
CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study is aimed at the development of a management strategy for the improvement of the effectiveness of secondary schools through the implementation of Total Quality Management.

In this chapter the research problem, the aims of the research and the theoretical assumption are defined. This is followed by a description of the research method, comprising a literature review and an empirical study. Finally, a chapter division and summary are given.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

It is commonly viewed that the general productivity in the RSA ranks amongst the lowest on the globe. The World Competitiveness Yearbook (Havenga, 1999:14-21) ranks South Africa's overall comparative competitiveness as 42nd out of 46 industrialised countries. According to this competitive index the ranking of management is 40 for Total Quality Management and 41 for customer orientation. What is alarming is the fact that the education system in South Africa is ranked 46th, which reveals that the system does not meet the needs of a competitive economy. This position could well be linked to the fact that the effectiveness of pre-tertiary education in South Africa, as reflected by the poor Grade 12 results, is of a very unsatisfactory nature.

The lack of effectiveness in education could be ascribed to factors like, amongst others (Kgobe, 1993:13; Lawrence & Paterson, 1993:18; Gordon, 1999; Steyn, 1999: 357; Van der Westhuizen *et al.*, 1999:315):

- Historical political developments;
- The collapse of a culture of teaching and learning at schools;
- Under-qualified educators and educational managers;
- A lack of commitment and low educator morale;
- Learner commitment and discipline;

- Parental involvement, and
- Limited teaching and learning materials, poor infrastructure and high levels of poverty in rural schools.

The economic needs of South Africa as a developing country require that organisations (i.c. educational organisations) are continuously renewed and changed, particularly in respect of a quality management approach (De Waal, 1992:17). Educational leaders are presently being confronted by the challenge to develop effective management and leadership through the whole school system (Retief, 2000:5).

Schools as organisations need to optimise effectiveness and productivity through the realisation of improved teaching and learning. They must become providers of quality (Quong & Walker, 1996:223). Managers have the task to create and maintain an environment where educators can teach and learners can learn. By doing this, managers would ensure that the teaching programme serves the educational needs of learners and the broad community.

Efforts have been made by education departments to engage schools in ceremonies to promote a culture of learning and teaching (COLTS) (Van der Westhuizen *et al.*, 1999:315). The present government has taken the lead to ensure effective education by introducing its Five Year Implementation Plan: 2000-2004 (of which the entire Programme 2 focuses on the effectiveness of schools) (Department of Education, 2000(a):14-17).

In the report of the *Task Team on Education Management Development (1996)* mention was made of the lack of management skills and experience managers of schools (principals and school governing bodies) had. In practice it occurs that some educators (i.c. senior educators) are promoted to the position of principal without having the appropriate managerial and leadership skills (NW Department of Education, 2000:6). At the same time the report of the Task Team provides guidelines on how managers can be developed to manage change. Hence the challenge in education lies in a development-orientated approach, emphasising aspects like leadership, organisational development and total quality management (TQM) (Department of Education, 1996:10-27).

Today we find ourselves in an age where quality is invariably a prerequisite for survival (Beard, 1989:9). The concept of Total Quality Management represents a fundamental change in management style and the way things are being done in an organisation (i.c. school). This management approach can be regarded as a philosophy of organisational culture change (Berry, 1997:57), which comprises a comprehensive change in the theory and practice of management and it is "primarily a paradigm concerning people and leadership" (Covey, 1992:261-263). Underlying this theory are certain pertinent features which distinguish Total Quality Management from other quality systems, namely (Capper & Jamison, 1993:25; Blunt, 1993:3; Van der Westhuizen, 2002:284-288), the focus on suppliers and clients, sustainable commitment to continuous improvement, focus on systems and processes, and participation or total involvement of employees.

Total Quality Management is therefore a total systems approach comprising the organisation as a whole, including the suppliers and clients (Siegel & Byrne, 1994:18-19). The school as an organisation could be regarded as a system, whilst the work being done within this organisation as an ongoing process (Bonstingl, 1995:6).

The application of Total Quality Management urges for change in organisations by which the culture, processes and structures are being inverted into a new culture, processes and structures by both management and subordinates (Herman & Herman, 1995:18). Total Quality Management comprises the transformation of the traditional hierarchical school structure (pyramid) into a new school structure which is organised along horizontal, rather than vertical lines of cooperation (Quong & Walker, 1996:222, 225, 226). This process of change requires a deliberate, integrated and dynamic effort by school managers (Murgatroyd, 1993:269) and embraces all role players, including the school principal, staff members, learners, and the community at large with client satisfaction as ultimate result (Capper & Jamison, 1993:25; Steyn, 1999:357).

It appears that in the past, South African education placed too much faith on hurried actions and quick-fix solutions to cure the deep-seated educational

problems and subsequently failed to create a teaching, learning and support culture (Van der Westhuizen *et al.*, 1999:315).

Total Quality Management as an approach which has enabled business enterprises to compete in a world of globalisation, comprises principles which could also be applied to ensure effective public schooling and the provision of education in South Africa (Steyn, 1999:357). Some researchers, however, take a critical stand towards the application of TQM in schools. Van Wyk (1995:14) warns against an uncritical acceptance of the TQM paradigm within the educational practice, whilst Daresh and Playko (1995) are “not totally convinced that this perspective is sufficiently articulated at present to make it an enduring or a very useful concept”. On the other hand, most authors are positive in their assessment of the TQM approach.

The question to be answered by this research is: what management strategies based on Total Quality Management can be developed to improve the effectiveness of secondary schools?

1.3 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

The above research problem was sub-divided into the following research aims:

- **Research aim 1:** To identify the characteristics of TQM in schools through a review of the literature;
- **Research aim 2:** To identify methods from the literature to implement TQM in schools;
- **Research aim 3:** To analyse case study schools from the literature;
- **Research aim 4:** To determine quantitatively to what extent effective schools make use of TQM, and to what extent elements of TQM could be identified in these schools. To determine qualitatively whether the strategies employed in schools are based on TQM assumptions and could characterise them as effective in terms of TQM, and

- **Research aim 5:** To develop a management strategy for the improvement of the effectiveness of secondary schools through the implementation of TQM.

1.4 THEORETICAL ASSUMPTION

It was assumed that the effective schools that had been identified for this research display the characteristics of TQM, or at least some of the characteristics that are associated with TQM.

1.5 RESEARCH METHOD

1.5.1 Literature study

A literature study of both primary and secondary sources was undertaken. The gathered information was measured and evaluated, from which conclusions were drawn. Searches were undertaken per DIALOG computer search, the Internet, SA Catalogue, RSAT, Education Index, Dissertation Abstracts, Nexus, MAGNET and EBSCO Host using the following descriptors: *total quality management; total quality education; total quality leadership; total quality schools; school effectiveness; school culture; programme implementation; quality control; education improvement; transformation; school based management.*

1.5.2 Quantitative phase

1.5.2.1 Questionnaire

A structured questionnaire (Likert type) based on the literature study was developed (specifically using the measuring tools of the Baldrige Education Program). The aims of the questionnaire were to:

- Determine to what extent effective schools are using TQM;
- Determine to what extent elements of TQM could be identified in these schools, and
- To identify the generic characteristics of those schools on the basis that they were typified as effective schools.

1.5.2.2 Study population

The study population consisted of the principals of secondary schools with a grade 12-learner pass rate of 80 – 100% sustained between 1997 and 2000 in the external examination of the North West Department of Education. The principals of those schools completed the questionnaire.

1.5.2.3 Statistical analyses

With the assistance of the Statistical Consultant Service of the Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir CHO suitable statistical methods were selected.

1.5.3 Qualitative phase

1.5.3.1 Interviews

Structured interviews and focus group discussions were conducted (see 4.3.2). The aim of the interviews and data collection was to establish whether the values and beliefs that define the school's culture and direct people's actions were based on TQM assumptions (Carlson, 1996:74; Gall *et al.*, 1996:607, 613).

A second aim was to identify the particular characteristics of these schools that could characterise them as effective in terms of TQM (in the quantitative phase the generic characteristics were identified (see 4.2.1).

1.5.3.2 Study population

The study population and sample consisted of five schools, which were identified in the quantitative phase (see 4.2.2) as those with a grade 12-learner pass rate of 98 – 100%. One school was also included as part of the pilot study. Structured interviews were conducted with the principals and focus group interviews with small groups of educators, learners and parents of each of the identified schools.

1.5.3.3 Decoding of data

Standardised procedures were used for decoding the qualitative data from tapes, interview schedules and written material.

1.5.4 Development of a management strategy

A management strategy for the implementation of TQM was developed to:

- Provide a simplified indication of relations between the main elements in the TQM process, and
- Highlight specific themes, relations and dimensions in the implementation of TQM for the improvement of the effectiveness of secondary schools.

1.6 CHAPTER DIVISION

Chapter 1: Orientation

Chapter 2: The characteristics of Total Quality Management in schools

Chapter 3: Methods to implement TQM in schools

Chapter 4: Case studies of TQM schools: a literature study

Chapter 5: Research design

Chapter 6: Analysing and interpreting of data

Chapter 7: A management strategy for the implementation of TQM in secondary schools

Chapter 8: Summary, findings and recommendations

1.7 SUMMARY

In this chapter the research problem was stated and the aims of the research were formulated. A statement of the theoretical assumption was given, as well as a brief outline of the quantitative and qualitative research methods that were used for the development of a management strategy. Finally, a preview of the division of chapters of this thesis was listed.

The next chapter will probe into the characteristics of TQM and its applicability to education.