

Quality of Higher Education: Implementation of Kaizen Philosophy

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The study is designed to implement the roles, expectations and experiences of students, faculty members, universities and inclusive departments in an accumulate form. So that, it becomes possible to make all the individuals in a university perform better and continue the process of improvement in every aspects of their operations. But, because of the differentiations in psychology and other factors of these people, this paper briefly shows how the implementation process should be designed according to the structure of their mindset. The paper shows how and by what means Kaizen can help the sources of higher education to improve and compete more effectively by concentrating on the human resource they have got. Also, the paper will give the institutions, their students and faculties, exclusively the chance to set out and analyze their own quality management practices and methods comparing with the Kaizen approach and philosophy.

Keywords: Kaizen, Higher education, Human capital, VSM, PDCA.

JEL Classifications: I20, I21, I23, I29, J24

1. Introduction

The world is changing with a pace which is sometimes more than expected. Flourishing of technology, innovation, applied education, vast acceptance of knowledge and its regular improvements are boosting the change. There are challenges in every aspect which are must to be faced for keeping the pace at an adjusted level. Knowledge and education system is the most vulnerable and crucial component to the changing system. It makes people more aware of their needs, rights and duties. Traditional treatments and approaches towards improvement of knowledge are on their way of getting obsolete. The challenges posed by university students demanding more excellence in higher education, rising accreditation or re-accreditation standards and competition between traditional non-profit and newer for-profit sources of higher education means that some of the traditional approaches taken for quality management of education, administration and innovation strategies of the universities must alter.

In the present days, Colleges and Universities want to be acknowledged as sources of good quality higher education. As such, they want to discover innovative ways of representing performance. They respond to students' demand for valuable teaching: students want to make sure that their schooling will lead to jobs and will provide them the abilities needed in the society of today and tomorrow. Mobility of students and escalation of fees amplify the consideration given by students to the quality of the teaching. The institutions need to develop pioneering approaches to measure the impact of their hold up on quality teaching.

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Khayum

They are still struggling to recognize the fundamental relation between their engagement in teaching and the quality of learning outcomes. Exploring the relation among inputs, processes and outcomes of higher education, calls for pioneering and in-depth evaluation instruments.

As it is often believed, sometimes the only one difference between good and bad institutions is their people. And it is often forgotten. It could be because of forgetting to one big potential. It is just human potential. Therefore, the paper is directed to look at a methodology which deals with human potential for minor but continuous improvements (CI), its utilization for higher educational institutions' progress and trouble-free sustainability of changes. And also this motivation drives the study to present a task-oriented policy for implementing the Kaizen philosophy instead of the present inefficient policies to improve the outcomes of the universities.

Firstly the paper describes Kaizen and its philosophy in an understandable way. Then the paper directs itself toward the implementation process, policy and other actions for maintaining sustainability in the route. Then through some recommendations, the paper finds its way towards the conclusion.

2. Literature Review

The philosophy of Kaizen was developed by Imai (1986). Though his book is aimed at applications of Kaizen in the businesses and especially in manufacturing, the principles outlined by Imai are able to be applied in the improvement of higher education. Newitt (1996) has given a new insight into the old thinking. The author also has stated that Kaizen philosophy in the management will liberate the thinking of both management and employees at all levels and will provide the climate in which creativity and value addition can flourish.

Bassant and Caffyn (1994) define the CI concept as 'an organization-wide process of focused and sustained incremental innovation'. Many tools and techniques are developed to support these processes of incremental innovation. The difficulty is the consistent application of CI philosophy and CI tools and techniques. As an organization wide process, CI requires the efforts of all employees at every level.

Now, in the context of the sustained growth and diversification of higher education systems, civil society is increasingly concerned about the quality of programs offered to students. Institutions may implement schemes or evaluation mechanisms to identify and promote good teaching practices. But, the success of any organization is directly linked to the satisfaction of the employees who embody that specific organization, that retaining talented people is critical to the success of any organization (Freeman, 2005). Effective organizations should have a culture that encourages the employee satisfaction (Bhatti & Qureshi, 2007). In a higher educational institution the employees are seen to be categorized like administrative officers, faculty members, office clerks, blue collar employees and so on. They are the driving force of that particular institution. The institutional environment of higher educational institutions can also lead to enhancement of quality of the teaching in higher education through these means. And, employees are more loyal and productive when they are satisfied (Hunter & Tietyen, 1997), and these satisfied employees affect the customer satisfaction and organizational output (Potterfield, 1999). The management literature has been accumulating evidence that human resource outcomes are related to business outcomes. However, most of the empirical studies have

Khayum

been conducted in the manufacturing sector and most of them have used cross-sectional designs. The link between Human Resource (HR) outcomes and business outcomes are discovered in different cross-sectional studies which may have occurred either because (a) good firm performance allowed companies to engage in progressive HR strategies or (b) progressive HR strategies encouraged good firm performance. Human resource management and organizational behavior theories suggest that the proper use of people enhances organizational effectiveness (Kelley, 2005). Obviously the most important job for the HR associates of a company are to have the best people in the organization in the most efficient way and to take care of them so that they are satisfied and bring the best by performing up to their highest level, for the company.

Employee satisfaction is defined as the amalgamation of affective reactions to the differential perceptions of what he/she wants to receive compared with what he/she actually receives (Cranny, Smith, & Stone, 1992). Therefore, the organizations should try to supply the employee expectations in order to approach the employee satisfaction. In addition, emotional state of the employees may also affect their satisfaction. This forces the managers to create and sustain the desired working environments in the organizations. That is, the well-satisfied employees will work more willingly and this contributes to the effectiveness of their organizations (Aydin & Ceylan 2009).

Continuous improvement in traditional classroom-style business school education is of increasing importance given the many recent calls to improve graduate business school education (Zimmerman, 1991; Karapetrovic et al., 1999; AACSB, 2002), and the advent of alternative sources such as online degree programs. The rapid rise of online degree programs indicates a shift in customer perception of the value of traditional classroom-style higher education – especially among part-time working professionals. In addition, students that work full-time for a living face pressure in the workplace to deliver greater value to customers in the products and services that they supply. Not surprisingly, these students come to the classroom with similar expectations of the university.

Wilson (2012) described that; students will be able to implement new things by keeping the Kaizen concept in their minds. There will not be any clash or conflict in the thinking process. Instructors will get the opportunity to reconsider even substantial teaching methodologies to seek improvement. Kaizen in the education will also help them to implement new ways of teaching whereby students will be able to grasp the teachings easily and they will be able to remember the concepts for ever. It is possible to review the way examinations are conducted. It is possible to frame exams in such a way that student's logical thinking and understanding power are traced in a better way. Teian (1992) describes that Kaizen is more than just a means of improvement because it represents the daily struggles occurring in the workplace and the manner in which these struggles are overcome. Kaizen can be applied to any area in need of improvement.

Now the philosophy needs an associate to fit in the specific places and situations. Here Value Stream Mapping (VSM) and PDCA cycle is represented as the sidekicks of Kaizen. Watson (1986) says that the origin of Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle or Deming cycle can be traced back to the eminent statistics expert Shewart in the 1920s. Shewart introduced the concept of PDCA. The Total Quality Management (TQM) guru Deming modified the Shewart cycle as: Plan, Do, Study and Act. Plan-do-study-act (PDSA) cycles provide a structure for iterative testing of changes to improve quality of systems. In recent years, quality improvement (QI) methods such as plan-so-study-act (PDSA) cycles have been used in an attempt to drive improvements.

Khayum

In 1994, the PDSA cycle was escorted by three questions to support in the planning step of the PDSA Cycle. In 1996 and 2009 publications, the PDSA cycle was broadened to include strategies and methods to develop, test, and implement changes that would result in improvement. This version was called the "Model for Improvement." As an introduction to a framework for improvement, the model for improvement has been found to support improvement efforts in a full range from the very informal to the most complex. The Deming cycle is a continuous quality improvement model consisting of a logical sequence of these four repetitive steps for Continuous Improvement (CI) and learning. The PDCA cycle is also known as Deming Cycle, the Deming wheel of CI spiral. In 'Plan phase', the objective is to plan for change, predict the results. In 'do phase', the plan is executed by taking small steps in controlled circumstances. In 'study/check phase' the results are studied. Finally in 'act phase', the organization takes action to improve the process.

Talking about the Value Stream Mapping (VSM), the Kaizen Foundation describes it as a process which includes physically mapping the "current state" while also focusing on where the system is required to be, or the "future state" blueprint, which can serve as the foundation for other Lean improvement strategies. In other words, "A tool used to improve a process by identifying added value and eliminating waste".

Taking a value stream perspective means working on the big picture, not just individual processes but improving the whole and not just optimizing the parts. If one truly look at the whole and go all the way from molecules into the arms of the customer, the process will need to follow the value stream for a product across many firms and even more facilities. The previous studies have covered mostly the empirical representation of the philosophy in the field of higher education. But none of them had presented any task-oriented methods or policies. This paper is a very small effort to start filling the gap.

3. Methodology

The study is a qualitative one which is descriptive in nature. The total basis of the study is the renowned literatures in the field. No samples were considered and also were not required for conducting the study. The study focuses on suggesting a procedure for implementing kaizen in educational institutions. For the purpose, the concept of VSM (Value Stream Mapping) and PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) cycle has been used here. The previous concepts and thoughts of researchers of the field are also taken into consideration to make sure about the availability and credibility of necessary and collected information.

4. Process of Implementing Kaizen in Higher Educational Institutions

There are people whom we see every day in front of our eyes. We go around them and try to help them to do their jobs more effectively and more simply. But many times could be the easiest and the best to ask directly them what should be done differently. It is often said that, sometimes the only one difference between good and bad organization is their people. And it is often forgotten. Even "common" regular employees like janitors, office clerk, and canteen-waiter or maintenance workers have huge resource of ideas. So the whole process should be implemented in different stages and considering different factors. As a university have stakeholders of different levels and positions, so there should be well defined processes for each and every level. It is because stakeholders from different stages are not homogenous. Stakeholders from each and every position or level differ

Khayum

from age, experience, responsibility, activity, expectation and participation. Keeping all these in mind, the steps in implementation process should be taken into consideration strategically.

5.1 Segmentation of the Stakeholders

Firstly the core stakeholders should be segmented according to age, experience, responsibility, activity, expectation and participation as stated before. The types of core stakeholders we see in a higher educational institution are:

- Investor/Financing authority (motivated by the outcome and in some case of for-profit institution: bottom-line)
- Employees (motivated by teamwork approach, upper-management or administrative commitment, rewards etc.)
 1. Administrative Officers (Directors, Deans, Finance official/ Treasurer, Registrar, Controller etc.)
 2. Faculty Members
 3. Office Clerks (Assistants, Official Staffs, Stenographer etc.)
 4. Lower Level Employees (Cleaner, Electrician, Plumber, Carpenter, Security Guard etc.)
- Students (motivated by the quality of service receiving)
- Guardians (motivated by the improvement of the students through quality service)

Here, why does motivation matter? Because, it increases their performance, eagerness of self-improvement and quality of service provided. Kaizen is the best tool for motivating them, as it takes into account all the segments and performs according to their ideas.

5.2 The Process

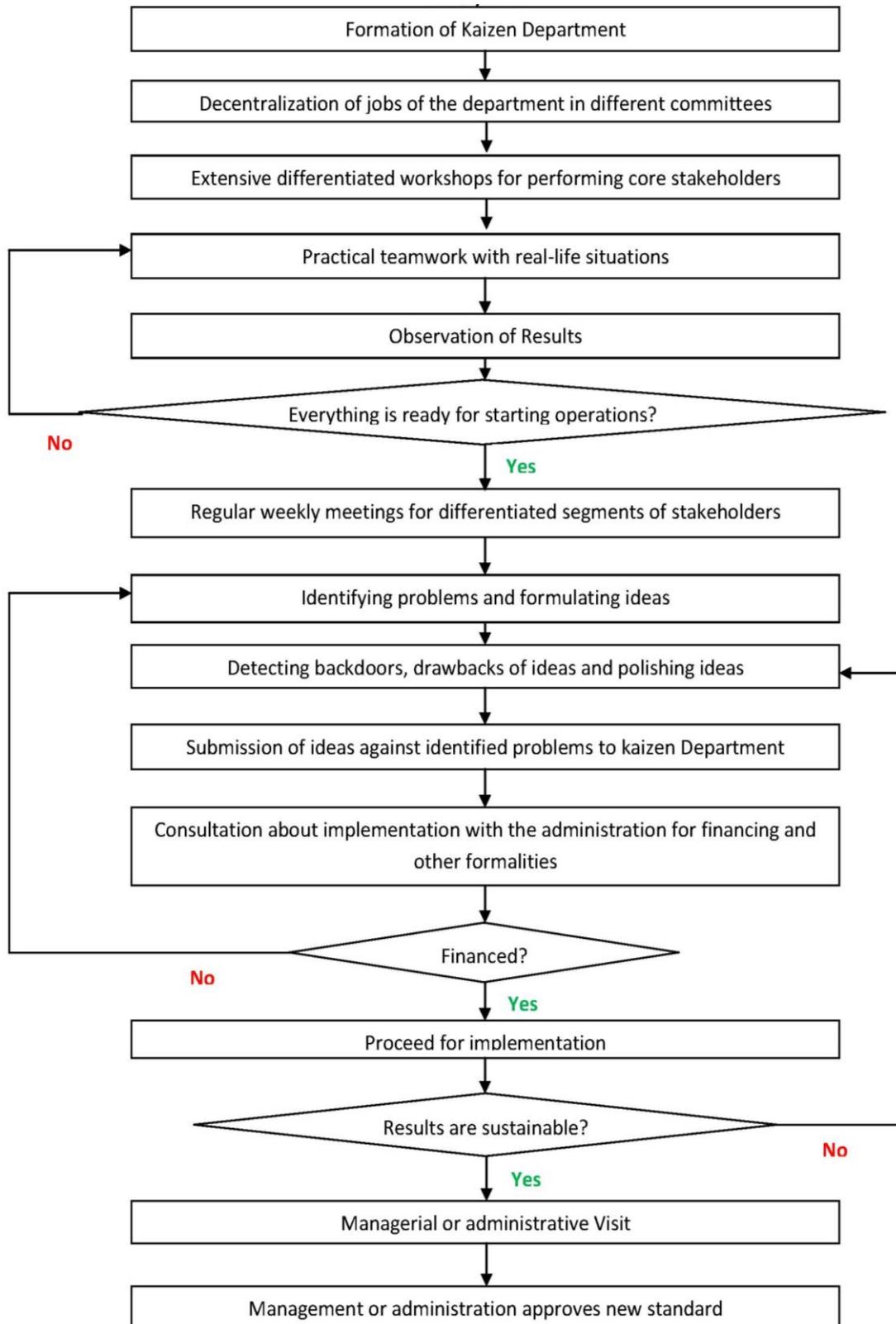
When we want to improve, we have to find problem, waste or from the other point of view opportunity. One very good systematic tool for finding opportunities is value stream mapping (VSM). VSM is a special type of flow chart that uses symbols known as "the language of Lean" to depict and improve the flow of inventory and information. Also it is a tool used to improve a process by identifying added value and eliminating waste. During VSM are analyzed all processes and flows. Result from VSM is prepared value stream map, in which all important information like processes and their initiators, academic calendar, semester or year, presently operations processes, execution, adaptation and evolution time etc. are included. Also there are drawn all material and information flows with their details. So, based on this map we have together whole current status with all pluses and minuses. There we can see our opportunities. Plus we have to analyze student requirements, judging times, etc. And all these information put together and make review of current value stream map. That results to future value stream map. Differences between current and future state are basically our opportunities for improvement and achieving customer satisfaction. This VSM activity should be repeated with some regularity (for example once per year).

Now talking about the process of implementation a standard predetermined cycle is expected to be maintained. In the 1950's Mr. W. Edwards Deming proposed that operative processes should be analyzed and measured to identify sources of variations that cause product or service deviations from customer requirements. Mr. Deming created the diagram to illustrate this continuous process, commonly known as Deming or PDCA (Plan

Khayum

– Do – Check – Act) circle. Figure 1 is created based on the practice and it shows the implementation process flowchart.

Figure 1: Flowchart Showing the Implementation Process



Khayum

5.3 Recommendations for Transformation

The alteration to kaizen will essentially be flawless. Its effects will be vital to the success of each student. Once a student and a university familiarizes to the concepts associated with Kaizen, there will be scope for greater advancement and overall prosperity. 'It is possible to figure out the outdated course plans and contents quickly and replace them or append the textbooks as per the current generation's line of thinking, by applying Kaizen in higher education. By undergoing this type of transformation process, the system will be refined and improved. There will be elimination of wastage in all aspects and students will have admittance to the best possible material than ever before.' (Mike Wilson, 2012).

Indicators for each member of staff on the way to kaizen implementation are-

- Giving up the conventionally established ideas,
- Discontinuance of tactic of excuses, critical interpretation of schemes and practices,
- Revising, how to make it, no – why it hadn't been done,
- Immediate correction of the committed mistakes,
- Taking advantage of wisdom, not – mindless spending the money,
- Continuous searching the answer to the "why?" question.

5. Conclusion

The notion of Kaizen, which gives emphasis to continuous, steady development as opposed to making key changes, provides a complete foundation for pulling together the key concepts of strategic planning and assessment. Assessment of student learning, as an example, seems to be most successful when faculty, students, administrators, and staff work together to recognize and develop all facets of the learning procedure. Such information gathered in a thorough assessment procedure can and should be used in strategic planning at the department and the institutional levels. Gradual changes should occur in the content and structure of the curriculum as well as within the courses themselves. Inevitably, interactions with other academic and administrative units have to be addressed due to their impact on the department's students; teamwork with those both inside and outside of the department is required. Slowly and gradually the institutional culture evolves into one more sensitive to better ways to maximize student learning. Nonetheless, leadership is prerequisite in order to pull it all together into a rational whole.

The paper presents a task-oriented procedure for implementing Kaizen philosophy targeting the increase in efficiency and quality of higher education delivered by different universities around the globe. The research work is just a small effort to meet the needs of time and evolution in the education world and students', faculty members', administrators' psychology. There's always a huge ground open for further research which is very much required in the respective field to cover-up the limitations and odds in this study or research work. The mostly faced problem is the lack of enough previous research works related to the field and the problem itself. There was lacking in required knowledge to conduct the research up-to more professional form. No mathematical modeling have been used which keeps the door open for further higher research works. Moreover some more time would have been helpful for the research to be more efficient and specific about the findings. But, considering all the odds, the paper is a result of best effort.

Khayum

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Khayum

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