

INTERNAL PEOPLE INVOLVEMENT IN TQM PERSPECTIVE: AN INTEGRATED FRAMEWORK

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Abstract: Failure to harvest the expected benefits of TQM is often unjustly ascribed to the TQM itself without proper understanding of and fostering the inseparable link among development orientation of top management, servant leadership behavior and employee empowerment that unlock the potential for TQM success. This paper presents a theoretical analysis of internal people involvement and proposes a framework that shows how developmental orientation of top management, servant leadership and employee empowerment are linked together to evolve into total internal people involvement, a critical success factor for TQM. Organizations interested in continuous improvement can use this framework to train their people with a view to developing right attitude and aptitude for the successful initiation and implementation of TQM.

Keywords: TQM; Management orientations; Servant leadership; Empowerment; Internal involvement

Introduction

Total Quality Management (TQM) can be described as a basic strategy to provides goods and services that completely satisfy both internal and external customers by meeting their explicit and implicit expectations. Its primary focus is on quality of management – not on management of quality. TQM does not view things partially and handle things fragmentarily, rather it deals with totality of management's quality. It emphasizes people – customers, suppliers and employees.

The TQM concept outlines that it is to completely satisfy the customers' expectations. As the expectations of customers – external as well as internal – are under constant changes, TQM constantly seeks for continuous improvement of quality. To achieve the objective of continuous improvement, TQM laid its foundation on three broad principles: *customer focus, process improvement and total involvement*. Total involvement implies customer involvement, supplier involvement and internal people (employee) involvement. The position of internal people involvement in the context of TQM is depicted in Fig. 1. This internal people involvement for TQM success is the main issue of this paper.

Rationale: Mission statement of business organization often justifies its existence by categorically outlining its intention to serve customer needs. In the context of globalization of business and intensified competition for capturing market share, exploring and meeting customers' latent expectations to make them delighted, in addition to satisfying their implicit and explicit expectations, are becoming more and more important. With this, it is being increasingly appreciated that customer empowerment and satisfaction can come only through real employee empowerment

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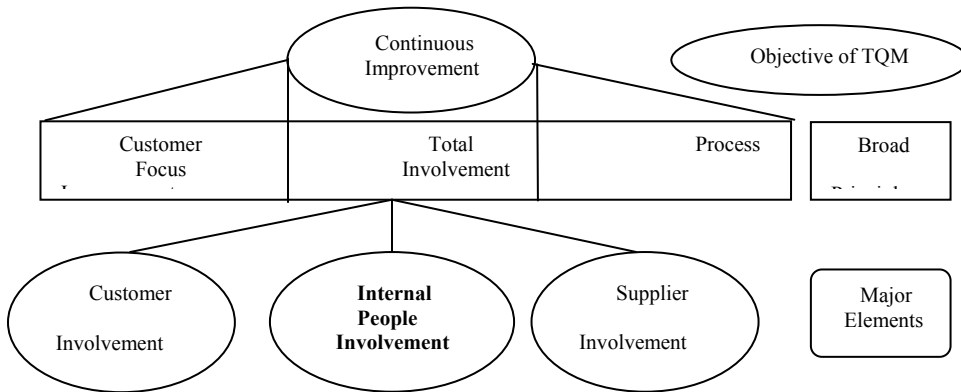


Fig. 1. Internal people involvement in the context of TQM.

and satisfaction. However, this cannot happen without top management commitment towards quality and customer satisfaction. Feigenbaum (1951) categorically states that quality-consciousness in a company depends upon many intangibles, among which management's attitude toward quality is paramount. Top management orientation determines the mode of leadership behavior and it is leadership that can create appropriate environment to real employee empowerment. Amsden *et al.* (1996) pointed out that the organizations and systems, adopting TQM style of managing, display six attributes that interact synergistically. Satisfying customer, holistic system, continuous improvement, people empowerment and "plan, do, check, action" (PDCA) are the first five attributes. They mentioned the sixth attribute as "senior management exhibits dynamic leadership to create an environment that fosters the above five attributes."

The most respected authorities on TQM have long argued that top management's leadership is key to TQM's success or failure. Top managers' underlying, often unspoken, orientations toward time, market, and customers affect the nature of their firms' TQM program. In fact, several tools & techniques of TQM can never ensure quality excellence without the commitment of top management and all other people in the organization. One of the most essential preconditions for the success of TQM program is total involvement and commitment of all people to their possible fullest extent. Thus the issue of analyzing internal people involvement by putting management orientation, leadership and employee empowerment together in the perspective of TQM success has managerial as well as academic implications and importance.

Top Management Orientations

Both Fayol and Barnard were vitally concerned with the role of senior management, which they saw as exercising direction of the entire organization. More importantly, they saw the role of the senior executive as critical to the success of the organization. In this sense, they laid the groundwork for the sixth attribute of TQM mentioned above. They held, in effect, that the organization is set on course and kept on course by top managers. The difference in TQM is the end to which top executives direct the firm as well as the means used. In TQM, executives focus the entire system on satisfying customers by empowering employees who use PDCA/S (plan, do, check, action/standardize) to continuously improve the system.

In attempting to implement TQM, many practitioners have disregarded Fayol and Barnard's work. When faced with upper management's unwillingness to embrace TQM fully, these practitioners have gone ahead anyway and put in whatever parts of TQM they could. This makes for an extremely vulnerable position. Unfortunately, many have eventually met with upper management reversals of their implementation efforts. For example, the Chairman of Florida Power and Light's (FPL) parent holding company dismantled FP&L's Deming Prize system, primarily because he refused to support the TQM practice (Amsden, *et al.*, 1996).

Choi and Behling (1997) state that top manager attitudes toward time, goals, and customers differ from firm to firm, and that these differences yield distinctly different approaches to TQM. These approaches, in turn, influence TQM's chances of success. Considering top managers' main concern, primary time focus and image of customers, they have identified three different orientations of top managers. These are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Top Managers' Orientations.

Characteristics of Orientations	Top Managers' Orientations		
	Defensive	Tactical	Developmental
Main concern	Surviving in a hostile world	Satisfying customer requirements	Growing the firm
Primary time focus	The past	The present	The future
Image of Customers	An opponent	A demanding buyer	A partner

Defensive Orientation

Main Concern: Defensive managers see no value to TQM techniques. They are resentful, even hostile, towards customers. They adopt TQM because their customer requires it and they do so grudgingly. They are reluctant to implement TQM or make other changes, even when explicitly requested to do so by a customer. The overarching sentiment is that the firm is forced to introduce these techniques and that they are strictly "for the customer's own benefit," not for the firm's.

Time Focus: Management is particularly bitter about its past dealings with its main customers. Top managers scramble to survive and preserve their firm in what they see as a dangerous environment with hostile customers. Their preoccupation with past problems prompts them to broaden the company's customer base in an attempt to reduce its dependence on single customers. Their efforts to do so are hurried and unplanned. They do not strategically construct new customer relationships, and build on existing relationships with their current customers.

View of Customers: Defensive managers view customers as unreasonable and threatening. Customers are viewed either as opponents or as powerful forces to be satisfied and emulated. In response, top management tries hard to ward off unreasonable customer demands and to ensure the firm's survival the best they could.

Tactical Orientation

Main Concern: The tactical orientation concentrates on identifying and managing responses to customers' immediate needs. These managers use TQM as a tool for reducing rejection rates and improving customer satisfaction, but its use is not clearly related to a larger vision of future growth or excellence. They implement TQM-related practices either because they have to do so to meet a customer's quality or delivery targets or because a customer explicitly requires that they do so.

Time Focus: These managers focus on the present, typically concentrating on the firm's contracts. They strive to respond immediately to customers' requirements and to maintain their present relationships. Consequently, little effort is made to unite the various elements of TQM into a coherent system for the sake of advancing the company.

View of Customers: Customers are typically viewed by these managers as superior in both their knowledge and their business practices. Here the customer leads and suppliers follow. Managers typically speak of emulating their customers and of becoming tuned to the way these customers do business. This orientation is in marked contrast to the developmental orientation, in which an equal partnership between the company and its customers is assumed.

Developmental Orientation

Main Concern: Top managers under the developmental orientation are not content with satisfying their current customers. They are deeply involved as well in an effort to transform the company into one of the best in the business. The company's goal is to compete against the best and the managers frequently talk of satisfying customers for whom the firm did not yet work. TQM is considered essential for the firm's growth, as is making employee education a key component of the industry.

Time Focus: These managers focus on the future. Many of their decisions are made not only to improve current performance, but also to better position the firm so that it could compete in years to come. Top managers and other employees express a personal dedication to making TQM work in the long term.

View of Customers: These managers see customers as partners in a cooperative relationship. An open dialogue between firm and its customers is seen important in sustaining the alliance. Being up-front with its customers about what can and cannot be done is critical for the long-run success of the partnership. The top managers of the companies like Toyota, Honda, Sony, Federal Express, DHL, Samsung, and Microsoft show developmental orientation.

Leadership

Leaders are people who are to do the right things right. When managing is to getting results through planning, organizing, directing, coordinating and controlling, leading is to improving systems through vision, alignment, empowerment, coaching (advising not directing) and care (by action not by speech). Feigenbaum (1996) mentions that "basic quality responsibility rests in the hands of company's top management. Getting quality results is not a short-term, instant-putting way to improve competitiveness; implementing TQM requires hands-on, continuous leadership". J.M.Juran (1994) also maintains that charting a new course (for TQM) requires extensive personal leadership and participation by managers. Research finding of Thomas C. Powell (1995) shows that committed leadership, open organization and employee empowerment are significantly positively associated with TQM performance.

Different leadership styles require to be adjusted with the progress in quality implementation process. For example, awareness level requires directive style, involvement level needs coaching style, commitment level claims participative style and ownership level demands delegatory style (Chris Tuffnell, 1995). Dean and Evans (1994) have identified four basic characteristics of successful TQM program. These are customer focus, strategic planning and leadership, continuous improvement, and empowerment and teamwork. They emphasize that leadership for quality is the

responsibility of top management. Senior leadership must create clear quality values and high expectations and build them into the way the company operates.

Servant Leadership: According to the earlier days definition of management, a manager is someone who gets work done BY others – the BOOS of an organization. Management definition of present days depicts a manager as someone who gets the work done WITH others – the LEADER of a project team. Naomi Stanford (1993) rightly points out key management responsibility. He maintains that staff in an organization interested in continuous improvement needs to develop attitudes and behaviors, which will drive it. Managers have a key role in fostering these attitudes and in modeling the required behavior. Therefore the present days managers need to demonstrate the server attitude towards followers and subordinates, particularly if they want to initiate and implement TQM successfully.

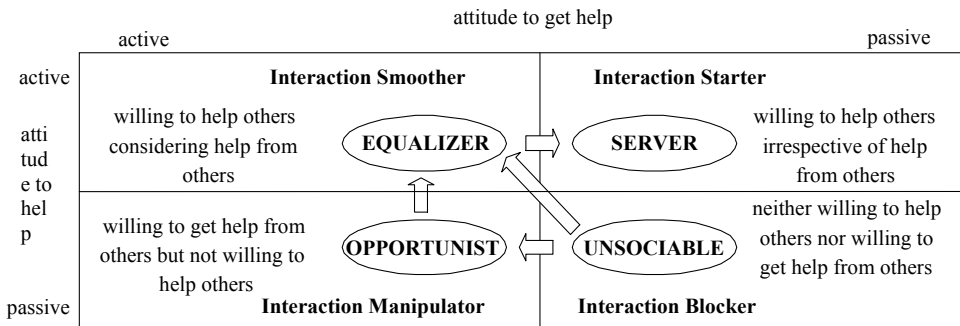


Fig. 2. Interaction orientation matrix.

Figure 2 showing interaction orientation has been developed to depict the unique characteristics of servant leader in terms of two attributes, namely attitude to help and attitude to get helped. Each of them is associated with active and passive states. The self-explanatory matrix makes it evident that servant leader must be in server quadrant. This implies that to create zeal and generate commitment among his followers, the servant leader must have active attitude to help them make their task easier without asking them much to help him.

The matrix also depicts the leader's direction of efforts relating to followers' psychological development. Since each employee in an organization is required to serve both internal and external customer, leader is supposed to pull his followers up in such a mental state that acts as a source of inspiration to serve the other needs. The arrows in the middle of the matrix indicate the directions to bring followers in 'Server State'. It is imperative for a leader to be in 'Server State' himself first if he wants to get his followers in that state. In this way the leader can have such followers who will help the leader to perform his intended task without waiting for being asked to do so.

Invert Pyramid Organization

When senior managers of an organization predominantly hold servant leadership attitude, the organization can be viewed as reverse-pyramid shape as depicted in Fig. 3. In such organization each person's job is to facilitate the job of his/her subordinates. For example, in Federal Express front-line manager's job is to make courier's job easier, and her manager's job is to make the front-line manager's job easier, and so on until the flow reaches the bottom head (CEO/COO) of the pyramid.

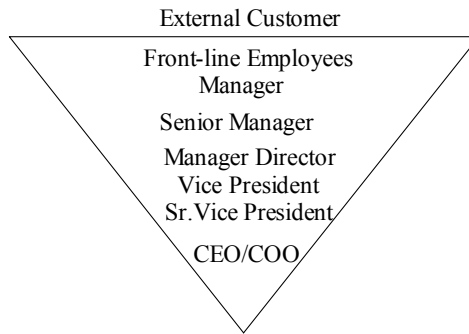


Fig. 3. Servantship and hierarchy. (Source: *Federal Express: The Visionade Real: a case by Greg Bounds*)

Empowerment

Empowerment is a concept, a philosophy, a set of organizational behavioral practices, and an organizational program. As a concept, empowerment is the vesting of decision-making or approval authority to employees where, traditionally, such authority was managerial prerogative. Empowerment as a philosophy and set of behavioral practices means allowing the self-managing teams and individuals to be in charge of their own career destinies, while meeting and exceeding company and personal goals through the shared company vision. Empowerment as an organizational program involves providing the framework and giving permission to the total workforce in order to unleash, develop, and utilize their skills and knowledge to their fullest potential for the good of the organization as well as for themselves (Ripley and Ripley, 1992).

Quality and empowerment training and retraining are the keys to unlocking the potential of the organization. It is mentioned earlier that Amsden *et al.* (1996) identified people empowerment as one of the six attributes of organization applying TQM successfully. Powell's (1995) finding reveals that TQM performance is positively associated with employee empowerment. Caroline Taylor (1993) describes how an empowered Quality Improvement Group of process operators at Boots Pharmaceuticals of Boots Company PLC has contributed to combat processing problems and improve production on a pharmaceuticals plant. Greg Bounds in his case "Toyota, Part III: Toyota Production System and Kaizen" quotes Fred Smith, CEO of Federal Express, "We must pay much more than lip service to empowerment. Employee must be empowered to do what has to be done in the name of customer satisfaction." He (Greg) writes about Toyota Motor Manufacturing (TMM), "It invests in sophisticated technology, but know that the real key to quality is the employee".

Confidence Levels and Empowerment

Figure- 4 is a simple matrix developed to show the evaluation impact on employee when his perception of the quality of the task he performed does and does not differ with the quality of that task as assessed by evaluating manager. From the self-explanatory figure it is clearly evident that the evaluation effect on employee is devastating when it falls in upper right corner. Real empowerment substantially reduces possibility of such devastating impact. The reason is that through real empowerment employees learn how to evaluate their own tasks, know what level of performance is expected of them and in many cases they themselves evaluate their own tasks. This

is particularly applicable when empowerment is real rather than lip service and organization accepts empowerment *as an organizational program* that creates environment conducive to unlocking the fullest potential of all people in an organization.

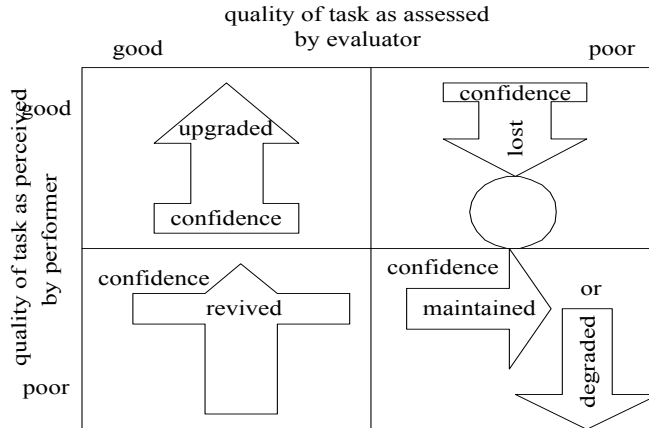


Fig. 4. Joint Impact of perceived and assessed quality on confidence.

Dimensions of Employee Empowerment

Building individual and system capabilities, alignment of values and commitment, and development of mutual trust between management and employees are the three key dimensions of employee empowerment. Individual ability, skill and knowledge can be built through education and training. Skilled and knowledgeable employee cannot work in absence of adequate support system. Therefore materials, methods and machines should be tuned to developed system.

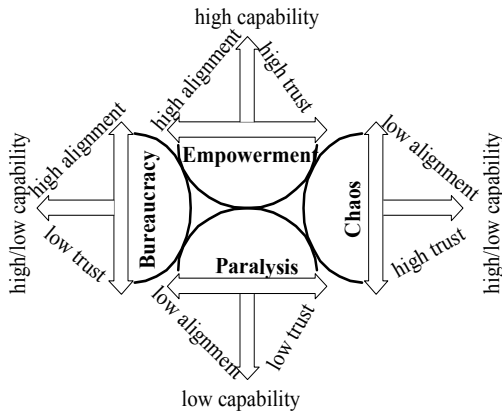


Fig. 5. Empowerment and its Dimensions (Source: Adapted from leadership training materials developed by K.S. Marlowe, Exxon Research and Engineering Co. 1988)

Building alignment requires teaching employees corporate mission, vision, values and objectives and helping them internalize those. Thus it generates employee commitment to organizational interests. Developing mutual trust refers to employee feelings. Trust is built if employee feels that they can trust their managers and their managers trust them. These three dimensions together can create paralysis, chaos, bureaucracy or empowerment depending on their levels – high and low. These four possible situations due to interaction of these dimensions with different levels are shown in Fig. 5. It is clear that empowerment results from the interaction of high capability, high alignment and high trust.

An Integrative View

Top management developmental orientation, servant leadership and employee empowerment discussed above can be put together in a framework to illustrate how internal people involvement may take place for TQM success as shown in Fig. 6. Accepting customers as partners, placing eyes on future and thinking of firm's growth collectively build developmental orientation in top managers. This orientation simultaneously necessitates and facilitates the demonstration of servant managerial leadership, which serves as a base for employee empowerment. Thus in organizations, adopting and practicing TQM successfully, internal people involvement process starts with intra-personal aspects (perception and feelings of customers, future and firm's growth) of top managers and developmental orientation emerges out through interpersonal and intergroup interactions of such managers. This orientation becomes visible through server leadership behavior and actions aiming at achieving the highest possible involvement of employees through real empowerment. All internal people involvement achieved in this way eventually lead to the success of TQM.

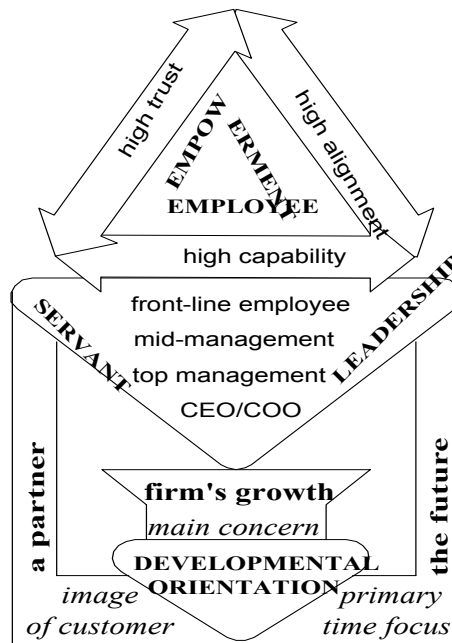


Fig. 6. An Integrated Framework for Internal People Involvement

Conclusion

For successful initiation and implementation of TQM in an organization, internal people commitment to and involvement in TQM efforts is essentially required. With server attitude, developmental oriented managers facilitate employee works, patronize them and empower them with a view to getting them committed and involved. For getting TQM benefits the development-oriented managers do not do things hastily and want results overnight. With great patience they develop trust among employees and make employees trustworthy. As TQM success is highly dependent on server attitude of every person in an organization, they try to bring each and every employee in 'Server State' gradually.

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