

## Revisiting Total Quality Management in Service Organisations

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### ABSTRACT

Scholars have studied Total Quality Management (TQM) implementation in manufacturing companies, but there are few studies on TQM implementation in service organizations. The aim of this paper is to describe the practices, benefits, and obstacles of implementing TQM in service organizations. The research looked at seven TQM activities as well as some of the factors that impede TQM implementation, such as middle-management resistance to change, poor education and training, inappropriate organisational culture, complexity of processes and inappropriate organisational structure. Managers will be able to create more efficient strategies for implementing TQM in service organizations by identifying these variables and following the recommendations.

**KEYWORDS:** Total Quality Management, Top-Management Support, Customer Focus, Employee Empowerment and Involvement, Supply Quality Management, Process Management, Continuous Improvement, Education and Training

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### I. INTRODUCTION

The service sector is perhaps the most critical part of a country's economy. It employs the bulk of the population in both developed and developing countries (Ghobadian et al., 1994), accounting for 75% of their respective Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Masud et al., 2018). Moreover, recently, the impact of the service sector on the GDP of many economies has been domineering and remarkable (Gupta et al., 2005; Ishola&Olusoji, 2020). According to United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (2019), this sector now stands tall among countries in Africa.

Due to rebasing of GDP in 2018, and with a GDP of \$80.2 trillion, the economy of Nigeria was acknowledged to be the largest in Africa (The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2019). This led to the service sector having a sharp increase of contribution to the nations coffers from 29.04% in the first quarter of 2015 to 51.59% in the second quarter, which has made it earn the position of the highest contributor to real GDP (₦8,181,239.94 million) (NBS, 2019). Notwithstanding the dwindling economic situations, this noble sector was outstanding. Telecommunications/ICT, banking, retail and wholesale businesses, and the Nigerian movie industry/production (Nollywood) are all key to this astronomical growth, which was aided by encouraging government policies and rise in foreign direct investment (FDI) (Ishola&Olusoji, 2020).

There is an increasing interest in total quality among service organizations as a result of the importance of quality service delivery and the position of service organizations in the economy. Also, top level managers in service organisations want to attend to quality issues with vigor and well-structured methods that have laid down procedures of the current state of service quality, the choice of the customer, and the overall features of service quality. Moreover, due to the fact that services are intangible, the importance to customers is unexplainable.

Additionally, quality service is one of the most vital means used to expound and validate behavioural goals connected to possible and preferred effects on financial performance, as well as other organizational outcomes. It is one vital tool used to keep an organization afloat. Furthermore, Cook and Verma (2002) asserted that quality service is a critical requirement for organisational performance.

In order to maximize quality, organisations used various methods ranging from quality control to performance development (Yang, 2006). Total Quality Management (TQM) is the most frequently used method (Sila, 2007; Kumar et al., 2009b). According to Talib and Rahman (2013), the upsurge for the need of TQM is as a result of the service industry's significant growth and intense market rivalry. In recent decades, TQM has been identified as a management theory that has gained popularity (Gunasekaram et al., 1998; Benavides-Velasco et al., 2014).

Appropriate TQM processes, according to Litton (2001) and Kumar et al (2009a), boost quality service, which leads to increased customer satisfaction and profitability. TQM seeks to monitor quality (Hafeez et al., 2006) and calls for the development of a quality strategy (Kanji & Wallace, 2000), which must include a well-

defined structure (Chin & Pun, 2002). TQM has been credited with improving internal communication, analytical skill/problem-solving, employee engagement and motivation, a stronger bond with vendors (suppliers), awareness of customers' needs, and a drive to reduce errors and waste (Talib et al., 2013).

It is pertinent to note that the major goal of TQM is to boost total quality (process and service quality) while controlling and lowering modification and expense (Antony et al., 2002). The real advantage of TQM is that it boosts organizational performance (Bon & Mustafa, 2013). Similarly, Saleh and Hasan (2015) claim that TQM benefits organizations by boosting employee involvement, increasing output, improving quality, reducing rework, lowering quality costs, boosting market share and turnover, and employee satisfaction, as well as improving competitive advantage. TQM is essential for aligning organizational managing competence (Zehir et al., 2012; Ahmad et al., 2013; Talib et al., 2013; Dubey, 2015; Fatemi et al., 2016). Within processes and organizations, TQM supports in the imposition of standards, the attainment of competence, and the identification of personnel responsibilities, and it plays a vital role in ensuring that companies fulfill their objectives (Mehralian et al., 2017).

Various studies by scholars have highlighted the worth of TQM in service organizations such as financial services, social and personal services, retail and wholesale (Loonam & O'Loughlin, 2008; Ho & Lin, 2010), transportation and education (Bayraktar et al., 2008; Mehralizadeh & Safaeemoghaddam, 2010), government services, hotels and restaurants (Claver-Cortés et al., 2008; Daghfous & Barkhi, 2009), health care (Duggirala et al., 2008; Hazilah, 2009), information and communication technology (Santouridis & Trivellas, 2010).

According to several scholars, about two-thirds of TQM implementation projects is not successful (David & Strang, 2006; Rich, 2008; Miller et al., 2009), while others have shown varied outcomes (Kaynak, 2003; Nair, 2006). As a result of these findings, managers will find it challenging to grasp what elements lead to TQM performance.

Based on the aforementioned, the goal of this research is to look into the most important total quality management concepts, as well as their challenges and effective implementation methods in service firms. The study is broken into five sections. After the introduction, the second part follows with an all-inclusive literature review of TQM principles, advantages, and activities. The third part involves the challenges of implementing TQM. Part four discusses TQM methods in service firms, and part five concludes the study with suggestions and recommendations.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1: Total Quality Management (TQM)**

Scholars in the manufacturing sector introduced Total Quality Management (TQM) into management literature (e.g. Crosby, 1979; Deming, 1986; Juran, 1988). TQM is a management concept that is based on the entire management of a firm. Provision of high-quality goods and services to customers is paramount in TQM (Daft & Becker, 1997). TQM is a management concept as well as a collection of techniques and processes that focus on quality as a whole. Thus, everyone is responsible for maintaining consistency (Gunasekaram et al., 1998).

Mossard (1991) opined that TQM is the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches as well as personnel to boost a firm's products and services, including all of the firm's procedures as well as the degree to which the customer's needs are met on a continuous basis. TQM is defined as "continuous improvement that incorporates all operations at all levels, assesses performance, centered on leadership and employee engagement and motivation, and take into account the whole system" (Flood, 1993, p.10).

### **2.2: Benefits of TQM**

In summarizing the fundamental benefits of TQM, Antony et al. (2002) advanced an exhaustive set of seven benefits from a factor analysis, namely: employee engagement, connectivity, productivity, customer satisfaction, competitive advantage, productivity, and the cost of bad quality have all increased. Similarly, Siddiqui and Rahman (2007) found that TQM benefits organizations by increasing productivity, lowering maintenance costs, improving service quality, increasing customer satisfaction, improving product quality, optimizing personnel, and improving customer relationships. In order to enhance a firm's performance, TQM must be recognized as a major determinant. (Sun, et al., 2004; Talib et al., 2011).

According to Ahmad et al. (2013) and Dubey (2015), TQM enables organizations to deliver high-quality goods, happier consumers, lower operating costs, and increase financial, quality, innovation, and employee satisfaction. It is focused on continuous improvement, meeting customer needs and requirements, minimizing rework and waste, increased employee empowerment and involvement, team-based problem solving, process management, close relationships with suppliers, top management commitment and regular support, human resource training and development, benchmarking, and other critical success factors. (Kayank, 2003; Aquilani et al., 2017).

Kaynak(2003), Nair (2006) and Brun(2011) opine that as a contribution to increased customer satisfaction; higher productivity, cost reduction, and elimination of waste are all advantages of TQM. Similarly, Modgil and Sharma (2016) submitted that TQM aids firms in reducing misrepresentation of production process and eliminating waste while improving performance quality.

### **2.3: TQM Practices**

The components of TQM and the major practices for TQM performance were explored in an aggregated analysis of the previous literature on TQM (Antony et al., 2002; Sadikoglu&Zehir, 2010). Several activities that have been deemed significant to the successful implementation of TQM have been clearly stated in this study. Nevertheless, no study has proven to successfully reveal the best practices to implement TQM, which has led to not having a definite TQM practices to be used in order to attain expected outcome (Ooi et al., 2008).

Eleven TQM variables were submitted by Brah et al. (2000) namely: benchmarking, quality improvement incentives, organization, customer focus, employee involvement, service design, supplier quality management (QM), process improvement, cleanliness, employee empowerment, employee empowerment, and top management support as eleven TQM constructs. Ten TQM activities were also revealed by Kanji and Wallace (2000): customer focus and satisfaction, communication, top-management commitment, zero defects, employee involvement, teamwork, human resource management, process management, quality assurance, and quality information and performance measurement.

Likewise, Sila (2007) in his view expounded six TQM practices as process management, leadership, customer focus, supplier management, human resource management, and knowledge and analysis, while Bayraktar et al. (2008) portrayed some critical success factors (CSFs) of TQM such as: education and training, vision, process control and improvement, quality system improvement, measurement and evaluation, employee engagement, recognition and reward, student focus, program design, leadership, and other stakeholders focus.

Furthermore, 10 TQM practices which form a structural relationship with organizational performance in ISO 9001:2000 certified Greek companies were identified by Fotopoulos and Psomas (2010) namely: supplier management and strategic quality planning, information, knowledge and education, customer focus, analysis, leadership, continuous improvement, employee management and involvement, and process management.

Following a detailed study by Sadikoglu and Zehir (2010), they recognized a set of eight TQM activities which are: information and analysis, customer focus, supplier management, employee management, leadership, process management, training, and continuous improvement. Likewise, Talib et al. (2012) submitted 17 TQM practices namely: Customer focus, product and service design, training and education, quality culture, continuous improvement and innovation, supplier management, communication, employee involvement, information and analysis, process management, quality systems, employee encouragement, human resource management, teamwork, strategic planning, top-management engagement, and benchmarking.

However, for this study, the seven TQM activities for service industries as proposed by Adem and Viridi (2020) are used and chosen because they have been validated as vital practices in the implementation of TQM in both the manufacturing and service sectors by an avalanche of scholars (Antony et al., 2002). They are: continuous improvement, customer focus, supply quality management, education and training, employee empowerment and involvement, process management, and top management support.

#### **(1) Continuous Improvement**

In continuous improvement, an innovative plan is put to the test to evaluate how successfully it balances advantages and costs. A strategic plan is developed and tested on a minimal scale to ascertain its importance to the firm. Management is expected to implement the new approach, if its outcome is superior at a reasonable cost. Hence, approaches that the outcomes are not favourable are adjusted or discarded. Continuous improvement is the process of constantly refining operations, services, strategies, and procedures in order to get superior results (Dean & Bowen, 1994).

Furthermore, Ahire et al. (1996) averred that continuous improvement in TQM implies the often modernization of product or service quality to attend to varying customer standards. Salaheldin(2009) and Kemboi (2016) posit that continuous improvement bolsters productivity, while (Kiprotich et al., 2018) reported that it promotes competitiveness. Moreover, Continuous improvement reduces delivery lead times, error, rework, redundant slack and deviation from quality standards, which leads to superior corporate performance (Sadikoglu&Zehir, 2010).

#### **(2) Customer Focus**

Customer-focused firms possess a solid understanding of the market, enabling them to maintain strong customer relationships, efficiently obtain market information, and swiftly act on quality customers' needs. This

is based on creating a transparent, pleasant, and long-lasting relationship with consumers in order to meet their needs, tastes, and request by making available premium goods and services.(Morrow, 1997; Reed, et al., 1996). It is the core of customer relationship management that emphasizes the establishment of effective communication channels between the organisation and customers. Regular visitations, frequent meetings with customers, and gathering feedback data on product and service quality lead to quality improvement (Lascalles& Dale, 1989). According to Ooi, Lui, Hung and Yen, (2010), customer focused organisations always listen to their customers, obtain information from them, analyze the information, determine their needs and expectations. According to Jablonski (1992), customer focus is critical in TQM because the customer is the one who gives a feedback about every product/quality service.

As a means to fulfill customer demands and prospects customer focus enhances constant quality in the creation and distribution of products and services (Crosby, 1979; Deming, 1986; Juran, 1988; Chen et al. 2008; Cai, 2009).

(3) ***Suppler Quality Management***

According to Ellram (1991), who surmised that strategic management of supplier relationships is crucial to the success of firms because of the level of commitment required and the existence of competitive information swapped among vendors. Supplier quality management helps firms to pick a small number of highly dependable vendors mainly due to high quality and ensuring the delivery of premium goods and services. Supplier quality management includes supplier support product enhancement, reliance on supplier process control (Kaynak, 2003), and supplier quality control (Khanna et al., 2011).

(4) ***Education and training***

Education and training is a systematic learning process that enables employees to enhance their performance by updating job-related skills, technical know-how, capabilities and views. Deming in 1986, highlighted education and training as prerequisites for quality improvement, "both on the job and as part of a continuous program of education and self-development" (Ryan, Deane & Ellington, 2001, p.45).

According to Talib and Rahman (2010), education and training aid in the maintenance of a certified high level of quality in the service industry, by divulging skills and knowledge of TQM procedures (such as statistical quality control) with the aim of meeting predetermined goals (Yang, 2006; Talib&Rahman, 2010).

(5) ***Employee Empowerment and Involvement***

Employee empowerment involves giving organisational members freedom, authority, autonomy and flexibility to make decisions or take action regarding their day-to-day tasks (Hass, 2010; Saif&Saleh, 2013; Hewagama et al., 2019). Empowerment leads to delegation of authority and decentralization of power (Islam et al., 2014). This fosters organizational trust and distorts the link between employees and top level management (Meyerson&Dewettinck, 2012). Employees who are structurally and psychologically empowered (Mathieu et al., 2006) with greater responsibilities and tasks are more satisfied on the job, more innovative in solving problems, and faster in responding to customer demand, resulting in enhanced market share, customer loyalty, and organizational success. (Walton, 1985; Chamberlin et al., 2018).

Closely related to employee empowerment is involvement. Bosak, Dawson, Flood &Peccei (2017) define employee involvement as "employees' opportunities to contribute their views and actively participate in organizational decision making" (p. 19). It refers to how much workers identify with their work, engage in decision-making, and see their efforts as significant and essential in terms of their self-worth (Saleh&Hosek, 1976). Through involvement organisations build human capacity, whereby top management share responsibility, knowledge, power and information across all levels.

Employee empowerment in TQM proposes that managers may easily handle quality decision-making activities and quality-related concerns when they notice problems and develop solutions by decentralizing control, delegating, and distributing needed resources to all employees (Hill &Huq, 2004). According to Mohrman et al. (1996), involvement activities by employees in TQM are an avenue for a firm's overall success by encouraging engagement in order to get the greatest results.

(6) ***Process Management***

TQM is founded on the concept that by enhancing the quality of the processes, the quality of the product may be enhanced (Ahire, Golhar& Waller, 1996). Identifying the work to be done, assigning roles to individuals, and arranging employees in an organizational structure in sequence of decision-making are all processes. It is due to the workplace's well implemented method (Harrington, 1991) and that workers execute jobs efficiently and effectively (Oakland, 2003). Process management reduce process variance (Flynn et al., 1995), enhance the product quality (Zehir&Sadikoglu, 2010), and has an impact on operational efficiency (Khanna et al., 2011; Chauke et al., 2019).



(7) **Top Management Support**

The personnel that pilot the affairs of the firm by establishing plans and deciding the strategic direction of a business are known to as top management (Geletkanycz, & Sanders, 2004). Their importance to the firm cannot be overemphasized (Sadikoglu&Olcay, 2014) because of their conceptual skills, greater goals, and resources (Senge, 1990), coordinate work processes (Grint&Willcocks, 2007), and define values and objectives that are imparted to all levels of the firm (Guffey&Nienhaus, 2002). Thus, their insistence of quality over cost and allocation of sufficient resources to affirm quality leads to making employees striving to meet quality (Ahire, et al., 1996).Khanna (2009) and Fotopoulos and Psomas (2010) posit that top management support is vital in initiating TQM initiatives. Similarly, Truong et al. (2014) averred that with top management support for quality management, there will be premium quality goods and services, which aids operational performance.

### **III. OBSTACLES TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT**

In order to avoid the failure of TQM approaches, getting acquainted to TQM obstacles is important (Mosadeghrad, 2014). Matta et al. (1996) revealed three barriers to effective TQM implementation in a study of Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA) winnersnamely: altering corporate culture, integrating with suppliers and customers, and achieving and maintaining employee buy-in.

Chin and Pun (2002) discovered ill-timed TQM, a lack of financial commitment to training and education, poor management leadership, a failure to recognize the value of employee involvement, inadequate training, poor employee cooperation, and a poor organizational culture in a study of Chinese companies.

Sebastianelli and Tamimi (2003) identified five “groups of barriers” based on a factor analysis: resources for TQM,insufficient-leadership for quality, inadequate planning for quality, customer focus,and lack of human resource development and management. This is in tandem with the actions discussed previously, namely administrators, clients, and staff, are all one. Applied factor analysis by Hill (2008) was used to group twenty-one obstacles to TQM implementation into three categories: leadership for quality, insufficient-planning for quality and training on quality. Furthermore, Bhat and Rajashekhar (2009) discovered five groups of obstacles using a factor analysis from an Indian environment: resources, total involvement, management commitment, insufficient-customer orientation, and planning for quality.

Griffin (1998), Fisher (1992), and Witcher (1994) in their studies divided the causes of TQM barriers into three categories:(1) ineffective or inappropriate TQM model; (2) ineffective or inappropriate TQM implementation method; and (3) inappropriate environment for TQM implementation.

Furthermore, Ali (2013) stated that a supportive environment is all TQM initiatives needs to be successful. He identified 39 impediments to efficient TQM adoption in service organizations, categorizing them into five groups:

(1) **Strategic Barriers: Middle-Management Resistance to Change**

It is obvious that managers can be an asset as well as an obstruction to TQM. Juran (1988) argued that peradventure there is any problem of quality , management should be held responsible. According to him, most of the problems associated with the implementation of TQM are connected to the efficacy of the TQM programme on ground. In their views, Manz and Sims (1993) opined that managers at bthe middle are the greatest obstacle to execution of TQM. There will not be TQM without their assistance. Because firms are unable to incorporate middle-level managers in TQM projects, they oppose and react negatively to the change program (Jacobsen, 2008).

(2) **Human Resources Barriers: Poor Education and Training**

Deficiency in education and training is another important barrier to TQM implementation. Education and training are important parts of the TQM program because they serve as a link to connect quality, gain engagement, and change behavior in the direction of continuous quality improvement. Employees can benefit from education and training in terms of job-related skills, interaction/communication, and teamwork, as well as overcoming resistance to TQM transformation (Kaynak & Hartley, 2008).

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(3) **Contextual Barriers: Inappropriate Organisational Culture**

Organizational culture is one of the most important facets of TQM implementation. Cultural variables account for 50% of TQM implementation discrepancy (Wakefield et al., 2001; Mosadeghrad, 2006). In the service sector, cultural impediments to TQM implementation are the most difficult to surpass (Zabada et al., 1998; Huq & Martin, 2000). Creating a caring and helpful culture is one of the most commonly cited issues of TQM implementation in the service sector. Subcultures such as surgeons, nurses, and paramedics, exist in the health-care profession with each having their own interests. They each have their own definitions of quality and methods for obtaining it. Hence, executives in the healthcare industry have limited say in TQM adoption. (Natarajan, 2006; Piligrimiene & Buciniene, 2008).

**(4) Procedural Barriers:** Complexity of Processes

Jabnoun (2005) submitted that a process that is supported by an organized structure is required to boost the effectiveness of applying TQM practices in service organisations. Moreno-Lozon and Peris (1998) asserted that TQM is strenuous to implement in a complicated mechanistic and administrative system. TQM implementation, on the other hand, is effective when there is a complex organic system with little centralization and formalization (Tata & Prasad, 1998). With decentralization, employee involvement and engagement in TQM activities rises, and the power imbalance among service organizations diminishes (Mosadeghrad, 2006).

**(5) Structural Barriers:** Inappropriate Organisational Structure

Organisational structure is another factor that affects the implementation of TQM. The relationship between structure and strategy is closely intertwined. According to Adinolfi (2003) and Naveh and Stern (2005) the deployment of TQM can be challenging in a highly organized service organization with a hierarchical and departmentalized structure. A dynamic, bureaucratic, and highly departmentalized structure, in addition to many segments of authority, are the most complex challenges to implementing TQM in service companies, according to Short and Rahim (1995). Several service organization setups are organized into departments with significant autonomy, boosting their ability to withstand change even more (Francois et al., 2003). This structure makes horizontal and vertical coordination difficult, which is crucial for effective TQM adoption.

**IV. TQM PRACTICES IN SERVICE AND MANUFACTURING ORGANIZATIONS – KEY DIFFERENCES**

TQM is mostly employed in manufacturing and operations, with minimal progress in other domains such as services (Sohal & Terziowski, 2000). TQM was essential in service organizations due to the expanding importance of the service industry and the volatile nature of the environment (Juneja et al., 2011). It is evident, that TQM services organizations differ from manufacturing organizations (Lenka et al., 2010). The difference is evident in operation, product design, process, and customer relationship. Manufacturing companies are more concerned with the process and product quality, whereas service companies are more concerned with client contentment. Manufacturing firms can implement an environmental management system such as the ISO certificate and observe social responsibility, but service organizations are accountable for TQM procedures such as contractor and vendor relations. Furthermore, training (training in sophisticated statistical methods) is critical in manufacturing organizations, whereas training (communication and interpersonal skills) is the fundamental. (Lenka et al., 2010; Talib et al., 2011; Talib, et al., 2012).

**Table 1:** TQM Practices in Service and Manufacturing Organizations

<b>TQM Practices in Service Organizations</b>	<b>TQM Practices in Manufacturing organizations</b>
Human focus	Product/technology focus
Focus on top management commitment and visionary Leadership	Focus on top management commitment and visionary leadership
Continuous improvement	Continuous improvement
Emphasis is on interpersonal relationship and communication skills	In recruitment and selection, emphasis is on technical skills
Statistical process control is inappropriate in professional services	Statistical process control is prescribed universally
Checks customer defections	Elimination of product defects
Quality measurement through customer satisfaction	Quality measurement by statistical techniques
Physical evidence has an impact on service quality	Physical evidence is not applicable

*Source: Adapted from Lenka et al. (2010)*

**V. CONCLUSION, SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATION**

This study explores some of the obstacles that service organizations face in implementing TQM effectively. Middle-management opposition to change, inadequate education and training, an unsuitable organizational culture, complicated process, and a futile organizational structure are all problems that limit TQM implementation in service firms.

The paper accentuates the call for a TQM model to act as a reference for TQM implementation, and also as an empirical study of the perceived barriers.

The following suggestions are made based on the obstacles found in the literature:

- (1) By including middle-level managers in TQM programs, service organizations should ensure management transformation or change.
- (2) Employee education and training should be prioritized in order to establish a more contented employees and a conducive workplace for innovation and resourcefulness. As a way of enhancing service quality, service managers should also enhance employees' technical abilities.
- (3) A positive culture (corporate culture of quality) should be developed through job security, cooperation, and fair pay. This will include developing and enhancing confidence, continuous improvement, empowerment, teamwork, risk taking, innovation, and incentive.
- (4) To eliminate method complications, service organizations should avoid multi-faceted procedures when implementing TQM activities.
- (5) Service firms should develop a quality management infrastructure if they intend to incorporate and maintain a TQM programme. Furthermore, they should also constitute a quality management board or department to deal with any structural barriers that might surface.

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