (Onsongo, 2007).

### **Statement of the problem**

Institutions of higher learning must enhance their conformance to client needs efforts to ensure customers' needs are met. This is by caring for the customers' desires and ensuring that the organization meets the client specifications. It is important because customers have expectations from the institutions they patronize and if the desires are not met, they get disappointed and they stop patronizing with the organization. Once the organization neglects to meet the desires of the clients, it cannot hold him//her. Institutions must ensure that they conform to customers' requirements to gain client faithfulness, referrals and retention. Mrig (2012), led an examination in United States on 79 institutions of higher learning on customer care. The examination discovered that the workers were more centered around fulfillment

of tasks as opposed to accomplishment of students centered results and did not have the time and better ways of how to give better services to students. The study found interested parties in higher learning institutions complaining about the customer care which had a direct influence on customer satisfaction.

Shandadnejad and Alroaia (2013) conducted a study on the impact of TQM in customer satisfaction in higher learning organizations in Iran. The study concentrated on the five elements of TQM in particular; tangibles, attitude, dependability, content and method of conveyance. The discoveries of the investigation was that all the five elements had a great impact on customer satisfaction. Sit, Ooi, Lin and Chong (2009), conveyed an exploration in Asia on Malaysia service sector where they researched on the connection between TQM practices and customer satisfaction. The investigation took a gander at six builds of TQM practices, for example, Process Management, Strategic Planning, Customer Focus, and Human Resource center, information and analysis. The study found a positive relationship of these builds with customer satisfaction, Human Resource center and Information sharing leading the in the service sector. Paneka (2013) also carried an exploration on the Total Quality Management and Customer satisfaction in education institution in South Africa. The study sought to determine the viability level of the Total Quality Management practices in Student services, infrastructure and Instruction. The investigation found no connection between the quality of the practices of the institutions and effectiveness level.

In Kenya, studies have been carried out on the relationship between quality and customer satisfaction among university students in Kenya. Owino (2013) carried a study on the influence of service quality on customer satisfaction among

university students in Kenya. He found out that service quality fundamentally impacted customer satisfaction in organizations of higher learning. He discovered human element reliability greatly affected student satisfaction. Another research conducted by Arango (2014) on effect perceived quality on customer satisfaction, found the drivers of customer satisfaction among university students in Kenya to be perceived value, product and service quality. Mate (2011) also conducted a research on the connection between customer service strategies and customer satisfaction with an emphasis on service quality in the media transmission industry.

Based on the study background on the relationship between TQM Practice and customer satisfaction, knowledge gaps have been identified. Past research has taken a gander at the connection between Total Quality Management and Customer satisfaction in institutions of higher learning in Kenya. Key among them is that past research has been done on the impact of TQM on customer satisfaction in light of the hypothetical system of Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Awards (MBNQA) (Keng and Bishan, 2011; Prajogo and McDermoth, 2005; Terziovski, 2006). Indeed, even the most known service quality method, SERVQUAL has been found to adjust the quality in the education context (Owino, 2013; Arango 2014; Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml, 1988; In'airat and Al-Kassem, 2014). This study therefore sought to establish the effect of TQM practice and Customer satisfaction on the theoretical framework of Deming Prize quality award model and European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) KM model. The investigation tried to discover the connection between Total Quality Management Practices and customer satisfaction in institutions of higher learning in Kenya.

### **Objective of the study**

The general purpose of the study was to investigate the effect of total quality management practices on customer satisfaction among selected universities in Nairobi County, Kenya. The specific objective Were:-

- To examine the effect of customer focus on customer satisfaction among selected universities in Nairobi County, Kenya.
- To determine the relationship between management commitment and customer satisfaction among selected universities in Nairobi County, Kenya.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Theoretical Literature Review**

#### **Deming Theory**

Deming (1986) characterizes quality as "fulfilling the client, not only to live up to his desires, but rather to surpass them". Deming's theory consequently begins and completes with the clients. The best TQM programs start by characterizing quality from the client's point of view (Arusu and Paul, 2005). Customer satisfaction is accomplished when their desires are matched by what is offered to them by the organizations. The Deming Theory is designed in such a way that managers can learn as much as possible from every customer interaction and improve the process of delivering value to all future customers. Deming indicated that quality should be aimed at fulfilling present and future consumer needs.

Deming (1986) focused on the obligations of top management to lead the organization in changing procedures and frameworks. He stressed the significance of advancement of employees abilities, creation of partnership with suppliers, utilization of



functional teams to distinguish and tackle quality issue, identification and measurement of customer requirements, workers participation in decision making and quest for consistent change. Deming approach concerns the formation of an organization system that encourages participation and practices which prompts constant change of procedures, products and services and employee satisfaction. The Deming approach is necessary for customer satisfaction and ultimately firm survival (Anderson, 2004). Ross (2002) demonstrated that quality begins in the meeting room and the quality managers should direct the battle for quality.

Deming philosophy is given in his fourteen points as follows; Management must create the purpose for the organization; Top management and everybody in the organization must learn on the new philosophy in the organisation comprehend the purpose for assessment; Stop granting business in view of cost alone; management must take greater responsibility for problems by actively finding and correcting issues with the goal that quality and efficiency are consistently enhanced; each worker must be oriented to the organization philosophy of continuous improvement, teach and institute leadership; Management must encourage open and effective communication; Management must optimize teamwork in order to be able to accomplish the purpose for the organization; eliminate exhortations for the workforce and numerical standards for the work force; eliminate management by objectives and also remove barriers that rob people pride of workmanship and training for everyone so that the organization meets the evolving condition.

In critiquing the theory, management must accept the essential responsibility regarding the continuous improvement of the processes. Management must be committed, involved and accessible if the organization is to prevail with regards to executing the new philosophy. This theory is pertinent to the study since it portrays the

significance of the customer focus and management commitment in guaranteeing that the organization fits in with the customer prerequisites.

## **Empirical Literature Review**

### **Customer Focus and its Effect on Customer Satisfaction**

Zhang (2008) defined Customer focus as the fundamental building block of Total Quality Management. It is how much an organization continuously meets customer requirements and desires. It includes identifying customer needs and meeting the requirements in order to achieve customer satisfaction. Organization must do it right the first time and every time for customer satisfaction to be accomplished. Customer Focus emphasizes on recognizing the client needs and requirements and fulfilling them to meet the organizational objectives. Customer focus and satisfaction are essential areas of quality management. Numerous researchers characterize quality as meeting client needs and requirements until the point when they are fulfilled (Ishikawa, 1985 and Kanji, 1990). Customer Focus and satisfaction ought to be viewed as the main thrust for the entire quality process.

In the present business environment, organizations are compelled to put customers as the main focus for the organization. The management has understood that the survival of the organization is reliant on addressing the client's needs and guaranteeing that the client will be fulfilled. Customer focus is one of the key objectives in an organization. There is need for management to direct organizational resources to meeting customers' needs and eventually achieve customer satisfaction. In deciding quality, customer is viewed as the king in the organization. Therefore, building the organization with the clients needs in mind will enable the organization to have products and

services that conform to customers requirements (Deming, 1986).

Pekar (2005) indicated that there are two types of clients. External clients that give salary to the organisation through the purchase of products and services while internal clients (workers) that fulfill the needs of the external clients. For an organization to fulfill their external clients, they should treat the internal clients with care and attention (Conduit and Mavodo, 2007). Client orientation applies to various aspects of the business from front line staff interaction with clients to top management staff relation with clients. Kennedy and Lassk, (2008), indicated that client focus is organization concern with past, present and future clients' needs, requirements and desires. Organization ought to have a solid sense of responsibility regarding understanding and fulfilling the clients in a proactive way for long term growth.

#### **Management commitment and its Effect on Customer Satisfaction**

Besterfield (2003) defined top management as the individual who directs an organization at the highest level. Commitment can be defined as a state of attachment that explains the relationship between an actor and an entity. The actor may be a single individual, a group of persons (e.g. project team) or an organization. Unfortunately, commitment is not a substantial thing thus to make it certain, one must have solid systems. Commitment is a great social value, everyone top to bottom, wants to have this value (Yousaf, 2006). Management commitment is a continuous and active demonstrations that everybody in the organization needs to meet client expectations. Without strong management commitment, the organization will not have a successful quality management system (Sanjay and Shaughnessy, 2008). Top Management must think of a quality arrangement that demonstrates an organization sense of duty regarding quality administration

rehearses. Quality policy indicates top management sense of duty regarding quality, clients' prerequisites, organization vision and mission, continual improvement of products and services and to education and training (Oakland, 2003).

For survival of today's higher learning foundations, it is vital to address the customer needs and requirements and to surpass their desires. Commitment of top management can help an organization to accomplish the goal of customer satisfaction. The contribution of the quality gurus demonstrates that organization initiative majorly affects premise of value products, services and procedures. For any quality activity to be successful, management responsibility is required as it is viewed as a backbone for effective implementation. Management must convey to the employees on the significance of meeting customer requirements. Top management must concentrate on its workers by training, empowering and giving rewards for them to offer quality service to the customers. Besterfield (2003) demonstrated that when management are keen on enhancing quality, workers will be provided with all the essential resources.

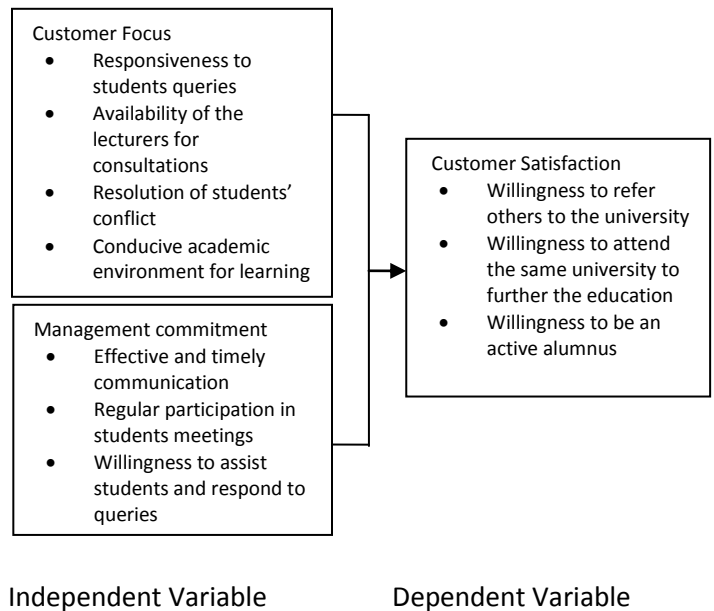
#### **Customer Satisfaction**

Kotler (2006) defined customer satisfaction as the level of comparing a product perceived performance in relation to customer expectations. Satisfaction is the difference between perceived performance and expectations. Managers ought to ensure they concentrate on the necessities on the clients in their decision making. Client gives an organization motivation to be in business without customers, there is no activity to perform and no requirements to be meet. Khan (2003) indicated that for any organization to accomplish sustainable competitive advantage, clients' ought to be pleased about the services given. An organization needs to concentrate on offering some incentive to the

clients in a more objective way than the rivals in order to retain and to allure new customer. When the desires of the customers are met, and surpassed, customer satisfaction is transformed to customers delight.

It is of vital significance to ensure the organisation clients are fulfilled and enchanted. Enchanted clients influence rehash purchases and offer referrals to the company. TQM advocates managers and workers to be so client focuses that they unendingly meet and surpass client desires by finding better approaches to enhance their products, services and procedures. Organizations ought to make a competitive environment that brings customer satisfaction. Kanji (2007) stated that many organizations manage internal challenges and overlook the requirements of the external clients. Higher learning institutions ought to request that their clients set client fulfillments goals and measure their performance against the customers desires Sahney and Banwet (2004). Geysken (2009) discovered that customer satisfaction is essential in developing long term marketing objectives. Client dissatisfaction should not be overlooked by an organization that needs to construct a loyal client base. Anderson and Fornell (2008) demonstrated that customer fulfillments gives an organization favorable position of bringing down the cost of low quality.

### Conceptual Framework



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**  
**Source: Author (2018)**

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Descriptive research design was chosen as it described the characteristics and association between TQM practices and Customer satisfaction among selected universities in Nairobi County, Kenya. Descriptive research design helped to demonstrate how the information was gathered, measured and examined to accomplish the exploration goals (Cooper and Schindler 2006. The study was carried out in Nairobi County where the Main campuses for University of Nairobi and KCA University were based. The target populace for the study comprised of respondents from University of Nairobi and KCA University. Unit of observation was enrolled Bachelor of Commerce degree students from the two Universities.



**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The researcher sought to find out the relationship between customer focus and customer satisfaction. The findings are reported in table 1 below.

**Customer focus and Customer Satisfaction**

**Table 1: Customer Focus and Customer Satisfaction**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	S.D
My university collects extensive complaint information from customers.	6.20%	11.10%	14.40%	44.20%	24.10%	3.69	1.14
My university has greater concern for quality products and services	6.40%	7.50%	19.20%	44.70%	22.10%	3.63	1.09
My university has concern for quick resolution for student conflict	6.90%	9.70%	11.10%	41.80%	30.50%	3.79	1.18
Employees understand customer needs and deliver products /service beyond customer expectations	5.10%	7.30%	12.60%	43.60%	31.40%	3.89	1.09
The university regularly solicits feedback from the customers to improve products and services	8.80%	10.60%	18.10%	32.30%	30.10%	3.64	1.26
The employees have customer best interest at heart	8.20%	14.40%	19.50%	36.90%	21.00%	3.48	1.21

**Source: Author (2018)**

It was evident from the table that on average, the respondents agreed that their university collected extensive complaint information from customers (mean = 3.69). Moreover, there was widespread consensus with the statement that the university had greater concern for quality products and services (mean =3.63). With a mean of 3.79, the respondents additionally indicated an acceptable degree of assent with the statement that their university had concern for quick resolution for student conflict. The statement that employees understand customer needs and deliver products /service beyond customer expectations also received popular support ((mean =3.89). Furthermore, the respondents registered a considerable level of approval of the statement that

the university regularly solicited feedback from the customers to improve products and services (mean = 3.64). Finally, the respondents mainly agreed with the statement that the employees have customer best interest at heart (mean =3.48).

**Management Commitment and Customer Satisfaction**

The researcher appraised the relationship between management commitment and customer satisfaction. The respondents mainly expressed either agreement or strong agreement with respect to the questions that were posed under this variable. This is as per table 2 below:

**Table 2: Management Commitment and Customer Satisfaction**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	S.D
The university communicates effectively on any development	8.40%	17.00%	16.80%	34.50%	23.20%	3.47	1.25
The management of the university have regular meetings with the students	8.40%	13.70%	12.40%	39.60%	25.90%	3.61	1.24
There is a written quality policy	8.20%	13.70%	20.10%	34.50%	23.50%	3.51	1.22
The Employees are quick in making decisions regarding student's queries.	7.50%	15.30%	16.80%	37.80%	22.60%	3.53	1.21
I believe the university gives quality education	9.70%	11.10%	21.50%	37.80%	19.90%	3.47	1.21
Employees are committed to delivering quality and conforming to customer requirements	13.50%	18.10%	35.20%	16.40%	16.80%	3.05	1.25
Management act on the student's evaluation feedback to ensure conformance to customer requirements	9.10%	19.00%	26.30%	25.40%	20.10%	3.29	1.24

**Source: Author (2018)**

There was agreement that the university communicated effectively on any development (mean = 3.47), On average, the respondents also agreed with the statements that the management of the university had regular meetings with the students (mean=3.61), there was a written quality policy (mean = 3.51), employees were quick in making decisions regarding student's queries (mean = 3.53), I believe the university gave quality education (mean =3.47), employees were committed to delivering quality and conforming to

customer requirements (mean =3.05), and management act on the student's evaluation feedback to ensure conformance to customer requirements (mean =3.29).

### Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction was the dependent variable of this study. The responses that were received from the respondents in relation to this variable are summarized in table 3 below:

**Table 3: Customer Satisfaction**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	S.D
I have experienced a positive relation with the university	2.20%	4.40%	11.30%	39.20%	42.90%	4.16	0.95

I am willing to be an active alumnus of the university	2.20%	9.10%	20.60%	52.40%	15.70%	3.7	0.92
I am satisfied with the quality of service provided by the administration staff	2.20%	4.40%	34.30%	34.30%	24.80%	3.75	0.95
I am willing to come back for further studies in this university.	4.60%	8.80%	23.70%	42.50%	20.40%	3.65	1.05
I am willing to recommend this university to someone else.	3.80%	6.60%	11.50%	46.00%	32.10%	3.96	1.02
Overall, I am satisfied by this university	5.80%	8.20%	10.80%	42.50%	32.70%	3.88	1.13

**Source: Author (2018)**

There was a strongly consensus with the statement that they had experienced a positive relation with the university (mean=4.16). They also strongly expressed their willingness to be active alumni of the university (mean=3.70). Moreover, they said that they were satisfied with the quality of service provided by the administration staff (mean=3.75) and they were willing to come back for further studies in the university (mean=3.65). They also strongly indicated that they were willing to recommend their university to someone else (mean=3.96). Finally, they expressed a strongly level of satisfaction with their university (mean=3.88).

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study found customer focus taking the lead as the most influential variable for customer satisfaction. The regression indicated that a unit increase in customer focus led to 0.677 increase in customer satisfaction. The correlation analysis also pointed out a positive relationship between the two. This was supported by (Ishikawa, 1985 and Kanji, 1990) who indicated that customer focus and satisfaction was regarded as the driving force for the whole quality process. Deming (1986) also indicated that the survival of organization is dependent on meeting the customers' needs and ensuring that the customer is satisfied. The descriptive statistics demonstrated that there was

consensus on the respondents agreeing on the significance of having quick resolution for conflict. This is supported with the highest mean of 3.79 of the respondents' responses. It is consistent with Mallack and Lyth (2003) who indicated that organization must be responsive to customers' needs and requirements.

The study found management commitment to have significant effect on the customer satisfaction. This was the second most significant variable. A unit increase in management commitment, led to 0.051 increase in customer satisfaction. The descriptive analysis indicated the significance of management commitment in enhancing effective communication and regular meetings with customers. This statement is supported by having the highest mean of 3.61 of the responses. The respondents also agreed on the significance of quality policy in an organization that is committed to ensure customer satisfaction. In overall, the respondents agreed that management commitment influences customer satisfaction. This is supported by (Oakland, 2003) who stated that Quality policy shows that top management is committed to quality services and fulfilment of customer needs. It is also consistent with Besterfield (2003) who indicated that top management commitment to quality improvement makes the implementation of quality efforts to be successful.

## Conclusions

The study concluded that customer focus was the most significant variable for customer satisfaction. The study concluded that the most significant aspect of customer focus were having quick resolution for customer conflict, management great concern for quality products and services, understanding customers' needs and requirements and collecting customer complaints. The study concluded that organizations need to have quick solutions to customer conflicts. Having customers' best interest at heart and soliciting feedback were fundamental in ensuring customer satisfaction.

The study concluded that regular meetings with students, ability for employees to make quick decisions, and effective communication to clients were the most significant aspect of management commitment. The study also concluded that quality policy statement was key in ensuring customer fulfillment.

## Recommendation for Policy and Practice

Higher learning institutions should strive to focus on the customers' requirements and needs in order to gain customer satisfaction. They should conduct market research so as to be aware of the customers' requirements.

Management of higher learning institutions should participate and be committed in the day to day running of the organization. Management should endeavor to conform to customers' needs and requirements and also empower their employees.

## Suggestions for further studies

The study recommended further studies be done on customer satisfaction in the higher education institutions. Other constructs or determinants for Total Quality Management could be examined such as employee empowerment, management by fact and culture. Future studies could also be done to include a large number of higher learning institutions.

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