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Good Governance Through Quality Management

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This working paper is a revised version of the paper entitled as “**Achieving Excellence In The Developing Countries Through ISO 9000**” that was presented at the D-8 countries regional conference on “**Good Governance and Institutional Reforms**” held at Islamabad on 20th - 21st February 1999



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Good Governance Through Quality Management

Abstract: Good governance is a challenge to us all in the developing countries. How can it be achieved is a big Q for the worried and patriotic citizens. This paper discusses some pertinent issues and challenges being faced by the developing countries which serve as impediments to successful implementation of their development programmes and suggests appropriate solutions particularly with Pakistani perspective.

Introduction

Day before yesterday I was watching television and I heard the Finance Minister pleading the businessmen to help him achieve the revenue target as there is already a shortfall of Rs 3 billion. This statement raised many questions in my mind. I was wondering as to why the government failed to meet their target despite so much of planning at the top level. It was well evident that this was planning at its best.

But today in the morning when I started off from my home to come here to attend this seminar I passed through various signals and at some I had to stop because of the red light. At every stop I witnessed that none of the leader vehicle had stopped before the white line. Though a policeman was standing there but he was not bothered about it.

After the green light when the traffic started moving the vehicle coming from the front turned to his right without any consideration to my right of way. That short one minute was good enough to tell me that this is freedom at its best.

Issues in Good Governance

At the top level we fail to achieve our targets despite our planning and at the people's level it appears as if rules do not exist or else we have failed to enforce them. I have visited other developing countries and it seems that we are all sailing in the same boat. I think it is high time that we better analyze as to why we are faced with failures / crisis in governance at all levels from top to bottom, only in the developing countries, whereas it is flourishing well in the developed countries. Why we cannot deliver quality services to our citizens the same way as it is done in the developed world.

1. Is it that our citizens are more demanding? Or is it that our governments do not have the capacity to meet their demands accordingly?
2. Maybe we have never really understood what their expectations are or else there is no prioritization in achieving their aspirations?
3. Or else may be that we are following a system which is not effective, a system which is devoid of discipline and accountability.

When I tried to probe through these questions, I found that what we really lack is vision in the right direction, lack of realistic objective setting, non-existent monitoring and evaluation mechanism, with the result that we end up in a situation where no one can be made answerable for any thing. In nutshell we have a system devoid of any accountability whatsoever.

It must be recognized that problems are associated more with the systems than with the people. The existing systems need improvement and some of them even require reengineering. At the same time people also need to be educated, trained and developed in the right direction. Our educational system only provides us with information as how to earn our living but does not inculcate good character in us.

Whenever we seek solutions to our problems, generally habitual attempts are made to go for quick-fix solutions without understanding the problem and without analyzing the root cause of the problem.

So what do we need to do. I feel that if we follow the concepts of Total Quality Management (TQM) then we may be in a better position to address and resolve such issues. TQM methodology provides many problem-solving techniques. I am an ardent advocate of quality management being a solution provider in all aspects of our lives. One of the most important aspects of developing a total quality system is to first determine:

1. Who our valued customers are;
2. What their needs are; and then
3. How to go about satisfying those needs successfully.

Since we normally tend to consider only our rich citizens as our only valued customers, we see that our policies are designed and enacted just to please this section of our society. On the other hand, if we also consider the poor section of our society as well, as our valued customers, probably we would see our budgets more attuned towards fulfillment of expectations of the poor. The only time that they get where they can express their feelings is through voting in election period, but even this choice they cannot exercise willingly. The fact is that our present democratic system has failed to adequately address the issues and expectations of all the sections of our society in a balanced manner and we need to look into it as quick as possible.

Managing Good Governance

We should not only endeavour to manage and satisfy only those requirements of the citizens that may have been their explicit demands, we must also continuously monitor and evaluate their new aspirations and expectations, Then all the processes in the the government functionaries should be attuned towards attaining their targets at all levels through effective use of the quality improvement tools that add value to their services.

We need to establish a mechanism whereby we can determine as to what the needs of the people are. After finding out what the citizen needs are, they should be prioritized and then the government should assess its own resource capability and capacity to fulfill them.

Based on this assessment, we can set realistic and attainable targets and objectives in such a manner that they are quantitatively transferred down to the last tier of the government agencies that are responsible to achieve them as exhibited by Malaysia and Nigeria. But merely objective setting shall not be good enough until and unless there is a monitoring and evaluation mechanism in place which continuously provides a feedback to the top level planners to see for themselves whether the targets they had set for themselves were attainable or not. If targets do not seem to be realistic then our leadership should be bold enough to undertake immediate corrective measures/ actions that should also be a basis for some additional preventive measures to pre-empt similar shortfalls/ situations in the future. This feedback should also be effectively used for making people accountable for their deeds and this can also be a basis for evaluation of organizational and individual performances.

One method of bringing the "Voice of the Customer" to the attention of the management is through Quality Function Deployment (QFD) which is also a system for translating customer requirements in to service requirements to be delivered by the state functionaries.

Though TQM tools can be implemented independently it is more beneficial to first have a quality system like ISO 9000 in place in all departments of public-sector organizations because it is considered a basic foundation for TQM. ISO 9000 provides a system which at least assures establishment of realistic target setting with a strong feedback and corrective action mechanism while keeping the focus on satisfying customer needs through quality services.

But then another question arises - at what cost? There is no denying the fact that ISO 9000 certification is costly, however, at the same time it must also be recognized that there are benefits of implementing an ISO 9000 system – simplified and easier audits, improved communication and consistent quality. [3]. Ultimately at the end of the tunnel the system gives more benefits than your quality investment costs. . To alleviate the cost of establishing ISO 9000 system, the Malaysian government has established its own agency for the establishment, training and auditing of its organizations and departments. Similar efforts can be emulated by the other developing countries as well.

Here I would like to advise that we should not have very high expectations and hopes while we look for answers to our management issues and concerns through ISO 9000 and TQM, primarily because while trying to emulate others we rarely give due consideration to the management styles and cultural aspects of the countries or situations involved.

Which Implementation Strategy be adopted?

While considering implementation of ISO 9000 in an organization, it is very important to decide as to what should be done first and what strategy be adopted. Generally it is recommended that organization development and induction of quality culture and quality control should precede before we start the processes involved with the ISO 9000 implementation in an organization. The matter of fact is that it all depends upon the type of organization, its size, its management style, type of services provided, number of processes involved, etc.

In some organizations I have witnessed organizational problems, in others we see wastage, in many you would find that all workers are illiterate, and still more are devoid of any concept of management practices. Now in such situations if we apply "the Client is the King" type solutions, then instead of taking them on top of the world we would rather make them paupers. We should not apply fixed remedies for different ills in an organization. Problems faced by the small departments are entirely different from large organizations/ departments. Therefore we need to formulate separate strategies for various types of institutions in the public sector. That is why we can not have a standardized plan for the implementation of ISO 9000, and that is where the expertise of consultants is recommended.

Conclusion

I feel that governments in the developing countries seriously lack expertise in corporate quality planning (i.e. formulation of "SMART" objectives from own local perspective) and self-accountability. We are in a habit of implementing imported ideas verbatim, and do not undertake needs analysis of our own situation and circumstances.

I strongly recommend that while considering implementation of any imported plan we must undertake gap analysis and take into consideration those socio-cultural-technological aspects as well which are imbedded in our society, and then measure it up with the imported ideas, only then would we be able to provide total solutions to our domestic problems. Or else we would be just placing plaques and statues of our achievements which are actually devoid of any quality spirit.

To conclude, the governments must immediately start regulating their goals of good governance through effective utilization of quality management tools and practices.

With the above recommendations in place, the public sector shall soon be able to realize the true benefits of developing a quality assurance system in their organizations, and we would see overall improvement in quality of services, increase in productivity and enhancement in efficiency of these organizations.

About the Author

Engr Tariq Abdul Majid ((Squadron Leader Retired) did his BE (Avionics) from PAF College of Aeronautical Engineering, Korangi Creek (Karachi) in 1979, MBA from Preston University USA (Islamabad Campus) in 1996, and BSc (Hons) War Studies from PAF Air War College Karachi in 1993.

An IRCA Registered Quality Auditor, he has conducted a number of IRCA approved ISO 9000 Lead Auditor Courses for AOQC Moody at international level, and is also providing training-cum-consultancy services on ISO 9000 QMS to various organizations/companies in Pakistan. He has also written many working papers on Engineering and Quality Management.

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