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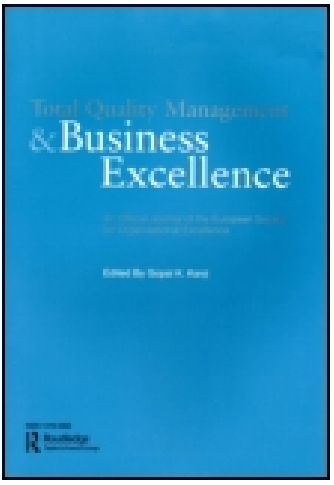

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Rethinking total quality management

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Rethinking total quality management

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ABSTRACT *Since the 1980s, total quality management (TQM) has become one of the most commonly used management acronyms. As a change management tool, TQM has been well-accepted by managers as it is seen as providing a "unified set of principles which can guide them through numerous choices or might even make choosing unnecessary" (Huczynski, 1993, Management Gurus: What Makes Them and How to Become One (London, Routledge), p. 289). Although the management of quality has often been identified as a key to business success in the highly competitive climate of the 1990s, this is not to say that TQM is without its critics.*

Introduction

Since the 1980s, total quality management (TQM) has become among the most commonly used management acronym. As a change management tool, TQM has been well-accepted by managers as it is seen as providing a "unified set of principles which can guide them through numerous choices or might even make choosing unnecessary" (Huczynski, 1993, p. 289). Although the management of quality has often been identified as a key to the business success in the highly competitive climate of the 1990s, this is not to say that TQM is without its critics (Yong & Wilkinson, 1999). This paper looks at the various rationalizations of the TQM phenomenon so far identified. The following classifications have been drawn up, not just based on what the original 'gurus' taught, but also interpretations and perceptions of TQM that have since developed:

(1) TQM as quality management;
(2) TQM as systems management;
(3) TQM as people management;
(4) TQM as a new management paradigm;
(5) TQM as re-engineering.

TQM's importance to organizations does not, however, mean that there is consensus on what TQM entails. Different commentators have come out with their own meanings and formalizations of TQM, making a generally accepted definition of the concept rather elusive. Even among the leading advocates of quality management (including the 'gurus', e.g. Deming, Juran, Crosby), their teachings have tended to be prescriptive, rather than analytical, and their work seems to make little reference to "previous management literature or indeed to reference much outside the quality management field" (Hill & Wilkinson, 1995, p. 8).

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Through the 'colourful' route in which TQM has evolved and the launching of a diverse array of quality practices during this evolution, practitioners have been given a free hand in shaping their own quality initiatives, thus contributing to the diversity of the concept.

TQM as quality management

It is widely recognized that the origins of TQM is with the quality management (QM) specialists like Deming and Juran. However, as an earlier paper has shown (Yong & Wilkinson, 1999), the formal beginning of QM can be traced to the US statistician, W. A. Shewhart, who introduced the use of statistical quality control in the 1920s. Shewhart's works were later adopted and broadened by other statisticians, such as Dodge, Romig and Deming.

The emphasis of these early originators of QM was based on the use of mathematical and statistical tools for improving processes in mass-production settings. In the case of Shewhart's early work, statistical methods such as control charts and probability sampling theory were used to sample for quality variation in production processes. These variations from acceptable tolerance limits were then investigated and their causes subsequently eliminated, thus resulting in more consistent final products. The early statistical approaches were later broadened to quality control in mass production of war materials during World War II in the USA.

The Japanese, riding on Deming's Japan lectures in the 1950s, also became keen exponents of these statistical approaches to quality. Among the reasons given for the economic recovery and success of Japanese manufacturers, the extensive use of "statistical methods by all employees at all levels of the organisation" is attributed to playing an important role (Dale & Shaw, 1994, p. 470). Besides control charts, Deming's introduction of the plan-do-check-action (PDCA) cycle has become entrenched in much of the Japanese approach to problem-solving among workers (Cole, 1994). The PDCA cycle today forms the basis of the QC Storyboard, which Japanese quality circles use to guide their problem-solving process and presentations.

Since Deming first taught the Japanese, the interpretation of QM in Japan has quickly broadened in meaning and content. Juran, who later spoke to the Japanese managers, introduced his own approach to QM: in his early lectures to CEOs, he suggest that "they try to find ways to institutionalise programs within their companies that would yield continuous quality improvement" (Juran, 1986, p. 44). He also stressed that QM go beyond statistical tools to include quality of design and quality of conformance, the Pareto principle, and also managerial tools for quality (Nonaka, 1995). Through an extensive national support structure, the Japanese have made progress from their humble early statistical beginnings. Through home-grown experts like Kaoru Ishikawa, and promotional organizations like JUSE, Japan Standards Association and Japan Management Association, the Japanese quality movement was started: senior Japanese managers began to take personal charge for QM, entire managerial hierarchies were equipped with how to manage for quality, quality control (QC) techniques were taught at all levels of the hierarchy, QC circles were introduced to involve employees, and quality began to be included in business plans (Juran, 1993; Nonaka, 1995). By the 1960s, the Japanese emphasis on QM was starting to be described as an integrated process of habitual improvement (Ishikawa, 1969). Japanese industries became the pioneers in adopting a holistic approach to quality, extending QM beyond the boundaries of manufacturing to the management of work in general (Witcher, 1995).

In the West, it was Feigenbaum who started to advocate the need for integrating quality control at all stages of manufacture, from design to production to the shipment stage. He was among the first to talk about the quality chain concept, where he argues that quality

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assurance should be extended to every part of the organization. He re-centered "quality management ideas towards a total conceptualisation" (Witcher, 1995), and made the concept more general and strategic in nature (Witcher, 1995).

TQM as systems management

Clustered with the 'hard' approach of QM, this established model of TQM is based on the use of systems and procedures for controlling quality. According to the definition given in the BS 4778: Part 1 (1987), quality systems entail having the organizational structure, responsibilities, procedures, processes and resources for implementing QM, such that there is a guiding framework to ensure that every time a process is performed the same information, methods, skills and controls are used and practised in a consistent manner (Dale, 1994). Such systems usually require companies to document all their procedures, work instructions, specifications and methods for all functions and aspects of the organization, thus providing employees with a reference system to assess their work and work improvements.

Quality standards like the BS 5750 and ISO 9000 series are recent and popular examples of such systems-based approaches to TQM. They were established to provide customers with an assurance that the quality of products and/or services provided by a supplier meet their requirements. However, quality standards have been in existence in one form or another for some time; the early standards were provided by major purchasers to their suppliers, but these early standards were mainly inspection-based activities, where purchasers develop their own systems of assessment, which "involved visiting the supplier to examine the degree to which their operating procedures and systems followed the requirements of the (purchasers') standard" (Dale, 1994, p. 335). Besides independent second-party certification, military standards like Mil-Q standards, American Military Standards, Defence Standards, and the like, have also been key precursors to the current quality systems standards. Today, the ISO 9000 series of quality standards are recognized as national standards by many countries, and third-party certification and registration facilities are also available internationally, thus providing companies world-wide with an infrastructure for systematic quality assurance and control. A quality system is widely understood to be a fundamental pillar in a company's holistic approach to QM and can help in ensuring that any improvements made are held in place (Dale, 1994, p. 354). Despite the emphasis that such systems should involve all functions and facets of a company, the focus of quality system standards is still biased towards the manufacturing sector and those divisions of the services sector which are production-oriented (Wilkinson, 1995).

Although many benefits have been claimed for the ISO 9000 quality system, such as internal operating efficiency, increased profitability and improved marketing (PERA International and Salford University Business Services, 1992), scepticism and disappointments with quality systems are increasingly being reported (Whittington, 1989; Wilkinson, 1995; Witcher, 1994). Among the difficulties and limitations to the ISO 9000 series, the bureaucracy and time involved in the documentation and certification process, its costs (especially for the small companies where resources are limited), limited applicability and a lack of emphasis on continuous improvements have all been cited against quality standards (Dale, 1994). A system based on the ISO 9000 series is recognized to provide only the foundation to TQM, but provides no assurance that there is a commitment to continuous and company-wide improvement (Dale, 1994). Wilkinson (1995) also saw quality systems as being inward looking—emphasizing conformance with internal procedures—with few direct linkages with customer satisfaction. As Witcher (1994) suggests, having quality systems does not necessarily "guarantee that people stick to procedures, or that an organisation is flexible

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enough to respond to customer requirements. Systems are intrinsically built into production and delivery design; if everyone works to the original overall design then quality is assured. However, systems are like empty bottles; the taste of the wine depends upon how people keep it in practice" (p. 7).

The narrow nature of this approach of TQM is widely recognized. For example, ISO 9000 quality systems have little effect on functions like human resources, finance or Management Information Systems (MIS), with the exception of training requirements, and following the instructions laid down (Dale, 1994). In most of the international quality awards like the Baldrige, European Quality Award and the Singapore Quality Award, quality systems play a small role towards these awards. Many QM advocates also concede that quality systems, while ensuring achievement of consistency of standards, do not have to provide for conformance to the external requirements of the customers or customer satisfaction; and as such ISO 9000 is not seen as the "pinnacle of success in relation to quality assurance and quality management" (Dale, 1994, p. 359). Nevertheless, ISO 9000 is very popular with organizations: some companies employ it because it helps to improve its processes and product quality, but in many cases, ISO 9000 is implemented for its visibility. According to Huczynski (1993), the success of the technique may not be as important as how the customer views the company if it is not using the technique: companies may use ISO 9000 just to signal to its customers that it is concerned with quality.

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TQM as people management

Despite its origins in statistical and engineering backgrounds, TQM today contains a large element of human relations emphasis. This approach to TQM is often seen as being the 'soft model' of TQM (Wilkinson, 1995), with its focus on the more qualitative aspects such as greater customer orientation, employee involvement, teamworking and the generally better management of employees within the company. Often, the human aspects of TQM are assumed to follow on from changes in production and management processes (McArdle *et al.*, 1995).

With the increasing focus on creating and internalizing a customer-oriented work culture, this approach of TQM places much significance on education, training and communication. To ensure that employees understand the concepts of TQM and their roles in the quality chain, training and education in quality principles are usually provided for all staff. Education and training are also supplemented with an increase in communication from management to encourage employees to 'do it right the first time'. The use of posters and slogans on the shop-floor stressing the importance of quality improvement and customer satisfaction is also very much the norm for this approach to TQM. This latter facet of QM promotion is, however, increasingly perceived as being rather shallow.

A more deeply rooted variant of the TQM approach is the management of the organizational culture that is geared towards continuous improvement. In advocating this approach, the proponents call for a major transformation of the company, which is achieved not by changes in the production processes but rather through changing people's mindset with a shift in the responsibility of producing quality work from a functional department towards the individual employee. The TQM advocates also call for the involvement of all employees in the decision-making process of the organization (Hill, 1991; Oakland, 1989), for example through their involvement in QC circles, cross-functional project teams and so on. Other ideas such as establishing learning organizations, empowerment of employees, changing the supervisor's role from being cops to coaches, and the Investors in People programme are seen as contributing towards changing people's mindset (Wilkinson, 1999).

All this focus on people should rightly mean that TQM fits in well with the human resource (HR) theories. However, most QM literature so far has generally not gone beyond making some generic "references to a need for more training, motivation and changed values ... but they [quality gurus] lack the expertise to develop a systematic view of what this entails in practice for the management of human resources" (Wilkinson, 1994, p. 273). The core HR practices of selection, performance appraisal, reward and development have, however, all been largely neglected despite much being said about people being the key resource in any TQM-practising firm. There is, therefore, a need to redesign the HR cycle such that quality is reflected at each stage of the cycle. Wilkinson (1995) expands on the need for an alignment of HR and quality policies within organizations:

> They [HR and quality] should not present mixed, and consequently confusing messages, to staff. The recruitment and selection policies and practices should be reviewed in order to ensure that they are capable of identifying the most appropriate staff to provide a quality service. This might involve the use of psychometric tests and assessment centres for selecting staff ... Training and development policies may be re-evaluated to ensure they are capable of delivering appropriately trained employees. This might involve the use of teamworking and problem solving skills sessions, the extension of career management workshops and the development of a 'learning organization' philosophy. Appraisal and reward would also require attention, raising questions of whether these reflect a teamwork ethos with an emphasis on quality, and whether it is possible to develop effective TQM without harmonising terms and conditions of manual workers and staff, or how appropriate it is to continue with payment schemes based on individual output at the same time as TQM is developed (Wilkinson, 1995, p. 196).

For the present, however, many of the above HR issues remain largely untouched by QM advocates and practitioners alike, but if TQM is really about changing people's mindset towards one that is truly customer-focused, management should start with looking at its own internal customers—its human resource, through its HR practices.

Much of the above is predictated on the assumption that HR management (HRM) can be utilized in the implementation of TQM through the management of individual performance. This could be seen as the 'performance management' view, with HRM focusing on the management of performance through the HR cycle, with appraisal, rewards and development efforts all underpinning a commitment to continuous improvement (Table 1). From this perspective, HRM thus provides key 'levers' of change in the creation of the quality culture. However, there is an alternative version of the relationship between TQM and HRM—what might be termed the 'Deming TQM' view. The key issue here is whether the

Table 1. *TQM and the management of performance: two competing views*

	Performance management	Deming TQM
Focus for performance improvement	Individual performance	System performance
HRM implications	Individual appraisal	Avoid blaming the individual—'drive out fear'
	Rewards	
	Development	Provide recognition, education and leadership

Source: Wilkinson *et al.*, 1998.

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main source of variation in organizational performance is the system or individual performance. The view implicit in the performance management approach is that performance can be effectively managed by focusing on the performance of individual workers. In contrast, Deming (1986) argues that differences in the performance of individuals belong to the category of 'special causes' of variation in work performance, and as such are minor relative to the 'common causes' of performance variation. He argues that the latter are endemic to the system of work and are primarily attributable to system design rather than to the day-to-day work effort of particular individuals. The implication is that attempts to manage organizational performance through the performance of individual workers are mistaken.

Thus, we have two contrasting hypotheses: one focusing on the management of individual performance, the other on improving the system. Indeed, Deming goes further and argues that individual appraisal and incentives divert attention from the true causes of performance variation and actually undermine those employee behaviours that contribute towards continuous improvement. In making this additional step, he appears to argue that the two approaches are mutually exclusive.

We would argue that Deming is correct to counsel against blaming individual workers for deficiencies in the work system, and it is widely recognized that evaluating workers against targets which are beyond their control is likely to demotivate. But we have noted, however, that the proponents of TQM have given too little serious attention to the issues of individual motivation and commitment, and that there is a need to examine more clearly how HRM affects the implementation of TQM. Our view is that we need a synthesis of the two views outlined in Table 1 (Wilkinson *et al.*, 1998). Thus, whilst HRM researchers and practitioners have tended to concentrate on the individual rather than on systemic determinants of performance, Waldman (1994) proposes a theory of work performance in terms of both 'person factors' (knowledge, skills and attitudes, and individual motivation) and 'system factors' (including the work system constraints and demands). Aside from determining work performance, these two sets of factors are said to interact, for example with the work system impacting on skills development and motivation and with people also influencing the design of the system. This is in line with the suggestion that HR policies can be adapted to underpin the development of the necessary motivation, attitudes and competencies required for TQM (Wilkinson *et al.*, 1998).

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TQM as a new management paradigm

As the QM philosophy evolves, TQM is increasingly being seen as a new management paradigm (Grant *et al.*, 1994; Witcher, 1995). Oakland (1989) calls TQM in his 1989 book a new way of managing to improve effectiveness, flexibility and competitiveness of a business as a whole to meet the requirements of customers. Since 1993, Oakland has expanded his exposition of TQM as:

> essentially a way of planning, organising and understanding each activity of the organisation) and depends on each individual at each level. For an organisation to be truly effective, each part of it must work together towards the same goals, recognising that each person and each activity affects and in turn is affected by others. TQM is also a way of ridding people's lives of wasted effort by bringing everyone into the processes of improvement, so that results are achieved in less time. The methods and techniques used in TQM can be applied throughout any organisation. They are equally useful in the manufacturing, public service, health care, education and hospitality industries.

He argues that TQM needs to gain ground rapidly and become a way of life in many organizations (Oakland, 1993, pp. 22–23). Others, like Bounds *et al.* (1994) describe TQM as a paradigm shift. In their definition of this new paradigm, they saw managers as shifting away from methods of inspection that catch defects before they reach customers and moving towards a proactive improvement to reduce variation around targets that match customer needs. Most TQM writers (Bounds *et al.*, 1994; Hill & Wilkinson, 1995) recognize the current state of TQM as incorporating elements of preceding QM eras, particularly the contributions of Shewhart, Deming, Juran and Feigenbaum. Thus, TQM has evolved into a philosophy incorporating the hard aspects of QM (namely the statistical techniques, systems tools and documentation, performance measurements) and also the soft aspects (namely teamworking, education and training, employee recognition).

Borrowing from Hill and Wilkinson (1995), TQM is today seen as a company-wide effort that emphasizes three core principles:

(1) *Customer orientation*. Quality is essentially about meeting customers' requirements, whether this be internal customers or the paying external customers. It is also based on the belief that all organizational members and activities should strive to satisfy these requirements.
(2) *Process orientation*. All activities performed within an organization can be broken down into basic tasks or processes, and these basic process are linked together in a 'quality chain'. Being in a chain, all processes will have an effect on one another. For example, this chain can be broken at any point by one person or machine that is not meeting the requirements of the customer, internal or external, and this failure, however minuscule, may eventually show up at the interface between the organization and its external customers, creating problems for those operating at the interface between the organization and the customer. For this reason, organizational members should always bear in mind that all their work is a process, which can have an effect on their colleagues' work, and ultimately the company's final output (Crosby, 1979).
(3) *Continuous improvement*. To satisfy customer requirements, there is therefore a need to improve continuously and this can be done by using or empowering the people closest to the job to identify and implement appropriate changes.

To implement these principles, there are essentially some core areas that organizations need to follow, and in themselves are defining features of TQM (Hill & Wilkinson, 1995). However different TQM proponents will have their own modes of implementation and, increasingly, governments are also encouraging the establishment of national quality awards, which apart from recognizing leading quality practitioners also provide TQM implementation roadmaps for companies aspiring to achieve high standards of competitiveness. The most renowned (and probably the most copied) of these national quality awards programme is probably the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA) in the USA. Providing probably the most comprehensive guidelines for TQM implementation, the Baldrige criteria covers seven categories or aspects needed for TQM adoption:

- *Management leadership*. This calls for the leadership and involvement of senior management in creating and sustaining a customer orientation and clear and visible quality values for the company.
- *Information and analysis*. To drive TQM, there is a need for adequate company data, information and the analysis system to support the improvement process. Measurement systems, both in terms of the traditional measurement of defects or variations, and the

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monitoring of Cost of Quality (COQ), are included under this category of implementation criteria.

- *Strategic quality planning*. All the planning process needs to start at the top, and all the key quality requirements need to be integrated into overall business planning. It also specifies the need for company's short-term and longer-term plans and how quality and operational performance are to be deployed to work units.
- *Human resource development and management*. The criteria call for establishing an environment conducive for building quality excellence. It looks for human resource planning and management, employee involvement, education and training, and employee performance and recognition.
- *Management of process quality*. There is a need for good process management in any TQM company and these may include R&D design, management of process quality for all work units and suppliers, systematic quality improvement and quality assessment.
- *Quality and operational results*. These criteria call for monitoring the quality levels and improvement trends in quality, company operational performance and supplier quality. Indicators and benchmarks relative to competitors are also looked for.
- *Customer focus and satisfaction*. The company's relationship with customers and its knowledge of customer requirements and market are looked for here. So are the company's customer satisfaction results.

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TQM and re-engineering

Re-engineering was the 'most popular management intervention' of the 1990s. (Cole, 1994, p. 77). The object was to build on 'discontinuity' by radically rethinking and redesigning processes to achieve improvements. The aim was no less then reversing the industrial revolution. Instead of 'paving the cow paths' (Hammer & Champy, 1993), we should 're-engineer' business using the power of modern IT. Process fragmentation is identified as the root of all evil. Rather than taking processes as given (which they argue is the TQM perspective), they should be overturned, taking a customer rather than management control perspective.

Indeed, some writers argue that TQM, with its emphasis on continuous incremental improvement, is unreconcilable with the requirement for radical strategic change that faces many companies (Grant *et al*., 1994). For some, the emphasis of TQM is on stability and gradual improvement, and thus it may be more suitable for already successful companies wishing to maintain and steadily improve their market positions.

Thus, business process re-engineering (BPR) proponents have criticized quality initiatives for working within established structures and territories rather than transforming them:

> Quality programs work within the framework of a company's existing processes and seek to enhance them by means of what the Japanese call *Kaizen*, or continuous incremental improvement. The aim is to do what we already do, only to do it better. Quality improvement seeks steady incremental improvement to process performance. Re-engineering, as we have seen, seeks break-throughs, not by enhancing existing processes, but by discarding them and replacing them with entirely new ones. Re-engineering involves, as well, a different approach to change management from that needed by quality programs (Hammer & Champy, 1993; p. 49).

In many respects, the ideas seem to have a similar theme to many of the ideas of TQM. In particular, BPR emphasizes developing cross-functional approaches to the design and delivery of goods and services, arguing that organizations should "be broken apart and rebuilt as a

process orientated business ... where everyone regards working in cross functional teams as the norm ... and where everyone knows that the key goal is to produce a service or product that the marketplace perceives to be best" (Johanssen *et al.*, 1993, p. 7).

It is obvious why such an approach may seem attractive at a time of increasing pressure from shareholders to produce quick results. Indeed, it could be said that TQM in its fullest sense went against the grain for many US and UK firms in its emphasis on cultural transformation, teamwork, new management styles, a degree of bottom-up participation and a long-term approach. Conversely, BPR might be seen as more attractive to senior managers, as it emphasizes large projects headed by senior managers producing fast results. However, is there such a strong dichotomy? According to Cole, re-engineering is a "direct and logical outgrowth of quality management". Indeed, some of the examples provided of re-engineering (e.g. Ford) stem directly from a quality initiative. Is it merely the latest manifestation of QM (Schonberger, 1994)? TQM (in theory at least) is about improving processes both incrementally and transformationally. The former may in fact often lead to the latter. Greene (1993) argues that there are two roots to radical processes of improvement: re-engineering (the clean sheet) *or* deepen the usual quality improvement problem-solving process with root cause analysis while broadening the quality improvement teams to include members across departmental boundaries. According to Greene (1993), the 1963 document from Matsushita Electrical Company which won the Deming Prize for best quality indeed provides evidence of large-scale processing re-engineering within TQM. It is fair to say that many initiatives under the banner of TQM have, in *practice*, focused more on incremental change as they have been based at shop-floor level, where the more limited scope of jobs and discretion mean it is not likely for radical change to take place. At higher levels of the organization, where cross-functional management teams may work, it is more likely to produce change (or breakthrough) on a larger scale.

Of course, the reasons why such approaches have less often been taken relate to the difficulties of bringing together managers from different departments and functions, the realities of organizational power and politics, and so on. BPR is likely to come up against the same barriers. Indeed, it is interesting to note growing disillusionment with BPR, which has itself been criticized for being implemented too narrowly (that is, within functions), for lacking effective leadership from the top and for not being integrated with the wider changes taking place within the organization (Hall *et al.*, 1993). Hall *et al.* (1993) argue that six levers of change are required: peoples' roles and responsibilities, measures and incentives, organization structure, IT, shared values and skills.

Indeed, it could be argued that process re-engineering is less likely to succeed without TQM because it utilizes similar methods and processes but on an *ad hoc* basis, without the training, experience and organizational infrastructure of TQM. Furthermore, organizational resistance is more likely in the absence of a TQM culture where planned quality change is seen as the norm (Hill & Wilkinson, 1995, pp. 18–19). Even Hammer and Champy have admitted that 50–70% of BPR initiatives fail to deliver.

Conclusion

This paper has covered the various rationalizations of the TQM concept, from its statistical origins to TQM as people management and the most current thinking behind TQM as a new management paradigm. Despite the feverish implementation of TQM programmes by companies the world over, some writers have recently started to pen TQM's obituary. These commentators (e.g. Caulkin, 1997; Gill & Whittle, 1993; Micklethwait & Wooldridge, 1996; Oliver, 1993; *The Economist*, 1995) have derided TQM as yesterday's solution, and as the

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latest management 'flavour-of-the-month' or 'fashion' to become outdated. It has also been described as being part of a general phase of management fads, which enjoyed early stages of 'enthusiasm' and 'activity', but is now feeling the wave of 'disillusionment' from practitioners, who are being courted by the 'next stage panacea' (Gill & Whittle, 1993). With the recent exodus of books debunking the fads and fallacies of modern management (e.g. Hilmer & Donaldson, 1996; Micklethwait & Wooldridge, 1996; Shapiro, 1996), it is no surprise that quality management—and in particular TQM—is also at the front-line of criticism by sceptical management journalists and academics alike.

Among the factors contributing to the backlash against quality management TQM, the blind faith and heavy reliance of managers on simplistic step-by-step approaches, supplemented by a prescriptive 'bag' of techniques, promising to solve operational and quality woes near-overnight, come in for much censure. Nevertheless, in the face of sagging financial fortunes, one can understand why companies and managers are willing to experiment with novel ways of dealing with organizational problems. There are indeed signs of managerial panic as intense international competition sets in: of the business fads Pascale (1991) highlighted, two-thirds evolved during the 1980–90 period, which was a time of emerging competitive threats from Japan and the rising economies. Riding on managers' anxiety about their careers, resulting in their tireless acceptance of 'quick-fix' solutions, the consultancy industry has also played a dominant part feeding managers with cure-all products. These offerings by management consultants have been criticized as shallow and mechanistic, basing themselves like 'cookbook recipes' for quality improvement, and they often fail to address the subtleties of culture and people management (Gill & Whittle, 1993). There were also QM techniques which have been adopted because companies wanted to 'keep up with the Jones's': many companies implemented or are thinking of implementing practices such as ISO 9000 not because they particularly need it to improve their operations but because they see their competitors implementing it, and as such feel disadvantaged in the eyes of the customer if they do not also have it. TQM is increasingly being 'balkanized' into 'smaller spheres of influence' (Patton, 1994) like ISO 9000 systems, QC circles, cross-functional taskforces, TPM, JIT production, 5S Housekeeping and so on. Although there is nothing fundamentally wrong with the principles postulated by these techniques, these tools and techniques are often used ineffectively by managers, and the outcome has been one in which there has been little fit between the techniques, and the realities of companies. Some companies implement one technique after another without some of these techniques ever coming close to solving any of the firm's ongoing predicament. According to Huczynski (1993), managers and workers are more "receptive to new ways of achieving fundamentally the same old business objectives. This does not mean that the old approaches are incorrect, only that they are seen as boring. Managers seek new answers to old questions that do not depend on past explanations" (p. 280). Thus, we may well see 'beyond TQM' (Flood, 1993) concepts being promoted. In many respects this would be unfortunate. As Hackman and Wagemen (1995, p. 339) conclude their review of TQM:

> Total quality management as articulated by Deming, Ishikawa, and Juran is a set of powerful interventions wrapped in a highly attractive package. When implemented well, TQM can help an organization improve itself and, in the process, better serve its community and its own members. If TQM is to prosper, however, rhetorical excesses will have to be kept in better check than they are at present, and researchers will have to do a better job illuminating the mechanisms through which TQM practices realize their effects. For only if the continuous improvement idea comes to apply to TQM itself will this provocative philosophy have a chance of sustaining itself over time.

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