

Students' Quality Circles: An Innovative Approach of Character Education

Resource Development and Institutionalization

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Abstract

Total Quality Person (TQP) is understood as a person with a leadership quality having mindset of inner-goodness who likes to serve the society as well as inner-smartness who always strives to excel in his profession. Students' Quality Circles (SQC) is one of the innovative educational pedagogies which empower young students to be a total quality person. It is already proven and exercised in different parts of the world since more than a decade. This paper likes to rationalize the inevitability of SQC in academia and wants to present the experience of SQC promotion in Nepal focusing mainly on the institutionalization and resource development.

Key words:

Total Quality People (TQP), Students' Quality Circle (SQC), WCTQEE, QUEST-Nepal, SQC Curriculum

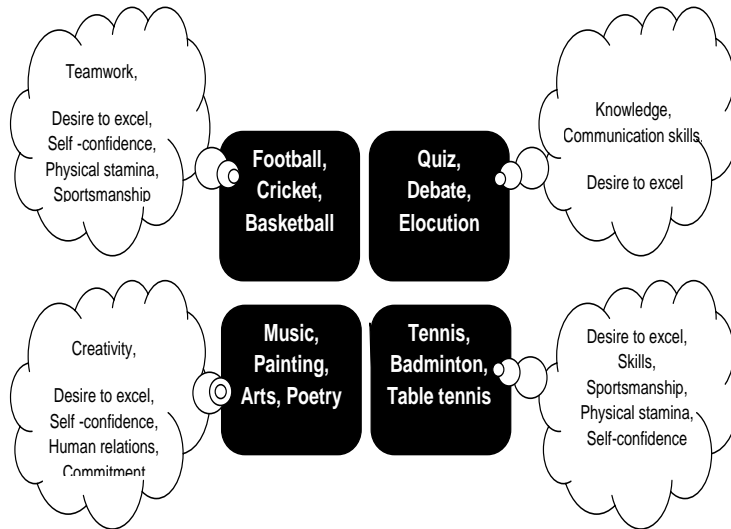
RATIONAL

The academic degree provided by an educational institute alone is not a guarantee that a person has imbibed the leadership qualities in his field of study. In general, a person's leadership qualities include, among others, his mastery of a subject; his capability to develop his own vision and voice in the subject useful to the society; his strength in inspiring other people to listen to his voice and follow him; his respect for human beings and all creations of nature both physical and emotional. Of course, it is a challenge to all educational institutions to ensure that their student graduates possess these leadership attributes besides acquiring the knowledge and skills which teachers normally attempt to bombard into the students' head.



We are these days talking about producing TQP (Total Quality Person) who is a true leader with personality attributes of smartness and goodness, a true leader. Total Quality Person is smart and competitive based on his or her knowledge and skills. They possess excellent capability to understand the nature, their scientific relationships with the human beings, plants and animals and the universe. They exude creativity and innovative thoughts to enhance the life quality of the people leaving in this world. Total Quality Person epitomizes goodness and harmonizes all living and non-living things with spiritual and emotional feelings. They have a mindset of cooperation, for working together in the society and improving continuously for the betterment of all. When it comes to leadership personality building of people it must be based on not only making them smart but also good at the same time.

The modern day educational institutes, in general, are found to focus more on developing the smart attributes of the students and less focused on developing their good attributes. Educationists have developed various intervention programs such as the character educational intervention or value educational intervention to build up positive character or pro-social behavior of students. Teaching moral education, ethics and value system to school children



have immensely helped to develop positive attitudes of students towards the society. Co-curricular and extra-curricular activities like sports, dramatics, debating and music are quite common. The benefits that students derive from competing in these co-curricular and extra-curricular activities are immense. However, developing mindset of competing with each other may enhance lopsided personality of smartness diluting the goodness personality, or collaborative traits which is a must to be a total quality person.



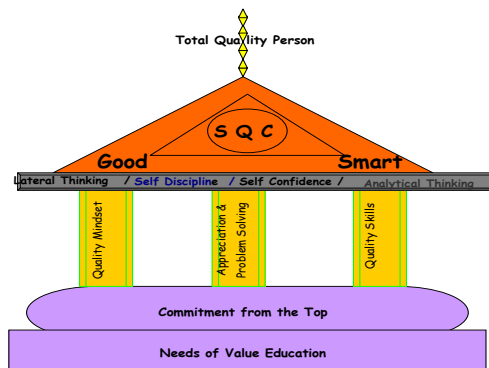
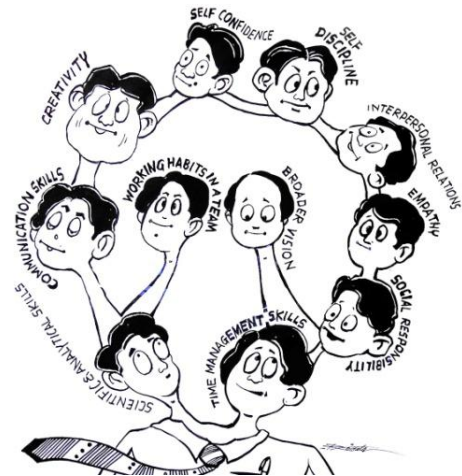
Scripting a new knowledge and skills on a clean board (or, mind) of students is always easier and more effective than deskilling adults by erasing various scripts already written in their minds during their early schooling life period. The latter is not only difficult but sometimes even counter-productive as well. The slogan “catch them young” is functionally true and should be followed by all educationists to build the quality mindset of people.

FUNDAMENTALS

Students’ Quality Circle, popularly known as SQC in the arena of educationists is one such newly devised and innovative pedagogy which can be understood simply as:

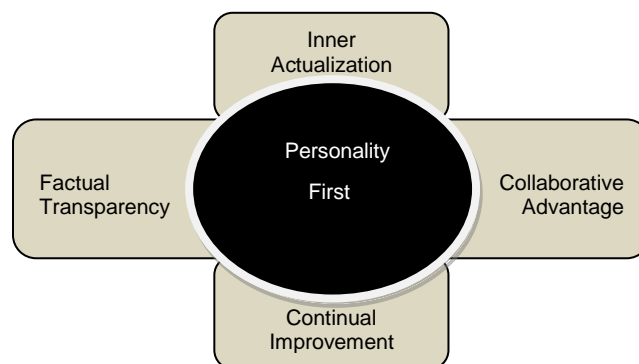
- *a small team of self motivated and proactive students with a common purpose working together;*
- *to identify recurring problems, analyze their root causes and solve them permanently leading to continuous improvements;*
- *using systematic, scientific and analytical Quality Circle (QC) approaches, tools and techniques;*
- *for developing students’ pro-social personality having collaborative and creative leadership traits.*

A research was concluded in 2005 by the author based on the international students involved in SQC projects in different countries. It is found that they have developed significantly eleven types of pro-social personality within the smart and good character attributes. Students develop self-confidence in their knowledge, action and capability to deliver positive results even in difficult situations. They instill self-discipline on their habit. They develop confidence in interpersonal and public relations skills. They develop an attitude of empathy towards other human beings and colleagues. They develop a feeling of social responsibility. They develop skills of managing time. They develop scientific, logical and analytic skills. They develop excellent communication skills and confidence in expressing their views and listening to others. They develop skills in lateral thinking and generating creative ideas. They develop habit of working in a team. Students involved in SQC also acquire broad and in-depth knowledge of life and the surrounding environment.



The basics or fundamentals of Students' Quality Circle can be explained by the house of SQC. The foundations are the needs of quality education and commitment from the top; the three pillars are appreciation and problem solving, quality mindset, and quality skills; the lintels and beams are lateral and analytical thinking, self discipline and self confidence; the roofs are the good and smart characters of the students and the Steeple is the Total Quality Person.

SQC adopts four prong approaches in its educational activities with the core approach of developing Personality – Inner actualization, Factual transparency, collaborative advantage and continual improvement.



Thus, we may quote:

SQC believes on “Collaborate with others but Compete with you”.

SQC believes on “Think out of the box but within a room”.

SQC believes on “Act for step by step continuous improvement but also with breakthrough”.

SQC believes on “Work with facts and figures but be transparent and everyone understand”

SQC believes on “Self realize your position and then only take action”.

SQC believes on “QC tools which is simple, visual and group work.



SQC is an adapted version of Quality Control Circles (QCC) exercised in industries for continuous development. Quality Circles in industries are considered as one of the most important components of Total Quality Management. The concepts of TQM and Quality Circles were developed in Japan and promoted to other parts of the world. SQC was developed in India with the inspiration

drawn from the Japanese TQM experience. Dr. Jagdish Gandhi from Citi Montessori School, Lucknow India brought SQC from Japan about two decades back. And, Dr. Vineeta Kamran CMS Principal taking technical help from the quality experts like Mr. PC Bihari experimented SQC at CMS, India, which was highly acclaimed by international community of quality. The World Council for Total Quality and Excellence as a forum then developed in 1999 with the participation of experts and educationists to promote the approach of SQC all over the world.

International conventions on Students' Quality Circles are organized annually in different countries to share and learn the knowledge on SQC. Experts from various countries have observed, discussed and recommended that the SQC approach to make Total Quality Person in academia must be across the countries. The vision of the SQC promotion program is suggested as "Every citizen of the world to be a Total Quality Person". The mission statement for achieving this vision is suggested as "Establishing Students' Quality Circles (SQC) in academia all over the world". However, till today, we are more concentrated on organizing international and national conventions. The institutionalization and resource build-up activities to promote this innovative approach of character education are seen lacking, and naturally many confusions are still surfacing up. We have not been able to move towards the vision developed by quality educationists at the World Council.



NEPAL EXPERIENCE

In Nepal, we have tried to institutionalize SQC through forming an specialized institution for a cause. Moreover, we are in the process of creating resources required to promote SQC, not only for Nepal but also for the world community.

QUEST-Nepal : A Specialized Institution

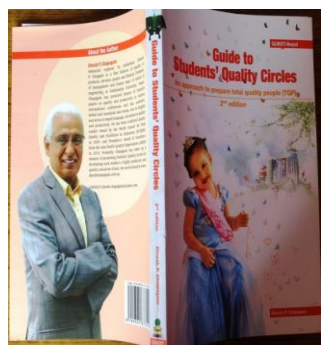
QUEST-Nepal, which is an acronym of "Quality Circles in Education for Students' Personality Development, Nepal", is a member-based, not-for-profit, non-governmental organization envisioned and established in 2005 by likeminded educationists in Nepal who believe in developing Total Quality People (TQP) by implementing Students' Quality Circle (SQC) as an

innovative and student friendly teaching-learning methods in educational institutes. QUEST-Nepal believes in the motto of **Together We Can ...**



More than twelve thousand students have already practiced SQC activities in their respective schools in Nepal and got opportunity to sharpen their leadership personality. At present, QUEST-Nepal has about one hundred SQC Master Trainers who have been involved in training of teachers. Each year since 2010, these SQC master trainers organize one Master Trainers Laboratory to create, share and learn SQC related concepts, approaches, tools and techniques. Teachers trained by them are working as skilled SQC facilitators in different parts of the country. QUEST-Nepal has already organized eight National conventions and one International convention since its establishment where nearly one thousand delegates participate and share their SQC experiences in each convention. QUEST-Nepal initiated monthly Newsletter in electronic media (e-communiqué) since October 2011 with an objective of information sharing and promoting the concepts, tools and techniques of SQC and SQC events in the country as well as in the world. Its website is **www.questnepal.org.np**, and its official mailing address is **info@questnepal.org.np**.

Guide to Students' Quality Circles : A Resource Book



QUEST-Nepal has published a resource book, which can be said as the only official resource book for learning and implementing SQC globally. It was first published in 2006 and the second edition is now available. The book is popular among educationists who like to promote SQC in academia. The book has answered the questions like why is SQC necessary in academia, what are the basics of SQC, what are the tools required for SQC, how to implement SQC in academics, what SQC masters say about SQC, how SQC are evolving and how students present their SQC case study. Besides, few international SQC related research papers presented at various international seminars are also placed at the end as reading materials.

SQC Curriculum : A Sustainable Process

After getting experience of SQC as extra-curricular activities in few Nepalese schools since 1999, QUEST-Nepal initiated co-curricular classes, allotting special time to the students' team to work for SQC since 2005. The QUEST-Nepal Master Trainers laboratory conducted in early 2013 felt that the time has come to introduce SQC as full curricular subjects at secondary schools. Many chief executives or founder principals of schools felt that the time has come to introduce SQC as a regular curricular subject to embrace many social behavior topics on it. With the collaboration of Nepal



educational policy related agencies of Government, a curriculum expert team was formed and a set of curriculum was developed for Grade 6 (average age 12 years) and implemented first time at Mt. View English Boarding School, Bhaktapur in Nepal from the academic session 2013 as a piloting test. May 10 is declared as the SQC course launching day in Nepal.

SQC addresses “Life skills approach to education” concern of UNICEF. It prepares students to become team players, manage time, develop communicative skills, acquire systematic and scientific approach to problem solving, be empathetic to fellow beings, learn to work under difficult situations in a scientific manner and contribute to the overall well being of the individuals and society.

The general objective of the course is to prepare good and smart citizens having pro-social personality traits who are able to collaboratively manage problems occurring in life for creating a better society.

The specific objectives of the SQC (Social Behavior) are as follows:

- To understand and develop positive attitude
- To develop team leadership and collaborative behavior
- To understand the concept and practice of continuous improvement
- To develop creative thinking and enquiring attitude
- To understand the nature, scope and benefits of SQC
- To understand the process of systematic problem solving and decision making
- To learn, understand and practice the qualitative visual QC tools
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- To understand and practice the planning and monitoring process
- To develop problem solving skills and social responsiveness
- To get the hands on knowledge on basic ICT tools and communication skills

SQC Curriculum Components	
Unit I:	Positive thinking
Unit II:	Team building
Unit III:	Continuous improvement
Unit IV:	Brainstorming
Unit V:	Introduction to SQC
Unit VI:	Systematic problem solving
Unit VII:	Basic SQC qualitative tools
Unit VIII:	Basic SQC quantitative tools
Unit IX:	Planning and Evaluation
Unit X:	SQC case study project work
Unit XI:	Communication skills

The course requires adoption of theoretical as well as practical approach. Theoretical classes: 40 hours (i.e., approx: 25%), Practical classes: 135 hours (i.e., approx 75%). During theoretical classes, the teacher will explain the concepts of various problem solving approach, tools and techniques and guide the students to practice those tools and techniques during practical classes. The SQC Case study project work will require students to collect data, analyze data and come out with solutions to those problems and prepare work plan to implement and evaluate the solutions

implemented. Teaching medium may be in English or Nepali as per the media of the school. Elicitation techniques, Problem based learning, individual, peer and group works and experimental learning methods of teaching-learning techniques are employed for development of pro-social behaviors of students

The course requires implementation of both formative and summative evaluation with theory- 40 percent and practical- 60 percent. Continuous Assessment System (CAS) will be incorporated for evaluation. External evaluation is suggested for final SQC case study presentation. Evaluation Chart is standardized. Parents, teachers and peers evaluation will be the basis of CAS.

SUMMING UP

As we are here in the process of deliberation on the progress and prospects of Students' Quality Circle in academia at this 17th international convention, Kingston University London, I humbly request to make concrete resolution by and for the academic world to follow in the future.

1. Let us understand and give recognition to this very important and innovative pedagogy, which is popularly known as SQC, or Students' Quality Circles which helps to develop pro-social personality of students.
2. Let us learn, share and create the knowledge base of SQC in wider perspective of building pro-social behavior, and make it as an educational topic. Let us not limit ourselves in organizing conventions to have networking of quality and educationists at one place once a year at the national and international forums. Let us have regular communication on the subjects of SQC.
3. Let us institutionalize and expand SQC promotion activities in academia around the world not limiting to few professionals working in few countries. Let us create organizations (formal or informal) attracting many educational leaders and volunteers to work for the SQC cause.
4. Let us develop resource base on SQC like periodicals, magazines, websites, books (printing as well as e-books), promotional materials, and like on.
5. Let us create social networking of former SQC graduates who will work as ambassador to promote SQC.
6. "Let Us Join Hands"- the motto printed on the logo of World Council for Total Quality and Excellence in Education (WCTQEE), and "Together We Can..." the motto printed on the logo of Quality Circles in Education for Personality Development (QUEST-Nepal). We definitely can produce students who can change the world for the betterment of future.

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