Total Quality Management & Business Excellence

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ctqm20

Top management: A threat or an opportunity to TQM?

Ebrahim Soltani [a]

[a] Kent Business School , University of Kent , Canterbury, Kent, UK

Published online: 24 Jan 2007.

To cite this article: Ebrahim Soltani (2005) Top management: A threat or an opportunity to TQM?, Total Quality Management & Business Excellence, 16:4, 463-476, DOI: 10.1080/14783360500078441

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14783360500078441

Total Quality Management
Vol. 16, No. 4, 463–476, June 2005

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Top Management: A Threat or an Opportunity to TQM?

EBRAHIM SOLTANI

Kent Business School, University of Kent, Canterbury, Kent, UK

ABSTRACT *In line with the proposed precepts and deadly diseases of TQM by Deming (1986) and other quality management scholars, the academic literature on the role of top management in quality improvement programmes suggests a fundamental question: 'why does the commitment from top management appear to have dropped off so dramatically?' On a theoretical level, a review of the relevant literature reveals a strong consensus that top management commitment is essential for successful TQM implementation. However, whether this commitment actually exists in practice, is an empirical question that has received much less attention. In addressing these issues towards filling this void, this paper aims to generate preliminary observations on the various factors affecting the role played by top management in organizational environments with a TQM orientation. Implications are discussed to generate research propositions that focus on the interplay of upper and middle level management and employees' commitment.*

KEY WORDS: TQM, CEO commitment, organizational performance, literature survey

Introduction

Long a concern among quality management gurus (e.g. Deming, 1986; Juran, 1989) and other organizational scholars (e.g. Dale & Cooper, 1994; Kanji, 1998; Wilkinson et al., 1998; Mintzberg, 1999; Scholtes, 1998; Bennis, 1989, 1997; Bennis & O'Toole, 2000), the commitment of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and his/her management team has emerged as an important subject of study for the majority of change movement pioneers in management. Indeed, researchers in areas such as Total Quality Management (TQM) have been concerned mainly with the low support of the senior management team of quality initiatives. An underlying assumption has been that top management commitment and recognition is one of the most critical factors for successful implementation of TQM. Quality-driven organizations, however, have ignored the predominant focus on top management for a variety of unknown reasons. Instead, top management were

Correspondence Address: Ebrahim Soltani, Kent Business School, University of Kent, Canterbury, Kent, CT2 7PE, UK. Email: e.soltani@kent.ac.uk

1478-3363 Print/1478-3371 Online/05/040463–14
DOI: 10.1080/14783360500078441

seeking the commitment and cooperation of middle-management and their employees through increased control over the work process (Wilkinson et al., 1997, p. 799). Such a situation, Wilkinson et al. (1997) argue, created a basic ambiguity in TQM, in that, the tighter managerial control involved in the drive to reduce variance (Parker & Slaughter, 1993) required increased surveillance arising out of the quality measurement systems introduced (Delbridge et al., 1992). This, in turn, is opposed to (Wilkinson et al., 1997, p. 799), 'empowering the workforce by delegating responsibility to those actually carrying out the job' – which is central to the TQM philosophy. On the contrary, the implications of a highly-committed top management team are enormous with regard to the theory, research, and practice of TQM initiatives.

A review of the literature on TQM reveals that a universal consensus to recognize top management commitment appears promising and conceptually very rich. Top management commitment and support, for example, has remained the first category in the majority of TQM awards (e.g. US Department of Commerce and Technology: MBNQA, 1993; EFQM: European Foundation for Quality Management, 1999; AQA: Australian Quality Award, 1994) and has also been designated the prime factor in business excellence in a number of frequently cited texts (e.g. Saraph et al., 1989; Flynn et al., 1994; Ahire et al., 1996; Zeitz et al., 1997; Black & Porter, 1996; Powell, 1995; Kanji, 1998).

Despite the attention paid by these bodies as well as individuals in the popular quality literature, the validity of its application is ultimately an empirical question. Empirical evidence demonstrating the issue of top management commitment to replace quality as a top priority, however, has not been forthcoming. Furthermore, even at a theoretical level, a clear and logical reasoning for the low commitment of senior management does not exist. In addition, lack of such evidence makes the connections between employee commitment and cooperation and the successful implementation of TQM hard and vague.

The purpose of this article is, first, to provide an explanation behind the low commitment of senior management in organizational environments with a TQM orientation and, second, to use these arguments to generate research questions and propositions that focus on the interplay of upper- and middle-level management and employees' commitment in the interest of successful implementation of TQM initiatives.

TQM in Practice: Some Evidence from Previous Research

There is some prima facie evidence (e.g. Conference Board, 1991; Cardy & Dobbins, 1996; Wilkinson et al., 1998; Sila & Ebrahimpour, 2002; Soltani et al., 2003) that in response to conditions of heightened competition and a range of other environmental changes, many if not most of today's organizations have initiated various TQM initiatives, as a fast track (Nwabueze, 2001) and a crucial feature (Wilkinson et al., 1998) to improve their viability, performance, and profitability. By early 1990s, for example, 93% of manufacturing companies and 69% of service companies have implemented some form of quality management practices (Conference Board, 1991), and its principles and techniques are now a well-accepted part of almost every, as Dow et al. (1999, p. 1) describe it, 'manager's tool kit'. Hence, even in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) the cognate tendency has manifested itself in attempts to generate the idea that it is an integral part of business strategy for maintaining competitive advantage and surviving in the marketplace. Furthermore, the idea of TQM has come to assume a place that is part and parcel

of the everyday job responsibility of the manager. From for-profit to non-for-profit organizations and from such sources as the Institute of Personnel Management (IPM) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), examples assail us of moves to introduce TQM initiatives, and the launch is announced of many other such initiatives. Such enthusiasm for TQM initiatives was highlighted by Deming (1986) nearly two decades ago, as he asserted that TQM will last forever, and hence if organizations wish to survive in the current and constantly changing business environment, they have no option but to put TQM as their number one priority.

> In order to compete in a global economy, our products, systems and services must be of a higher quality than our competition. Increasing Total Quality is our number one priority here at Hewlett-Packard. (John Young, President of Hewlett-Packard)

Fuelled by such seminal texts as Out of the Crisis (Deming, 1986), Quality is Free (Crosby, 1979), What is Total Quality Control? (Ishikawa, 1985), Juran on Leadership for Quality (Juran, 1989), The Leader's Handbook (Scholtes, 1998), Kanji's Business Excellence Model (KBEM) (Kanji, 1998), The Leadership Advantage (Bennis, 1999), a key tendency appears to be the increased emphasis that is being placed upon top management commitment. According to the research based on Saraph et al. (1989), Dale & Cooper (1994), Waldman (1994), Flynn et al. (1994), Ahire et al. (1996), Zeitz et al. (1997), Powell (1995), Zairi & Youssef (1995), Bardi et al. (1995), Tamimi (1998), Sohal & Terziovski (2000), Black & Porter (1996), Thiagarajan & Zairi (1997), Ghobadian & Woo (1996), Motwani (2001) and Soltani et al. (2003), senior management commitment and recognition is one of the most critical successful factors for the implementation of TQM. In more elaborate language, management commitment involves articulating a vision for the future that is clear and compelling and also proves a strategic leadership (Tsang & Antony, 2001).

In an examination of the TQM survey-based research published between 1989–2000, Sila & Ebrahimpour (2002) found top management commitment (TMC) as the most common and critical factor of TQM. Nonetheless, in a recent UK study of a sample of EFQM-affiliated organizations – consistent with previous research (e.g. Kearney, 1992; Smith et al., 1994; Wilkinson et al., 1998) during the 1990s – Soltani et al. (2003) reporting on their research, found that the majority of respondents were sceptical about TQM's benefits. Of the survey respondents, for example, less than one-third were satisfied with their quality management programmes (32% compared to 68%). Hence, some writers (e.g., Main, 1991; Tetzeli, 1992; Sitkin et al., 1994) go so far as to suggest that TQM simply does not work because it has taken on many of the characteristics of earlier management fads. To shed some light on this issue, many researchers (e.g. Kanji & Asher, 1993; Kanji, 1995; Sinclair & Zairi, 1995; Dale & Cooper, 1992; Cole, 1999; Oakland, 1989; Wilkinson et al., 1998; Reavill, 1999; Silvestro, 2001; Mann & Kehoe, 1995) agree that TQM failures are implementational, and yet most available writing concentrates on organizational issues (e.g. Atkinson, 1990; Sitkin et al., 1994). For example, it is difficult to get everyone in a company moving towards the same goals (e.g. Ishikawa, 1985; Wilkinson, 1994). Other widely cited problems include poorly defined or non-existent goals, poor planning, fear of change, lack of management commitment, deep-seated management-worker antagonism, work overloads, failure to provide proper training and appropriate resources, lack of real people involvement,

employee resistance, and lack of an integrated performance measurement system (e.g. Dale & Lightburn, 1992; IPM, 1993; Wilkinson et al., 1994, 1998; Lakhe & Mohanty, 1994; Gudim & Meer, 1995; Soltani et al., 2003).

Such findings have prompted organizational scholars and, in particular, TQM advocates to suggest that some new aspects of quality management should be given higher priority on the TQM agenda. Agreement on the vital role of soft aspects or people-based issues, for example, has emerged from the most current studies on TQM precepts, however, for the major rate of TQM failure and the drive for improved performance either. In Wilkinson's (1994) words, 'most work asserts the importance of human factor issues, but does not go beyond general references to a need for training, enhanced motivation and changed cultures' (also quoted by Wilkinson et al., 1998, p. 4).

I am motivated by a concern that the potential contributions of TQM could be lost if CEO and his/her management team do not place quality as a top priority. As Dale & Cooper (1994, p. 20) put it: 'TQM needs the commitment, confidence, conviction and involvement of senior managers and, if this is achieved, it avoids false starts being made'. Hence, TQM is in danger of being managed inefficiently and, accordingly, inappropriately implemented. Indeed, the overall pattern that emerged from my review of the causes of TQM failure suggests that TQM must be implemented with a full support and clear sense of loyalty and commitment of top management team. This is consistent with what Dale & Cooper pointed out:

> The CEO and his/her senior management team must never become satisfied and complacent with the progress which the organisation has made in TQM. They must strive continually to achieve quality in the product, service and associated processes. (Dale & Cooper, 1994, p. 26)

Or as Kanji put it,

> Leadership is the fundamental driver of business excellence. It is the role of leadership to define a mission, vision and goals that promote a quality culture, and establish a set of shared values. (www.gopal-kanji.com)

Although senior management commitment is hardly novel to organizational researchers, it has not been reflected in TQM to clarify more precisely 'why aren't top management clamouring to adopt and be aware of their critical role in embarking on TQM initiatives?'

The issue of CEO commitment is thus critical in locating the emergence of TQM initiatives in a broader organizational perspective. We draw directly from the work of TQM gurus (e.g. Deming, 1986; Juran, 1989) and scholars (e.g. Kanji, 1998; Scholtes, 1998; Dale & Cooper, 1992), who not only established the general importance of top management for successful implementation of TQM, but also focus especially on 'a very strong relationship between, on the one hand, the business achievements and ambitions of an organisation and, one the other, senior executives' understanding of the TQM philosophy' (Dale & Cooper, 1994). Specifically, these proponents of TQM stressed that TQM and, accordingly, organizational effectiveness is contingent upon how well senior management adapts to the distinct requirements associated with TQM culture.

Top Management Commitment: A TQM Perspective

Kanji's (1990) definition of quality, like many texts in this area, is that of satisfying customers' requirements continually, and hence he believes that TQM aims to achieve quality at low cost by involving everyone's daily commitment. Others (e.g. Oakland, 1989) see it as far wider, encompassing not just identifications and meeting the requirements of external customers, but also the internal ones. Specifically, Ho & Fung (1998) take more of a holistic and organization-wide approach to TQM, portraying the definition of TQM through taking a very close look at the each word:

- Total – Everyone associated with the company is involved in continuous improvement (including its customers and suppliers if feasible);
- Quality – Customers' expressed and implied requirements are met fully;
- Management – Executives are fully committed.

Clearly, an important corollary of the majority of literature on TQM and other organizational studies is that leadership is a key element in successful implementation of large-scale change (Norman & Keys, 1992): the leader shows the need and sets the vision, defining the basic purpose, goals, and parameters or requirements of TQM (cited in Packard, 1995). Along similar lines, Kanji (1998) attempted to integrate various perspectives of TQM to facilitate the journey towards business excellence and has come up with a model, as he called it, 'Kanji's Business Excellence Model (KBEM)'. In line with the previous works of TQM scholars, KBEM is based on Kanji's pyramid principles of TQM, and links together the prime (Leadership), the four principles (Delight the Customer, Management by Fact, People-based Management and Continuous Improvement), and the eight core concepts, to provide forces of excellence in an organization (see Figure 1).

The primary focus of KBEM is on measuring customers', employees' and shareholders' satisfaction simultaneously within an organization in order to obtain a comprehensive evaluation of the organizational performance. Specifically, KBEM can be used to

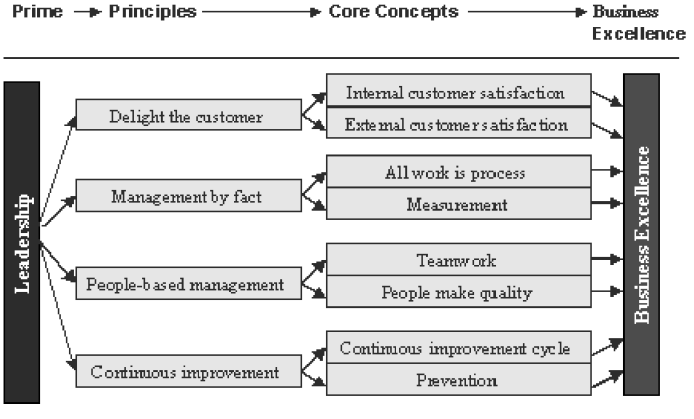

Figure 1. Kanji's Business Excellence Model (KBEM). Source: www.gopal-kanji.com/kbem (accessed May 2004)

measure the Business Excellence Index (BEI) in order to show how well different areas of the organization – leadership, continuous improvement and other TQM principles – are performing, in different geographical areas and, more importantly, over time. KBEM, from my viewpoint, represents a significant addition not only in the TQM literature but also in general organizational writings for two reasons. First, prior attempts (e.g. Liberson & O'Connor, 1972; Grusky, 1963; Gamson & Scotch, 1964; Brown, 1982) to treat leadership/top management as having little impact on organization success can no longer be regarded as valid and reliable. That is, Kanji's approach to business excellence explicitly considers leadership as the prime for business excellence. Second, prior research has either failed to take into account linkages between leadership with principles and core concepts of TQM or has not been clear with regard to the nature of the role of leadership as a fundamental driver of business excellence. According to Kanji (1998), senior management must be actively involved in creating a Total Quality Culture (TQC) with a clear vision through the following leadership roles:

- to define a mission, vision and goals that promote a Quality Culture,
- to establish a set of shared values,
- to define a Quality strategy,
- to better coordinate the use of resources in order to improve financial performance,
- to establish goals and systems to enhance customer satisfaction,
- to establish effective information systems and to use objective data in the decision process,
- to promote the development of human resources, investing in training and education and to recognize quality achievements,
- to communicate, define and motivate continuous improvement.

In a very succinct, thorough and insightful article, 'Introducing TQM: the role of senior management', Dale & Cooper also acknowledged the important role of senior management in the drive towards TQM success, suggesting that embarking the TQM initiatives as a strategic decision requires senior executives commitment, confidence, conviction and involvement (Dale & Cooper, 1994, p. 20). Specifically, Dale & Cooper (1994) go even further, seeing a linear correlation between top management commitment and employees' involvement in TQM initiatives. Some support of this notion can be seen in the work of Masterson & Taylor (1996, p. 70). In describing the key factors of TQM success, the usual argument in the TQM literature suggests that organizational leaders are responsible for providing a vision encompassing the organization's quality values, goals, and systems, as well as planning the change effort that leads the organization to this vision and keeps it there. These studies, although commendably comprehensive, have advice that lacks sufficient precision to be of real help in identifying the causes of low commitment of CEO and his/her senior management team.

In line with general arguments in organizational studies, most conceptualizations of TQM include visionary leadership (Anderson et al., 1994: Waldman, 1994). A succinct summary of Deming's (1986) 14 points is, of course, 'reducing variation' through 'highly-committed leadership' (see Table 1).

Closer inspection of Deming's writings highlights the commitment of leadership so as to improve the performance of man and machine, to improve quality, to increase output and simultaneously bring pride of workmanship. Similar to Deming (1986), in Taylor's

Table 1. Fourteen points for management

1. Create constancy of purpose toward improvement of product and service, with the aim to become competitive and to stay in business, and to provide jobs.
2. Adopt the new philosophy. We are in a new economic age. Western management must awaken to the challenge, must learn their responsibilities, and take on leadership for change.
3. Cease dependence on inspection to achieve quality. Eliminate the need for inspection on a mass basis by building quality into the product in the first place.
4. End the practice of awarding business on the basis of price tag. Instead, minimize total cost. Move toward a single supplier for any one item, on a long-term relationship of loyalty and trust.
5. Improve constantly (and forever) the system of production and service, to improve quality and productivity, and thus constantly decrease costs.
6. Institute training on the job.
7. Institute leadership. The aim of supervision should be to help people and machines and gadgets to do a better job. Supervision of management is in need of overhaul, as well as supervision of production workers.
8. Drive out fear, so that everyone may work effectively for the company.
9. Break down barriers between departments. People in research, design, sales, and production must work as a team to foresee problems of production and in use that may be encountered with the product or service.
10. Eliminate slogans, exhortations, and targets for the workforce asking for zero defects and new levels of productivity. Such exhortations only create adversarial relationships, as the bulk of the causes of low quality and low productivity belong to the system and thus lie beyond the power of the workforce.
11. Eliminate work standards (quotas) on the factory floor. Eliminate management by objective. Eliminate management by numbers, numerical goals. Substitute leadership.
12. Remove barriers that rob the hourly worker of his right to pride of workmanship. The responsibility of supervisors must be changed from sheer numbers to quality. Remove barriers that rob people in management and in engineering of their right to pride of workmanship. This means abolishment of the annual or merit rating and of management by objective.
13. Institute a vigorous programme of education and self-improvement.
14. Put everybody in the company to work to accomplish the transformation. The transformation is everybody's job.

Source: Deming (1986).

(1911) book The Principles of Scientific Management all important knowledge was in the heads of management. Authors such as Bryce (1991) have conceived the exclusive role of management to use 'science' to define an 'optimal' system of production through close scrutiny of work procedures. Further, Juran, a noted quality disciple, dedicated an entire book to the leadership of quality initiatives (Juran, 1989) and attributes Japanese success in the quality arena to getting appropriate knowledge into the heads of management, followed by a strong feeling of commitment. As Dale & Cooper observed,

> If they do not get involved and demonstrate personal commitment, the corporate health of the organisation will suffer. (Dale & Cooper, 1994, p. 20)

Regrettably, the management climate that has evolved from Taylor's paradigm, and followed by quality management gurus (e.g. Deming, 1986; Juran, 1989), is probably very different from what they had in mind. It is not surprising that Bryce (1991, p. 15) would characterize today's management as too far from the scientific management.

Such reasoning follows from an understanding that treats today's managers as highly committed to the status quo. Bryce (1991, p. 15) surmised as much in explaining his findings of an association between the science, knowledge, and commitment of many of today's top management and low business achievements, but, Bryce did not directly examine executives' commitment in a particular organizational context.

Such outcomes have been observed and discussed by Dale & Cooper in the study of the role of senior management in introducing TQM; as they pointed out, TQM – as a way of organizational and business life in world-class companies – can become a reality only through senior management (Dale & Cooper, 1994, p. 21). In that vein, a study has been carried out within a sample of top European corporations, involving questionnaires from 500 managers. As reported by McKinsey and Company (1989), 95% considered top management commitment as the key requirement for success of TQM. These findings were further supported by Lascelles & Dale's (1990) study, illustrating the CEO as the primary internal change agent for quality improvement.

It seems hard to deny that there has been a highly charged atmosphere surrounding the discussion of senior management commitment in organizational environments with a TQM orientation since the 1980s. The problem is that the prescriptive literature on TQM failure says more about the existence of the low commitment of CEO/senior management than the cause(s) of such low commitment and why it exits. In the organizational arena alone, for example, there has been substantial research on commitment to goals (Locke, 1968), to jobs (Porter & Steers, 1973), to organizations (Staw, 1974), to courses of action (Staw, 1974; Rubin & Brockner, 1975), to strategic configurations (Ghemawat, 1991), and to understanding more about TQM and becoming personally involved and committed to its introduction and development (Dale & Cooper, 1994). None of these, however, focused directly on the concept of the degree of senior management commitment to TQM initiatives, nor did they provide sufficient precision to be of help in response to why top management commitment dropped off so dramatically? Perhaps research on the full commitment and involvement of senior management in TQM implementation (e.g. Dale & Cooper, 1994) comes closest to what I wish to examine, but it tends to focus on 'the main reasons why senior mangers should become personally involved in TQM and examines why they need to know about TQM; in contrast, the primary thrust of my attention is on the absence of commitment or low CEO commitment to TQM initiatives.

In my view, low or lack of commitment of a CEO/senior management team to the TQM philosophy derives partly from 'mobility of management', referred to as 'Deming #4 deadly disease' (see Table 2).

Table 2. Seven deadly diseases for a business

1. Lack of constancy of purpose to plan product and service that will have a market and keep the company in business.
2. Emphasis on short-term profits: short-term thinking.
3. Evaluation of performance, merit rating, annual review, etc.
4. Mobility of management – job-hopping (removes constancy of purpose).
5. Management by use of visible figures only – ignores figures that are unknown or unknowable.
6. Excessive medical costs.
7. Excessive costs of liability.

Source: Deming (1986).

On the one hand, one can be highly committed to TQM as a management of philosophy and a set of guiding precepts, believing that he/she will remain long enough on the job to fulfil the commitments. Or, on the other hand, one could be less committed to the TQM as a process of continuous improvement because he/she will not be in the job long enough to know about TQM, understand how to make a significant impact, and what to do in terms of positive actions (Dalgleish, 2003). In the latter scenario the implication is clear:

> it is likely that the quality improvement process will stagnate, disillusionment will set in and, as a consequence, the corporate health of the organisation will suffer. (Dale & Cooper, 1994, p. 20)

Despite the frequent lack of empirical work and a direct theoretical attention to the link between mobility of management and low commitment of senior management, research has shown how a highly committed senior management team can be linked to organizational success. The correlation or otherwise of the fourth Deming deadly disease and CEO commitment thus remains an open question; and throughout this paper I have been trying to make an initial attempt at a theoretical level – followed by an empirical research (in progress) – to provide an answer.

Conclusion and Implications for Future Research

This paper has helped to cast light on an important issue, which was left unanswered in the prior works of TQM research: is senior management a threat or an opportunity to TQM? A literature survey was carried out, given that there is a relative dearth of evidence regarding the nature of CEO/senior management commitment as the most critical factor of TQM success (e.g. Saraph et al., 1989; Flynn et al., 1994; Ahire et al., 1996; Zeitz et al., 1997; Black & Porter, 1996; Powell, 1995). Based on my findings, there remains contention about the extent to which senior management can influence the TQM positive outcomes. In the case of United States' industries, the landmark and relatively sober contributions by Deming (1986, 1993) have charted and interpreted the necessary changes, but there has, as yet, been no British equivalent. Debates have raged nonetheless about the main causes of the low commitment of CEOs. This suggests an alternative route that management may take through a possible shift from the management of the individual to the management of process. Yet, to an astonishing degree for an increasing number of scholars, 'TQM failure', has been attributed to the low commitment of CEOs. Compared with the 1980s, perhaps of equal importance is that it is not so much that the message itself has remained but that 'why there is such a low commitment of senior management' is being received more seriously in this research project.

Despite the gloomy tone of the role of senior management, the author thinks that there is an exciting opportunity for CEOs that understand the gurus' writings on TQM. In Out of the Crisis, for example, Deming (1986) provides a full account of his thinking on the primacy of management's role in improving quality and productivity and demonstrates what managers do wrong and how costs, dependability and quality must be improved. In fact, Deming provides a theory of management that gets to the roots of the problems of industrial competitiveness that face management today. However, although most managers know Dr Deming as a quality guru, few have actually integrated his thoughts into their own management theory and practice. When Deming was asked, shortly

before his death, who had adopted his philosophy, his answer, as it had always been, was simple and emphatic, 'No one!' (Schwinn, 2002) and the author doubts much has changed. We must acknowledge that our management paradigms may not be complete without consideration of his message. What Deming and other quality gurus argue is that the key to success is to identify the management culture before attempting to install TQM and to take steps to change towards the management style required for it (Dalgleish, 2003).

Such heavy weight by TQM gurus given to the issue of the commitment of senior management serves to raise in sharp form the urgent issue of the theoretical coherence of the TQM precepts and a need to have available sound and rigorous academic research, analysis and comment. Regrettably, it has to be said that, so far, the academic community has not responded to the challenge. Remarkable though it may be, there is simply no serious extended treatment available on this potentially crucial issue of managerial commitment. Put simply, the review of the UK and the US literature gives the impression of an increased awareness and a strong consensus in the business community that senior management has a considerable impact on a company's performance and market value; and also a widening rift in their publications on CEO commitment between the practising managers who write up their own experiences with TQM implementation, with little awareness of the core idea of TQM, and the academics who endlessly dissect the minutiae of the TQM philosophy but who display little awareness of why senior management aren't clamouring to adopt and be aware of their critical role.

There are of course numerous textbooks on quality management and a still-thriving prescriptive stream. But, until now, it has been very hard to locate material that attends to this issue in a searching and critical fashion.

Although I am a true believer in Deming's teachings and methods – which are as powerful as ever – because of the high rate of TQM failure, and in an attempt to make Deming's thoughts come true, I suggest further work is carried out directly examining the association between top management commitment, mobility of management, and TQM failure. That is,

> Proposition 1. TQM organizations with highly committed top management/CEOs will have better organizational performance than with low committed management.

> Proposition 2. Management commitment to TQM precepts and philosophy will be higher in organizations with lower mobility of management than with higher mobility of top management/CEOs.

In respect with implications for future research, this article points to the general importance of considering leadership/senior management as the prime for business excellence and hence highlights the need for empirical research on the ideas proposed here. Specifically, it would be beneficial to conduct field research that more systematically investigates the extent to which senior management is committed to TQM philosophy. Such a study could be done not only within the quality-driven organizations, but also across different organizational contexts. Such empirical work could provide fruitful insights about the apparent considerable uncertainty as to whether senior management represents a threat or an opportunity to TQM. Taken together, and as part of this effort, empirical research examining the impact of senior management interventions in the drive towards business

excellence is sorely needed. This can be fulfilled through exploring the following – yet unanswered – questions (see Dalgleish, 2003; Turner & Turner, 1998):

Research Question 1. Why isn't senior management clamouring to adopt and be aware of its critical role?

Research Question 2. Why has top management commitment dropped off so dramatically?

Research Question 3. How long does the CEO typically last on the job in TQM organizations?

Research Question 4. How many changes in management philosophy have there been in the last ten years?

Research Question 5. What is the association between mobility of management and TQM failures?

Acknowledgements

This paper is an updated version of the one accepted and presented at the Seventh International Conference on Quality Management and Organisational Development (QMOD), Monterrey, Mexico, 4–6 August 2004.

The theoretical research upon which this paper is based was funded by I.R. of Iran and ESRC Postdoctoral Award number PTA-026-27-0622. The author would like to thank the anonymous reviewers, Professor Gopal Kanji and, in particular, Professor Terry Williams and Mr. Robert Bob van der Meer for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

References

Ahire, S., Golhar, D. & Waller, M. (1996) Development and validation of TQM implementation constructs, Decision Sciences, 27(1), pp. 23–56.

Anderson, J. C., Dooley, K. & Rungtusanatham, M. (1994) Training for effective continuous quality improvement, Quality Progress, 27(12), pp. 57–61.

AQA (1994) Australian Quality Awards, Assessment Criteria and Application Guidelines (St Leonards, NSW: Australian Quality Award Foundation).

Atkinson, P. E. (1990) Creating Culture Change: The Key to Successful Total Quality Management (Bedford: IFS Publications).

Bardi, M. A., Davis, D. & Davis, D. (1995) A study of measuring the critical factors of quality management, International Journal of Quality and Reliability Management, 12(2), pp. 36–53.

Bennis, W. (1989) Why Leaders Can't Lead: The Unconscious Conspiracy Continues (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass).

Bennis, W. (1997) Managing People is like Herding Cats (Provo, UT: Executive Excellence Publishing).

Bennis, W. (1999) The leadership advantage, In Leader to Leader, No. 12 (Spring), pp. 1–9. Available: http://www.pfdf.org/leaderbooks/l2l/spring99/bennis.html.
Bennis, W. & O'Toole, J. (2000) Don't hire the wring CEO, Harvard Business Review, May–June, pp. 171–177.
Black, S. A. & Porter, L. (1996) Identification of the critical factors of TQM, Decision Sciences, 27(1), pp. 1–21.
Brown, M. C. (1982) Administrative Succession and organisational performance: the succession effect, Administrative Science Quarterly, 27(1), pp. 1–16.
Bryce, G. R. (1991) Quality management theories and their application, Quality, 30(1), pp. 15–18.
Cardy, R. L. & Dobbins, G. H. (1996) Human resource management in a total quality management environment: shifting from a traditional to a TQHRM approach, Journal of Quality Management, 1(1), pp. 5–20.
Cole, R. E. (1999) Managing Quality Fads: How American Business Learned to Play the Quality Game (New York: Oxford University Press).
Conference Board (1991) Employee Buy-ins to Total Quality (New York: The Conference Board, Report No. 974).
Crosby, P. B. (1979) Quality is Free: The Art of Making Quality Certain (New York: New American Library).
Dale, B. G. & Cooper, C. (1992) Total Quality and Human Resources: An Executive Guide (Oxford: Blackwell).
Dale, B. G. & Cooper, C. L. (1994) Introducing TQM: the role of senior management, Management Decision, 32(1), pp. 20–26.
Dale, B. G. & Lightburn, K. (1992) Continuous quality improvement: why some organisations lack commitment, Industrial Journal of Production Engineering, 27(1), pp. 52–67.
Dalgleish, S. (2003) Could Deming have been wrong?, Quality, 42(6), p. 18.
Delbridge, R., Turnbull, P. & Wilkinson, B. (1992) Pushing back the frontiers: management control and work intensification under JIT/TQM factory regimes, New Technology, Work & Employment, 7(2), pp. 97–106.
Deming, W. E. (1986) Out of the Crisis (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Centre for Advanced Engineering Study).
Deming, W. E. (1993) The New Economics for Industry, Government, Education (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Centre for Advanced Engineering Study).
Dow, D., Samson, D. & Ford, S. (1999) Exploring the myth: do all quality management practices contribute to superior quality performance, Production & Operation Management, 8(1), pp. 1–27.
EFQM: European Foundation for Quality Management (1999) Total Quality Management: The European Model for self–appraisal, Guidelines for Identifying and Addressing Total Quality Issues (Eindhoven; EFQM).
Flynn, B. B., Schroeder, R. G. & Sakakibara, S. (1994) A framework for quality management research and an associated measurement instrument, Journal of Operations Management, 11(4), pp. 339–366.
Gamson, W. A. & Scotch, N. A. (1964) Scapegoating in baseball, American Journal of Sociology, 70, pp. 69–72.
Ghemawat, P. (1991) Commitment: The Dynamic of Strategy (New York: Free Press).
Ghobadian, A. & Woo, H. S. (1996) Characteristics, benefits and shortcomings of four major quality awards, International Journal of Quality & Reliability Management, 13(2), pp. 10–44.
Grusky, O. (1963) Managerial succession and organizational effectiveness, American Journal of Sociology, 69, pp. 21–30.
Gudim, M. & Meer, R. v. d. B. (1995) Issues surrounding the implementation of TQM: the Scottish experience. University of Strathclyde, Department of Management Science, Working Paper, No. 4, February.
Ho, K. M. & Fung, C. K. K. (1998) TQM Business Excellence Model. Available: http://www.hkbu.edu.hk/~samho/tqm/tqmex/content.htm#gurus (accessed May 2004).
IPM: Institute of Personnel Management (1993) Quality: People Management Matters (Exeter: IPM Research Series, Short Run Press Ltd).
Ishikawa, K. (1985) What is Total Quality Control? The Japanese Way (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall).
Juran, J. M. (1989) Juran on Leadership for Quality (New York: Free Press).
Kanji Quality Culture (No date) Measuring Business Excellence. Available: www.gopal-kanji.com (accessed May 2004).
Kanji, G. K. (1990) Total Quality Management: the second industrial revolution, Total Quality Management, 1(1), pp. 3–12.
Kanji, G. K. (1995) Quality and Statistical concepts, in: G. K. Kanji (Ed.) Total Quality Management: Proceedings of the First World Congress (Abingdon: Chapman & Hill).
Kanji, G. K. (1998) Measurement of business excellence, Total Quality Management, 9,(7), pp. 633–643.
Kanji, G. K. & Asher, M. (1993) Total Quality Management Process – A Systematic Approach. Advances in Total Quality Management Series (Abingdon: Carfax).

Kearney, A. T. in Association with TQM Magazine (1992), Total Quality: Time to Take Off the Rose Tinted Spectacles, A Report (Kempston: IFS Publications).
Lakhe, R. R. & Mohanty, R. P. (1994) Total Quality Management: concepts, evolution and acceptability in developing economies, International Journal of Quality and Reliability Management, 11(9), pp. 9–33.
Lascelles, D. M. & Dale, B. G. (1990) Quality management: the chief executive's perception and role, European Management Journal, 8(1), pp. 67–75.
Liberson, S. & O'Connor, J. F. (1972) Leadership and organizational performance: a study of large corporations, American Sociological Review, 37, pp. 117–130.
Locke, E. A. (1968) Toward a theory of task motivation and incentives, Organisational Behaviour & Human Performance, 3(May), pp. 157–189.
Main, J. (1991) Is the Baldrige overblown?, Fortune (July 1), pp. 62–65.
Mann, R. & Kehoe, D. (1995) Factors affecting the implementation and success of TQM, The International Journal of Quality & Reliability Management, 12(1), pp. 11–18.
Masterson, S. S. & Taylor, M. S. (1996) Total quality management and performance appraisal: an integrative perspective, Journal of Quality Management, 1(1), pp. 67–89.
McKinsey and Company (1989) Management of quality: the single major important challenge for Europe, European Quality Management Forum (Montreux, Switzerland, 19 October).
Mintzberg, H. (1999) Covert leadership: notes on managing professionals, Harvard Business Review, November–December, pp. 140–147.
Motwani, J. (2001) Critical factors and performance measures of TQM, The TQM Magazine, 13(4), pp. 292–300.
Norman, A. J. & Keys, P. R. (1992) Organisation development in public social services: the irresistable force meets the immovable object, Administrative in Social Work, 16(3/4), pp. 147–165.
Nwabueze, U. (2001) An industry betrayed: the case of total quality management in manufacturing, The TQM Magazine, 13(6), pp. 400–408.
Oakland, J. S. (1989) Total Quality Management (London: Butterworth-Heinemann).
Packard, T. (1995) TQM and organisational change and development, in: B. Gummer & P. McCallion (Eds) From Total Quality Management in the Social Services: Theory and Practice (Albany, NY: Rockefeller College Press).
Parker, M. & Slaughter, J. (1993) Should the labour movement buy TQM?, Journal of Organisational Change Management, 6(4), pp. 43–56.
Porter, L. & Steers, R. (1973) Organisational work and personal factors in employee turnover and absenteeism, Psychological Bulletin, 80, pp. 151–167.
Powell, T. C. (1995) Total quality management as competitive advantage: a review and empirical study, Strategic Management Journal, 16(1), pp. 15–37.
Reavill, L. R. P. (1999) What is the future direction of TQM development?, The TQM Magazine, 11(5), pp. 291–298.
Rubin, J. Z. & Brockner, J. (1975) Factors affecting entrapment in waiting situations: the Rosencrantz and Guildenstern effect, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 31(6), pp. 1054–1063.
Saraph, V., Benson, P. G. & Schroeder, R. G. (1989) An instrument for measuring the critical factors of quality management, Decision Sciences, 20 (4), pp. 810–829.
Scholtes, P. R. (1998) The Leader's Handbook: Making Things Happen, Getting Things Done (New York: McGraw-Hill).
Schwinn, D. R. (2002) Six sigma and more, Quality e-line, 4(7), pp. 1–2. Available: www.pqsysems.com/eline/v200207/sixsigmaandmor.htm (accessed May 2004).
Sila, I. & Ebrahimpour, M. (2002) An investigation of the total quality management survey-based research published between 1989 and 2000: a literature review, International Journal of Quality and Reliability Management, 19(7), pp. 902–970.
Silvestro, R. (2001) Towards a contingency theory of TQM in services: how implementation varies on the basis of volume and variety, International Journal of Quality & Reliability Management, 18(3), pp. 254–288.
Sinclair, D. & Zairi, M. (1995) Performance measurement as an obstacle to TQM, The TQM Magazine, 7(2), pp. 42–45.
Sitkin, S. B., Sutcliffe, K. & Schroedern, R. G. (1994) Distinguishing control from learning in total quality management: a contingency perspective, Academy of Management Review, 19(3), pp. 537–564.
Smith, S., Transfield, D., Foster, M. & Whittle, S. (1994) Strategies for managing the TQM agenda, International Journal of Operations & Production Management, 14(1), pp. 75–88.

Sohal, A. S. & Terziovski, M. (2000) TQM in Australian manufacturing: factors critical to success, International Journal of Quality and Reliability Management, 17(2), pp. 158–167.

Soltani, E., van der Meer, R. B., Gennard, J. & Williams, T. M. (2003) A TQM approach to HR performance evaluation: a questionnaire survey, European Management Journal, 21(3), pp. 323–337.

Staw, B. M. (1974) Attitudinal and behavioural consequences of changing a major organisational reward: a natural field experiment, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 6, pp. 742–751.

Tamimi, N. (1998) A second-order factor analysis of critical TQM factors, International Journal of Quality Science, 3(1), pp. 71–79.

Taylor, F. W. (1911) The Principles of Scientific Management (New York: Harper and Row).

Tetzeli, R. (1992) Making quality more than a fad, Fortune, 18 May, pp. 12–13.

The Economist (1992) The cracks in quality', 18 April, pp. 67–68.

Thiagarajan, T. & Zairi, M. (1997) A review of total quality management in practice: understanding the fundamentals through examples of best practice applications, The TQM Magazine, 9(6), pp. 414–417.

Tsang, J. H. Y. & Antony, J. (2001) Total quality management in the UK service organisations: some key findings from a survey, Managing Service Quality, 11(2), pp. 132–141.

Turner, R. & Turner, L. (1998) W. Ewards Deming's fourteen points and seven deadly diseases of management. Available at http://www.endsoftheearth.com/index.html (accessed May 2004).

US Department of Commerce and Technology (1993) Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (US Department of Commerce and Technology, NIST).

Waldman, D. A. (1994) The contributions of total quality management to a theory of work performance, Academy of Management Review, 19(3), pp. 510–536.

Wilkinson, A. (1994) Managing human resource for quality?, in: B. G. Dale (Ed.) Managing Quality, 2nd edn, pp. 273–291 (Hemel Hempstead: Prentice-Hall).

Wilkinson, A., Godfrey, G. & Marchington, M. (1997) Bouquets, brickbats and blinkers: total quality management and employee involvement in practice, Organisation Studies, 18(5), pp. 799–819.

Wilkinson, A., Redman, T. & Snape, E. (1994) The problems with quality management: the views of managers, Total Quality Management, 5(6), pp. 397–404.

Wilkinson, A., Redman, T., Snape, E. & Marchington, M. (1998) Managing with Total Quality Management: Theory and Practice (London: Macmillan).

Zairi, M. & Youssef, M. A. (1995) Benchmarking critical factors for TQM, part I: theory and foundations, Benchmarking for Quality Management & Technology, 2(1), pp. 5–20.

Zeitz, G., Johannesson, R. & Ritchie, J. E. (1997) An employee survey measuring total quality management practices and culture, Group and Organisation Management, 22(4), pp. 414–444.