

Hammers, nails, sealing wax, string and gunpowder!

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Abstract Starting from experience of working with Japanese Quality Gurus, and decades of industrial consultancy, this article addresses the fundamental principles of the Quality Movement and suggests ways forward for Quality as empowerment, led from education. Quality Circles, empowering workers, and Students' Quality Circles, empowering students, provide a starting point for educational, economic and social innovation.

Keywords Education · Empowerment · Expert · Inspection · Professional · Quality Circles · Scientific management · Standardisation · Tools

1 Introduction

Everyone is in favour of “quality”: that must be a given. Most people would like to see “better quality.” That must also be a given. Nobody enjoys the experience of being impacted by a poor-quality product or service. We feel shocked and cheated whenever that occurs, so why do we have so much trouble achieving it?

Most of us are very familiar with the shock of witnessing situations where “poor quality” has resulted in disaster; scandals in hospitals, nuclear power stations located on fault lines, plane crashes, dams bursting, etc. These are sometimes referred to as “quality catastrophes.”

Probably, most would also feel more secure if they knew that the industries where such risks are present employed the services of “quality professionals.” After all, they

should know what to do to prevent or limit the effects of such incidents. Also, the Quality Professional should know how goods and services can be provided at maximum added value, shortest possible delivery time and with little in the way of waste. Can they do this? Well, actually no, at least not so many of them, the way things are. Amazingly, depending upon which branch of the quality sciences and disciplines they have studied will determine their usefulness in this respect.

Despite the fact that the term “Quality Professional” has been in use in the industrial world since the early decades of the twentieth century, there is a surprising disparity of opinion as to what that term actually means (Sasaki and Hutchins 1984). This divergence of opinion is strongest within the so called “profession” itself. Some of this confusion is due to differences of opinion as to the actual definition of the meaning of the word “quality,” which is as widely disputed today as it was decades ago. Not surprisingly, this confusion results in stark differences of opinion as to the role of the Quality Professional in an organisation.

2 Two approaches

There are in fact two distinct populations of “Quality Professional,” and each of these has very strongly entrenched, and very differing, views as to the underlying philosophy of quality, and of course, each of these so-called “professionals” sees his own cherished approach to be the true path. Some are not even aware that there is an alternative to what they have been brought up to believe! It is a bit like religion!

With such a division, it might appear logical to say that surely one approach must produce better results than the

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