



# TQM implementation issues: review and case study

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*Abstract* TQM is a philosophy mainly dominated by large companies. Small businesses are lagging behind larger ones when it comes to introducing and adopting new managerial philosophies and advanced technology. Many small companies have stopped at quality system certification, such as ISO 9000, in their quality journey rather than pursuing further continuous improvement efforts through TQM. Small businesses must understand the need to go beyond the quality system stage and work towards a total approach for quality. Only through this total approach will their quality effort be a success. Discusses the various issues confronting small businesses when embarking on TQM. First, reviews the subject of TQM and the quality initiatives undertaken by small businesses (which are treated as small- to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)) such as ISO 9000 and TQM. The small business characteristics are also examined. Second, presents a case study conducted in a small manufacturing company. Culminates with conclusions and discussions drawn from both the review and the case study with suggestions for future research directions.

## Introduction

Many of the companies that have implemented TQM are large multinational corporations (MNCs) such as IBM, British Airways, Hewlett-Packard, Motorola, etc. Except for the very few, in small businesses many are still lagging behind when it comes to implementing new management techniques such as TQM.

This paper looks at the various TQM implementation issues particularly in small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The background section reviews the concepts of TQM, and some of the quality initiatives undertaken by small businesses. Most of the studies found relate to quality assurance and the implementation of BS EN ISO 9000; very few focused on the application of the wider concept of total quality. A short description of small business characteristics is also given to provide an understanding of their problems. The case study part of the paper presents a detailed report of a study conducted in one SME involved in manufacturing. Various issues for effective implementation such as management practices, process of implementation, results and outcomes were investigated. The final section presents the conclusions based on both the review and the case study and suggests future research directions.

## Background

Different authors have given various definitions of TQM. Kanji (1990) defined it as:

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