The Yellow Brick Road:
Total Quality Management and the Restructuring of Organizational Culture.

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Abstract

The paper offers a critique of Total Quality Management . It is essentially in three parts: the first examines the rise of TQM through the western experience of Japanese development, second it examine the nature of TQM's promised cultural change and, finally questioning the very notion of `quality'. It explores this development as - taking a metaphor from the work of Philip Crosby one of the 'guru's of Total Quality - a journey down the yellow brick road. The development of TQM being rich in icons and symbolism it is argued that it acts both to legitimate current changes in organisation through the penetration of the market and also as a market model of organisation based on customer and supplier links. In contrast to the claim of TQM to challenge bureaucracy it argues that, while it might counter some of its dysfunction's, it can be located within a bureaucratization process.

Introduction

The last decade has seen the most concerted attempt to transform organizational culture since the rise of modern, bureaucratic, organization. During the 1980's a wide range of manufacturing and service sector companies, followed in the 1990's by public and welfare organisations, began to implement some programme of Total Quality Management (TQM). In their study of manufacturing industry Oliver and Wilkinson [1988; 1989] indicate that almost one hundred per cent of the major British manufacturing companies approached, and all Japanese owned firms, were either introducing some form of total quality or considering it; management consultants have complained that they cannot sell their services unless there is TQM involved [Loren 1989]. Work which attempts a critical appraisal of TQM , either, as in the work of Hill [1991a; 1991b], see it as a minor - if potentially more successful - development from quality circles or, as that carried out by Wilkinson and various colleagues [*op cit. ;* Deldridge, Turnbull & Wilkinson 1992; Sewell and Wilkinson 1992a, 1992b], view it as a phenomena within the labour process of 'fordist' manufacturing systems - strictly machinofacture - and as part of 'JIT/TQC regimes' of labour regulation. Ian Graham [1988], for example, has indicated how the myth of Japanese competitiveness has supported and legitimated western attempts at cutting inventories through JIT. While this is all important work in examining, theorising and conceptualising current changes in the 'Japanisation of British Industry' it by-passes issues of the relationship to broader transformations. It has identified a connection which exists in limited sectors, in motor manufacture and electrical goods - those owned by or in direct competition with Japanese firms - but is itself now limited sphere of the influence and application of TQM.

Initially an emphasis on quality could be construed as a necessary corollary of JIT methods which called for components to be supplied on demand without the back-up of

sizeable stocks on site. However TQM has increasingly become established as a separate managerial approach with far wider applicability and a strong emphasis on changing workplace culture. This poses a particularly strong managerial ideology, one which has been missed by previous consideration either because of the link with JIT or, in the work of Hill possibly because of earlier association with criticisms of the idea of a 'dominant ideology' [Abercrombie *et al* 1980]. More generally, following the over-emphasise of the role of Taylorism in promoting the de-skilling of labour in the work of Braverman [1975] there has been a reluctance to examine the relationship between managerial ideology and organizational change.

TQM has transcended its industrial roots and is now being applied across a spectrum of activities not always associated with Just-in-Time manufacture. While initially growing out of the concerns of Quality Assurance, where 'fitness for use' and 'meeting customer requirements' were narrowly associated with component manufacture - particularly by suppliers and subcontractors - it has now become more explicitly a managerial attempt at cultural transformation.

This paper addresses TQM as a new managerial ideology and attempts to set it in the context of a broader transformation, associated with a new right market philosophy, which is attempting to consolidate an industrial consensus around *quality*. Along with the new right it offers a critique of bureaucracy - or more precisely its dysfunction's [Merton 1968] - and presents a set of essentially market oriented metaphors to replace ideas of hierarchy and action. It is not just that these phenomena might be associated with *post-fordism* but that it premised on, and is symptomatic of, what is likely to become a more significant debate around political strategies currently represented in Britain, for example, in the Government's White Paper *The Citizens Charter* [HMSO 1991] in the USA with the

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introduction of such initiatives as the Baldrige Awards as well as in the rest of the industrial world [Garvin 1991]. While conscious of this context for the current appeal of TQM it is felt important that instead of subsuming it into a minor relationship it is addressed in its own right, as an ideology, to see the implication for organizational culture. What I will argue is that TQM not only poses a mode of conceptualising organization in non-bureaucratic terms - and hence might serve as the basis of a post-modern organization theory [Cooper & Burrell 1988]. It can also be seen to act to legitimate pseudo-market relations into organization - the spread of internal markets and a restructuring of the public sector. In practice, while it appears to challenge job demarcation and the rigidities of bureaucracy it (through its roots in the articulation and formalisation of procedures) paradoxically lends itself to the bureaucratization process.

In this context, then, the introduction of Total Quality Management is seen as essentially part of a cultural reconstruction around and emerging from the workplace. But this reconstruction reflects part of a contestation, not over immediate ownership or of material control of workplace organisation, but over the very way of perceiving social relations. In an attempt to reconstruct the hegemony of the workplace 'common sense' metaphors of social and organisational life are being deployed to alter subjective relations; that hierarchical images of power and control are replaced by those of market and exchange, of 'customers' and 'suppliers'. What is at stake is not necessarily the structures of organisation, although there are some implications for this within TQM but, far more centrally, it is the way that we perceive organisational relations.

TQM: the cultural revolution

The introduction of TQM appears as a reverse of the `macho management' styles of the late 1970's and early 1980's, in which high and increasing levels of unemployment

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allowed a ruthless return to managerial prerogative at the expense of organised labour and any attempt at industrial consensus[see e.g. Denham 1991]. While `macho management' might have been a partial and far from coherent phenomena, linked to the rigours of corporate restructuring in recession and particularly to the `fiscal crisis of the state' [O'Connor 1973], the attempt at a new consensus represents a more universal and articulate appeal to a new `common sense' work culture.

Work cultures have been the subject of considerable concern in recent years. Meek [1988] sees this emergent interest as linked to the economic crisis experienced by the west in the 1970's. In part this clearly is a symptom of management attempting to regain cultural authority within the workplace [Van Maanen & Barley 1985 40], particularly with the industrial and economic ascendance of Japan in the period. On one side this has led to an increasing interest in the application of anthropological and 'structural functional' approaches to the study of organizations with a focus on norms, values, beliefs and the rituals of organisations - as well as on leadership considered to create the climate of a strong culture. On the other hand - and often interrelated - management is concerned to construct strong organizational cultures considered appropriate for the present economic climate [see e.g. Frost *et al* 1985, 1991; Deal & Kennedy 1988]. In terms of the TQM literature the work of Atkinson [1990] represents the most theoretically developed notion of culture change, which draws noticeably from the 'structural functional' tradition. However the central feature of TQM is the idea of culture change which is grafted onto earlier quality management theory and practices; it is argued that culture change has come to differentiate TQM from quality assurance and even what is often called Total Quality Control. An obvious example of the attempts to construct a unitary set of corporate beliefs and values is in the development of 'mission statements' although here the concept of 'quality' serves the same role. Clearly the notion that what unifies organizational effort and transcends sectional interests is that all should work

together to achieve 'quality' has considerable power although - as I will indicate later - the notion of quality being deployed is a far from socially neutral one.

Central to Total Quality Management, and what defines its establishment in the latter half of the 1980's and demarcates its position as against its origins in quality assurance is the insistence on the creation of culture change. While the exact nature of the proposed culture is obscure in the literature of its 'heroes', 'evangelists' and 'priesthood' the culture change itself is rich in icons, artefacts and symbols. My objective, through an exploration of the work of some of the key figures in the development of TQM and some of its symbols, is to identify the cultural ambitions to which it aspires; to explore the culture which TQM is attempting to construct in the workplace.

At first sight the cultural ambitions of TQM seem rather modest, to shift management and worker's attitude to quality control from `fire fighting to prevention' thus making it the responsibility of all employees[e.g.. Atkinson 1990]. But advocates and commentators have seen the proposals as revolutionary.

> The `Industrial Revolution' took place in the last century.  Perhaps the `Computer Revolution' happened in the early 1980's. But we are now, without doubt, in the midst of the `Quality Revolution' - a period of change affecting every type of business, enterprise, organisation, and person. For any company, continuous quality improvement and cost reduction are essential if it is to stay in business as we strive to be part of a unified Europe. [Oakland nd 2; see also Crosby 1989 140; Lamb 1990]

These sentiments, linking the idea of a quality revolution to the *Citizen's Charter* have been expressed by John Major, in his Forward to the Conservative Party Manifesto for the 1992[Major 1992].

What management feel they have found is no less than the holy Grail, pervaded with the mysticism of the east, it offers to meet customer requirements at dramatic saving in cost; in the title of an early exposition `quality is free'[Crosby 1979]. The ideology and practice of TQM poses a direct assault on traditional work cultures and practices. It has spread from roots in manufacturing industry to increasing adoption within the service and public sectors.

TQM offers the ideological support to complement systems of `internal markets' now being introduced; part of the TQM `cultural revolution' is to achieve the transformation of peoples attitude to work roles and positions within them.

> 'A cultural revolution that sets out to supplant hierarchy with informality.'[Lorenz 1990]

Instead of bureaucratically defined roles within a hierarchy TQM poses the customer-supplier chain, conceptualising a market alternative to `modern organization.' TQM might be introduced in association with new working methods such as JIT and the 'team concept' [Parker, M & Slaughter, J. 1990], as well as alongside various forms of internal markets, it does not - in itself - change the immediate relationships except at the level of subjectivity. The introduction of TQM clearly allows further organizational change like the breakdown in role demarcation enhancing the development of more flexible division of tasks. Its particular contribution to the current repertoire of organizational changes is not to construct market relations but to construct a way of seeing organizational relations as market relations. As I will argue, what is offered as `quality' is a metaphor for the market, it is therefore an important link between new right ideology, critical of state and other bureaucracy and the cost of services, and the restructuring which goes way beyond straight privatisation in form and subtlety. A recent British Treasury White Paper, entitled *Competing for Quality* [CM 1730], for example, exemplifies this position arguing 'a more business-like approach' for the public sector as:

> moving away from the traditional pyramid structure of public sector management. The defects of the old approach have been widely recognised: excessively long lines of management with blurred responsibility and accountability; lack of incentives to initiative and innovation; a culture that was more concerned with procedures than performance. As a result, public services will increasingly move to a culture where relationships are contractual rather than bureaucratic. [HMSO CM 1730]

Part of the appeal of TQM to management and government alike is that it detaches questions of 'quality' from resource allocation, there would - it is argued - be considerable savings if all jobs were always done 'right first time'.

In focusing on a critique of organizational bureaucracy TQM is also linked to a more general transition to `post-modernity' [Clegg 1990; Cooke 1990; Harvey 1989]. But, like post-modernity itself, TQM is a Janus critically transcending the limits of modern organization by harking back to pre-modern forms. It offers a managerial ideology articulating a support for systems of internal and external subcontracting thought extinguished by the pattern of modernity - stifled by the standards of Taylorism and Fordism [Littler 1980; 1982]. It appears on the one hand to support the empowering of individual workers and the autonomy of groups which transcend traditional job demarcations of skill and function while on the other resting on the clear articulation of work processes through standards and procedures; its links with quality standards such as BS5750 and ISO9000. Thus, while it appears critical of rigidly defined bureaucratic roles it is, through the establishment of procedures, centrally concerned with constructing such roles. The development of quality assurance methods - particularly the establishment of quality standards like BS5750 and ISO9000, by requiring tasks to be documented brings about the separation of individual tasks from particular roles - exemplifies the very depersonalisation of roles which is at the heart of bureaucracy. However the distinct contribution of TQM is to provide the ideological support for this process, in the name of 'quality' , and through 'culture change' challenge traditional practices. Hence TQM can be seen as representing a hegemonic project [Gramsci 1971; Hall 1988]. It starts from the relatively incontestable notion that we all should be concerned about the improvement of quality.. But, with this assertion comes both an ideological framework of individual responsibility within a market relation - of individuals being both customer and supplier - and a shoring up of organizational hierarchy with a new legitimacy. This is, then, not the introduction of real sets of market relations, of real quantitative changes in the mode of exchange between participants in organizational relations. There occurs no immediate transaction between these 'customers' and 'suppliers' in the chain, there is no lubrication of

the market friction's, except at the most subjective of levels [Williamson 1975]; market

relations are presented as the only ones which can achieve the desired outcome -'quality'.

This change occurs within a framework in which elements of the autonomy and control

exerted by workers over their work can appear to devolve back into their hands but in

practice be further appropriated by management. TQM is presented as a mode of liberating

and empowering the worker, devolving power and decision making in a fundamental

challenge to the inertia's of bureaucracy. However, by the very ideological trammels set by

TQM on the subjectivity of workers and management this apparent devolution of power

might reflect the very controls that are being constructed by the metaphorical quality chain,

far from the search for the "gold in the workers' heads" being a force to liberate the worker

[Murray 1990 45; Lorenz 1990], its discovery might further enhance managerial prerogative.

TQM, by latching into the `politics of production' [Burawoy 1979; 1985] appears to transform

the culture of the workplace in attempting to construct a new worker; the `ideal' of the self

managed worker sensitive to the dictates of the market. It takes away individual autonomy

and reconstructs worker initiative in a manner which allows management determination.

Using Gramsci's metaphor of trench warfare, if 'macho management' represented a period of

'war of manoeuvre' - the rush of cavalry and troops in battle - and the deployment of

coercion, TQM is part of a 'war of position' - the consolidation of a position after the advance

[Gramsci: 1971].

The Yellow Brick Road

Philip Crosby, a charismatic populariser of TQM, argues that:

> Changing a culture is not a matter of teaching people a bunch of new
> techniques, or replacing their behaviour patterns with new ones. It is a matter
> of exchanging values and providing role models. This is done by changing
> attitudes. [Crosby 1984 97]

That:

> All we have to do is describe the future as we would like it to be and then
> march on down the yellow brick road. [*ibid.* 99]

The `yellow brick road' neatly symbolises the promise held out by Total Quality Management, doubtfully in the way intended by Crosby, that if we know what we want and set off down the road towards it then our wish should come true. In the classic story of Oz [Baum 1982],- made into a musical in the 1930's - Dorothy, a little girl from the grey plains of Kansas, along with her dog Toto, are blown into the mystical land of Oz by a cyclone wind. The child becomes a hero by accidentally killing the wicked witch on whom her house lands - and rewarded with the witches silver slippers - but is directed to the wizard, along the 'yellow brick road', for her way back to Kansas. On the way to the wizard Oz, in his Emerald City, she meets a lion without courage, a straw man without a brain and a tin woodsman who wants a heart. The story tells their adventures trying to see the great wizard and then getting him to grant their wishes, a heart, a brain, courage or the way back to Kansas. Like the wizard TQM is often claimed an almost magical potency to bring about remarkable changes, the main problem being the problem of getting people to believe its powers.

The remainder of this paper offers a critique of the theory of Total Quality Management through its approach to workplace culture, and is essentially in three parts. In the first I examine the rise of TQM through the western experience of Japanese development. Second I examine the nature of TQM's promised cultural change and, finally questioning the very notion of `quality'. It explores this development as a journey down the yellow brick road; the development of TQM being rich in icons and symbolism.

The most potent symbol of Total Quality must be Japan, its apparent attachment to the very success of Japan in the contemporary world economy. But the relation to Japan, and eastern promise, allows TQM a mystical aspect to complement managerial materialism. If we

were also looking for a graphic symbol of this managerial mysticism, it must be the circle -

possibly a contrast to the bureaucratic pyramid.

The Circle Effect

From the late 1970's as Japanese industrial advance converged on western decline,

a stream of managers and experts began to journey to the east to discover the reason.

> Like pilgrims to the temple of success, they (were) travelling to an ancient land ...to
> learn how Japan does it. [*Time* March 30, 1981, cited in Rees and Rigby 1988 173]

Their discovery was the Japanese system of quality control which appeared to have

transformed their industrial fortunes. The earlier reputation for shoddy copies of western

manufactured goods replaced in only a few decades by one for innovation and reliability.

Initially the very potency of the symbol of the circle seemed to suffice, with the quality circle

becoming a ready export along with motor cars and electrical goods. In a reversal of the

earlier reputed pattern of relations between Japan and the west, western companies set out

to copy what appeared Japanese innovation. But a major discovery of the early missionaries

was also that the Japanese miracle had been created by - mixing religious metaphors -

western guru's; prophets of quality management to the Japanese in the 1950's these ageing

sages - W. Edwards Deming and Joseph Juran in particular - were to become the hero's of

TQM.

TQM only really became established in the latter half of 1980's although its roots go

back to developments around mass production in the United States in the 1930's which gave

rise to both human relations and quality assurance. The idea of creating a culture change

was only recently wedded to the methods of quality assurance to create TQM , although

some of the elements of what is meant by this culture change - around the emphasis on the

customer - was embedded in the earlier work of Deming and Juran.

The establishment of modern Quality Assurance can be traced to the work of W.A. Shewhart on statistical process control in the 1930's. It was in the application of this to US wartime production through the work of the Statistical Research Group that saw the techniques become established. However, as Deming was to reflect, there were divisions between different approaches. While there was the development of particular techniques, Deming was sensitive to the organizational setting for their adoption through and by management.

> Brilliant applications attracted much attention but the flare of statistical methods by themselves, in an atmosphere in which management did not know their responsibilities, burned, sputtered, fizzled, and died out. What the men did was to solve individual problems. Control charts proliferated, the more the better. Quality control departments sprouted. They plotted charts, looked at them, and filed them. They took quality control away from everybody else, which was of course entirely wrong, as quality control is everybody's job. They put out fires, not perceiving the necessity to improve processes. [Deming 1982 486]

Deming, then a government statistician and the heir to Shewhart, had offered his advice to a group of statisticians considering how to put their skills to useful war work. Given the latter path of the statistical application into quality control it is worth citing this at some length.

> Time and materials are at a premium, (Deming argued) and there is no time to be lost. There is no royal short-cut to producing a highly trained statistician, but I do firmly believe that the most important principles of application can be expounded in a very short time to engineers and others. I have done it, and have seen it done. You could accomplish a great deal by holding a school in the Shewhart methods some time in the near future. I would suggest a concentrated effort - a "short" course followed by a "long" course. The short course would be a two day session for executive and industrial people who want to find out some of the main principles and advantages of a statistical program in industry. It would be a sort of popularization, four lectures by noted industrial people who have seen statistical methods used, and can point out some of their advantages. The long course would extend over a period of weeks, or, if given evenings, over a longer period. It would be attended by the people who actually intended to use statistical methods on the job. In many cases they would be delegated by the men who had attended the short course.[letter from Deming to W. Allen Wallis, April 1942, cited by Allen Wallis 1980]

Reputedly because of the inefficiency of the Japanese telephone system, the US occupation forces began to cultivate interest in quality control in their programme of reconstruction. In 1950 Deming was to accept an invitation to give a series of lectures in Japan, the outcome being the establishment of something very like the programme he had proposed for the Statistical Research Group in the US in 1943. Indicating the division, Deming has recently argued that:

> It was vital not to repeat in Japan in 1950 the mistakes made in America.
> [Deming 1982 488]

Deming was to address a small group of top managers on the importance of Statistical Quality Control (SQC). Characteristic of the approach, this was complemented with consumer research. This was followed by a series of conferences and lecture programmes, all carried out under the auspices of the Japanese Union of Scientists and Engineers (JUSE). Royalties from the publication of Deming's lectures, donated to JUSE, were used to fund prizes for quality improvement - the Deming Prizes. Deming, who returned on subsequent years for further lectures, was followed by other statisticians principally Joseph Juran and Armand Feigenbaum who went further than Deming in developing the managerial and organizational dimensions of quality control [Bendell nd.]. With the establishment of TQM being identified with these early Japanese origins Deming has achieved cult status with the Deming Society established to disseminate his philosophy [Mann 1989].

As well as promoting the annual award of the Deming prizes JUSE were responsible for a journal, *Statistical Quality Control*, first published in 1950. This built around an education programme designed for foremen, the journal was a vehicle for discussion in workshop quality control study groups. In 1962 they publish *Gemba-to QC* (Quality Control for the Foreman), as one of a series of three pamphlets on quality control, and the workshops for foremen were renamed "QC circle activities"[Ishikawa 1985; Deming 1982].

Battling to reconstruct its industry and for a place in world markets, with a reputation for shoddy and cheap goods, Japanese Quality Circle activity - contrary to many western observers - was not concerned with working conditions. They had a purely pedagogic role in the education of foremen in the techniques of quality control. The attraction of this method of training shop floor workers in methods of detecting defects, for the Japanese, was that it saved the cost of inspection.

> If defective products are produced at different stages of the manufacturing process, even strict inspection cannot eliminate them. If instead of relying on inspection, we produce no defective products from the very beginning - in other words, if we control the factors in a particular process which cause defective products - we can spare a lot of money that is expended for inspections.[Ishikawa 1985 20]

The lessons were practical, applying the techniques learnt to identifiable production problems. The problem would be identified latterly through brain-storming, and the `seven tools of quality control' -Pareto Charts, Cause and Effect diagrams, Stratification, Check sheets, Histograms, Scatter diagrams and Shewhart's control charts and graphs - then applied to the practical exercise. While all employees were taught the techniques, usually by their foreman, the participation in the Circles was voluntary. The origin and development of the circles, therefore, was not in the group participation and suggestion Scanlon Plan, as some western authors suggest [Gorz 1989 63; Rose 1988 168], but in the far more structured and controlled development of practical production skills. These circles sought workers ideas, the `gold in the mine' as Juran put it [cited in Bendell nd 8], in a way that was dictated and controlled by management.

Guru's and Evangelists: the emergence of TQM

The emergence of TQM is rooted in a native critique of western management in the sphere of quality, as well as a western attempt to account for Japanese industrial success. Early work was carried out at the Hawthorne works of the Western Electric Company

alongside the birth of 'human relations' ; as the manufacturing arm of ITT this was to spawn the work of Philip Crosby a generation later [Mann 1989; Holberton 1991]. It is not surprising in this context that, with the choice of developing mass assembly electronics, Japan was to appropriate some of this pioneering work. While there are claims that the work of Crosby and the earlier gurus are more directly connected - as we shall see later - they appear to be relatively autonomous developments although convergent on the very emergent threat from eastern competition. As well as an attempt by Crosby to take on the mystic aura of a quality guru.

The onset of industrial recession in the 1970's saw many western companies trying to grasp the nature of the Japanese threat, particularly by those operating in sectors such as the motor industry, computers and electrical goods, firms like Ford, Phillips and Hewlett-Packard [Rees and Rigby 1988], which felt this most directly. This threat, perceived as the ability of Japan to produce quality goods which, because of their expanding sales, clearly met customer requirements, was reinforced by pressure from an expanding, vocal, consumer movement. But the search for the secret of Japans success began to take on an almost mystical character, with commentators writing of `missions' and even `pilgrimages':

> The cost of losing a reputation for high quality was rammed home to British and American managers who went on pilgrimage to Japan in the late 1970's. They came back with two messages. First that the quality was as important to competitiveness as price and second that standards were best maintained through ingraining the pursuit of quality in the everyday working habits of production workers and office staff, rather than relying on specialist inspectors. [Leadbeater 1986]

The initial response was often to attempt to replicate one aspect of the Japanese system, an emergent fad for Quality Circles, the mystique was enhanced by the discovery of ageing sages of quality. Like the hippies of the previous decade managers, in search of their - albeit more materialist - salvation discovered their guru's in a previous generation of western experts. Deming, particularly, was credited with a truly metaphysical message. The Director

of Quality at Hewlett-Packard UK - and Chairman of the British Deming Society - told a

conference, for instance, that:

> In 25 minutes it is impossible to tell you what the philosophy of Deming
> actually is. It is so all embracing, it is so complete in its approach it is so
> revolutionary in its concept, even though it may not appear to be at first
> sight, that it takes about half a day at minimum to begin to even touch the
> surface. [Graham 1988 81]

The essential feature within Deming's approach, which arguably separates it even from other

quality approaches, is that it proposes that "a company exists for the purpose of serving its

customers" [*ibid.*]. As we shall see, the mysticism of the approach goes further to develop an

almost transcendental belief in Total Quality being cultivated in the workforce. The

evangelical approach is also adopted toward the workforce, the principal role of TQM training

is to develop this belief. It is common amongst the trainers - the TQM priesthood - to draw

distinctions - following work at Avon cosmetics - between believers, agnostics and non-

believers [see e.g. Curtis and Boaden 1988]

A number of more substantial methods, beyond the fad for 'quality circles', were

beginning to be incorporated within the west in the light of the Japanese experience. The

motor industry, particularly, saw the Japanese advantage as resting in part in their devolving

inspection to the operator and thus cheapening cost through a saving on non-productive

labour [see e.g. Marsden *et al* 1985]. Also much associated with the motor industry there

were developed methods, such as Quality Function Deployment [e.g. Griffin 1991]and the

'House of Quality' [Hauser and Clausing 1988] which attempt to break down divisions

between marketing and the design process to incorporate what was felt consumer demand.

> The foundation of the house of quality is the belief that products should be
> designed to reflect customers' desires and tastes - so marketing people,
> design engineers, and manufacturing staff must work closely together from
> the time a product is first conceived. [*ibid.* 65]

While some were incorporating the quality message into design and others taking the

spiritual path to Total Quality an apparently more worldly vision was also emerging in the

USA which was to have a far more profound impact in creating sense of cultural mission that

gave birth to TQM, through its almost evangelical crusade, than the fad for quality circles or

the technical adjustments to design and manufacture. In July 1979 Philip Crosby left his Vice

Presidency of ITT, where he had responsibilities for Quality, to establish his own

consultancy. This was promoted by the success of his book *Quality is Free*. The central

message of the book is, similar to that coming out of Japan, that quality should be built in not

inspected out. There was immense waste in the processes of inspection and in rectifying

fault, the solution - which held the magic savings - was to `do it right first time'.

> Quality is not only free, it is an honest-to- everything profit maker. Every
> penny you don't spend on doing things wrong, over, or instead becomes half
> a penny right on the bottom line. In these days of "who knows what is going
> to happen to our business tomorrow" there aren't many ways left to make a
> profit improvement. If you concentrate on making quality certain, you can
> probably increase your profit by an amount equal to 5 to 10 per cent of your
> sales. That is a lot of money for free.[Crosby 1979 1]

While the ultimate object of savings on cost is clearly spelled out by Crosby we are still

presented with an act of conversion and faith; management enters into an evangelical

crusade, becoming exposed to the true belief [*ibid.* 8]. Quality Management goes then

through the stages of maturity of Uncertainty, Awakening, Enlightenment, Wisdom and

Certainty [*ibid.* 26-30].

So potent is the symbol of Japan within Total Quality Management that Crosby, while

well established in the west, also claims the status of an eastern guru comparable to Deming

and Juran. He says that a `zero defects' programme he established in 1962 while

misunderstood in the USA proved a strong influence on NEC in Japan:

> Dr. Kobyashi of Nippon Electronic Corporation (NEC) came to see me in
> Orlando. I explained to him what I really meant by zero defects and when he
> returned to Japan, he set it up. Last summer the Japanese had a celebration
> of 16,000 people representing 3750 companies, recognizing 20 years of zero
> defects in Japan. [Crosby 1989 9]

While differences in approach to quality and quality assurance do remain, as well as division and accusations of charlatanism [Crosby 1989 79], a convergence of the followers of the older and newer generation of Guru began to appear to create a reasonably coherent approach defined ultimately as *Total Quality Management*. A strong element of eclecticism emerged among the practitioners, consultants who found themselves selling a similar product, essentially a simple solution to organizational ills. While one side - the more entrepreneurial wing - traded on exhortation to `do it right first time', and the other - the more academically scientific - on a package of statistical techniques, they were both meeting customer requirements, with no real grounds for the customer to judge except in the marketing of the product. Elements of established quality assurance were being drawn on and prescriptions investigated from Japan like the move to devolving responsibility for inspection to the workforce themselves - Total Quality Control - but the emergence of TQM itself was only to occur when all this became subsumed within the 'culture change' project.

The Establishment of TQM

The catalyst for the tightening up of quality assurance systems in both Japan and the west, a process which established Total Quality, was the second oil crisis. This not only led to industrial recession and greater desperation in the west but also to a tightening of the quality process in Japan. One of the initiators of the transition to Total Quality Control in Japan, a supplier to Toyota, explained the circumstances.

> Toyoda Gosei officially began TQC in 1982, but the study of TQC was actually begun three years earlier in 1979.
>
> The year 1979 coincided with the second oil crisis. Costs rose substantially on raw materials we were using and in some instances, they were almost impossible to obtain. We were not sure what the future held to the company, and we wanted to introduce TQC to strengthen our company's basic structure. We began by holding a series of seminars on TQC for our top managers, which gradually filtered down to other groups.
>
> In late 1979, we experienced a recall campaign caused by the poor quality of one of our products. As you are aware, when safety parts are involved in the

car business, we have no other alternative but to recall cars and replace those faulty. [Nemoto 1987 123; see also Atkinson 1990 3]

By the mid 1980's the introduction of Total Quality began in earnest. Instead of earlier experimentation with quality circles involving only a small percent of workers, cost saving through avoiding error was to be a company wide commitment.

In Britain this company wide commitment has been promoted by the Department of Industry which, amongst more widespread publicity through the its National Quality Campaign launched in 1983 [Lascelles and Dale 1989], sent a `Mission' to the USA and the far east [Trade and Industry, Department of nd; D.T.I. 1985; 1985]. The team of managers, consultants, broadcasters and trade unionists were shown the operation of quality circles in Japan, with trips to Toyota and Sony. They also attended a session at Crosby's Quality College in the USA . While all the members of the `mission' seemed to come home with the conviction that British industry needed to take seriously the challenge of Total Quality there was visible scepticism toward both Japan and US approaches.   A noticeable drift occurred in the approach of the British government in its approach to the quality campaign, reflecting the development which was occurring in Quality Assurance. Initially the emphasis was on the establishment of quality circles and gaining accreditation through British Standards Institute for quality systems, BS5750. Increasingly this was presented as a step along the road to Total Quality Management - adding 'culture change' to the repertoire of quality assurance.

By 1988 a group of European multinationals, established the European Foundation for Quality Management. The fourteen initial members included Bosch, Ciba-Geigy, Nestlé, British Telecom, Fiat and Renault [*Financial Times* September 16 1988]. The reason that TQM should be promoted in this way by large multinationals, as well as by national governments, is not difficult to see; concern about suppliers led to attempted regulation and certification. While some national governments as purchasers and some firms, like Ford,

could impose their own standards on suppliers a uniformity of standards such as BS5750 in Britain or the International ISO9000 with independent monitoring, were more suited to current demands.

The introduction of these standards require that work procedures are spelled out; that the requirements for each task are documented. This clearly has implications in terms of both bureaucracy and 'de-skilling' [Tuckman 1994]. The immediate requirement appears to be the detachment from the worker of their knowledge and placing it in the hands of management [Braverman 1974]; far from an alternative to Taylorism it appears to share many characteristics. Also, through the process of the documentation of procedures there appears an increase in traditional forms of bureaucracy; not only do we see the permeation of substantive rationality we see the very establishment of rules of conduct. The rejection of bureaucracy which is articulated within TQM is clearly not of the traditional formulation but of its dysfunction's [Merton 1968]; in organizational terms it challenges the construction of the 'bureaucratic personality' through detaching particular duties from specific roles. Once the procedures have been established then the tasks are open to a forms of team working, thus also the contrast between the 'empowerment' of the workforce and 'de-skilling'. However there is another dimension to the idea of empowerment which is further consistent with new right thinking, that the empowerment occurs precisely because of the penetration of market relations.

Total Quality: the Mission

While they might have similar roots and, to some extent share techniques and concepts, TQM should not be confused nor reduced to the idea or practice of quality circles nor even to the Japanese notion of Total Quality Control. One initial reason is that TQM often develops without quality circles and some of its key theorists, including Juran and Crosby,

doubt the viability of a cultural transfer or have little faith in the voluntarism and autonomy of circles - however constrained they may be in practice. What marks out TQM is the emphasis placed on the creation of 'culture change' which appears at one level to be an exhortation to adopt at least some element of Japanese work culture which in practice masks the appeal to market relations - to the customer - supplier chain as a market metaphor to replace ideas of bureaucracy.

The process of establishing TQM is, as one might expect, almost like an act of conversion. The initial process, often initiated by a convert within the ranks of management, is to establish the `cost of quality'. A practice which appears to have originated with Crosby it is now widely used to establish the sort of savings that might be made through `doing it right first time', and against `the cost of getting things wrong' [Atkinson 1990 21*ff*]. A reasonably standard estimate for the outcome of the exercise is a saving of 15-25% of turnover in manufacturing, and as much as 40-50% in services, with the possibility of even more in the public sector [*ibid.* 21-2].

With senior management convinced of the need to establish Total Quality Management the `top down' process of establishment divides into two parts; the establishment of an organization for TQM and the establishment of quality training; the conversion of management and then workers. There is some variation in the way that different organizations apply this programme, let alone in the prescriptions of different guru's and quality consultants, but there is broad similarity.

TQM acts to both reinforce existing hierarchy and construct an emphasis on group or team working at lower levels. The `quality organization' often replicates the existing hierarchy giving the senior roles new legitimacy, although - for Crosby there is the often mentioned ambition of more status for Quality Managers. At the top of the organization is a

management committee, chaired by the chief executive, consisting of the most senior management. Each member of this committee, usually excepting the Chief Executive, will - chair a lower committee consisting of their immediate subordinates. Below this are usually groupings called Quality Improvement Teams, which may be permanent or *ad-hoc*, with cross functional membership and responsibility for particular improvements. At the lowest rung, run by management but incorporating the shop floor, come groupings which might be called quality circles - although they often have different names. This then reinforces essentially the existing bureaucratic hierarchy now justified as a collective whose central objective is achieving 'quality' in its activity. The introduction of TQM has often also been associated with the introduction of new supposedly Japanese styles of team organization [Parker & Slaughter 1990]; of a repertoire of 'new management techniques'[Coyne & Williamson 1991]. In these circumstances the role of TQM, claimed to empower the workforce, is extended to promote the flexibility of labour through the externalisation of working procedures. In establishing externalised standards of working the de-skilling of the workforce is facilitated allowing jobs to be both scrutinised by management and undertaken by any member of the team.

TQM is often introduced following a 'cost of quality' audit which evaluates the inspection costs and apparent wastage - the 'cost of getting things wrong'. The consultants who carried out the 'cost of quality' audit then usually carry out initial training with management since they have to show enthusiasm and inspire the lower ranks. While the training might include some of the statistical tools of quality assurance the main emphasis is usually on the identification of the internal customer; an initial exercise is usually for those on the courses to identify who their immediate customers are and to whom they are suppliers. The training itself is hierarchical, senior management having longer and better surroundings than more junior management, the training of shop floor workers occurring in house.
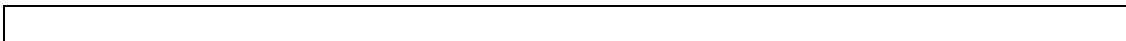
Insert Figure

"The Quality Chains"

- approximate position -

Symbols and icons of this conversion begin to appear, with plaques confirming the quality training, pens, lapel badges, certificates and drinks coasters - all bearing a quality message logo. These are the very artefacts of the cultural conversion that is being promoted, a conversion which at times - through the word of the TQM evangelists - takes on the dimensions of almost a religious conversion. The mission is to strive for quality and the means of achieving this is set out in a particular route, the acceptance - depending on which of the gurus is being followed - of a set plan; in both Deming and Crosby's case this has fourteen steps.

The central message is to develop an awareness of the `customer'. This is deliberately used to make individuals sensitive to task responsibilities within a complex division of labour, even amongst the majority of managers and workers who never have any contact with the final customer. This is clearly, then, not of itself constructing an internal market - no transaction occurs within the internal customer-supplier chain within TQM. It is an alternative mode of conceptualising sets of relations within organizations; the market metaphor is introduced as a counter to bureaucratic models of power and authority. At least one consultancy does take this idea further in asking those in training to construct a service level agreement with their customers and suppliers.

The customer is not then the purchaser of the goods and services of the supplier but is defined as the next one in a chain, most of whom are within the organization. John Oakland has represented this as the `quality chains' [see Figure]

> ...the keystone of company-wide quality management is the concept of customer and supplier working together to their mutual advantage. For any particular organisation, this becomes `total' quality management if the supplier/customer interfaces extend beyond the immediate customers, back inside the organisation, and beyond the immediate suppliers. In order to achieve this, a company must organise itself in such a way that the human, administrative and technical factors affecting quality will be under control and produce consistency. [Oakland nd 10]

Recently this message has moved beyond the organizations where there were definable external `customers' to complement the development of the commodification of the public sector. State run Health and Social Services have increasingly been moving towards an awareness of their 'customer' [see e.g. Edgar   1991],  with exhortations to `meet customer requirements' .

'Quality' acquires a value laden meaning.   The qualitative basis of market values come from the political framework and is fundamentally ideological. TQM thus draws from, and reinforces, a new right attempt at representing not market structures themselves but the value and values of the market as an ideal. It starts from the basis that we all accept that we should be striving to produce 'quality' then moves to argue that the only means of achieving this is to accept the ideological representation of the market. Quality' itself becomes an icon, a selling point for an increasing number of goods and services [Du Gay & Salaman 1992; Mathews 1991]. The customer becomes deified, surveyed to find their demands and wishes. `Meeting customer requirements' is the definition of quality offered and employed, and it is to the problem of definition that I now turn.

The Definition of Quality

"You have no right to expect to send you back to Kansas unless you do something for me in return. In this country everyone must pay for everything he gets" [the Wizard to Dorothy in Baum 1982]

While attempting to establish a new `common sense' within production Crosby is vehemently critical of the common sense view of quality.

The first struggle, and it is never over, is to overcome the "conventional wisdom" regarding quality. In some mysterious way each new manager becomes imbued with the conventional wisdom. It says that quality means goodness; that it is unmeasurable; that error is inevitable; and that people just don't give a damn about doing good work. No matter what company they work for, or where they went to school, or where they were raised - they all believe something erroneous like this. But in real life, quality is something quite different. Quality is conformance to requirements; it is precisely measurable; error is not required to fulfil the laws of nature; and people work just as hard now as they ever did. ... people perform to the standards of their leaders. If management think people don't care, then people wont care. [Crosby 1979 7-8]

The definition of quality as `conformance to requirements' is a basic point for Crosby, the first of his quality absolutes. Juran, alternatively, argues that customer requirements might themselves be mistaken, this might lead to faulty or unsafe goods. He offers the alternative `fitness for purpose'. But this also seems a long way from the commonly accepted view of quality. It can only be considered within very narrow categories, a Ford Escort can't be contrasted with a Rolls Royce, quality is reduced to utility. This has caused disquiet even among advocates of TQM, Bendell represents it as a contrast of European and American cultures.

the European concept of quality is more than the American fitness for purpose. This is the concept which in the service sector produces *adequate* identical hotels, which to the critical European perhaps lack intrinsic style or character. In terms of manufacturing, the traditional European conception of quality also includes good aesthetic design and good engineering, as well as the required functionality. ... Thus quality in the UK and Europe is more than just the adequate sameness of our American cousins. [Bendell nd. 3, emphasis in the original]

In identifying the recent concern with *quality* in the field of welfare Coote and Pfeffer [1991] identify four current approaches to the definition of quality. They define these approaches as the *traditional* - what we might call the common sense view, the *scientific* - Juran's 'fitness for purpose' - a *managerial* view associated with excellence, and *consumerist* approach. In this

context, of what they perceive as a growing terrain of political contest Coote and Pfeffer offer their own *democratic* approach to quality which would serve to empower the consumer - in their discussion very much the consumer of welfare provision. What they miss, although clearly indicate, is the very process of constructing this ideal consumer as well as the broader political and cultural terrain of 'quality assurance' already embedded in industrial, commercial as well as welfare organizations. There is a fundamental transformation occurring from the common sense view - not accountable by culture as Bendall would infer. Quality is being reduced to quantity, its essence being denied in the transformation.

> ...quality is precisely measurable by the oldest and most respected of measurements - cold hard cash. [Crosby 1979 15]

Quality is becoming a metaphor for the market, the symbol of free choice. The enthusiasm of the new right rests with the idea that it is only when we perceive ourselves as customers of `a service that we, as individual consumers, exert pressure for improvement. The failure of state health and welfare services, it is therefore argued, were not because of lack of resources - much of these were believed wasted in not 'getting it right first time' - but because those using the service didn't see themselves as purchasers [see HMSO 1991]. This at a time when the market is on the ascendancy as a potent symbol, raised by Thatcherism and the new right it is now the standard of the `new Eastern Europe'. In this regard aspects of Eastern Europe are not just seen as a mirroring the state sector of the west - where the development of a market philosophy is but a rehearsal for the larger production - but that the product is almost the prehistory of Japan's. The reputation of East European cars is often compared with that of Japans a few decades ago - the early imports of Toyotas with the current reputation of the Scoda or Lada. Potentially we are seeing the opening of a new phase in industrial development and the international division of labour perhaps the periodization could be Fordism, Toyotaism and Scodaism.

The Land of Oz

standing in just the spot the screen had hidden, a little, old man, with a bald
head and a wrinkled face, who seemed to be as much surprised as they
were. The Tin Woodsman, raising his axe, rushed toward the little man and
cried out,
"Who are you?"
"I am Oz, the Great and Terrible, said the little man, in a trembling voice, "but
don't strike me - please don't! - and I'll do anything you want me to."
Our friends looked at him in surprise and dismay.
"I thought Oz was a great Head," said Dorothy
"And I thought Oz was a lovely Lady," said the Scarecrow.
"And I thought Oz was a terrible Beast," said the Tin Woodsman.
"And I thought Oz was a ball of Fire," exclaimed the Lion.
"No, you are all wrong," said the little man meekly, "I have been making
believe."
"Making believe!" cried Dorothy. "Are you not a Great Wizard?"
"Hush my dear," he said, "Don't speak so loud, or you will be overheard -
and I shall be ruined. I'm supposed to be a Great Wizard."
"And aren't you?" she asked.
"Not a bit of it, my dear, I'm just a common man."
"You're more than that," said the Scarecrow, in a grieved tone; "You're a
humbug." [Baum 1982, 155]

Total Quality has moved from a hard production based approach, applying statistical

techniques to variation in output, and is now been increasingly applied within the service sectors

[see e.g. Wilkinson, Snape and Allen 1990]. With it came a change in emphasis toward concern

for customer service. A further development has, subsequently, been its employment in areas

were the idea of `customers' has until recently been alien. The pioneering work was begun at

British Telecom where in the height of denationalization there was a concern to abandon what

they saw as the `civil service' mentality. More recently this has moved more centrally into the state

sector, with hospitals questioning the notion of a patient and carrying out customer satisfaction

research [see Dalley and McIver 1989; Dalley and Carr-Hill 1991; Dalley *et al* 1991; and

Hennessey *et al* 1991]. TQM thus has the advantages of the wizard of Oz in being many

things to different people.

Of course some elements of this transition are a welcome departure from the drab

uniformity of the, `as long as its black' motor car of Fordism - be it the grey green uniformity of

hospital walls - and the depersonalisation of bureaucratic organization experienced by the

consumer - the organizational outsider.   Quality assurance has involved sets of practices which resemble Taylorism - the establishment and monitoring of working practices despite the methods of establishing these being very different. Through the development of manuals of procedures it has become possible to separate tasks from roles, particularly on the shop floor, and introduce considerable flexibility through this very process of the depersonalisation of tasks of those internal to the organization. However this was originally, with conventional quality assurance, locked into working craft practices and other forms of definitions of skill in manual work as well as 'professional' practice elsewhere. Recently, with the extension of quality assurance all these traditional modes have come under greater surveillance with TQM challenging the conventional guardianship of quality.   What has developed so far is the appropriation of *quality* within a discourse which argues that there is only the market alternative to stultifying modernity. That it must occur within a system of the commodification of need and the quantification of quality which is represented in organizational terms, and represents organization, as a chain of customers and suppliers. Far from being an alternative to bureaucracy *per se* TQM extends a bureaucratization process while challenging some of its dysfunctions.

But can we take Crosby's metaphor any further? In the end the yellow brick road led to Oz and the wizard; and the wizard was a fraud, an ordinary conjurer.   Many organizations have moved along Crosby's 'Yellow Brick Road' toward Total Quality Management in the last few years and it appears that they have little more than the belief in an ultimately magical solution that motivated the original travellers. Like those who saw the Wizard of Oz, people perceive different things in TQM. The immediate appeal might rest in the cost saving through devolving inspection, in 'getting it right first time', in 'customer service', or statistical process control. But, like the magical powers of the wizard, is the idea of the Japanese miracle. And miracles are the prerogative of prophets and, in this case their underlying message is a belief in the market - at least metaphorically and in opposition to the alternative of traditional bureaucracy - as the only

means of achieving quality. But it should not be a surprise that beneath the market metaphor and the critique of bureaucracy appears to be its apparent antithesis, the bureaucratization's process. Fundamental to traditional organizational analysis, with the study of modern organization has been the recognition of an informal culture of work within the bureaucratic frame. With the inversions of post-modernity, with the rejection of the metaphors of formality and the appeal to this very idea of 'culture', we can find this very same formality submerged within its practice.

In the last few years a large number of organizations have gone down the 'yellow brick road' of TQM, believing that this would be the solution to their problems. The Lion, Scarecrow and Tin Woodsman all found what they wanted inside themselves - and each gained a kingdom within the Land of Oz. While Dorothy - because of her magic slippers - found that she already had the means to return to Kansas. But - as Baum's stories of Oz develop in a whole series of books - this does not solve the problems of Oz where the competing forces of good and evil continue destablising the land. But, more interesting, the very origins of the name given to this land by Baum - that of Oz - was apparently taken from letters on a drawer of his filing cabinet, O-Z. Like Oz, TQM is embedded in the world of bureaucracy.

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