

**QUALITY AS A KEY
TO THE EDUCATIONAL MISSION
OF A COLLEGE
(2/2)**

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**V. ELEMENTS FOR WORKING OUT
A POLICY AIMING AT QUALITY.**

An educational establishment which decides on a policy for achieving quality, has to realise that to bring about change, it must give up lots of those things which in the past it considered worthwhile.

Quality is the forceful philosophy behind many of the changes occurring at this fin de siècle. Ours is the era of change, and we are the ones who must control change whenever it has to do with children and youth. *"Change without control becomes chaos whereas stability without control is stagnation"*.

In planning a policy for quality we need:

1. **To determine the terminology** connected with quality. We are not dealing with terminology which refers to quality in business of the Japanese or American style; but we are not rejecting it either. Lots of areas of knowledge began in eclectic fashion until they became more specialised. At the moment, educational terminology is like a surging sea of words, which we should tame by gathering them into a glossary with a clear definition of their educational meaning.
2. Stress should be on change and continuous improvement.

"Change forces on us the need for leaders and the latter begin to make changes where the rest of us see no need. That is what John Adair writes in "Leaders not chiefs". If we compromise quality, we compromise change, because "change is the only constant".

3. **A policy concerning quality** should be broad-based and generic; that is true and applicable no matter where. All the educational community should be committed to the policy, it should reach everyone, it should use all possible means to persuade everyone of the value of participation and shared commitment. This is not only a matter for the administration and teachers of a college: if we have quality homes we shall receive into our colleges the raw material for quality, a basis for a process towards integrity.

4. **A policy aiming at quality should be concise, short, clear.**

Educational establishments are formed of persons, who even in cultural matters have different training and depth of specialisation. Workers and employees should also understand and assimilate the quality processes. The college should define, point out objectives, policies and strategies and work out a method of evaluation: one could do worse than taking the first step in this direction by announcing "A Quality Year" for the college.

5. **A policy which enthuces the will of all collaborators.** This will create a strong leadership, so that not just one leader will appear, but several. John Adair in the book just quoted says: *"The leader always finds a way forward, tends naturally to think in terms of group involvement and will give his direct contribution to the common task."*

6. **A policy for quality should have wide influence** on the whole surroundings; it should not apply just to the school. A "philosophy of surroundings" is according to Alfonso López Quintás, a strategy of "creating surroundings": a person, as person-in-relationship, creates surroundings, like the rings on the surface of a lake when we throw a stone in the water. All its surroundings should be influenced by an educational establishment in questions of quality, favouring new ways of being and acting in those influenced.

7. **Quality should be controlled statistically.**

Edward Deming initiated in Japan and generally in Business settings the process called "Total Quality", proposing as goal: "People of Quality". To reach the goal he decided among other strategies to increase the number of hours spent on study by the Japanese. They now study 1960 hours per year, whereas we Colombians study hardly 630 hours. Many colleges are now experimenting with diversification. I believe that if this experiment is not being made within the context of quality, it is a falsehood and we are deceiving ourselves.

When we come to final evaluation, numbers and percentages carry weight, not only descriptions of quality, which however are more important.

In another article on evaluation in the context of quality, we shall deal with this theme at greater depth.

**VI. PHILOSOPHY OF QUALITY
AND EDUCATIONAL MISSION.**

This theme cannot be avoided when we are dealing with a subject as important as the educational mission. We shall approach it from two angles.

1. **The Educational mission must be prepared and known;** this requires several steps:

- 1.1 It is the direct responsibility of the Rector/Director and the Administrative team, not only in their personal and shared reflections, but also in their presentations to the educational community.

- 1.2 This mission of the educational establishment should aim at the Objectives of that centre. Just as a business concern has its progress plan, so also the school, college, university should have their educational plan, in which the objectives are understood, and which become "life projects" for those in the institution.

1.3 Unity and cohesion should be established between all the elements of the educational community, by the fact that all know what they want and where they are going. When the mission is clearly defined, co-responsibility is created, as well as interdependence, joint management, consciousness of shared mission, which enrich and mature the co-partners. When everyone agrees on attitudes and activities, the process of quality in the mission is better maintained.

2. **The educational mission should be directed towards a plan** for survival in the long term, based on quality, which means an acknowledgement that:

2.1 Quality is an organisational matter, because, as Peter Drucker says "we live in a world of organisations".

2.2 Quality is a philosophy of work, and ergonomics (work efficiency studies) teach us that this philosophy is not just the obtaining of good results, but also of qualifying the worker; according to the theory of Taylor: "*The worker should improve his manual and intellectual skills*".

2.3 Quality is not only a matter of obtaining results, we repeat, but of surviving and improving, for in this sense, change is something one decides in advance. "What is impossible today, tomorrow will be normal", states Joel A. Barker in the video "Paradigm".

Change has three bases: 1. evolution, 2. because we reach crisis point, 3. because we plan for the future. In all three, quality should have its place, if one wants to survive and advance.

VII KINDS OF ORGANISATIONS TO OBTAIN QUALITY.

Experts in Quality at Business level speak not only of the kinds, but also of the processes of organisation found in business enterprises, which according to Joseph M. Juran are three in number:

1. A change of mentality
2. Working project by project
3. Creating a favourable atmosphere and attitude

Kinds of organisation mentioned (and their application in the educational centre):

1. No organisation: which implies restricted vision and danger of going off track.
2. Organisation for acceptance: meaning just opening a educational centre, obtaining permission to function and ensuring monthly income etc.
3. Precautionary organisation: like protection, inspecting, but without projecting for the future, without vision.
4. Coordinating organisation: detailed in direction, animation, work in interdisciplinary and interdependent areas, staff of specialists, counsellors, assessors, etc.
5. Organisation to ensure Quality: the use of which will assure integral formation and which implies:
 1. that we define the mission.

2. that the objectives which are defined, be attainable and quantifiable.
3. that we have a clear policy.
4. that we know where we are going, whether we are administrators, teachers, or another part of the educational community.
5. that we coordinate the strategic plan.
6. that we assign resources: human, financial, technical material, logistics.
7. that we evaluate and analyse.

This organisation to ensure quality implies in turn a time scale:

- 1 Information: in the first month of the academic year
- 2 Implementation: in the second and third months
- 3 Expansion and maturation: in the next six months
- 4 Evaluation: in the final month of the year.

Each of these stages has concrete action plans within the calendar, because quality is not merely theoretical but something really connected with persons, educational projects and undertakings.

Conclusion

Concerning this theme of "Quality as the key to the Educational Mission of a College", we can say that it is an unexplored topic, though much has been written on quality in business realms. My purpose has been twofold: to encourage further research in the educational field; to facilitate the inclusion of some elements which will fit our educational projects within such a framework.

We have a grave responsibility as educators at this particular time, for as the Spanish educator Olegario González de Cardenal states:

Those who have children and youth under their care have the future at their command. If however an educator does not look to the future he does not really have anything to say to his charges. ●

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