Chapter 25

Quality Management: An Evolutionary Cross-Cultural Perspective

Alessandra Vecchi
University of London Arts, England

Louis Brennan
Trinity College Dublin, Ireland

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is to address the extent to which quality management is “culture-specific.” The chapter presents the results of a survey administered across 21 countries that seeks to examine quality priorities and practices by adopting the Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness (GLOBE) framework (House et al., 2004). Drawing on previous research (Vecchi & Brennan, 2011), data was collected in 2009 as part of the fifth iteration of the International Manufacturing Strategy Survey (IMSS). The methodology involved the use of a self-administered questionnaire to director/head of operations/manufacturing in best practice firms within the sector of firms classified by ISIC codes (rev.3.1) Divisions 28-35. From this study, it emerges that adopting the GLOBE framework provides an invaluable insight into understanding quality management across countries. While some previous research portrays quality management as a comprehensive management paradigm with elements and relationships that transcend cultural and national boundaries, the current study provides evidence that the adoption of certain quality practices across different countries can follow distinctive patterns.

INTRODUCTION

Since the 1990s, many quality models have been widely adopted by firms, such as the Deming Prize in Japan, the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award in the USA, and the European Quality Award in Europe as frameworks for implementing Total Quality Management (TQM). The widespread assumption is that these are operational frameworks that reproduce TQM by capturing its main constituent parts and replicate its core ideas in a clear and accessible language (Cua et al., 2001). However, TQM is an approach to management embracing both social (“soft TQM”) and techni-
Quality Management

A significant strand of the literature seeks to assess the diversity of quality practices amongst countries. The increased complexity of today’s