

# Perception of the Students Regarding TQM Practices in Technical Institutions in Punjab

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*In a world of ever increasing competition, privatization and internationalization of education, many educational institutions in India and abroad apply TQM principles in education. Internationalization of higher education has become a fact, just like Globalization. Internationalization should not be seen as an end in itself, but as a means of quality enhancement. Quality is the ability of the institution to fulfill its task and to achieve its goals. Total Quality Management in higher education means improving the quality of courses, input instructional process, resource management processes and structures as well as student support service output and linkages with world of work and other organizations. Total Quality Management (TQM) is inevitably common factor that will shape the strategies of higher educational institutions in their attempt to satisfy various stakeholders including students, parents, industry and society as a whole. The paper is an attempt to explain the application of TQM in education. It deals with issues pertaining quality in higher education and moves on to identify variables influencing quality of higher education.*

*Keywords: TQM, Continuous improvement, Education, Knowledge, Efficiency*

## Introduction

The importance of education for the development of excellence, expertise and knowledge leading to overall development in economy cannot be undermined. This has necessitated a sound strategy for the development of higher education in almost all countries of the world. Establishing leadership in the world is possible only when we have a developed system of higher education in which efficiency remains the sole criterion to evaluate performance. The system of higher education is found efficacious in making available to the society a dedicated, committed, devoted and professionally sound team of human resources to decide the future of any nation. This is possible only when the principles of quality management are inculcated in the system of higher education. Total Quality Management (TQM) is inevitably common factor that will shape the strategies of higher educational institutions in their attempt to satisfy various stakeholders including students, parents, industry and society as a whole. The paper is a theoretical attempt to explain the application of TQM in education. It deals with issues

pertaining quality in higher education and moves on to identify variables influencing quality of higher education. The new economic growth theories have emphasized the role of human capital as the key of economic growth and development. The World Bank's recent study of 190 countries reveals that it is higher education that helps in enriching the quality of manpower. Thus higher education is a basic investment necessary to improve the overall quality of life. The strong linkage between the economy and education was never so clearly visible as now.

Most of the organizations agree that a culture advocating a total commitment to customer satisfaction through continuous improvement and innovation is a pre-requisite for successfully facing ever increasing competition. Total quality management (TQM) is such a culture which advocates a total commitment to customer satisfaction through continuous improvement in all aspects of business. Continuous improvement in academic institutions means

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identifying the needs and expectations of the institution's customers. Raouf (2004) has shown that in an academic institution 'suppliers' become 'customers' and 'customers' play the role of 'suppliers' TQM is applied to business and industry; but it has been recently introduced and experimented in higher education. Many universities and colleges apply Total Quality Management as a tool to enhance the quality of higher education. The concept of quality is accepted by everyone and TQM literature in higher education is available in plenty. The student is considered as a customer since quality mean "conformance to requirements" of the customer. In a world of ever increasing competition, privatization and internationalization of education, many educational institutions in India and abroad apply TQM principles in education. Internationalization of higher education has become a fact, just like Globalization. Internationalization should not be seen as an end in itself, but as a means of quality enhancement. Quality is the ability of the institution to fulfill its task and to achieve its goals. Total Quality Management in higher education means improving the quality of courses, input instructional process, resource management processes and structures as well as student support service output and linkages with world of work and other organizations(Tulsi, 2001). Since it is holistic approach the support and cooperation of faculty and staff members are needed for quality improvement. Participatory team work of all in an institution occupies a critical place in the practice of TQM.

Total quality is total in three senses —

1. Customer focus
2. Involvement of staff members
3. Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI).

The customer determines the quality. The student is a customer since the student is buying Professor course and has the unmistakable right to expect certain things for his/ her money: Relevant course content, fairness, access, expertise and a reasonable learning situation (Sytsma 1996). The student both the customer and co-producer since learning is the joint effort of the professor and the student. Both the professor and the student jointly produce a product — learning. Broadly speaking it is the combine effort of students, parents, alumni, community and faculty. The customer is not the students alone, but all stake-holders. The terms customers, public goods, non-merit goods, in the context of education and not acceptable to a civilized class when it denotes to a commercial conditioning of pay and use concern since education is regarded as charitable. But the other practical question is whether every stake-holder including the

student has a right to demand quality or excellence in education.

## Review of Literature

TQM has been adopted as a management paradigm by many organizations worldwide. Quality movement in across the world starts with quality improvements project at manufacturing companies. But later it spread to other service institutions including banking; insurance, non profit organizations, healthcare, government and educational institutions. TQM models, based on the teachings of quality gurus, generally involve a number of "principles" or "essential elements" such as teamwork, top management leadership, customer focus, employee involvement, continuous improvement tool, training etc. Awards like Deming in Japan, Malcolm Balridge in USA; European Quality awards etc are reflection of growing concern in this area. TQM is the process of changing the fundamental culture of an organization and redirecting it towards superior product or service quality (Gaither, 1996) TQM can be defined as a general management philosophy and a set of tools which allow an institution to pursue a definition of quality and a means for attaining quality, with quality being a continuous improvement ascertained by customers' contentment with the services they have received (Michael et al., 1997).

According to Witcher (1990) TQM is composed of three terms: Total: meaning that every person is involved including customer and suppliers, Quality: implying that customer requirements are met exactly and Management: indicating that senior executives are committed. TQM may also be defined as; doing things right for the first time, striving for continuous improvement, fulfilling customers' need, making quality the responsibility of every employee etc. Most of work of quality and TQM can be traced to teachings and statistics in Japan during the 1950's and the revolution that follow ed in the USA in the 1980s to meet or preferably exceed customer expectations. Common theme in quality management includes consistency, perfection, waste elimination, delivery speed and customer service. The objective of TQM is to build an organization that produces products or performs services that are considered as quality by those who use them. The quality of a product or a service is the customer's perception of the degree to which the product or service meets their expectations.

According to the reports of UNESCO and the World Bank, social and private returns of the higher education is less than those of primary and secondary education, It is

estimated that social return of primary education is 25% while that of higher education is only 1%. This has led to the thinking that the returns of higher education are largely personal/private and therefore, subsidy on this should be reduced. There are three generic approaches to TQM in higher education (Harris 1994). Firstly there is a customer focus where the idea of service to students is fostered through staff training and development, which promotes student's choice and autonomy. The second approach has a staff focus and is concerned to value and enhance the contribution of all members of staff to the effectiveness of an institution's operation, to the setting of policies and priorities. This entails a flatter management structure and the acceptance of responsibility for action by defined working groups. The third approach focuses on service agreements stance and seeks to ensure conformity to specification at certain key measurable points of the educational processes. Evaluation of assignments by faculty within a specified timeframe is an example.

Lawrence and Mc.Collough (2001) propose a system of guarantees designed to accommodate multiple stakeholders and the various and changing roles of students in the educational process. Their system of guarantees focuses on three customer groups: students, instructors of advanced courses that build on prerequisite courses and thirdly organizations that employ graduates of the college. A system of guarantees provides an institution with a competitive advantage by allowing it to tangible or intangible educational quality to perspective students and their parents.

Durlabhji and Fusilier (1999) states that customer empowerment in education requires greater input from students as well as from business community that will eventually employ them and this in term will streamline education and eliminate any vestiges of the esoteric academic "ivory tower" that exist in business school coursework. The benefits of student empowerment in the classroom must be weighed against the need for control to achieve minimum educational goals and adequate and fair evaluation.

Sangeeta et al. (2004) considers education system as a transformation process comprising of inputs of students, teachers, administrative staff, physical facilities and process. The processes include teaching, learning, and administration. Outputs includes examination results, employment, earnings and satisfaction.

Roffe (1998) considers that due to open competition, students are becoming more customers as well as consumers and expected to pay a growing share of the costs of education. This leads to competitive forces that generate different

programmers for different student groups. The conceptual problems include whether TQM in higher education should be people or problem oriented, difficulty in introducing the application and acceptance of TQM in higher education institutions, which have not embraced tenets of TQM, team Vs individual orientation towards TQM, maintaining the rate of innovation amongst others.

TQM has been used successfully in variety of organizations, including manufacturing and service organizations. TQM was first applied in industries. Colleges and universities have later gradually started applying TQM principles. Some researchers have documented the experience of ISO 9001:2000 certification and TQM implementation in some higher educational institutions. TQM is for achieving excellence (Jabnoun and Sedrani, 2005) and TQM is for continuous quest for excellence (Lakhe and Mohanty, 1994). TQM can be defined as a holistic management philosophy aimed at continuous improvement in all functions of an organization to deliver goods and services in line with customers' needs or requirements (Demirbag et al., 2006).

Management Leadership is a key factor in the success of TQM in higher education institutions (Tari, 2006). When top management is committed to quality, adequate resources will be allocated to quality improvement efforts (Karuppusami and Gandhinathan, 2006). The learning environment that includes lecture rooms, laboratories, and social space can become a surrogate indicator of the institution's capacity to offer service in an organized and professional manner (Bitner, 1992). The learning support facilities include libraries and computing facilities. And other facilities include student accommodation and health care (Harvey, 2003). Students will have an idea of "overall" quality of the service provided by an institution. Evaluating students' opinion on the overall service quality can be compared with known benchmarks (Owila and Aspinwall, 1998)

Naik (2001) has strongly suggested that bringing quality movement through application of TQM in Indian higher education will result in global recognition. He further suggested that a law should be made to have quality assurance cell in every academic institutions like in UK. Assurance and Total Quality Management, and recommended changes to be made in colleges and universities in order to improve the quality of teaching.

### **Need for the Study**

Technical education is essential to improve the technical

manpower of a country. In India, especially in Punjab many technical institutions have ISO9001: 2000 and NBA certificates but it seems the quality of education in those institutions is not satisfactory. Some of the problems like lack of infrastructure, shortage of qualified faculty, students' attitude towards learning, poor students' results and placement inadequacy in the engineering and management institutions result in the institutions' and stakeholders' disarray. So this is the right time to give more importance to quality education. The implementation of TQM practices in these institutions may certainly help the students to get quality education.

## Objectives of the Study

1. To study the perception of students regarding the TQM practices in their institution.
2. To identify and rank the factors and to suggest improvement in technical education.

## Research Methodology

Questionnaires based on 7 critical factors or dimensions with 21 operating items of quality management as a comprehensive measure of TQM implementation is distributed to 250 students of engineering and management institutions of Punjab. Students from each Institution were randomly selected to collect the data. The respondents were asked to rank the factors on a five point Likert scale (5–Strongly Agree, 4–Agree, 3–Neither Agree Nor Disagree, 2–Disagree, 1–Strongly Disagree). Statistical tools analyzed the collected data. The scores were added together and then divided by number of observation per factor to determine the mean score of each factor, higher the score, the greater the importance of the factor.

## Findings

In order to achieve the esteemed goal of producing well qualified and trained technocrats an institution has to work efficiently and effectively. Every technical institution strives towards imparting technical competence to the student by creating a healthy environment for their personality development and finally enabling them to achieve higher grades in their respective fields. In the Table No. 1 seven critical factors are taken which directly or indirectly influence the effectiveness (quality) in technical institutions. These factors are important for the effective implementation of TQM.

It is analyzed from the table that factor Administration has

highest mean score (52.58), which shows that administration in the various institutions is working efficiently to some extent and meeting its responsibilities. This factor is ranked First in comparison to other factors. Another factor which scored high mean and ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> is Teaching effectiveness (51.33). Factor Infrastructure has 3<sup>rd</sup> rank with mean score of 50.77. Training and development comes at 4<sup>th</sup> rank with mean score of 50.07. Student's awareness and participation is ranked 5<sup>th</sup> with mean score of 49.78. Interaction with Industry and society comes at 6<sup>th</sup> rank with mean of 49.60. Another factor which is ranked at 7<sup>th</sup> place is Extracurricular Activities at the institutions with mean score of 48.90. It is felt that institutions are not interacting with the industries which are required these days. Also of there is a need to work out on the extracurricular activities which are important for getting confidence and better exposure for the students.

## Factor 1: Administration

The administration of technical institutions play vital role in its functioning and its responsibilities includes setting objectives for the functioning of the institution, formulating policies and control all the functions which directly or indirectly affect the efficiency. The table no 2 shows the weighted mean for adaptation of standard measures for students is 53.67 and clear Vision and policies related to quality education is 52.67 and implementation of ISO, Six-Sigma and other TQM techniques have weighted mean of 51.4.

## Factor 2: Infrastructure

"We shape our institution and our institution shapes us", Winston Churchill. An institution must have adequate land, necessary buildings, and hostels, supporting facilities, canteen, transport, library, well equipped laboratories and workshop availabilities of teaching aids like OHP, LCD projector, seminar halls, and conference room and last but not least advance computing facilities. These facilities are initial prerequisite for any technical institution which must be present to ensure proper functioning of technical Institution. In this factor the table No. 3 shows the weighted mean of various facilities provided by the institution. The table shows lab and library facilities and canteen are inadequate in the Institutions. The table shows the weighted mean of various facilities provided by the institution.

## Factor 3: Extra Curricular Activities

Good education in its totality must include the overall development of the student and must not restrict to training

in a specialized discipline. The institution must organize various extra-curricular activities like arranging group discussions, debates, technical quiz, extempore, guest lectures, seminars and promote NCC, NSS, sports, games, cultural and co-curricular activities. These extra curricular activities enhance and improve the inherent capabilities and skill of the students. Table no 4. shows the weightage given by the institutions to various extra curricular activities.

#### **Factor 4: Interaction With Industry & Society**

The fresh engineers and managers from technical institution need to be offered training in industries to give them first hand practical exposure. There is a need for general recasting of curricula, with industry oriented programs and to establish a close link between an educational program and social needs. The table no.5 shows the weighted mean of various items included in the factor, interaction with industry and society. It is evident from the table that training and development programmes, interaction with parents and industry and campus recruitment is not sufficient yet. The institutions are trying to develop yet these facilities.

#### **Factor 5: Training & Development**

Training and development activity is very much essential to survive in this competitive world. The institution must have proper infrastructure to carry out training and development activities. The students must have access to scientific journals and other modern library facilities. There must be availability of qualified and experienced research oriented and motivated faculty. Adequate financial provision must be present to carry out training activities. The table no.6 shows the weighted mean of training to students 48.87 and weighted mean of 51.27 to special classes for improvement of communication skills. It shows that the training needs of students are not taking care properly by the various technical institutions.

#### **Factor 6: Teaching Effectiveness**

The quality of students coming out of the institutions largely depends upon the quality of the teaching staff employed. With the cooperation of faculty members students are motivated to take part in the seminars and workshops. The table no.7 shows weighted mean of 49.87, attitude of faculty towards quality education and weighted mean of 52.80 for encouragement to students.

#### **Factor 7: Student's Awareness and Participation**

The Students constitute the input of the whole system. The accomplishment of the process of imparting knowledge is greatly affected by environment in which the students are out and also on their self zeal to learn and excel. A student's own awareness and interest for learning and the inherent aptitude to grasp together with his sincerity, regularity and honesty are key to his successful accomplishment of his course. It is also necessary to boost the morale of the students by motivating the students. All these aspects when carefully implement and nurtured bring about a total turn around in the quality of education. The table no. 8 shows the weighted mean of various items included in the factor student's awareness and participation. It is analyzed that students are not rewarded for good performance and in academic related decisions students are not involved.

#### **Recommendations and Conclusion**

The people very well feel the importance of technical education. So the educational institutions are vested with tremendous responsibility to transform a youth into a high intellectual person in their respective fields by imparting quality based education. As perceived by the students, all seven critical factors are given equal importance.

However, they perceive that the extra curricular activities and interaction with industry are not at all taken care by the institutions. But the other critical factors good infrastructure, management's approach, effective teaching practices are now in practice, however they need further special attention in implementation. Institutions have an important role to play in determining the success of TQM in the education system, besides providing training and courses for staff. Constant monitoring should be carried out on its progress and problems encountered as these might hinder its implementation. Commitment from every level of the organization is essential for a successful TQM implementation. Last but not least, students' involvement and participation is also important as it provides measures of the actual performance, which completes the feedback loop in the strategic management process.

#### **Research Limitations / Future Research**

The data collection has been restricted to one geographical area in India, especially the Punjab due to operational constraints. This study is confined to the students of self-financed engineering institutions only. The study can be further extended to Government Aided institutions and Universities. The study can also be extended by making cross comparison between various states in India and other countries.

Further research is needed for better understanding of the subject matter. The instrument may be further improved by covering all elements of the TQM and institutional performance. The sample should be increased, and extended to other universities to get more in-depth information. Also in this study, only students are surveyed when in fact academics, supporting staff and parents are also stakeholders in an education system. Therefore, to get a clearer and more accurate picture of TQM implementation, these groups should also be included in future studies.

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## Appendix

Questionnaires schedule to measures total Quality practices in institutions in the technical institutions

### Factor-1 Administration

1. The top management of the institution has a student focus and clear performance measures.
2. Institutions has clear vision, mission and policy statements related to quality.

3. The top management is committed to implement ISO9001 - 2000/TQM/Six Sigma concepts in the institution.

### Factor-2 Infrastructure

4. There is well established laboratory and library facility to facilitate realistic learning
5. There is round the clock network facility to explore new avenues at knowledge.
6. Well maintained hygienic canteen facility is provided.
7. There is proper arrangement for the sports activities in the institution.

### Factor-3 Extra Curricular Activity

8. NSS, NCC and club activities of the college motivates the students to render service.
9. The institution conducts seminar/workshops/conference regularly.

### Factor-4 Interaction with Industry & Society

10. Regular meetings (Parent –Teacher-Industry) people are conducted to review the quality education.
11. The Industry-institution interactions programmes are conducted periodically.
12. Better placement programmes for student placement is being provided through campus recruitment.
13. Placement activities in the institution equip the student well trained to face various tests such as Attitude, Aptitude and English comprehensive test.

### Factor-5 Training and Development

14. Adequate training is given to the students to improve the communication skills.
15. Special sessions are conducted to improve the communicate skills of students.

### Factor-6 Teaching Effectiveness

16. The faculty has positive attitude towards improvement of quality education in institution.
17. Teaching faculty supports in TQM programmes and

encourages the students for taking parts in seminars and conferences.

the participation of students & faculty.

**Factor-7 Student’s Awareness and Participation**

- 18. Rewards are given recognizing good performance of students.
- 19. In the academic related decisions management encourage

20. The complaints from staff and students are immediately looking into.

21. There is student counsellor to give vent to your grievances.

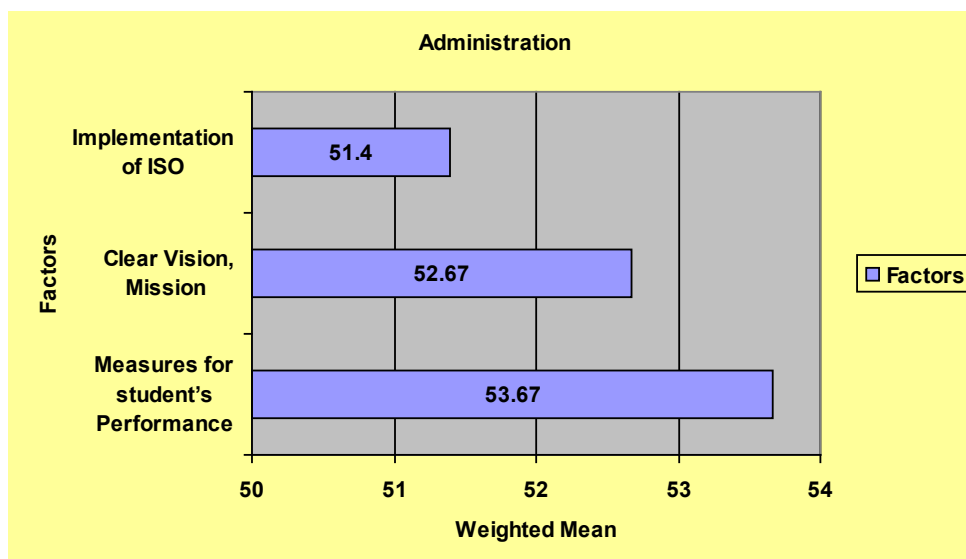
**ANNEXURE**

**Table 1 : Ranking of Critical Factors**

Factors	Mean	S.D	Rank
Administration	52.58	9.99	1
Infrastructure	50.77	8.31	3
Extra Curricular Activities	48.90	7.90	7
Interaction with Industry society	49.60	9.05	6
Training & Development	50.07	5.36	4
Teaching Effectiveness	51.33	9.48	2
Student’s Awareness and Participation	49.78	6.94	5

**Table 2**

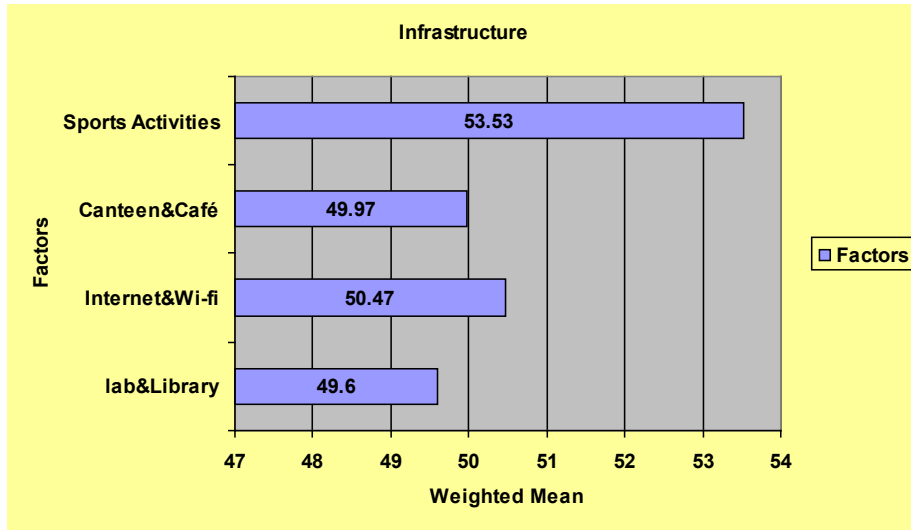
Administration			
Factors	Measures for Student’s Performance	Clear Vision & Mission	Implementation Of ISO
Weighted Mean	53.67	52.67	51.40





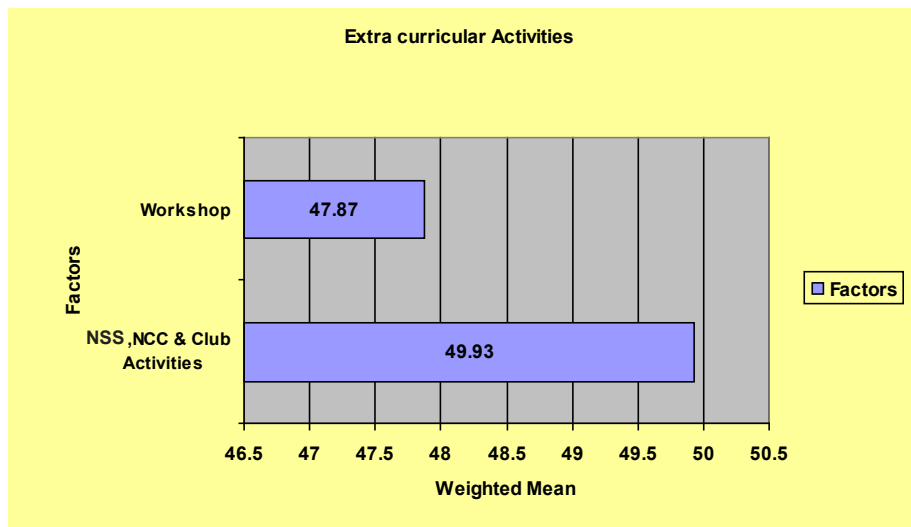
**Table 3**

Infrastructure				
Factors	Lab & Library	Internet & Wi-fi	Canteen & Cafe	Sports Activities
Weighted Mean	49.60	50.47	49.97	53.53



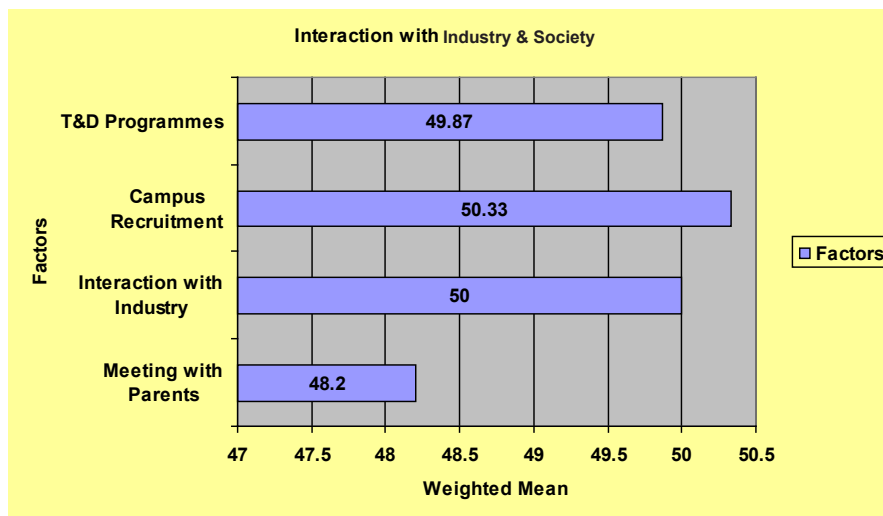
**Table 4**

Extra Curricular Activities		
Factors	NSS, NCC & Club Activities	Workshop/Conferences
Weighted Mean	49.93	47.87



**Table 5**

Interaction with Industry & Society				
Factors	Meeting with Parents	Interaction with Industry	Campus Recruitment	T & D Programmes
Weighted Mean	48.20	50.00	50.33	49.87



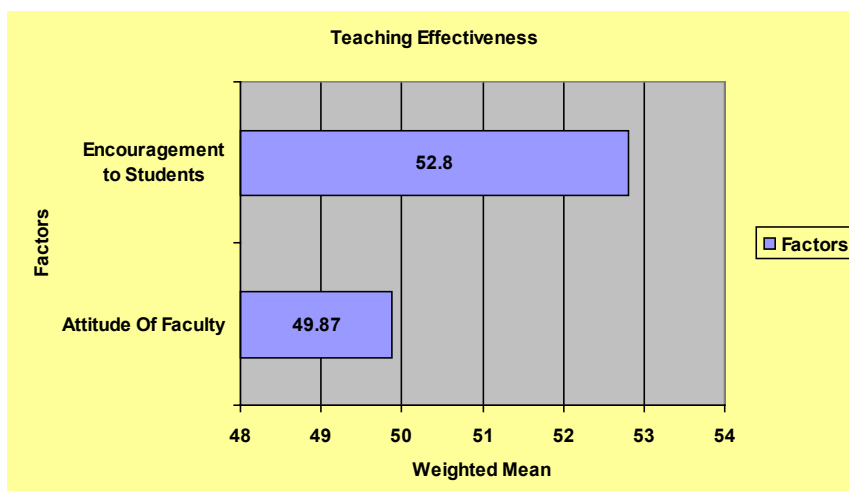
**Table 6**

Training & Development		
Factors	Training to Students	Special Sessions on Communication
Weighted Mean	48.87	51.27



**Table 7**

Teaching Effectiveness		
Factors	Attitude of Faculty	Encouragement to students
Weighted Mean	49.87	52.80



**Table 8**

Student's awareness and Participation			
Factors	Recognition of Performance	Student Counselor	Involvement in Academic Decision
Weighted Mean	49.40	50.33	49.60

