
ISO 9000 APPLICATION IN SRI LANKAN PUBLIC SECTOR:**A success story of a District Secretariat***Dr. J D Samarasinghe¹*

ABSTRACT

Interest in adopting ISO 9000 quality management system by Sri Lanka's public sector organisations is a recent phenomenon. Is ISO 9000 a really useful venture for the public sector organisations? This paper presents the findings of the study on the experience of ISO 9000 implementation of a District Secretariat. In this study it was revealed that motivation for implementing ISO 9000 had been internally generated backed by the dynamism and positive influence of the 5S and quality circle implementation and winning several productivity competitions. Team spirit has been instrumental in successful ISO 9000 implementation. The powerful leadership has been found as the key to success. Survey data revealed that respondents confirmed that the most prominent outcome was 'reduction of errors'. Respondents also confirmed that internal performance and employee satisfaction have improved but customer satisfaction which is a key goal in TQM has not been adequately achieved. The findings of this research indicate the need for implementation of ISO 9000 in public organisations as a mandatory requirement.

Key words: ISO 9000, TQM, quality management, employee and customer satisfaction

Introduction

In organisations managerial activity for control and the pressure for process management are key needs (Hackman & Wageman, 1995; Hammer & Stanton, 1999). Quality management (QM) initiatives such as Total Quality Management (TQM), ISO 9000, business process re-engineering and Six Sigma meet the needs for process management. Though some suggest that interest in these has waned by 1990s (Powell, 1995), process management initiatives have collected more vigour even later, as it builds organisations' dynamic capabilities (Benner & Tushman, 2003). The proponents of process management claim efficiency improvement, cost

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reduction, improved customer satisfaction and high profits as some of the organisationally beneficial outcomes of process and quality improvement initiatives (Hammer & Stanton, 1999).

TQM and ISO 9000 series of quality standards have become the two main streams of QMs (Sun, 2000). Originated in Japan, TQM gradually spread to USA and Europe while ISO 9000 originated in Europe and pervaded throughout the world. The ISO 9000 standard was initially designed for manufacturing firms but later introduced to service organizations including public sector. It is a product quality standard but not a standard for QM. A QM system is the framework of processes used to ensure achieving organisational objectives through customer satisfaction. The organisation prepares the documentation on its quality policy statement and on the purpose, scope, content and procedure for each activity in a quality manual (Docking & Downen, 1999). The accredited third party institutions carry out audits, the documentation and implementation. Organisations conforming to the standards are offered a certificate for three years and are allowed to use "ISO 9000 certified" emblem (Cole, 1998). In this process the quality of the products or services output is not ensured.

Recently, a wave of interest is apparent to join the band wagon of ISO 9000 among public sector institutions in Sri Lanka. There are some anecdotal reports on some successful implementation of new QM methods in Sri Lanka, such as introduction of Japanese 5S method to health sector (Kaluarachchi, 2009). ISO 9000 QM system has become one of such favourite initiatives. Perhaps, this thrust may have been triggered by the competitive mindset created by productivity and quality competitions introduced by the Management Competition of the Ministry of Public Administration & Home Affairs (MOPA&HA), National Productivity Awards of the National Productivity Secretariat, National Quality Awards of the Sri Lanka Standard Institution and Quality Circle propagation by NGOs (e.g. Taiki Akimoto 5S Award of Japan Sri Lanka Technical and Cultural Association (JASTECA) and Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Quality & Productivity).

The public sector organisations showing interest in QM, such as ISO 9000 is not a recent phenomenon but empirical evidence for applicability and suitability of the quality standards in public sector organisations is rare (Sarok, 2010) except for a few studies (e.g. Sing & Nahra, 2006; Ahmed, 2010; Gastélum, 2003). Studies on ISO 9000 or TQM in the context of the public sector in Sri Lanka is even, rarer except for Kaluarachchi (2009), Kaluarachchi (2010), Liyanage, Wijesinghe, & Fonseka, (2010) which are more concentrated on 5S implementation than TQM or ISO 9000.

Although empirical research on QM including TQM and ISO 9000

increased dramatically still many questions in this regards have been left unanswered (Filippini, 1997), such as leader role (Kaluarahchi, 2010), performance (Sun, 2000), influence of ISO 9000 on the public sector and small business (Yousof & Aspinwall, 2000). Part of the problem of assessing TQM's real contribution to public management is the relative lack of hard data (Scharitzer & Kokrunk, 2000).

Hence, this paper examines the case of ISO 9000 implementation of a public sector institution in Sri Lanka with the purpose of understanding the motivation for adoption of ISO 9000 certification, the way the system was implemented, the role of the leadership in the whole exercise and the effects of the quality management initiatives.

Literature review

TQM originated in practitioner oriented manufacturing context and it has not been fully integrated into the management theory (Samarasinghe, 2004), but Chiles & Choi (2000) posit that TQM's theoretical roots lie in change, adaptation and learning theories. Other related theoretical roots of TQM are found in culture, and other behavioural theories. Neo-institutional and network theories facilitate diffusion of ISO 9000 as an organisational innovation (Guler, Gullien & Macpherson, 2002), and inimitability of ISO 9000 practices in resource based and contingency theories (Powell, 1995; Van der Bij & Broekhuis, 1998). However, TQM has been adequately studied empirically, after 2000, in particular. But, influence of ISO 9000 quality intervention as a separate approach has not been adequately examined.

Quality is defined as "the degree to which a set of inherent characteristics fulfils requirements" (ASQ, 2000). TQM is a hazy and ambiguous concept (Dean & Bowen, 1994) and is defined in numerous ways. Ross (1993) defines TQM as "an integrated management philosophy and set of practices that emphasises, among other things, continuous improvement, meeting customer's requirements, reducing rework, long range thinking, increased employee involvement and team work, process redesign, competitive benchmarking, team-based problem solving, constant measurement of results, and closer relationship with suppliers". ISO 9000 is defined as "a set of quality standards that are determined as being necessary for manufacturing and service organizations to be effective competitors" (Raisinghani, Ette, Pierce, Cannon & Daripaly, 2005). ISO 9000 can be used by management to improve performance and higher quality output. The eight principles that ISO 9000 series emphasise are: customer focus, leadership, employee involvement, process approach to activities and

resources, system approach to management, continuous improvement, and strategic supplier and customer partnerships (ISO 9001:2000).

In the literature, sometimes interventions such as introduction of ISO 9000 or Japanese 5S housekeeping techniques are interchangeably termed as TQM (e.g. Kaluarachchi, 2009). ISO 9000 certification may be considered as an initial step towards TQM (Taylor, 1995; Sun, 2000; Escanciano, Fernández & Vázquez, 2001; Bradley, 1994; Stephens, 1997; Curkovic & Pagell, 1999; Yusof & Aspinwall, 2000; Claver et al., 2002; Gotzamani and Tsiotras, 2002), and raising awareness of quality among workers and a good climate in which to implement it (Taylor 1995; Escanciano, Fernández & Vázquez, 2001). But some are of the view that ISO 9000 is contradictory to TQM principles (Martínez-Lorente & Martínez-Costa, 2004) and the scope of TQM is much broader than ISO 9000 as a management system framework and ISO 9000 is not a substitute for TQM (Sun, 2000).

Research reports that organisations may have a number of reasons for seeking ISO 9000 registration. Motivation for seeking certification can be pressure from existing customers (Brown & van der Wiele, 1995) or desire for operational improvements driven internally (Weston, 1995). Companies applying ISO 9000 by external motivation, such as customer pressure or as a promotional tool saw fewer benefits from it than those companies that had internal motivation to improve management practices and, consequently, performance (Huarng, 1998; Van der Wiele, Dale & Williams, 2000). However, The general agreement is that companies that obtain ISO 9000 certification motivated by internal pressure get better performance outcomes, such as productivity and improved quality practices than those pressurised by external reasons (Martínez-Costa & Martínez-Lorente, 2004). The argument that the internal conviction that ISO 9000 will be beneficial for management, finds support in the literature where positive relationship between motivation and certification results have been found (Meegan & Taylor 1997; Huarng, Horng, & Chen, 1999; Gotzamani & Tsiotras 2002).

There has been a growing trend in other countries where the government departments, statutory bodies and other public sector organisations are required to initiate certification in order to become more efficient and lean, financially more prudent and generate real improvements in their operations (Guler, Gullien & Macpherson, 2002; Dixon & Kouzmin, 1994; Sing & Mansour-Nahra, 2006). Among other things, this process involves the adoption of ideas, practices, programs, schemes, tools and other similar management interventions through privatisation process or by attempting to emulate the philosophies and disciplines of private sector organisations (Brown, Ryan & Parker, 2000). The Malaysian Government intervened to implement ISO 9000 in all government agencies in 2000.

Pressure has come from the government requiring its departments and agencies to focus on their operations and engage in continuous improvement through adoption of best practices (Sarok, 2010). At present, ISO 9000 certification has become a mandatory requirement for qualifying for public works, for both contractors and consultants in the construction industry in Hong Kong (Dissanayaka, Kumaraswamy, Karim & Marosszeky, 2001). In Australia, departments and agencies are encouraged to improve their management performance through implementation of systems such as ISO 9001. In this case pressure has come from its stakeholders (Sing & Mansour-Nahra, 2006). In local governments in both Western and Eastern Europe, such as Britain, Denmark, Poland and Turkey and the United States have successfully implemented the ISO 9000 quality standards. The implementation of ISO 9000 in the Polish local government in 1998 was based on the experiences and practices of West-European local government which had adopted the specifics of public administration (Taylor & Wilson, 1991) and attracted the attention of the public (Freeman & Grover, 1993, in Sarok, 2010).

Research reports confusing findings as to the effects of ISO 9000 certification. Some studies have found that certification does not have any effect on performance when implemented with TQM (Terziovski Samson & Dow, 1997; Rahman, 2001). Some research reports no general agreement regarding the effects of ISO 9000 on the performance (e.g. Gupta, 2000; Romano, 2000; Withers & Ebrahimpour, 2001). Some have reported either no effect (e.g. Terziovski, Samson & Dow, 1997; Simmons, 1999; Aarts & Vos, 2001; Wayhan, Kirche & Khumawala, 2002), or pessimistic findings (e.g. Terziovski, Samson & Dow, 1997; Hua, Aarts & Vos, 2001; Wayhan, Kirche & Khumawala, 2002).

On the contrary, some researchers have reported positive effect of ISO 9000 on performance (e.g. Docking & Downen, 1999; Gupta, 2000; Romano, 2000; Withers & Ebrahimpour, 2001; Sharma, 2005; Taylor, 1997; Brown, Van der Wiele & Loughton, 1998, Anderson, Daly & Johnson, 1999; Sun, 2000; Withers & Ebrahimpour, 2000; Gotzamani & Tsiotras, 2002), financial impact (Corbett, Montes-Sancho & Kirsch, 2005; Sharma, 2005), increased employee motivation and personal accountability for job performance, improved quality awareness, improved awareness of problems, improved management control, improved customer service, reduction of errors (Brown & van der Wiele, 1995), increased market share, increased growth in sales and improved customer satisfaction, reduced variability in the production process and improved control and reduced defect rates (Buttle, 1997).

One of the problems with QM initiatives in public sector is the neglect of the role of the citizenry as an important customer. Government programs

exceed the boundary of mere satisfaction of clients (process quality) and are more concerned whether the public programs have produced the desired outcomes (technical quality). If the social goals are not met, the program is rated a failure despite its capability to create client satisfaction (Moore, 2002 in Alford, 2002), which principles of ISO 9000 and TQM emphasise. Citizens should be the ultimate focus of the government and its agencies (Alford, 2002).

Leader and top management involvement in implementation is not adequately discussed in the relevant literature. Sing & Mansour-Nehra (2006) report fullest management support in the certification process (e.g. the Chief Executive Officer issued a notice to all staff early in the process and remained vocal on the issue throughout) while the General Managers provided resources and encouragement to staff. They also engaged in steering committees and proactively included QM items in the agendas for major and regular management and office meetings. In the Malaysian Civil Service when an organization decides to implement ISO 9000 as discussed above, basically, it has gone through the process of reforms. The management support is guaranteed and the quality culture has been institutionalized (Ahmad, 2010). In a study in Malaysia, Bin Biha, (1997) found that the top management support was low during the implementation and the lack of leader role play during the implementation was due to the weak leadership. After the implementation a positive increase in awareness and knowledge had resulted in support and commitment to resources but overall the contribution of leadership was reported very low.

In a study of public sector in Malaysia ISO 9000 application is understood as similar to reengineering. Citizen's Charter has been instrumental in making the public servants more conscious of their duties/responsibilities to the public. In this study Ahmad (2010) perceives the new version of the ISO standard as being closer to a TQM system where human resource management, customer focus, and leadership are emphasised.

Methodology

Case study approach was used, as advised by Yin (1994) to examine the dynamics within the institution (Selznick, 1949) and how those dynamics behave when come into contact with the introduction of a QM initiative. A single case of a District Secretariat was chosen to study the phenomenon using both qualitative and quantitative methods for data collection and analysis. The qualitative data were collected from focus group interviews, one to one interviews using a semi-structured interview schedule, observations and document analysis. One to one interviews were carried out with five participants including the District Secretary, senior managers

who were involved in ISO 9000 implementation and other key employees. The researcher was able to observe some limited, informal conversations between employees and service recipients, and formal proceedings at meetings and employee behaviours. While observation did not form a major part of the data collection, it did provide additional input. In these observations field notes were taken and memos were written which were later analysed. For collecting quantitative data, a questionnaire with a 13 item scale adapted from Claver, Tari, & Molina. (2001) to suit to a public sector organisation was used to measure employee perceived outcomes of ISO 9000 application. Respondents indicated the extent of agreement with each statement on a 5 point Likert type scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree). The questionnaire was administered to a stratified random sample of 50 participants who were senior and junior managers and Management Assistants. Only 46 completed questionnaires out of 50 were received. Content analytic method prescribed by Miles & Huberman (1994) was used for qualitative data analysis while quantitative data were analysed using SPSS.

Findings

Findings of the case study are reported here. The District Secretariat (DS) (District name is withheld for anonymity) also known as Kachcheri functions under the direct line authority of the MOPA&HA. The post of District Secretary which is also known as Government Agent is a legacy from the colonial rule now turned more development oriented than bureaucratic. The District Secretary, who is the Chief Executive Officer, is responsible for the administration of the procedure of civil administration from the village level up to the Parliament level. The Civil administration functions include: rural development activities, maintenance of peace, law & order and multitude of other services involving public life. The District Secretary looks after the civil administration of the entire district and exercises supervisory authority over the Divisional Secretariats within the District which are the lowest service delivery points in the Sri Lanka's administrative system. There are 16 such Divisional Secretariats under the DS in the current study operating with six hundred and fifty Grama Niladari Divisions. The DS office operates through four main Divisions: (1) Planning Division (2) Administration Division (3) Accounts Division and (4) Establishment Branch. The office is manned by 65 officers appointed by the MOPA&HA around 35 representing other Ministries/Departments.

The ISO 9000 quality certification was introduced to the DS office in 2009 under the leadership of the District Secretary who had gathered experience by having worked as a Divisional Secretary in the same District for quite some time and had earned reputation as a practical leader.

The fact that the motivation for implementing ISO 9000 in the DS office is internally generated within the leaders and the employees, rather than due to pressure from an external force, is consistent with the previous studies (e.g. Withers & Ebrahimpour, 2001; Singels, Ruel & Van de Water, 2001). The initiative has come naturally from successful implementation of the Japanese 5S method and adoption of various productivity and quality improvement initiatives including setting up of quality circles. Through these experiences and winning the first place of the National Productivity Award competition in the province and winning the third place at the national level in two consecutive years, the DS office has cultivated a competitive thrust for excellence. The senior staff including the District Secretary had made benchmark visits to the DS office and the Provincial Ministry of Health of the adjoining District several times. The benchmark leadership of the DS office of the adjoining District which had already introduced the ISO 9000 positively influenced the case organisation. The ultimate objective for introducing ISO 9000 is to offer good services to the customers, in fact, delighting customers. From the point of view of the Government, there is no compulsion or encouragement to implement ISO certification; in fact, reactions from the authorities are discouraging, rather than appreciative. The view of the Ministry of Administrative Reforms is that quality management and public reforms are two different things and the role of ISO 9000 initiative is to maintain the level of services after improvements have been made through reform activities which indicate a kind of role confusion between ISO 9000 interventions and administrative reforms.

Involvement with productivity improvement initiatives in which various process re-engineering projects have been undertaken has provided necessary environment and experience for launching the ISO 9000 initiative. The familiarity with the process orientation has also been very instrumental. Prevalence of the conducive environment has been instrumental in embracing the new cultural change. At the initial stage the implementation was not very smooth as there was resistance from existing discordant elements represented by different employee categories broken into several segments. The resistance gradually faded away and the teams have become dynamic and always pressurising the leadership to do new things. Dedication of the senior staff members close to the leadership and the support of talented junior staff and lower level employees have added necessary dynamism for the change.

The Quality Management System (QMS) established in ISO application is periodically reviewed and audited to ensure suitability, adequacy and effectiveness of processes. Audit is the key to ensure smooth functioning of the system and the audit team go round and find deficiencies and report to the District Secretary whereupon corrective actions are proposed. Changes

are effected following approval of the District Secretary, as described in the Document & Data Control procedure. The Audit team once again go back and report whether corrective actions have been effected; until then the process is held under surveillance. This activity goes on continuously without which the whole system will become ineffective. The content of the Quality Manual (QM) may therefore be altered on need basis. Data, such as customer satisfaction are also collected and analysed to demonstrate the suitability and effectiveness of the QMS and to evaluate where continual improvement of the effectiveness of the QMS can be made. The main thrust areas include; customer focus, resource management, monitoring, and measurement.

Measuring & Monitoring of Processes to achieve the expected objectives is also a key control procedure. In the measurement of processes, service delivery times, waste reduction and cost control measures are also included and each process owner monitors the process, as per the Plan – Do – Check – Action (PDCA) cycle. If any process is not achieving its intended output, immediate corrective actions are taken by the District Secretary.

However, for effective implementation of the system, the District Secretary's personal and close supervision is required. Challenges for effective continuation of the system include; encouraging subordinates to make continuous improvement and continuous supervision. Without these it is difficult to maintain the system. Unique to a public sector institution there are no financial incentives except self satisfaction, as the District Secretary puts it:

“When other work intervenes the process may collapse. If we miss out a crucial meeting, it affects the system seriously. We are not getting any benefits other than the personal satisfaction. Whatever good things we do if we make a slightest mistake we get only blames or disciplinary actions. When everything goes fine, in this system, no one really appreciates us”.

Team Building and Team Working

Success of the implementation of the QMS is largely due to the motivation of the teams and team working. Teams continuously engage in problem finding and resolving through informal systems and structures, such as productivity improvement teams. Thrust has come from the non-stoppable drive for quality and continuous improvement. There are Division-wise separate structures such as Quality Function Deployments (QFDs) to monitor and problem solving. Motivation for individuals comes through their work being facilitated and made their lives easier for them. They can finish their work on daily basis without leaving arrears or backlogs. They

work even after normal working hours ungrudgingly to finish the work without claiming overtime. Talents of individuals are recognised in this environment and they quickly attend to what they are asked to accomplish, as the work being done to its perfection is appreciated. To improve the team culture employee involvement and team cohesiveness building techniques, such as trips, matches or sport events are organised.

The emerging theme is that the dynamism generated within the organisation, in the form of team spirit, employee involvement and commitment, which are the result of 5S, Kaizen, Quality Circles and ISO 9000 implementation, mingled nicely with the powerful leadership to create a unique system rare to be found in public sector institutions in Sri Lanka.

Challenges

Some difficulties arise when efficient workers go out on transfer and new employees come in to the system from elsewhere, whereupon the efficiency of the system tends to diminish. Typically in the public service, some who cannot cope up with the dynamism of the system or who have personal level issues, such as attitudinal or behavioural, tend to leave the organisation. Participants report that they face problems when they work with other institutions which have incompatible systems, such as the MOPA&HA where ISO 9000 quality standards are not practised. But they are comfortable when dealing with 16 Divisional Secretariats which are ISO 9000 certified.

Leadership

Leadership is critical to achieve success in change initiatives, such as quality improvement programmes. This is truer in bureaucratic systems which do not formally encourage changes but maintain status quo, though informally encourage through lateral programmes. The leader of this organisation used to make benchmark comparisons with better institutions elsewhere with a view to possibly, outperform those. The leader has demonstrated unique leadership in persuading the subordinates to follow her vision, step by step; from small initiatives, such as 5S housekeeping methods to more sophisticated ISO 9000 quality standards. When failures occur she investigates the reasons for failure and tries to correct the situation with quick fixes. The leader communicates a convincing message to the staff that they should be excellent in service delivery and that the ISO 9000 is only a means and not the end to achieve excellence. The leader tries to ensure continuous support of different cadres by convincing all staff members without any discrimination between Kachcheri and non-

Kachcheri staff. Though the leader has been flexible and motherly, strict personal supervision of the work processes is maintained, clear targets are given to the staff to be achieved, and when mistakes are found the offenders are severely reproached, then comforted and followed up until corrections are made. Regarding the important issue of sustenance of the programme, majority confirmed that second and third layer leaderships have been created to carry forward the work, even without the current grand leadership.

The questionnaire survey data on participants' perceived outcomes of ISO 9000 quality management intervention are analysed and presented here. The number of cases analysed were 46 in which male and female were 18 (39%) and 27 (58%), respectively and the mean age of respondents was 41. Respondents' average number of years in service and the number of years in the organisation were 14 and 5, respectively. The educational qualifications are: O/L qualified (none), AL qualified 32%, graduates 34% and postgraduates 30%. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy = Cronbach's Alpha .69 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity $p = 0.000$. The reliability of scale items was Alpha = .83 which means that errors are small and the data can be used confidently to understand the perceived outcomes of the intervention. The 13 scale items were separated into three dimensions as per Claver Singels, Ruel & Van de Water, (2001) as organisational performance, customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction. All scale items of the three dimensions were reliable at Alpha = .69 and the scale item inter-correlation was $p = 0.000$.

As per the Table 1, the three inversely coded scale items (good results can be obtained even without ISO 9000, not actively involved in the community and not concerned about collecting information to measure customer satisfaction) have shown greater variance which means the respondents are not in favour (as shown in high Std. deviation) and all the positive scale items have shown less variance and consistency (low Std. deviation). As the low variance suggests respondents' most supported outcome was 'errors have been reduced' as a result of the programme which is a critical quality management outcome. Respondents have also confirmed that Inter divisional coordination, team spirit among employees, overall performance and employee satisfaction have improved. Fair agreement was indicated on improvement of customer satisfaction due to the ISO 9000 application but they have indicated that public complaints have hardly reduced.

In line with Claver et al. (2001), scale items (as shown in Table 1) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 9 were identified as the organisational outcome factor, 6, 7, 8, 10 and 11 were identified as the customer satisfaction factor and 12 and 13 were identified as the employee satisfaction factor. Mean values and standard deviations of the three factors were observed. Employees were positive

that their satisfaction improved due to the ISO 9000 intervention (Lowest variance was observed).

Table 1: Participants' average rating of ISO 9000 implementation performance

Mean	4.24	Performance improved	
Median	4.00	Errors reduced	
Mode	4	Waste reduced	
Std.	.507	Helped to achieve organisational targets	
	.389	Good results can be obtained even without ISO 9000	
	3.89	Not actively involved in the community	
	4.20	Not concerned about collecting information to measure customer satisfaction	
	4.00	Customer satisfaction has improved due to the ISO	
	5	9. Inter divisional coordination has improved	
	4	10. Implemented a process to collect and solve customer problems	
	5	11. Public complaints have reduced	
	4	12. Employee satisfaction has improved	
	5	13. Team spirit among employees has improved	

Table 2: Mean values of outcome factors

Description	Mean	Std.
Organisational outcomes	24.3	3.5
Customer satisfaction	20.4	3.4
Employee satisfaction	8.5	1.3

In summary, the survey findings indicates that internal performance, such as reduced error and employee satisfaction have been rated over customer satisfaction which is a fundamental TQM principle.

Conclusion

There are some similarities and differences between the experience of other public sector organisations reported in the literature and the case organisation examined here. The major differences are: (1) in the reported cases the requirement for ISO 9000 implementation is mandatory but in the present case there is no such compulsion or encouragement but unhelpfulness (2) in many reported cases, the way forward has mainly been through consultants who have generally adopted large and costly approaches; but in this case even public funds are not available and the way forward is made by the leader and the teams through collaborative trial and error learning process (3) in other reported cases the motivation to implement the programme has come from extrinsic incentives based on pay and reward systems, whereas in this case the staff are intrinsically motivated. This is contrary to cultural perspectives expressed in Nanayakkara (1999), the view that change initiatives are technical and managerially not beneficial (Samarathunga & Bennington, 2002) and political bureaucracy and poor administrative setup that discourage changes (Kaluarachchi, 2010). In Sri Lanka implementation of ISO certification in the public sector is not a part of the formal management reform process (as in Malaysia) or a reengineering initiative (Hammer and Champy, 1993).

What are the main problems faced by the organisation? The study revealed that there were key issues faced by it. One of the main issues is the non recognition of the voluntary pursuance of quality management initiatives by public institutions by the authorities. District Secretaries are afraid to use public funds for these because of possible audit queries. If the leader is transferred out there will be no administrative responsibility for others to continue ISO 9000.

The ad-hoc and isolated adoption of the ISO 9000 quality certification in the public sector institutions without the financial and administrative support and a mandate from the authorities raises serious sustainability issues, as the success of such initiatives largely depend on the strength of the leader's personal leadership capabilities and tend to die a natural death with the leader's exit from the organisation as they are on a transferable service. To sustain the ISO 9000 it should accompany process re-engineering. On the other hand, to succeed in quality improvement, as the experience of other reported cases, ISO 9000 is only a start and not the end of a long journey towards the quality excellence and public organisations should gradually be allowed to transform to TQM organisations. Implementing ISO 9000 and TQM will enable public sector institutions to be more efficient and provide good continuous service while having motivated and satisfied set of employees. The authorities should officially recognise and support ISO 9000 and TQM implementation and should provide necessary funds and necessary motivation.

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