Total Quality Management: Is It a Fad, Fashion, or Fit?

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This paper examines the fad, fashion, and fit theory using the case of total quality management (TQM). The examination has been undertaken using a range of research studies, commencing in the late 1980s. Three stages have been identified in the evolution by which a fad can become a fit with normal management practice. In stage 1, the fad must be clearly defined and measurable. In terms of TQM, the clarification was the ISO 9000 series and quality award models. Stage 2 is the move to a fashion, which comes about when major pressures toward widespread adoption of the fad are present. For example, there was pressure from major customers for their suppliers to achieve ISO 9000 certification. As a consequence, the ISO 9000 series became a fast-spreading fashion. Stage 3 is the move either from fad to fit or the move from fashion to fit. Fit into normal management practice means that the original fad will have effected the normal way of working within whole organizations and not just a small part such as would be the case in the adoption of a mere fashion. The fieldwork shows that such a change will only occur when there is strong internal motivation and emotional involvement to implement TQM. It is also pointed out that, should such a move take place from fad or fashion to fit, then chances are that organizational performance will also be perceived to have been effected in a positive way.

Key words: management practices

INTRODUCTION

Fads and fashions are part of management science, and some understanding exists as to why they arise. There is, however, a degree of difficulty in understanding why some fads and fashions burst onto the scene and then just as quickly decline while others seem to last longer and eventually become part of recognized management theory (that is, a fit).

The subject of fads has been explored by authors such as Eccles and Nohria (1992), Huczynski (1993), Abrahamson (1996), Kieser (1997), Micklethwait and Wooldridge (1997), and Shapiro (1995). Typically they describe how fads and fashions have become popular and why some management gurus have received widespread acclaim by promoting them. Huczynski (1993) articulates how the gurus gain currency by ensuring that their messages are relevant to the situation of the day. From an economic perspective the major issue relates to what value is added to a business from the use of fads and fashions and understanding why and how those fads deliver improvement. Clearly if a fad is to survive it must bring about organizational change. This can take place at many different levels, and is usually a complicated and difficult process, requiring motivated individuals to help push through the necessary changes. Those fads requiring major organizational changes will only occur if those involved have sufficient motivation: Simply setting objectives and goals for people to accomplish and/or playing to their emotions is insufficient.

The focus of the research reported in this paper is to examine the subject of total quality management (TQM) in terms of the fad, fashion, and fit theory. TQM has been described by some authors as a fad and as such only a short lifetime would be expected

(Wilkinson and Wilmott 1996; Cole 1999). The concept, however, seems to have survived for at least 10 years outside of Japan despite the many reports outlining why it is not working (A. T. Kearney and the *TQM Magazine* 1992; Economist Intelligence Unit 1992; Naj 1993). Also, TQM is still apparently thriving in organizations as evidenced by the number of national and international quality award winners. This paper explores the concept of TQM in the context of the fad, fashion, and fit theory, drawing on research evidence, including various questionnaire survey projects, carried out by the authors for over a decade.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The first step was to find empirical evidence for the statement that TQM is a vague and not-very-well-defined field in the area of organizations and management. This evidence has been found within the academic fraternity through three subsequent surveys among European universities and business schools and a questionnaire survey of industrialists in the Netherlands and United Kingdom. The investigation was focused on the opinions of respondents about the meaning of TQM and what was actually carried out under the TQM label. The main part of the questionnaires consisted of structured questions with predefined lists of TQM-related aspects, based on the literature and supported by brainstorming seminars using TQM experts. Table 1 covers the major data related to these surveys.

The survey data have been analyzed through factor analyses to identify specific factors that might define TQM. *T*-tests have also been used, which show that various subsamples of respondents have different views of TQM. The evidence shows very clearly that TQM is a vague and not-well-defined phenomenon. Table 2 shows the results of factor analysis on the predefined list of aspects of quality management for the survey data. The 1990 survey of industrialists gave four factors with Eigenvalues of 1.0 or higher; however, even taking these four factors together they do not explain 50 percent of the variation. For the surveys of academics in 1991, it was found that only two factors could be defined with 30 percent variation explained. In 1993, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test showed that the data could not be used for factor analysis; however, in 1996 the two-factor

Table 1 Questionnaire surveys on the vagueness of TQM.

A. Questionnaires to universities and business schools (1990–91; 1992–93; 1995–96):

	Mailed	Response	Response rate
Sample 1990–91:	Approximately 600	139	23%
Sample 1992–93:	Approximately 600	103	17%
Sample 1995–96:	Approximately 600	89	15%

B. Questionnaire to companies (1990):

	Mailed	Response	Response rate
Subsamples:			
Chamber of commerce (NL)	1,000	184	18%
EFQM members (Europe)	67	32	48%
Regional Quality Association (NL)	225	38	17%
Ford MC suppliers (UK)	120	68	57%
QM-3 conference (UK)	130	36	28%
Total sample	1,542	358	23%

Table 2 The vagueness of TQM: Quality management aspects in company training and university teaching.

Survey	Results factor analysis*:						
	KMO measure	Bartlett test	Sign. level	Factor	Eigenvalue	% Variance explained	Cum. % variance explained
Company survey (1990)	0.95	8151.35	0.00	1	16.03	34.8	34.8
				2	2.62	5.7	40.5
				3	1.75	3.8	44.4
				4	1.57	3.4	47.8
University survey (1991)	0.77	2861.06	0.00	1	10.37	22.6	22.6
				2	3.52	7.7	30.2
University survey (1993)	0.49	164.31	0.00	-	-	-	-
University survey (1996)	0.90	916.89	0.00	1	8.05	50.3	50.3
				2	1.64	10.2	60.5

* Factor analysis on the list of predefined aspects of quality management (principal components analysis with varimax rotation); the number of factors is defined by using the scree test and the Eigenvalue (>1.00).

Table 3 Questionnaire surveys on the use of ISO 9000 series and self-assessment against a quality award model.

A. Questionnaire on the use of ISO 9000 series (1994):

	Mailed	Response	Response rate
All ISO 9000 series certified companies in Western Australia	500	160	32%

B. Questionnaire on the use of self-assessment against quality award models (1994)

	Mailed	Response	Response rate
All members of the Australian Quality Council (AQC)	1,200	213	18%
All members of the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) and participants of the First European Conference on Quality Management Self-Assessment (Milano, March 1994)	500	117	23%
Samples identified by project partners in six European countries	1,600	402	25%

solution became more reliable, indicating that it took a long time before TQM became more defined in two directions—the ISO 9000 series and quality award models.

The vague area of TQM is clarified through the ISO 9000 series of standards and through the excellence models of the international, national, and regionally recognized quality awards. These two initiatives, however, can be identified as fads themselves; therefore questionnaire surveys have been used to research their use. Table 3 summarizes the four questionnaire surveys used.

The focus was on the following main themes.

- Measuring the pressure to start the TQM approach and use the ISO 9000 series or the quality award models; external pressure is related to customer

demands or demands from governmental or professional bodies; internal pressure is related to achievements, which are related to internal improvements.

- Identifying and measuring intrinsic and extrinsic factors relating to the motivation to use the ISO 9000 series or self-assessment against a quality award model in the organizations; using factor analysis on the responses on predefined lists of motivation factors.
- Identifying and measuring improvement factors, performing factor analysis on predefined lists of improvement issues in relation to these two initiatives; the responses have been reduced to a small number of improvement factors (internal/external; short/long term; hard/soft improvements).

The development of an ISO 9000 series quality system does not, in general, demand many changes in an organization; neither does it require the involvement of all employees. The effects, in relation to business performance improvement, have not been significant although some short-term improvements have been made based on changes to work procedures and improved discipline….

These data sets have been studied with the use of statistical analysis (for example, t-tests, discriminant analysis, and regression analysis) and the relationships clarified. A detailed description of the questionnaires and the analysis of the responses can be found in Van der Wiele (1998).

DEFINITIONS

Hesseling (1984) points out the difference between fad, fashion, and fit. A fad has to do with a new popular finding (for example, "business excellence" in Peters 1985), and is something that bursts onto the scene and fades away after a short period of time. If the fad is applied in a variety of situations, is based on evidence given by those using it, and seems to work, then the fad becomes a fashion and quickly attracts followers and disciples. A fashion is essentially something that remains on the surface of an organization. A fashion comes and goes and does not put down deep roots. In contrast, a fit is where the idea from the original fad becomes incorporated into the day-to-day fabric of the organization and effects its overall management system and the way of working of every employee.

Few fads ever progress as far as a fit. The typical life cycle of a fad is described by Campbell (1971, 565–566).

> The fads centre around the introduction of new techniques and follow a characteristic pattern. A new technique appears on the horizon and develops a large stable of advocates who first describe its successful use in a number of situations. A second wave of advocates busy themselves trying out numerous modifications of the basic technique. A few empirical studies may be carried out to demonstrate that the method works. Then the inevitable backlash sets in, and a few vocal opponents begin to criticise the usefulness of the technique, most often in the absence of data. Such criticism typically has very little effect. What does have an effect is the appearance of another new technique and a repetition of the same cycle.

According to Eccles and Nohria (1992) most of the fads and fashions that have appeared in recent times are not new ideas but old concepts translated into modern or new words (that is, the words have changed over time but the principles stay the same). A case in point is *business process reengineering* (BPR), which has been dissected in considerable detail by writers such as Deakins and Makgill (1997).

Fads come and go, and the last two decades are no exception. This is well described by Pascale who produces a figure that shows the ebbs, flows, and residual impact of business fads during the period 1950–88. According to Pascale (1990, 14),

> Successful organisations must build paradigms and then break them down and create new paradigms thereafter, otherwise they become

inevitably imperiled by them. The ultimate and largely ignored task of management is one of creating and breaking paradigms.

So, from this type of evidence there seems to be a need for fads and fashions in the world of business.

WHY ARE FADS POPULAR?

In an uncertain world managers need continual reassurance. They want to know if they can imitate successful leaders and organizations and adopt their management approaches. Most managers, however, believe there are no universal rules of success but they nevertheless continue to seek out, and perhaps overvalue, examples of perceived success.

There is little doubt that the [award] models provide the means for the TQM believers to spread their faith and explain it to others.

There are numerous cases where effectiveness of ideas or theories has had a positive impact on business efficiency and yet adoption has been minimal, despite the fact that much of the knowledge has existed for decades. Pfeffer (1996) gives the example of best work practices, and examines the question "Why don't organizations change, even when confronted with fairly convincing evidence concerning the efficacy of alternative management methods and processes?" Five prerequisites for ideas to become popular have been defined by Huczynski (1993, 46).

1. To be timely
2. To be brought to the attention of its potential audience
3. To meet the individual needs and concerns of the users
4. To be perceived as relevant by potential users
5. To be verbally presentable in an engaging way

Managers do take fads seriously, based on the considerable market for training events, conferences, and consultancy activities created around the fads, which have emerged during the last two decades. With respect to TQM, for example, many approaches have been proposed as the latest fad. There has been quality circles, statistical process control, failure mode and effects analysis, quality function deployment, design of experiments, benchmarking, and self-assessment against the criteria of quality award models. The differences between fads tend to be created by the attention that is given to specific aspects of management and organizational theory. According to Huczynski (1993, 278) managers perceive potential value in using fads in their own organizations for one of the following reasons.

- The new idea can be perceived as a solution to a critical problem.
- The new idea can act as an internal motivator.
- The new idea can be a vehicle, which assists organizational change.
- The new idea is taken seriously, because of a fear of the competition.
- Implementation of a new idea is more advanced than what the competitors are using.
- A new idea is introduced because of the meaning customers give to that new idea or the perception customers have about companies that follow it.
- An individual (manager) in the organization might perceive the new idea as a career enhancer and might want to become a champion who promotes its adoption.
- Managers follow new ideas as a system of defense, so they cannot be blamed for failure due to lack of knowledge.
- Managers may see the new idea as a way to create quick answers to difficult problems.
- The adoption of a new idea is offering the manager an insider status.

The area of fads with respect to organizations and management theory is one that is difficult to define. Pascale (1990) has examined the impact of this on managing organizations and concluded that while the number of new ideas is growing fast, most of them have only a short-term impact. Managers, however, seem to need new ideas on a regular basis, without being sure how they will affect the performance of organizations.

Another way of looking at those new ideas is that the broader concepts, like TQM, are the fad, and the tools, techniques, systems, and practices that compose

the fad are simply attempts to define the meaning of the fad and to understand what needs to be done. It is usual to find that the fad itself is vague, and is open to many meanings in different settings. Consequently, it is difficult to define it in a simple way and thereby test out its potential. Therefore, many definitions are possible, and the fad can survive as long as each new definition makes clear to managers what they have to do in order to be seen as following the overall philosophy.

The extent to which fads are able to satisfy managerial needs contributes to the popularity of a particular fad and the creation of a new guru in the person who brought the fad to the attention of a wider audience. Research by Jackson (1996, 571) supports this relationship.

> Conventional explanations of the enormous popularity of management gurus have centred on the need for managers to find relatively quick and simple solutions to their organizations' complex problems and the gurus' adeptness with marketing technology to promote these solutions. A few writers have also recognised the role that management gurus play in responding to managers' needs to make sense of themselves. Management gurus appeal to the manager's social or externally directed esteem needs by legitimating and celebrating the manager's role in society. The spiritual and charismatic quality of the gurus' work resonates with the manager's personal or internally driven needs by providing a sense of hope and purpose.

In addition to the motives derived from organizational and individual goals, and managerial needs, there are also the suppliers of fads who play an important role in the creation and dissemination of those "new" or reformulated versions of old ideas.

IS TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT A FAD?

From the work of Campbell (1971), Eccles and Nohria (1992), Hesseling (1984), Huczynski (1993), and Sörensson (1997, 251–256) it is clear there are a number of common strands associated with fads.

- It has to do with some perceived new finding that appears to supersede the current message.
- It comes to attention with a burst of publicity, usually in a form of a book and/or publication in a prestigious journal, and fades away after a short period of time.
- It is not really a new idea, but just old concepts translated into modern words and using the same methods, tools, and techniques.
- It starts with the first wave, based on successful application in a limited number of situations, then is spread by a small group of believers using publicity generated by conferences, training events, and articles in popular journals. The second wave is based on a small number of empirical studies, which support the success of the fad and advocate its extended application and use. The third wave tends to be a backlash against the fad, in which criticism is made that it is not working and of limited benefit.

If, however, self-assessment is to survive and reinforce TQM, then it must become a real fit with the normal management practices of the organizations. It must be integrated with the basic managerial processes of strategy determination, policy deployment, budget cycles, human resources systems, and so on.

A number of these strands can be identified in TQM. It is not really new, because quality has always been an issue in organizations. For example, Morrison in Dale (1994) provides a thorough analysis of the quality management situation in the pre-twentieth century.

TQM has many ideas, tools, techniques, and practices that have their roots in the scientific management approach and the human relations movement. The subject of quality management was popularized by the initial teachings of Deming, Feigenbaum, and Juran, who stimulated interest at a general management level. In the early years, their teachings were not well accepted in the United States. In Japan, where the time frame and circumstances were different, managers were more receptive.

The term *TQM* first surfaced in the mid-1980s, and was promoted based on a relatively limited number of success stories such as those at Xerox, Motorola, and Hewlett Packard; the Japanese experience; and national quality campaigns such as that in the United Kingdom; and excellence awards such as the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award and the European Quality Award. TQM has, for some period of time, been at the center of management thinking for a relatively small group of believers. Japan has at least two more decades of experience than the West; however, even in Japan it was, for a long time, kept in a small circle of believers (for example, JUSE consultants) and was not exposed to a broader audience. This only started to happen in the mid-1980s. In Japan, America, and Europe, in the first instance, only a few believers, acting on their faith in TQM, were able to apply the concept. There have been some empirical studies, which have focused on supporting the general success of quality management (for example, Ahire, Golhan, and Waller 1996; Saraph, Benson, and Schroeder 1989; Flynn, Schroeder, and Sakakibara 1994; Powell 1995). However, criticism of the concept started in the early 1990s (for example, A. T. Kearney and *TQM Magazine* 1992; Fuchsberg 1993; the Economist Intelligence Unit 1992; Miller 1992). It was typically claimed that TQM does not produce sufficient results for the expenditure that has been committed to its introduction and development; that TQM is an excuse for streamlining the organizations; and that the concept produces too much inward thinking.

Because TQM has survived over a relatively long period of time in the West (more than 20 years) and even longer in Japan (more than 40 years) and still finds broad support among the practitioner and academic fraternities, it might be argued that according to the trilogy of Hesseling (1984) it has moved in the direction of fashion and fit. However, within the broad entity of TQM there are many tools, techniques, approaches, and organizational arrangements that have been developed to facilitate its use and application. Many of these could be considered fads in their own right as organizations have attempted to use them as stand-alone solutions to problems. Thus, the rapid rise and subsequent fall from popularity of some of the constituent parts of the TQM package such as quality circles, and more recently benchmarking, could be seen as being typical examples of fads.

Research on TQM within European universities has also followed the fad-to-fit trend. Many universities started activities in the field toward the late 1980s, but as pointed out by Van der Wiele and Dale (1996) the number of universities and academics actively researching the subject has decreased. It also appears that those academics who are still active in the field have integrated their research work within their basic discipline—organizations and management (for example, process management, human resources management, and performance management) or techniques (for example, process capability and reliability). Organizations and management on one hand, and techniques on the other, are two factors arising from the factor analysis on the aspects of TQM in the questionnaire survey in 1996; see Table 2.

The authors' research findings support the argument that a fad in itself does not change organizations. A fad is not simply good or bad; rather it is a matter of how it is put to use.

Sörensson (1997, 251–256) argues that a more unified approach to TQM is needed to stop unnecessary squabbling among professionals about the relative advantages of different approaches, which are promoted as new trends. He argues that its basic concepts are identical or very similar to the well-known classic approaches of Deming, Juran, and Feigenbaum and, in turn, the methods and tools of these experts are to a large extent derived from the area of statistics, industrial engineering, and human relations management. Sörensson (1997, 251–256) also makes the point that the various fads have a lot in common, in their philosophies, strategies, and concepts, as well as in the methods, tools, and techniques that are deployed as part of their use. The authors' research supports these arguments: TQM, as the generic term for a management philosophy, is built on a small number of key

concepts (for example, people involvement, continuous improvement, fact-based management, process control, and customer orientation).

THE EVOLUTION OF TQM FROM FAD TO FIT?

In the Western world it was perhaps the launch of the ISO 9000 series following on from its BS 5750 series predecessor that a larger audience started to take up the TQM message. The ISO 9000 series gave clear definition of what was required to put into place the basics of quality assurance, and managers started to understand what they had to do to be seen by others as a "quality" organization. In the main, an ISO 9000 series quality management system is implemented because of external pressure from major commercial customer organizations, who force their suppliers to have ISO 9000 series certification as some guarantee of quality. In addition, governments have instituted policies where an ISO 9000 series certificate is a condition for becoming a preferred supplier.

The development of an ISO 9000 series quality system does not, in general, demand many changes in an organization; neither does it require the involvement of all employees. The effects, in relation to business performance improvement, have not been significant although some short-term improvements have been made based on changes to work procedures and improved discipline; see for example, Buttle (1996) and Dale and Oakland (1994). Many organizations that have been forced down the ISO 9000 series certification route have treated the quality system as a necessary condition of doing business. According to Brown and Van der Wiele (1996), only a few have linked the ISO 9000 series quality system to internal and personal goals and organizational change and improvement.

From the authors' research, it is clear that the TQM believers who started with ISO 9000 series certification have been able to achieve improvements in business performances because they were motivated to link ISO 9000 series certification with goals for changing the organizations, and were committed to driving the organizations beyond the ISO 9000 series level of quality management maturity and toward TQM. In relation to the fad-to-fit trilogy of Hesseling (1984), it can be concluded that the implementation of an ISO 9000 series quality management system has now moved firmly into the fashion field. In the early 1980s there were only a small number of organizations who were certificated. These days, based on the ISO Survey (ISO 1999), around 272,000 companies have now received certification of their quality system, and the numbers are growing as ISO 9000 expands into the Americas and southeast Asia, stimulated by QS-9000.

So despite the continued criticisms (for example, Seddon 1997) it can be concluded that ISO 9000 has become a fashion, albeit a surface phenomenon. It has been adopted by a large number of organizations. But it leaves much of the organizations relatively untouched. It is the concern of only a few managers, and it has had little impact on the total management systems of the organizations. It is suggested that the current more rigorous and wide-ranging QS-9000 quality standard and the new standards being developed by the International Organization for Standardization are a reaction to this situation. They are an attempt to move the ISO 9000 series from being a fashion to a fit with normal management practice.

In this context the new models are much more similar to models of business and performance excellence such as the Baldrige Award and European Quality Award, which have become popular since they were first publicized in the late 1980s and early 1990s, respectively. These models describe and define, in a broad and deep manner, what quality means in relation to managing organizations. These models make it clear for managers what they have to do and how they can measure their improvement goals. There is little doubt that the models provide the means for the TQM believers to spread their faith and explain it to others. These two models comprise a number of criteria, which together describe a general approach to business excellence in terms of inputs, throughput, outputs, and business results.

There are major differences with respect to the motivation for the implementation of an ISO 9000 series quality system and the use of self-assessment against an excellence model. External pressure to implement self-assessment is uncommon, which is not the case with ISO 9000 series certification. In larger

organizations there might be some pressure from top management to the business units to use self-assessment, but because the initiative is internal there will be clear reasons for the decision in order to convince the business unit management teams to put it on their agenda. Data from the questionnaire surveys support these conclusions; see Table 4. It is shown that the external pressure factor in the case of ISO 9000 series implementation is stronger than an internal pressure factor. Based on the findings of the three self-assessment surveys this is in direct contrast in the case of the implementation of self-assessment.

Two extremes can be identified in terms of the goals for starting self-assessment. There is the initiative taken to win a quality award, which is a relatively short-term goal. On the other hand, there is the goal to use self-assessment in relation to managing organizational change and business improvements, which has

Table 4 Comparison of the importance of the reasons to implement ISO 9000 series and self-assessment.

Survey	*Internal reasons for implementation;* mean* value of factor(s)† and (standard deviation)		*External reasons for implementation;* mean* value of factor(s)† and (standard deviation)
ISO 9000 series (Australia)	3.03 (0.92)		3.62 (0.75)
Self-assessment (Australia)	4.20 (0.64)	3.04 (0.83)	2.50 (0.82)
Self-assessment (Europe—advanced)	4.07 (0.80)		1.62 (0.69)
Self-assessment (Europe—general)	4.01 (0.75)	2.81 (0.90)	2.41 (0.95)

* Mean value of the factor(s) related to internal and external reasons to implement ISO or self-assessment; mean value on a five-point scale from (1) not important to (5) very important;

† Factor(s) found through factor analysis (principal components analysis with varimax rotation) on the predefined list of (internal and external) reasons to implement ISO or self-assessment; the number of factors is defined by using the scree test and the Eigenvalue (>1.00).

Table 5 The relation between the reasons for implementation of the ISO 9000 series and self-assessment and perceived benefits.

Survey	Improvement factor(s) *	Internal reasons for implementation 1†	2 †	3 ‡	External reasons for implementation †
		(correlation coefficients)			
ISO 9000 series (Australia)	1. Short-term issues	.69∏		.49∏	.50∏
	2. Long-term issues	.49∏		.43∏	.20§
Self-assessment (Australia)	1. Quality Award criteria	.26§	.21	.29§	.11
	2. All predefined, specific improvement issues	.28§	.42∏	.42∏	.13
Self-assessment (Europe—advanced)	1. Quality Award criteria	.54∏		.45∏	.01
	2. All predefined, specific improvement issues	.44∏		.48∏	-.05
Self-assessment (Europe—general)	1. Quality Award criteria	.46∏	.29∏	.54∏	.07
	2. All predefined, specific improvement issues	.45∏	.37∏	.51∏	.18

* Factor(s) found through factor analysis (principal components analysis with varimax rotation) on the predefined list of perceived improvements in relation to the implementation of ISO 9000 series or self-assessment; the number of factors is defined by using the scree test and the Eigenvalue (>1.00).

† Factor(s) found through factor analysis on the predefined list of internal and external reasons to implement ISO 9000 series or self-assessment;

‡ Factor built on internal motivation issues to implement ISO 9000 series or self-assessment;

§ Significance level: LE .05 (2-tailed);

∏ Significance level: LE .01 (2-tailed).

long-term benefits. From analysis of the authors' research findings—for example, Van der Wiele et al. (1996a; 1996b)—it is clear that the relation between the internal reasons and motivation to implement self-assessment are significantly related with process outcomes; see Table 5. These data show that external pressure might be sufficient to get short-term improvements from the implementation of an ISO 9000 series quality system. In the case of self-assessment, external pressure does not show any significant positive relationship with improvement factors; one of the found correlation coefficients was even negative!

Clearly if a fad is to survive it must bring about organizational change.

This research was undertaken in early 1996, and at that time self-assessment was in its infancy. Even in the advanced European sample (that is, Van der Wiele 1996a) few respondents had long-term experiences with self-assessment. These respondents did indicate that they would continue the process over the long term. However, there is some evidence (Ritchie and Dale Forthcoming) that the novelty of self-assessment is now starting to wear off, in particular, if management fails to follow up on the improvement plans that have been developed. On the other hand, some companies have been successful in linking the self-assessment process with the regular business cycles of strategic planning, policy deployment, and budget decisions. In this way a fit has been created with the day-to-day fabric of management activities and, in this environment, self-assessment carried out at appropriate intervals generates the motivation and involvement of employees to seek improvements and enhance results. Those companies that don't create such linkages will find it problematic in continuing the self-assessment process. In those organizations there will be some resistance, less motivation, the improvements and results will be less striking, and the self-assessment process will stop and eventually fizzle out.

The authors' research findings support the argument that a fad in itself does not change organizations. A fad is not simply good or bad; rather it is a matter of how it is put to use. The introduction and development of TQM will only lead to business success if it generates the necessary organizational changes; and if nothing is changed, then improvements in performance cannot be expected. People will always resist change, and managers who are involved with the facilitation of TQM have to demonstrate personal commitment and leadership to overcome resistance to change. Therefore, in order for TQM to be successful it has to be linked with organizational goals and objectives, and this demands senior management support and commitment.

WILL TQM SURVIVE?

The interest in TQM started in the Western world during the early 1980s, and—during the1990s—the ISO 9000 series and excellence models, in particular, have helped believers spread the message and involve others by explaining what was required to embrace the philosophy. Managers accepted these models because they understood the language and could relate them with normal business practices. They have also provided the opportunity to define organizational goals in relation to business improvement and, in this way, managers have been able to use the models to involve and motivate employees, develop a change process, and make performance-enhancing improvements.

In many organizations little progression beyond the ISO 9000 series of quality management maturity has been made, and in these cases it is usually found that only one element of the TQM philosophy (that is, quality assurance of processes), has been fully accepted by organizations. This element involves little change for most organizations, and can be implemented without affecting large parts of the organizations. This acceptance on a wide scale, however, can truly be regarded now as a fashion. But, as with many fashions, so many people follow it that it brings with it little competitive advantage.

In contrast, self-assessment using an excellence model will involve whole organizations and not just quality professionals. If, however, self-assessment is to survive and reinforce TQM, then it must become a real fit with the normal management practices of the

organizations. It must be integrated with the basic managerial processes of strategy determination, policy deployment, budget cycles, human resources systems, and so on. With this approach the objective to win a quality award might, in the short term, provide the appropriate motivation and enthusiasm but may create a tendency to position self-assessment outside of "normal work." After winning the award there is the danger that motivation and enthusiasm will die out and TQM will fall back. With an integrated approach, TQM can survive and become a fit. The argument for this is related to the activities associated with a regular self-assessment cycle. Many people will be involved in various initiatives, a considerable number of activities and processes in the organizations will become part of this, and the motivation to move forward in terms of quality management maturity will be part of the normal business routines. The self-assessment process will also stimulate the use of a range of tools and techniques, mechanisms, and practices.

DISCUSSION

The focus of this article has been how a management fad can succeed and become part of normal management practice, defined as follows:

- No specific structure or organizational arrangement is required to run the program, tool, technique, system, or the specific activity related to the fad.
- No project approach is used for the fad, and there is no clear starting point and endpoint of the activity.
- The activity related to the fad is built into organizational systems and procedures.
- It is on the agenda of all regular management meetings.
- Managers and employees define the activities related to the fad as "normal" in relation to running the business and not as a special event.

The change from management fad to fashion and to fit, as described by Hesseling (1984), will not always take place. Some fads decline and are followed by newer and different fads. On the other hand, fads have been introduced as the way to get competitive advantage. When there are many believers it might become a fashion; however, it can lose its value if everyone is not committed to its use and it just becomes a basic necessity to do business (Micklethwait and Wooldridge 1997).

All the literature and the authors' research evidence point out that the change from fad to normal management practice will occur in three main stages, as follows:

Stage 1 is the situation when there is, in an organization, a small number of believers who are interested in a particular fad. This situation will remain the same, and the fad will not be accepted into normal management practice unless progression is made to stage 2.

Stage 2 concerns the spread of the fad. There will always be resistance to change and the deeper the change required in relation to implementation, then the stronger the resistance. To overcome resistance the believers need to mobilize strong forces in favor of the change; this can only be done if the following is accomplished.

- There is a clear definition of what the fad is.
- There are measures linked to the definition.
- Although there may be no direct evidence of a relationship between adoption of the fad and short-term profit (this, therefore remains primarily a matter of "belief"), there is certainly no direct relation between adoption of the fad and major business losses.

Once stage 2 has been reached then strong forces (for example, customers and head office) can demand that the fad be implemented and a measurement system put in place to check the degree to which this has occurred. This type of external pressure will lead to more active internal resistance, which will probably help ensure that, even if external pressures force adoption of the fad, then it will just remain a surface phenomenon. Thus, if a sufficient number of organizations are forced to take up the adoption, there may well be a progression from fad to fashion but further progression is unlikely because of the organizational changes needed to achieve a real fit with the normal way of managing the organizations.

If the fad is to become fully embedded within the organizations (that is, a fit) then a further stage of

development is necessary. That is *stage 3.* The presence of external pressure to change may be sufficient to result in a fad being adopted, but it will not be enough to ensure that a sufficient body of influential people becomes committed to the extent that performance improves. Motivation theory (for example, Ford 1992) suggests that in a complex dynamic situation a high level of emotional involvement is required of the activists who are trying to influence organizational direction. A high level of emotional involvement is only likely to be present when people perceive there being internal as well as external reasons for the change.

Change theory suggests a possible further complication in this journey of organizational change from fad into fit with normal management practice. This concerns the demanded level or depth of change. If the change required is shallow, then the level of motivation will be less, and external pressure may be sufficient to result in acceptance of the fad. If, however, a change of some depth is required, then the level of internal motivation will need to be high, and external pressure by itself will not lead to the necessary changes. In the case of TQM, ISO 9000 series registration is an example of shallow change and self-assessment is an example of deep change and continuous improvement.

Individual organizations that seek ISO 9000 series certification primarily as a result of external pressure, and consider this as an end in itself, will be less committed than those that see ISO 9000 series certification as being primarily internally motivated and as a means to organizational change. Brown and Van der Wiele (1996) report the findings of a questionnaire survey on the practices and experiences with ISO 9000 series certification in Western Australia. They examined the relationship between external and internal pressure and performance. Using T-tests the sample was split into high and low scoring on external and internal pressures and these were related to differences in the performance criterion variables. The findings show a number of statistically significant issues related to the issues. Organizations that perceive external pressure from customers and/or headquarters as the important reason to go for ISO 9000 series certification

- Are more disappointed with the results of certification.
- Show less-positive financial improvement and improvements in market share.
- Demonstrate lower levels of improvement in human resource related factors and organizational control factors (for example, management control, planning, organizational structure, and discipline).

It is clear from this study that individuals who perceive external pressure as the primary driver for ISO 9000 series certification are less committed to change, and see it as not related to performance.

For TQM to become a real fit with the normal way of managing the business, key persons within the organizations must be highly motivated for this to happen. What is needed is intrinsic motivation allied to knowledge of what has to be done.

A positive relationship with performance improvements was found for the perception that external pressure was the main driving force for ISO 9000 series certification. From this it was concluded by Brown and Van der Wiele (1996) that for successful implementation of an ISO 9000 series quality system the need for internal motivation is less strong and external motivation might be sufficient. This, however, is dangerous because later, the organizations may have to change to a more internally driven approach. Brown and Van der Wiele (1996) also found that approximately 10 percent of all ISO 9000 series certified companies initially sought certification because of external pressure but afterward changed to a more positive, internally driven quality approach during the process of developing the quality system and award of the certificate.

The authors' work survey on self-assessment (for example, Van der Wiele et al. 1996a; 1996b) show comparable results. A strong relationship was found between internal motivation and result variables describing performance improvements. These positive relationships are statistically significant for most of the performance variables. Respondents who perceive more external pressure (either from customers or headquarters) for the implementation of self-assessment are less

positive about improvement on many of the performance variables. From this work it can be concluded that for companies that are using self-assessment in a serious manner, TQM is no longer a fad, since it involves major and deep organizational changes and the involvement of all managers and has now become part of the normal way of managing the business.

It has become clear that for the deep organizational changes demanded by self-assessment, external pressure and motivation will not, on their own, deliver positive results. Only internal motivation will provide the stimulus. There is some support for the view that the relationship between internal motivation and performance improvement is stronger for deep organizational change.

CONCLUSION

If TQM is considered as a typical fad then it has been shown that for this to progress to becoming either a fashion or a normal way of managing, it needs to

- Be clearly defined.
- Be measurable.
- Have no direct link to short-term major losses.

But the next stage in moving from a fad to a fashion or fit, requires pressure to be exerted upon the organizations to adopt the newly defined and measurable fad.

In the case of TQM it can be seen that the International Organization for Standardization, through its development of the ISO 9000 series, gave many organizations a system that they could demand of their suppliers. The ISO 9000 series requires only shallow changes since the majority of managers will not be directly involved, and, therefore, external pressure from customers or headquarters will be sufficient for adoption. Thus, the fad can quickly become a fashion—although because of the primary external pressure for the change, the likelihood of further development into TQM becoming a normal part of running the business is small.

For TQM to become a real fit with the normal way of managing the business, key persons within the organizations must be highly motivated for this to happen. What is needed is intrinsic motivation allied to knowledge of what has to be done. If pressure is primarily internally motivated, clearly linked to the well-being of the organizations (for example, self-assessment against an excellence model), then there will be greater chance of deep organizational change, resulting in business performance improvement. If this motivation is lacking, then TQM will not develop into the fit stage, and in those companies TQM will disappear and might be followed by a new fad.

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