

Exploring the Theoretical Framework of the Dimensions of Total Quality Management

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Abstract:

Background: Total Quality Management (TQM) is recognized as a comprehensive management approach aimed at the continuous improvement of organizational performance, the enhancement of customer satisfaction, and the optimization of business processes. The purpose of this study is to explore the multifaceted dimensions of TQM and to elucidate their impact on organizational success. TQM encompasses several foundational principles, including leadership commitment, customer focus, employee involvement, process optimization, and continuous improvement.

Methods: This study conducts a review of existing literature and established theoretical models to provide an in-depth analysis of TQM's implementation strategies and its overall effectiveness. The exploration focuses on identifying and examining the core dimensions that constitute the TQM framework and their interplay in achieving desired organizational outcomes.

Results: The research highlights "customer focus" as the central tenet of TQM, emphasizing the critical need for organizations to meet both current and future customer needs. A "supportive leadership" framework is identified as vital for motivating employees and fostering an innovative organizational culture. Furthermore, "employee involvement" at all levels is demonstrated to be critical for achieving high performance and operational excellence, with employees contributing ideas and actively participating in decision-making. "Process management" is underscored as an essential TQM element, requiring continuous monitoring and improvement to ensure efficiency and quality. Finally, "continuous improvement," driven by methodologies such as Kaizen and the scientific method, is established as central to TQM, ensuring organizational responsiveness to evolving customer needs and market dynamics.

Conclusion: The study demonstrates that the effective implementation of TQM principles leads to enhanced business performance, increased customer loyalty, and a significant competitive advantage. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of how TQM can be utilized as a strategic tool for achieving long-term success in both small and large organizations. By integrating TQM into their operational culture, organizations can achieve greater productivity, improve quality, reduce waste, and forge a sustainable path towards business excellence

Keywords: Total Quality Management (TQM), Customer Focus, Employee Involvement, Continuous Improvement, Leadership, Process Management.

1. Concept of Quality

Total Quality Management (TQM) is a contemporary managerial concept. TQM is about continuous improvement in organizations and companies, made possible by doing what customers want (Alarifi 2018; Abdullah, Hussein, and Mejbil, 2023). TQM is also about improving processes. We look at and measure processes to find improvement opportunities in how processes run. TQM effort to minimize the time it takes to do things. It does this by removing non-value-adding activities for the customer and products (Mukhtar and Butt, 2016). TQM is a management philosophy about improving the performance of organizations. TQM creates a culture of quality that is not superficial but rather profoundly cultivated within the organization. A culture of quality that focuses on improving all aspects of an organization and company (Sila, 2007). The UK Quality Organization provided a working definition, as this understanding of TQM will enable us to better improve products and services, to increase organizational and company operational performance. Through TQM, lower costs and increased customer satisfaction can be achieved: TQM is the guiding philosophy with which an organization approaches management through the lens of a continuous and collaborative process of business performance that focuses on fulfilling the requirements of the customer and the project, It is a collaborative form of business performance that relies on the shared capabilities of both management and workers, aiming for continuous improvement through teamwork (Toke, 2021).

2. Dimensions of Total Quality Management (TQM)

- According to Sotirelis & Grigoroudis (2020), there are numerous dimensions to TQM, such as: Leadership/management commitment, customer focus, benchmarking, employee involvement/empowerment, employee development/training, quality design / product vision, data analysis/results

measurement, and continuous improvement. Most studies confirm, however, that TQM is based on the elements or dimensions: according to Pambreni et al. (2019) are as follows:

- **Customer Focus**

This dimension addresses how the organization identifies the current and future requirements and expectations of its customers. "Customer focus" is the core principle of Total Quality Management philosophy and involves effective management of customer relationships, determining customer satisfaction. The Malcolm Baldrige Award allocates 25% of its evaluation points based on the organization's attention to its customers and how it meets their desires. Long-term organizational success is linked to its efforts to maintain customers and respond quickly to their changing needs and desires, in addition to delivering products that satisfy or exceed their expectations (Al-Tamimi & Fadil, 2005).

It is the ultimate goal that organizations and companies of all types and sizes strive to achieve. Therefore, organizations must understand the current and future needs and expectations of their customers to achieve customer satisfaction. Customer focus is related to meeting the needs and expectations of current and potential customers by developing a comprehensive understanding of customer needs and then delivering recognized value to customers (Islamgaleyev et al., 2020).

Commercial organizations such as Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) can implement customer focus as a guiding strategy to determine their ability to develop and deliver enhanced value to customers through addressing market insights. The expected outcomes of the customer-focused strategy include creating value for the customer, leading to customer loyalty and business performance. The current literature shows that customer focus strategy stimulates customer interaction actions that lead to uniqueness and value in the customer experience. The actual embodiment of the customer focus strategy depends on establishing customer focus as a culture throughout the commercial organization. A culture and practices focused on customers enhance the overall performance of the business organization (i.e., customer satisfaction, sales, market share, profitability) and develop competitive advantage (Lee & Lee, 2020).

The concept of customer focus has attracted attention in current literature, and its impact has been widely explored. Despite many contributions in recent years, the argument around customer focus has been mainly led by proposals from Narver and Slater (1990), Deshpande et al. (1993), and Bartley et al. (2007). Each of these proposals has a significant impact on the structure and performance of organizations and businesses, and they are based on related principles such as customer centricity, market

orientation, integrating cross-functional activities, and responding to market changes. Narver and Slater (1990) believe that customer focus (or market orientation) is a unidimensional construct consisting of three behavioral elements (i.e., customer orientation, competitor orientation, and coordination between functions) and two decision criteria (i.e., long-term focus and profit goal) (Flight & Mudiyanse, 2021). Although Narver and Slater (1990) showed a significant positive impact of customer focus (or market orientation) on profitability, their metrics used to define customer focus (market orientation) did not capture the elements that support strong collaboration with and learning between firms through networked links. Similarly, performance metrics adopted in organizations and businesses were limited to financial performance measures (i.e., profitability) over a combination of financial and non-financial performance metrics. On the other hand, Deshpande et al. (1993) demonstrated that customer evaluation of a supplier's customer-focused orientation aligns with business performance; however, a supplier's internal evaluation of customer focus did not align with customer evaluations and thus failed to align with business performance. This outcome appears to suggest that customer focus will generate business performance only when customers evaluate the supplier's customer orientation. On the other hand, Bartley et al. (2007) provided practical insights on how organizations and businesses can become more customer-focused using a framework that evaluates the culture of customer focus and the level of customer focus in the business organization. However, their metrics for customer focus were mainly focused on elements such as relationship management, customer service performance indicators, forecasting, orientation strategies, training, customer surveys, and customer information understanding (2021; Madhani et al., 2020).

As noted by Babu (2018), the concept of customer focus has been addressed in a fragmented manner, based on the viewpoint that customer focus primarily involves generating and distributing intelligence linked to customers, who are considered the key players in the market. A customer-focused commercial organization places importance on both current and future customer needs and has also developed its capabilities regarding joint collaboration with customers, customer insights, networking with customers and other businesses, and utilizing AI supported by machine learning to accurately analyze large customer datasets to define a customer-focused approach related to context (Yau et al., 2021).

Therefore, organizations and businesses that exhibit a high orientation toward customer focus exert considerable effort in preparing for their customers by developing appropriate customer focus factors such as joint collaboration, networks, and customer insights (Madhani, 2020).

- **Supportive Leadership**

Continuous and sincere involvement from leaders within the organization is essential from the standpoint of Total Quality Management because leaders contribute the positive attitude, behavior, and action to leverage the resources needed to make TQM successful within the organization. Such 'supportive leadership' is a major component of company growth and transformation, as the focus is on positive leadership practices and it creates employee behaviors through motivation and learning what's important towards the company's goals. To lead, in part, means to inspire and support employees' abilities to contribute their best efforts. Supportive leadership engages the ethical and human domains between the leader and employees, pushes collaboration and group work, and persuades employees of the significance of meeting the desired objectives and goals, meaningfully and in ways they see fit. Supportive leadership makes gains through relationships in the organization by raising shared expectations, inspiring successful engagement not just for employees but for management, and activating organizational empowerment, creativity, and innovation (Lbewazda, 2018).

- **Process Focus**

dimensions of Total Quality Management will to improve and develop internal processes in the organization. The emphasis will be to consistently improve quality and efficiency to reach the highest levels of quality and efficiency in providing product / services. This means that processes need to be examined thoroughly to determine their efficiency and quality and ensure that the processes operate at optimal capacity while minimising waste and inefficiency of resources, improving any bottlenecks in a workflow, working out seamless cooperation between the areas of the organisation, and sourcing the right technology, tools to generate the outcome required. It could either mean partially or completely remodelling and reviewing processes in the organisation, and based on what you assess with TQM, will enable the organisation to achieve a high level of quality and satisfaction in their products / services (Lbewazda, 2020).

Process management is one of the primary dimensions of TQM and refers to groups of methods, materials, tools, and people involved in production. The ongoing belief is that total quality of products can be improved through direct or indirect improvement of process quality. The goal of process management is to reduce variations by building quality into the production process, which results in better production quality and lower costs, such as rework costs and waste costs. Maintaining the operational ability to meet production requirements is the most important issue in

control and improvement processes, and quality does not come from inspection, but from improving the production process. Process management is defined as "how the organization designs, manages, and improves its processes to support its policy and strategy and fully meet customer requirements, while generating increasing value for its customers and other stakeholders" (Jaafreh & Al-abedallat, 2012).

- **Employee Involvement:**

Employee involvement is one of the important key dimensions in Total Quality Management (TQM). Employee involvement is the dimension that involves engagement of employees at all levels in the process of not only improving quality, but decision-making too. This dimension recognizes the value that employees at all levels can add to an organization's total quality management journey and helps foster innovative ideas, reach organizational goals, and enhance productivity. When employees feel empowered and are engaged within the organization, they are more committed to their role and willing to complete their responsibilities to the best of their ability. This, in turn, will lead to better work quality and consequently, improved product quality. Employee involvement means exchanging ideas and opinions amongst the employees in the organization and encouraging them to submit proposals that are for development and improvement. Also, it adds to the employee's sense of accountability and motivates them to do a good job as they will view themselves as true partners in the process. Employee involvement is a critical stage in your total quality management journey as it contributes to having a collaborative work environment that fosters creativity and innovation as part of the employees "normal work day" to increase impact and effectiveness and ultimately customer satisfaction and loyalty. Involving employees means activating the employees' involvement in the various roles and functions of your organization in a way that makes them feel valued and empowered to use their capabilities and potential. Because they occupy the most prominent position in the organization, they will allow you to really utilize their sense of involvement and it will take their contribution to a new level on a meaningful organizational culture and improvement scale. (Samadi & Hiali, 2021).

Modern management has witnessed significant development due to the scientific and technological revolution, which requires making critical decisions to optimize the use of available human and material resources. Thus, leaders must involve subordinates in decision-making, where opinions, ideas, analysis, and evaluation are exchanged. This, in turn, reflects on job satisfaction and the overall improvement of work conditions in the organization. Decision-making is a fundamental concept in management, crucial for formulating policies, setting goals, making choices, and implementing them. Since all decisions are important, an organization's success depends on the quality of decision-making. Managers constantly face vital and strategic decisions. Employee involvement

in making less strategic decisions can reduce errors in the process. Therefore, it is essential to enhance employees' organizational and individual capabilities to qualify them to participate in decision-making within the organization (ICDNMB, 2022).

Modern organizations and companies are characterized by high levels of human interactions, inclusive thinking, information exchange, and effort to solve obstacles and problems. This has necessitated the presence of a participatory environment in decision-making to strengthen individual, collective, and organizational relationships (Al-Busaidi, 2008). Decision-making is a conscious mental process and a type of organized thinking that defines the problem to be decided, possible solutions to achieve goals efficiently, with minimal effort and cost, and the highest level of return (Qarwani, 2017).

Involving employees in decision-making leads to a feeling of acceptance and commitment once these decisions are implemented, which results in a conscious understanding of the components of the decisions taken. It also leads to the reduction of roadblocks that employees can place to avoid implementing the decisions. Participation is an intelligent mode or successful means of accepting decisions or enhancing decisions' effectiveness. Conceptually, participation in decision-making is integrating stakeholders to take part in a collective decision, which will further contribute to achieving goals, with accountability of individuals for their duties.

It captures the spirit of democratic interaction in the collective role of work in the organization (Abu Khait, 2019). Employee participation means involving and empowering employees in their role to apply their efforts for increasing both individual and organization performance. This can happen through either (a) participative direct involvement, which assists the organization in achieving its mission statement and maintain important goals by being innovative, experienced, and solving problems and making the decisions, or (b) through employees legislative body that protects their welfare or represents their interests in decision making (Ijeoma, 2020).

Conditions for Effective Participation in Decision-Making:

According to (Dede, 2019), there are essential prerequisites for successful participation in decision-making within any organization, which are as follows:

- Sufficient time must be available for participation before the procedure required for participation becomes inappropriate in emergency situations.
- The topic of participation must be closely related to the employee's environment, otherwise, employees will perceive it as just busy work.

- Participants must have the ability, such as intelligence and knowledge, to participate.
- Participants must be able to communicate mutually to exchange ideas.
- There must be no feeling of threat to either party. If employees believe their status will be negatively affected, they will not participate. Similarly, if managers feel their authority is threatened, they will not allow participation.
- The potential benefit of participation must outweigh its cost. Participation should not come at the expense of the organization's work.
- Participation must occur in the area of individual freedom or department autonomy, within the framework of decision-making restrictions.

Importance of Participation in Decision-Making:

Engaging employees in the decision-making process provides them an extent of professional and personal ownership of the organization and success overall. In this way, employees are more productive because they engaged in the company as a whole not just their isolated tasks and they genuinely want to see their efforts succeed, this is obviously good for the organization and additionally, it allows the employee to build responsibility and experience toward future job roles (Anderson, 2019).

One important concept of delegation of authority in organizations is soliciting employees' perspectives in making specific decisions. This can also stimulate employees' own innovations to improve and develop production, create decisions that they feel responsible for and promote their own significance in the organization. This increases their motivation and acceptance of development and change, as well as organizational influence where involvement in decision making in a positive way influences the success of achieving the organization goals (Bouqtif, 2017). Generally speaking, additional employee involvement in decision making will improve morale and engender commitment to respective development initiatives. Many companies have a strict distinction of authority separating management and employees; however additional participation from employees reduces this distinction and can facilitate communication and interaction between supervisors and employees. If employees feel their ideas are valued by the company; it enables an opportunity for their contributions to affect the outcomes of their work, as well as develop positive perceptions, job satisfaction, and positive attitudes toward the organization (Anderson, 2019).

Levels of Employee Participation in Decision-Making:

Since decision-making has become highly complex in an ever-changing environment, the degree of employee involvement in decision-making varies from one

leader to another and from one situation to another. The Vroom and Yetton model (Qarbouz & Alamawi, 2020) outlines five leadership styles, each differing in decision-making methods, where we find:

- **Authoritarian Autocratic:** This style is characterized by individual decision-making with no consultation, where employees are instructed to implement without review.
- **Paternalistic Autocratic:** In this style, the leader gathers information and then makes decisions individually based on that information.
- **Consultative Democratic:** The leader seeks individual opinions and then makes decisions based on those opinions.
- **Consultative Controlling:** In this style, individual opinions are sought from employees, but the leader makes the decision individually.
- **Democratic:** The leader discusses the issue with the team, and decisions are made after all opinions are discussed within the team.

Table (1)Vroom-Yetton Leadership Model

Leadership Style	Description
A1	Solve the problem or make the decision individually using available information.
A2	Collect necessary information from subordinates and then solve the problem individually, employees may or may not be aware of the purpose behind the questions.
C1	Share the problem individually with relevant subordinates and obtain their suggestions before making the decision. The decision may or may not reflect subordinates' influence.
C2	Share the problem in a group setting with subordinates, obtain suggestions, then make the decision which may or may not reflect their input.
G2	Share the problem with subordinates as a group, generate alternatives, evaluate them, and try to reach a consensus on a solution, with the leader facilitating the discussion but not imposing a solution.

Decision-Making Levels in Organizations (Nawadari, 2013)

There are three decision-making levels within the organization:

- **Strategic Level:** These decisions are related to the future and long-term plans that affect the entire organization, such as capital diversification, mergers, or expanding production capacity.
- **Tactical Level:** These decisions are linked to medium or short-term activities and resources necessary to achieve the organization's goals, such as budgeting or production development.
- **Operational Level:** These decisions are related to daily activities or short-term actions that require strict adherence to operational and planning orders, such as shipping goods, inventory control, or employee attendance.

- **Continuous Improvement:**

The idea of continuous improvement is centered around developing knowledge in the dimensions of management processes and taking the actions required to satisfy customers by demonstrating high performance and providing value for customers. It offers better products and services and fewer mistakes, improves the efficiency of their organization, and improves the ways the organization can adapt to environmental changes. Most organizations want to improve the performance of its organization and create competitive advantage since the performance of these organizations depends on what strategies and principles are best selected and applied to influence the continuous improvement process. Total Quality Management (TQM) is a principle of continuous improvement because it is an unending process of involvement of every aspect such as people, equipment, suppliers, materials, and procedures. The principles of continuous improvement hopefully will aid or enhance the quality, productivity, and reduce waste in producing products or services that fulfill or exceed the requirements of customer. Improving begins with identifying the needs of the customer and ends, in principle, with an overall satisfactory assessment of performance through all stages of the production process and in the marketing process (Samadi & Hiali, 2021).

Sustained improvement is now a requirement of all modern organizations and companies in all of their operations and products, as customer needs and expectations are always changing in addition to the external changes taking place in the environment. Therefore, organizations must improve and develop their operations and products in order to compete effectively in an aggressive market. Continuous improvement began as an administrative and philosophical approach based on employee suggestions in the

United States in the late twentieth century at the same time that the Japanese began to use quality circles as a vehicle for improvement processes and solving quality issues.

Methods and Approaches for Continuous Improvement (Qazzaz, 2002)

Several approaches can support the organization's continuous improvement process. Three main approaches include the scientific method and the Kaizen method:

- **Triangular Method for Continuous Improvement:** This method includes quality planning, control, and improvement. Quality planning ensures the production of high-quality products that meet customer needs, control ensures that production follows planned processes, and improvement guarantees the sustainability of quality standards.
- **Scientific Method (Problem-Solving Approach):** Developed by the U.S. Air Force as a model for continuous improvement, this method includes seven steps: identifying improvement opportunities, analyzing problems, researching solutions, implementing changes, evaluating impacts, and ensuring continued performance improvement.
- **Kaizen Method:** Developed by the Japanese, this method is based on continuous and gradual improvement involving everyone in the organization. It focuses on improving processes, reducing waste, and enhancing efficiency on an ongoing basis.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, Total Quality Management (TQM) stands as a cornerstone for organizations that are looking to achieve excellence and sustainable growth. The review provides evidence that TQM is much more than a collection of practices or techniques. It is a holistic philosophy and should be embraced as an organizational culture if an organization is to be successful in the long-run. The key domains outlined within TQM, customer focus, supportive leadership, employee engagement, process management, and continuous improvement interact with each other to form a strong TQM framework that contributes to the overall performance of the organization. Customer focus forms the base of the TQM model, as organizations should comprehend and meet customers' immediate and evolving needs. If organizational leadership understands customers' needs, they are better able to meet and exceed customer expectations, resulting in increased customer satisfaction and loyalty, which are essential to achieving competitive advantages. Supportive leadership is another influential area in TQM, because if leaders create an environment that is confident and encourages innovation, this can drive employee motivation to become engaged and inspired to perform at their best. Effective leadership is ultimately more than decision-making; it is about supporting and providing guidance to employees in reaching collective success.

Another critical aspect of TQM is employee involvement. Having employees involved in decisions creates a sense of ownership of and responsibility for the company, generating motivation that leads employees to enhance the success of the organization. Cultivating a culture that allows inclusivity and collaboration, can create far greater creativity, problem solving, and productivity. Process management minimizes waste, removes duplication of internal effort, and makes the best use of resources to enable high-quality products and services. One of the more remarkable facets of TQM is continuous improvement. The commitment to a continuous improvement process means that the organization continuously evaluates its processes, products, and services, and through this, remain flexible and agile to changing customer expectations and competition in the marketplace. Using techniques such as Kaizen and the scientific method, supports organizations to identify opportunities for improvement and put effective fixes in place. The cycle of evaluation of processes and refinement, means that organizations will keep up with changes. The research outlined that TQM is a long-term process that is dynamic and continuous. TQM requires an organization-wide culture commitment to fulfil this understanding. In other words, TQM is not a one-time programme, it is a continuous journey that successfully integrates the principles of quality into every aspect of an organization. Organizations that have developed full implementation of TQM principles have developed a culture of excellence that supports not only performance but also sustainable business success and operational performance.

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