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TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT AS A TOOL FOR EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines Total Quality Management as a concept and a useful tool for efficiency and effectiveness in public administration. It views TQM as applicable in public administration just as it has been found useful in business and private administration. It recommends total commitment on the part of Government on TQM and encourages public administration practioners in Nigeria to embrace change so as to bring about a more result oriented public administrative system in Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Public Administration is that administration found in a political setting geared towards implementing public policies made by the politicians or political masters. It is the opposite of Business or private administration in the sense that while public administration is associated with Government and its policies, private administration is purely for individuals or groups whose main reason of venturing into business is to make profit. Though, making profit is not the entire goal of public administration, providing quality services has become the expectations of most of the people in the polity. Indeed, for any Government to survive, it must be prepared to render not only services but quality services to the people. Thus, whether public or private, quality services and products are sine — qua - non to the survival of the organization. There is no gainsaying the fact therefore, that to compete in today's economy; organizations need to provide high quality products and services. It is this search for continuous improvement in quality that have led organizations to Total Quality Management (TQM) as the most effective and powerful route to achieving excellence. TQM is an

organization's effort to continuously improve the ways, people, machines, and systems accomplish work for the overall benefit of the organization and its end users. Although TQM is recent as a philosophy. Its origin dates back to Taylor's scientific management. It is a culture, a way of thinking about and doing things in an organization which enables it to consistently achieve planned and continuous improvement in the quality of all its activities, processes and results in order to meet or exceed the expectations of the end users. Though the concept (TQM) is more recent, it has been effectively adopted in the private sector for excellent service delivery and improved profitability (Otokiti, 2001:1). TQM in the context of public administration is understood within the perspective of comprehensive quality services. It is for this reason that Stahl (1995) describes it as a system approach. to management that seeks to continuously improve organizational processes and system. It is the integration of all functions and processes within an organization in order to achieve continuous improvement in the quality of goods and services. The goal is customer (people) satisfaction (Ross, 1999).

The application of TQM in organizations

TQM is all about quality in terms of all the functions of an organization and it is a start - to finish process that integrates interrelated functions at all levels. These functions include: Planning, organizing, staffing. Directing or leading, coordination, Reporting and Budgeting. It is therefore a systems approach that considers every interaction between the various elements of the organization. Hence the expectation is that TQM will bring synergistic gains to the organization since the overall effectiveness of the entire system could be higher than the sum of the individual outputs from the subsystems. It is the combination of quality and management tools aimed at increasing business and reducing losses due to wasteful practices. By implication TQM refers to the most efficient and effective management that any system could put in place and adopt in order to save the totality of established system for efficient and resourceful competitive organization. TQM as argued by Nicholas (2006:203) is a very effective

management tool in refocusing Governments' mission as servants of the citizenry by concentrating the resources of public administration on the Governmental processes that can be enhanced to deliver higher quality services, by encouraging the decentralization of bureaucratic authority, by stressing the prevention of problems, and by helping public administrators understand that most problems result from faulty system, not faulty people, and understanding that could have positive and profound effects on human resources management in the public sector. In the same vein, with Total Quality Management, end users would have the opportunity to participate in the policy making process. In general, TQM involves the organization's long-term commitment to the continuous improvement in quality, throughout the organization and with active participation of all members at all levels, to meet and exceed customer expectations. This top-managementdriven philosophy is considered a way of effectiveness in organizations. In a sense, TQM is simply effective management (Weihrich and Koontz, 2006:547).

Core values of TQM

In the views of Hodaerts, et al (1994:9-11), TQM has several core values. These are;

- Methods and processes are designed to meet the needs of internal and external customers (that is, whomsoever the process is intended to serve).
- Every employee in the organization receives training in quality.
- Quality is designed into a product or service so that errors are prevented from occurring, rather than being defected and corrected in an error prone product or service.
- The organization promotes cooperation with vendors, and customers to improve quality and hold down cost.

Managers measure progress with feedback based on data.

Based on these values the TQM approach provides guidelines for all the organizational activities, including human resource management. To promote quality, organizations need an environment that supports innovation, creativity and risk taking to meet customer demands. Problem solving should bring together managers, employees and customers. Employee should communicate with managers about customer needs. Weihrich and Koontz (2006:548) therefore argued that the quality improvement efforts need to be continuously monitored through ongoing data collection, evaluation, and feedback and improvement programs. TQM is not a one-time effort; instead, it is a continual, long term endeavor that needs to be recognized, reinforced and rewarded. When done effectively, TQM should result in greater customer satisfaction, fewer defects and less waste, increased total productivity, reduced costs and improved profitability, and an environment in which quality has high priority. From the above discussion so far, it shows that TQM views an organization as a collection of processes. It maintains that organizations should incorporate the knowledge and experiences of workers. The simple objective of TQM is "Do the right things, right the first time, every time". TQM is infinitely variable and acceptable. Although originally applied to manufacturing operations, and for a number of years only used in that area, TQM is now becoming recognized as a generic management tool, yet as applicable in service and public sector organizations.

THE GUIDING PRINCIPLE TO EFFECTIVE TQM POLICY IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Although empirical analysis is limited, it does appear that the introduction of TQM can improve the attitude and morale of public workers. For the implementation of effective and workable TQM policy, the following guidelines have been identified as essential for its optimum efficiency and assessment in the public service. The most important of these guidelines according to Otokiti (2001:18) are;

- The understanding of both the proximate and ultimate relationship between TQM and the element of behavioral and cultural change.

- The understanding of the system and subsystem relationship essential for a successful complementation of management together with the behavioral and cultural commitment of target participants.

- The understanding of TQM as a composite system either by default or by choice.

As Choppins (1995) puts it, the principle of effective TQM includes the following;

1. TQM must overly be the highest priority of the organization and any definition of quality should include satisfying, conforming to the needs and expectations of customers.

2. The concept of customers include organizational staff, investors, employees, stockholders, suppliers, the commodity and every interpersonal relationship and the long term satisfaction of customers and clients need will be one of the aims of total quality organization.

3. It must have a clear stated, widely understood and generally acceptable direction and will communicate openly and clearly its principles, beliefs, values, mission statement, and policy for quality sake.

4. The ethics of TQM must embody values, beliefs, and thus total quality is intrinsic to every activity, decision and action.

5. The highest level of integrity; honest thrust and openness are essential ingredients of TQM.

For a successful TQM policy in the public sector therefore, organizational development and human resources development systems must be aligned and incorporated in the TQM system. This can diagrammatically be explained as;
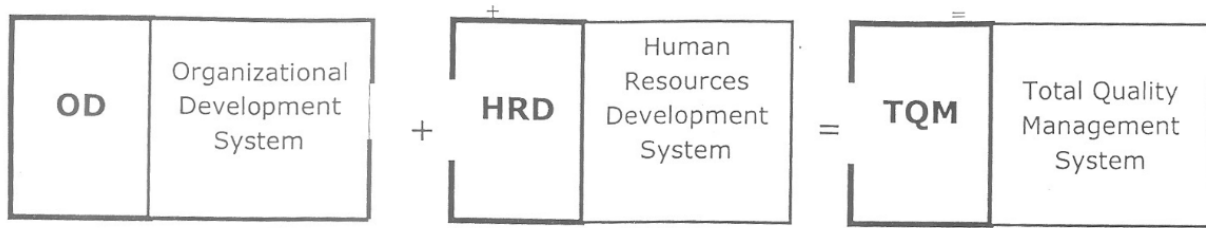
In achieving effective TQM policy in public administration both administrators and managers must understand organizational development system. Also Otokiti (2001:21) observes that the human resources development (HRD) explains the importance attached to people based policy. People resource centers and impact measurement of HRD relates four public service elements to profitability and effectiveness. These elements are: Basic, Supportive, Promotional and Regulatory services. All functional aspects of HRD blend with organizational development (OD) and quality management (TQM) to produce optimum service.

IMPLEMENTATION PRINCIPLES AND PROCESSES TO TQM IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

A preliminary step in TQM implementation is to assess the organization's current reality. Relevant preconditions have to do with the organization's history, its current needs, precipitating events leading to TQM, and the existing employee quality of working life. If the current reality does not include important preconditions, TQM should be delayed until the organization is in a state in which TQM is likely to succeed (Hashmi, 2004:2-3). If an organization has a track record of effective responsiveness to the environment, and if it has been able to successfully change the way it operates when needed, TQM will be easier to implement. If an organization has been historically reactive and has no skill at improving its operating systems, there will be both employee skepticism and a lack of skilled change agents. If this condition prevails, Tichey (1983) therefore recommends that a comprehensive program of management and leadership development may be instituted. A management audit is a good assessment tool to identify current levels of organizational functioning and area in need of change. An

organization should be basically healthy before beginning TQM. To Introduce and implement effective TQM policy; Otokiti (2000:2) argued that the operators must incorporate the following dimensional elements;

(1) The Implementation strategies;

The implementation strategies consists of two significant approaches namely (a) The traditional management approaches, and (b) The integrative approach. The traditional management approach is the most common approach. This approach is sometimes forced on people's existing culture without negotiating with or gaining commitment of their impact on individual's life. This approach often sees TQM as a technical process. It usually aims mainly at changing behavior. While under Integrated management approach, the TQM technique is-expected to be blended and balanced with existing cultural initiatives in organization, human resource mix and management system.

(II) Skills and Application techniques;

The main focus here is the Administrative Core Skills (ACS) which is the main condition for an up to date administrative officers under the process of implementing TQM. Thus, administrative and management officers need core skills. They must have the basic understanding about management process and leadership to adequately operate within a TQM system (Otokiti, 2001:24).

(III) Success Parameters for Public Administrators;

The list of success parameters are in-exhaustive, however they are grouped into five stages as stated below,

- Good understanding of the management assessment tools for leadership success.

-       Introduction of cost - benefit analysis.

-       Management and understanding of structure of conflict and cooperation.

-       Optimal strategic policy mix, and

-       Use and incorporation of master trilogies.

TOWARDS EFFECTIVE TQM IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE

For successful implementation of TQM in public administration, there is need to create necessary management structures, developing strategies for building commitment designing mechanisms to Communicate.the change, and assigning resources. Designing transition management, in fact, Hyde (1992) asserts that management must be heavily involved as a leader rather than relying on a separate staff, person or function to shepherd the effort. To communicate the change, mechanisms beyond existing processes will need to be an effective ongoing communication tool to keep employees aware of activities and accomplishments. Management of human resources for the change effort is important with TQM because outside consultants will almost always be required. Choose consultant based on their prior relevant experience and their commitment to adapting the process to fit unique organizational needs. While consultant will be invaluable with the initial training of staff and TQM system design, employees should be actively involved in TQM implementation, which they can pass on to other employees. A collaborative relationship with the consultants and clear role definitions and specification of activities must be established. By and large, TQM is an agent of change in which everyone involved in bringing about this change must understand the need for quality in the change and understand the measurement of such quality.

CONCLUSION

Despite the problems in implementing TQM in the public sector, there is a rising level of performance attributable to TQM across a wide range of areas. TQM helps to improve quality of service, productivity, customer satisfaction, level of customer service, and communication, improvement in timeliness, group decision making, and commitment to stakeholders, as well as reduced costs and the use of new performance measures. The argument over the relevance of TQM in Nigerian public administration has been an interesting one. The government, having operated under a military government and command structure for a very long time may find it difficult to accept change. What is dynamic in life is change. As it is often said, the only thing that is constant in life is change itself. The private sectors easily adapt to change once such a change is perceived as productive and reward oriented. However, for the public sector, change is often seen as political and impossible to a large extent, and difficult to some extent (Otokiti,2001:34). The paper argues that for Public Administration to be efficient and effective it has to embrace some innovations or change without which growth and development itself is not possible. And this change can be achieved through effective implementation of TQM. One might reasonably glean from the public experience with TQM that its strengths for the public sector may reside more in the philosophy of TQM, and less in its commandments and techniques, for TQM pressures management to think in terms of defining quality in client-based terms, of seeing the larger picture, of improving processes of empowering employees, of long-term strategic planning and of never being content with the status quo. The paper therefore concludes that no organization can improve its performance and productivity unless its people identify with and promote these somewhat notion, and that TQM has the unique ability to draw this kind of managerial thinking to the forefront.

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