Teaching staff – The Most Important Factor of the Quality in High Education

Violeta Cepujnoska

Abstract

In the TQM system, the quality of knowledge and education are the first goals and tasks. To realize these goals and tasks, the selection of the teacher is a key factor because the teacher is involved in planning, doing, checking, acting and advancing of the educational process. "A quality teacher" can be described by numerous both measurable and not measurable indicators such as: education, diligence, moral, talent and predisposition for the profession, humanity and adherence to principals, ability for doing research etc.

The ability for doing research can easily be checked having in mind the results of the scientific work of the teacher, but it is difficult to judge the abilities of the teacher to work on the problems the students face in the process of acquiring new teaching material.

Another specificity is that the selection of the teacher at the university is a continuous process. At each next promotion the criteria repeat, but the knowledge must evolve.

Therefore, by TQM system the criteria of selection a teacher must be defined in details and very preciously, as a barrier in front of which the candidate will ask himself: "Do I have a right to be a teacher?"

I. On Some Characteristics of the Educational Process

The quality management in education differs profoundly from the quality management in other service activities. One of the most substantial differences in this process is the great level of individuality and independence of the direct participants and performers of the educational process. The independence is great motivation force and significant inheritance of this profession, but it is difficult to establish control of the quality of education.

Another substantial characteristic of this profession is that the teacher appears in the following functions: planning, doing, checking and acting. In other service activities, these four functions are executed by different people, that is teams, and, in this case only by the teachers and the students. The third specificity are the clients-students. In other services, the clients can react in a tempestuous way when the quality of service do not meet the set requirements, complain or ask for the payment of the damage. In education, this is much more difficult. The clients, the students can easily be led into the situation of ignorance if the teacher wants it. On the other hand, the student is "dependent" and hence "subordinated" to the wish of the teacher for correct examination.

The forth specificity of this profession, very important to the quality is the need of team work among the teachers and among the teachers and students. For this profession the links among teachers when performing their tasks are much more important than vertical links of the teachers and the dean, the manager. The hierarchy, in this case, has completely different character compared to other service activities. The policy of teaching and the development of the teaching are in the jurisdiction of the management body, but the teaching itself is created by the teachers.

The fifth specificity, or the first, is the dire consequence resulting from the wrong selection of the teacher. In other services the incompetence of a particular person in doing his job can be easily noticed, whereas in this profession it is difficult to be perceived or when it is, it is too late. The consequences are very serious since a low qualified teacher can produce a great number of graduates who will obviously lack knowledge of the particular field.

The creation of a teacher – professionalist is a long term process connected not only with studying, as a means of acquiring a certain amount of knowledge, but also with preparing for permanent studies as a main task of this profession. Besides, this profession asks for other moral and ethic forms of qualification that can not be reached by education, but can be developed by working in the process of education.

The management plays an important role in the development of the quality of the educational institution, but if no significant attention is given to the selection of the teachers, the management can not offer more than the teachers themselves.

The teacher is a manager. He creates and develops the course, teaches, provides all necessary facilities for this, grades the students and finds the mistakes, corrects the errors and prevents them from appearing in the next circle of quality. In all this, the best help can come from the students, but only if the teacher asks for it and feels it necessary. Whether the teacher will cooperate with the students or to which extent depends on the management of the educational institution. If the management introduces the philosophy of Total Management Quality, it establishes the indispensable climate for cooperation between the students and teachers in building the quality system in which the students are engaged in assessment and also in the unapredvawe of the advancement of the educational process. To successfully fulfil these obligations, the teacher must be adequately educated, scientifically profiled and highly moral and responsible – as substantial prerequisites for a quality person. Apart from this, the teacher must love his profession and here to find his own motivation for work.

II. The Teacher and "The Track of Quality"

The quality of teaching is one of the most important segments of the quality of studies. According to the definition adopted by the international organization of standardization (ISO) quality of an entity [1] (a process, an education process) represents all characteristics related to its ability to meet the defined and comprehensible requirements.

In our opinion, the defined requirements for quality teaching would be:

- clear and understandable lecturing,
- fluent transmitting of the content,
- eloquent expression,
- demonstrating examples relevant to the practice,
- linking the current content to the previous themes,
- using the contemporary teaching aids in lecturing,
- inspiration of the students to discussion,
- motivation of the students for studying and better success,
- discipline during the presentation of the topics, time of presentation, consultation hours etc.,
- discussion on certain topics in order to develop the creativity in the students,
- development of the democratic relations in the lecturing in terms of creating scientific criticism and self criticism etc.

The teacher participates in the education process as:

- a creator of the curriculum and syllabuses,
- an instructor of a certain course,
- a motivator in the work with the students,
- a person who is doing the assessment of the knowledge, abilities and qualifications of the students,
- an initiator for improvement, advancement of the knowledge regarding the quality of the education process, conditions of work etc.,
- a tutor in the process of creating a professionalist,
- an initiator of the research work,
- a manager of the team work etc.

To satisfy all these functions, the teacher has to meet a few requirements:

- adequate education, university degree, master and Ph. D. degrees,
- ability of continuous studying (studying as a main job),
- high level of culture, ethics (moral),
- high level of responsibility,
- diligence,
- demonstrating a sense of communication etc.

Besides all these, the teacher must love his profession/job, to be precise and defined in demanding quality from himself and others, persistent and consequent in argumentation of the ideas for development of the teaching and scientific process etc.

The first basic prerequisite, the adequate education can be easily proven and checked.

The diligence can be evaluated by the results of the work. However, the evaluation of other prerequisites is more difficult, and they are not less important for the quality of the teacher than the former ones.

The ability to study is very important prerequisite for successful teacher (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1: "The track of quality" of a teacher.

The teacher-beginner has a certain quantum of knowledge which can be sufficient for a certain time, but not for long. Therefore, it is indispensable that the teacher wants to study, can study and with time he will learn a lot, he will continuously evolve his knowledge and will follow his "track of quality" in his career.

III. The Teacher and "The Circle of Quality"

The quality of teaching can be represented by "The circle of quality" (Denimag [2]: Plan – Do – Check – Act)

Planning:

According to previously adopted curriculum and syllabuses, the teacher organizes his teaching which has to provide transmission of the entire knowledge from a particular field, but to also linked to other fields. Shortly, a course has to represent a partial knowledge of a certain area but within the framework of the global field of specialization. ("Do it globally") Within the framework of this task, the teacher has to plan all necessary funds and aids for the realization of the defined quality, but the provision of the working facilities are the obligation of the management.

Do:

The teacher does his work independently or in cooperation with other teachers from that field, but by doing this he has to follow and satisfy the interest of the students. The teacher is doing his first self-assessment by lecturing. The second self-assessment he is doing through the discussion on the asked questions and responses of the students.

Check:

The exam is the activity with the help of which the teacher is checking the knowledge of the students. In the same time it is a self-assessment of the teacher. Actually, through the exam, the teacher evaluates how much knowledge the student has acquired, how much did not and why, or, to which extent the lack of knowledge is due to the unsatisfactory quality of teaching. This segment of the activity – lecturing and self-assessment can be performed only if the teacher wants it,

if he finds it necessary. This happens to those teachers who are in love with their profession and have pre-disposition for it.

Act:

In the quality system of the education institution, the control as a function has to be planned and designed in compliance with the needs and possibilities of the institution, but, the selfcontrol is the most important for the quality of the teaching. By self-control the teacher can discover the best his mistakes in teaching, his unawareness for certain issues (he can discover this from the students), for the teaching methods and examination, for the criteria of grading, etc.

Fig. 2: The development of a teacher and the circle of quality.

By respecting the circle of quality, every teacher can improve his work and each next circle can be on a higher level of knowledge, with better teaching method, with better approach to grading, etc.

Thus, every new circle of quality can be advanced process. The time for the new circle has not been defined since it is immanent for each teacher, management or university but it appears when certain number and type of mistakes in the activities are recognized and there is an adequate solution for them. The next circle must have positive changes and until this is not met, it should not be done.

IV. On the criteria of selection of the teachers

The criteria of selection of the teachers are one of the most substantial activities of the TQM system. They must be carefully designed and applied with discipline. The criteria must be adequate to the level of the education institution and to reflect the quality of the educational process.

Expressed by the language of statistics [4, 5], in every education institution there are teachers who differ among themselves to a smaller or higher extent. Among the universities, faculties and institutes within one country differences in the quality level exist too, Fig. 3.

Fig. 3: Difference in the level of quality among the universities..

The university, faculty or institute has the level of quality which is the consequence of the average quality of the teachers.

The quality of the teachers begins with the quality of his selection. The educational institution has its own level, its own system and its own criteria of staff selection. These initial criteria of staff selection can be named. "The first barrier of quality", Fig. 4.

Fig. 4: The first barrier of quality.

If a staff selection provides an adequate quality of the teachers who fulfil and exceed the clearly defined measurable and not measurable criteria, the initial quality of the educational process will be met. Good quality of a teacher provides good quality of teaching, examination, education, scientific training, quality of knowledge etc. In other words, a professional attitude is developed in the future expert.

In estimating the quality of the teacher, the message of Galileo Galilei has to be considered: "Everything that is measurable, should be measured, and what is not, must be made measurable". Also, in selecting the teacher it has to be considered that TQM has no emotions, no soul, TQM asks for strict fulfillment of the criteria in order to reach the highest goal-quality of the teaching staff.

V. On the assessment and self-assessment of the teachers

When selecting the teacher, everything is clear regarding the measurable values such as the certificate of education and the rating of the educational institution the certificate is issued by, the published papers – type and volume, working on projects and the results showing the diligence, qualification and ability to work – study, persistency in overcoming the problems, however it is difficult to estimate the moral, love of the profession, ability for team work, ability for self-criticism etc.

A teacher has to be able to discover what the students do not know, why and how this can be improved, with whom, when, where and all the time keeping high level of responsibility.

Every teacher before he pursue a career of teacher must ask the question: Do I have a right to be a teacher if I am not concerned what I am like?

Every educational institution must clearly and precisely define "The first barrier of quality" to provide indispensable and the most important performer of the quality – the teacher.

VI. Instead of Conclusion

Design of the quality system by TQM in education is a difficult task because the educational process is a complex, very vital for the society and very specific.

When designing the quality system, the global goals have to be defined, to consider the most important activities for realization of those goals and to define the necessary criteria. If the goal is the education of a good quality expert, one of the most important prerequisites is the quality teaching imposing the necessity of a good teaching staff.

To provide a good teaching staff the criteria on selection as well as for further development and improvement of the teacher must be defined.

As we find it, the selection of the teaching staff must be "the first barrier of the quality" as the most important control point in the quality system.

Author

Prof. Dr. Violeta Cepujnoska

Vice Rector

University St. Cyril and Methodius

Bul. Krste Misirkov 66

91000 Skopje, Republic of Macedonia

Tel. +389 (91) 12 90 48

Fax +389 (91) 11 63 70

E-Mail: vioche@mpt.com.mk

it is hard to measure. This happens to those teachers who are in line with their profession and have the disposition for it.

As for the quality system of the educational institution, the function has to be planned and designed in accordance with the needs and possibilities of the institution, but the selection is the most important for the quality of the teaching. The self-control of the teacher is the best his mistake in teaching, his own mistake. For certain reason the teacher can discover the mistake of the teaching methods and its improvement for the future of teaching.

The development of a teacher and the work of quality.

By respecting the circle of quality, every teacher can improve his work and each next circle can be on a higher level of knowledge with better teaching methods. That every new circle of quality can be achieved and progress. The time for the new circle is not held behind since it is important for each teacher to be in the university but it appears after a number of years and mistakes in the activities are recognized and there is an adequate solution for them. The next circle must be a positive change and until this is not met, it should not be done.

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