

**TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT
AND
PARADIGMS OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

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Introduction

The implementation of total quality management (TQM) in public organizations is usually associated with the rise of New Public Management (NPM). Together with NPM, TQM has encountered a lot of criticism. The underlying argument has been that NPM and TQM undermine civil service ethos since they advocate entrepreneurial approaches in providing public services. Apart from the discussion of TQM's suitability for public agencies, there is an ongoing discussion about the downsides of TQM as such. One of the most serious objections to TQM is that it creates mechanistic solutions (Godfroij 1995) and increases bureaucracy (Hill and Wilkinson 1995, 19).

Yet, the bureaucratic aspect of TQM in respect to public organizations has not deserved much attention. Since NPM has been described as the transformation of culture of the public service from a rules-bound bureaucracy to an entrepreneurial and performance based focus (van Gramberg and Teicher 2000, 479), a paradox seems to appear between the rhetoric of NPM and TQM as a form of bureaucracy. The question also rises what is the relationship between TQM and traditional public administration. Despite the growing popularity of governance, that is sometimes argued to represent a new paradigmatic shift in public administration, there are those who argue that (modernized) Weberian bureaucracy, as well as components of NPM, are still relevant to public sector organizations¹.

Therefore, the aim of the paper is to analyze the suitability of TQM for public organizations and to identify the preconditions that have to be met in order to gain success in implementing TQM. The paper argues that although the implementation of TQM in public sector is usually associated with the ideas of NPM, it shares several similar tenets with traditional public administration.

The paper concentrates on micro and meso levels of quality². TQM influences also macro level quality, however, as Schedler and Felix (2000, 134) argue, the impact that TQM has is indirect in the form of reinforcing effects upon the relationship between people and government. This relationship is of secondary concern here, as is the connection between governance and TQM. Nevertheless, as governance is a developing concept that attracts increasingly more attention among scholars and practitioners of public administration, some general remarks about the connections of TQM and governance are brought out.

¹ See for example Olsen (2006); Pollitt and Bouckaert (2004, 99-102); Bovaird and Löffler (2003a, 22) for further reference. While there is no doubt that traditional public administration qualifies as a paradigm, there is no consent among scholars whether NPM can be called a paradigm (Kaboolian 1998, 189). The discussion is not important from the point of view of this paper, so the "title" of paradigm is also given to NPM as well as to the concept of governance.

² Micro-quality applies to the relationships of the top, middle and base of an organization. The ultimate purpose is to improve the organization's performance. Meso-quality deals with the relationship between producer and consumer, or supply and demand, or provider and user. The general aim is to increase the external quality of the service paying more attention to those on the demand side. Macro-quality applies to the relationship between a public service and the citizenry, and to the relationship between the state and civil society. The fundamental concern is the improvement of the quality of life in society, including the quality of citizen/state relations within that broad concept (Pollitt and Bouckaert 1995, 14-15).

The paper starts with an overview of quality definitions. After that, introduction to TQM and its various models is made and its critique as well as TQM's role in public organizations is explained. Secondly, NPM and traditional public administration, i.e. bureaucracy, is analyzed in relation to TQM to show that the latter two are remarkably consistent. Subsequently, the conclusions are presented about the relationships between TQM and paradigms of public administration; besides, the general preconditions of implementing TQM in public organizations are outlined. In the end of the paper, brief references are made about the connections between TQM and governance.

Quality, Models and Critique of TQM and TQM in Public Organizations

Definitions of Quality

Quality is essentially an unwieldy notion that has different meanings to various people. For example, perceived quality is defined as the consumers' judgment about an entity's overall excellence or superiority or value (Zeithaml 1987, cited in Rowley 1998, 325). Perceived quality is a form of attitude related to, but not the same as, satisfaction, and resulting from a comparison of expectations with perceptions of performance. It differs from objective quality, which involves an objective aspect or feature of a thing or event (Rowley 1998, 325). Reeves and Bednar (1994, 437) have categorized definitions of quality as follows:

1. Quality as excellence;
2. Quality as value;
3. Quality as conformance to specifications;
4. Quality as meeting and/or exceeding customer's expectations.

Quality as excellence and quality as meeting and/or exceeding customer's expectations are more subjective concepts. Quality as value (for money) and quality as conformance to specifications contain more objective aspects. The latter are easier to manage and apply in case of measurable/comparable products or services. The former are difficult to measure, manage and put into practice, especially in service organizations. The conclusion of Reeves and Bednar (1994, 419) is that there is no global definition of quality: different definitions are appropriate under different conditions. Øvretveit (2005, 539) defines public service quality as meeting the needs of those most in need of the service, within higher level requirements, available resources and at the lowest cost. Still, this definition is not sufficient enough to provide a comprehensive or one-to-one understanding what are the characteristics of quality (public³) service.

³ OECD has tried to summarize the components of quality in the context of public service delivery, e.g. timeliness, accuracy, accessibility and appropriateness, equality and legality (the latter are likely to have priority if they are not already part of service delivery) which express values of service provision and as a part of this the relationship between the supplier and client. These values differ from country to country, depending on cultural and political backgrounds (Shand and Arnberg 1996, 17).

Total Quality Management

Generally speaking, TQM is a systematic approach to the practice of management, requiring changes in organizational processes, strategic priorities, individual beliefs, individual attitudes, and individual behaviors (Olian and Rynes 1991, cited in Spencer 1994, 448). TQM is both a philosophy and a set of guiding principles for managing an organization (van der Wiele et al. 1997, 241). But the vagueness of the quality notion, the evolution of quality management (QM)⁴ and influences from numerous quality “gurus” have brought along numerous interpretations of TQM’s contents. Yong and Wilkinson have drawn up a classification that demonstrates the different rationalizations⁵ or forms of TQM (Yong and Wilkinson 2001, 247).

(1) TQM as quality management

TQM as quality management is to a great extent about managing quality in mass-production settings using statistical tools (e.g. control charts, flowcharts, SPC - Statistical Process Control etc.) for improving processes although it goes beyond mere tools incorporating issues of quality control to managerial functions, e.g. strategic planning and involving workforce (training on quality control techniques, quality circles) (Yong and Wilkinson 2001, 247-248).

(2) TQM as systems management

Clustered with the “hard” approach of QM, this model of TQM is based on the use of systems and procedures for controlling quality. Quality systems entail having the organizational structure, responsibilities, documented procedures and work instructions, processes and resources for implementing QM, such that there is a guiding framework to ensure that every time a process is performed the same information, methods, skills and controls are used and practiced in a consistent manner (Dale 1994, cited in Yong and Wilkinson 2001, 249). Quality standards like the BS 5750 and ISO⁶ 9000 series are examples of such systems-based approaches to TQM. They were established to provide customers with an assurance that the quality of the products and/or services provided by supplier meets their requirements (Yong and Wilkinson 2001, 249).

(3) TQM as people management

This approach to TQM is often seen as being the “soft model” of TQM, with its focus on the more qualitative aspects such as greater customer orientation, employee involvement, team-working, and generally better management of employees within the company. Much significance is placed on education and training, communication and involvement of all employees in the decision-making process (Yong and Wilkinson 2001, 250). The proponents of this approach call for a major

⁴ In the evolution of QM, four fairly discrete stages can be identified: inspection, quality control, quality assurance, and TQM. The first two stages are based on detection and the latter two on prevention (van der Wiele et al. 1997, 239).

⁵ These rationalizations of TQM might co-exist in an organization. For example, the British Quality Association distinguishes a range of “soft”, “hard” and “mixed” forms of TQM. “Soft” TQM emphasizes customer awareness and the duty of employees to take responsibility for quality. The principal strategy is the development of customer care programs, in order to improve the quality of delivery and company culture. Employee motivation is crucial for successful customer care because employees are empowered to deliver quality to internal and external customers. “Hard” TQM uses the traditional techniques of quality control and assurance, and corresponds to the “management by fact”. “Mixed” forms combine the two approaches (Hill 1995, 38).

⁶ BS – British Standard, ISO – International Organization for Standardization.

transformation of the company that is achieved not by changes in the production processes but rather through changing people's mindset with a shift in the responsibility of producing quality work from a functional department towards the individual employee. Changing the supervisors' role from being cops to coaches is seen as contributing towards changing people's mindset (Yong and Wilkinson 2001, 250).

(4) TQM as re-engineering

The objective of Business Process Reengineering (BPR) is to build on "discontinuity" by radically rethinking and redesigning processes to achieve improvements (Yong and Wilkinson 2001, 254). Rather than taking processes as given, they should be overturned, taking a customer's rather than management control perspective. Some writers argue that TQM, with its emphasis on continuous incremental improvement, is unreconcilable with the requirement for radical strategic change that faces many companies (Grant et al. 1994, cited in Yong and Wilkinson 2001, 254). But in many respects, re-engineering seems to have a similar ground with many of the ideas of TQM. According to Cole (1994, cited in Yong and Wilkinson 2001, 255), re-engineering is a direct and logical outgrowth of quality management. TQM (in theory at least) is about improving processes both incrementally and transformationally. The former may in fact often lead to the latter.

(5) TQM as a new management paradigm

TQM has evolved into a philosophy incorporating the "hard" aspects of QM (namely the statistical techniques, systems tools and documentation, performance measurements) and also the "soft" aspects (team-working, education and training, employee recognition) (Yong and Wilkinson 2001, 252-253). TQM as a new management paradigm states that it is the overall quality of management that leads to better performance. There are several ways how to achieve quality of management among which national quality awards represent one option. The most renowned (and probably the most copied) of these national quality awards program is the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA) in the USA (Yong and Wilkinson 2001, 253). European Foundation of Quality Management has developed another quality awards program (EFQM Excellence Model) that is used in European countries⁷.

All in all, these rationalizations demonstrate that TQM is a very ambiguous concept and the implementation of TQM should not be taken as simplistic step-by-step approaches often promoted by consulting industry (Yong and Wilkinson 2001, 256). Despite the divergence of views on what constitutes TQM among those writing on the subject, a number of key elements are usually brought out, including (van der Wiele et al. 1997, 241):

- customer orientation;

⁷ At present it is even argued that TQM has been marginalized by business excellence (Adebanjo 2001, 37) that has broadened the concept of QM to such an extent that it is now a synonym for "sound management" (Giroux and Landry 1998, 195; 199-200). Excellence is generally associated with the EFQM Model. At its origin, this model was based on TQM principles. Later the "quality" term was removed from the criteria of the model. The changes were carried out in order to reflect the shift in business emphasis and new management ideas as well as to fulfil the requirements of organizations in public and private sectors. On the other hand, management of quality is making comeback (e.g. Six Sigma) as a result of perceived shortcomings in excellence (Adebanjo 2001, 40). Adebanjo argues that business excellence and quality complement each other and should co-exist since the wider perspective on organizational performance comprises also "older" QM ideas and practices (ibid.).

- commitment and leadership of senior management;
- planning and organization;
- using quality management techniques and tools;
- education and training;
- involvement and teamwork;
- measurement and feedback;
- cultural change.

The Critique of TQM

Despite the popularity of TQM, it has met a lot of criticism. Regarding the hypotheses, some relevant critique is as follows⁸:

First dilemma concerns the relation between standardization and innovation: if TQM encourages the development of standards for output and procedures, it becomes more difficult to think innovatively. Institutionalization of QM tends to stimulate mechanistic solutions even where the need of innovation calls for more organic solutions (Godfroij 1995). As in classic bureaucracies, rules could take on a life of their own if people come to use them in a ritualized manner or to retreat behind them, paying lip service but not abiding by the spirit of what they are intended to do (Hill and Wilkinson 1995, 19).

Second, if the challenge is to evaluate and improve the system as a whole, it is alluring to develop synoptic systems of planning and control, which again involves the risk of becoming bureaucratic, hierarchic, and static. In other words, if one tries to develop an organic and dynamic organization, it is difficult to comprise the integration of the total system (Godfroij 1995). For example, quality systems may become too inward looking emphasizing conformance to internal procedures with few direct linkages to customer satisfaction (Silvestro 1998, 308; Yong and Wilkinson 2001, 249).

Third, cultural implications are of utmost importance. As Schein (1985, cited in Hill 1995, 40) has noted, structures, systems and procedures are important but secondary mechanisms of change. It is the cultural change that is the major objective of TQM (Hill 1995, 40). According to Dawson (1995, 190), TQM is a philosophy of change based upon open communication and employee involvement in the organization and control of work. The main thrust of these changes is towards collaborative teamwork, multi-skilling and cultural commitment. TQM promises harmony, autonomy, and increased responsibility. Yet, these “promises” often fail to reflect organizational practice, and are contradicted by increased work controls, work intensification, and employment insecurity (McArdle 1995, cited in McCabe et al. 1998, 404-405). Tuckman (1995, cited in McCabe et al. 1998, 405) develops the argument about TQM being an attempt to create new forms of managerial and political control.

In sum, quality and TQM are not coherent and straightforward notions – the differences in understandings should be acknowledged in analyzing TQM. Nevertheless, it is possible that the existence of several definitions of TQM could be

⁸ For an extensive overview of TQM’s critique see Giroux and Landry (1998, 183-203).

advantageous if the concept can be adapted to the particular situations of those using it (Giroux and Landry 1998, 194). Therefore one has to understand organizational contingencies and environment affecting public organizations in implementing TQM.

TQM in Public Organizations

A number of experts refer to the dangers that accompany an uncritical adoption of private sector QM practices (e.g. Walsh 1991, Radin and Coffee 1993, Swiss 1992, Hazlett and Hill 2000). Swiss argues that the orthodox TQM is strikingly ill suited to the government environment, the major problems being its insufficient modification for services (service provision is usually more difficult to manage than manufacturing products), problems of defining customers, inappropriate emphasis on inputs and processes (problems of measurement), governmental culture (Swiss 1992, 358-359). Hazlett's and Hill's study showed the characteristics obstructing TQM in public sector to be as follows: public sector culture; lack of clear customer focus; too many procedures; people working in divisional "silos"; too many targets; lack of awareness of strategic direction; general belief that staff are overworked and underpaid; domination by stakeholders (Hazlett and Hill 2000, 518). Radin and Coffe (1993) present the confounding attributes to be uncertainty in goals and threat of disruption in operations (due to turbulent political environment), the multiplicity of accountability mechanisms (i.e. lack of clear customer focus), and the fact that government action may have many meanings while TQM assumes that an organization is created to produce something concrete (Radin and Coffee 1993, 48-49).

All in all, what is the relevance of TQM to public institutions? An obvious conclusion is that there are substantial hardships associated with using TQM's ideology or implementing its practices in public organizations. The stakeholders, political system, institutional settings, culture etc. constitute an environment for the public organization and this system context puts up settings for the public organization that have to be respected as a *conditio sine qua non* in transforming public organizations into TQM (Madsen 1995).

The concept that describes the nature of contingencies public organizations have to face may be called "publicness" (see Boyne 2002; Löffler 2001; Haque 2001 for the discussion or uses of the concept). Antonsen and Jorgensen (1997, 337) define publicness as organizational attachment to public sector values: for example due process, accountability, and welfare provision. Organizations with a high degree of publicness differ from organizations with a low degree of publicness. The former are characterized by complex tasks, professional orientation, many external stakeholders, conflicting environmental demands, and low managerial autonomy. The latter are the opposite (ibid.). In the context of this paper, the concept of publicness basically summarizes the barriers to classical TQM (or indeed to all managerial ideas and techniques) in public organizations. It would be logical to expect that organizations with a low degree of publicness lend themselves more readily to managerial ideas, including TQM. Organizations with a high degree of publicness find it harder to accommodate managerial interventions. For example, Löffler argues that public institutions with a high degree of publicness are not interested in implementing TQM and taking part in competitive quality award contests (Löffler 2001, 28).

On the other hand, taking these barriers into account, modified TQM or “reformed” TQM, as Swiss (1992, 360) has named it, might help to improve the performance of public organizations. “Reformed” TQM (see also table 1 in this paper, page 9) emphasizes client feedback, performance monitoring, continuous improvement and worker participation (Swiss 1992, 356). Löffler supports the standpoint that TQM is beneficial in the public sector if it is adapted to the particular conditions of public service provision (Löffler 1996, 26).

But the problem is that public institutions are still too different in order to apply “reformed TQM” in all settings – the degree of publicness might differ considerably among organizations. Consequently, a complementary perspective might help to explain the relationship between TQM and public organizations. Hence, TQM is compared with two paradigms of public administration in order to better illuminate the mechanisms through which it would be possible to understand TQM in public institutions.

TQM in Different Paradigms of Public Administration

TQM and NPM

TQM reached public sector with the popularization of NPM ideas in the 1980s. For example, Kelly (1998, 201) suggests that “grounded in rational choice and public choice and containing elements of TQM, the NPM seeks to offer more efficient mechanisms for delivering goods and services and for raising governmental performance levels.” Mathiasen mentions that there is a considerable overlap between TQM and NPM (Mathiasen 1999, 95⁹). Madsen goes even further claiming that TQM looks like a better approach for public organizations than Weberianism, just as TQM has proved to be a better approach for private organizations than Taylorism (Madsen 1995), although Madsen here obviously leaves unnoticed the problematic aspects of TQM. Hazlett and Hill (2000, 515) conclude that literature on NPM often mentions 3 E-s (economy, efficiency, effectiveness) as goals of reforms. As a result of quality-service-consumer orientation (i.e. the characteristics of TQM), NPM focuses now on the principles behind the 5 E-s: excellence and enterprise in addition to the previous ones (ibid.).

NPM and TQM are considered to be the same for a reason – TQM shares several aspects with NPM (see Table 1). Even this tentative comparison demonstrates several compatible areas¹⁰.

⁹ For similar arguments see Scharitzer and Korunka (2000, 943) and Löffler (1996, 14).

¹⁰ The author tried to relate similar tenets in the table, but some rows of the table are not easily comparable due to the reason that it is possible to relate one aspect of NPM to several tenets of TQM and vice versa. Empty boxes show that there were no matches between concepts.

Table 1. The comparison of NPM, TQM and “reformed” TQM

New Public Management	Total Quality Management	“Reformed” Total Quality Management
Being close to its customers (Pollitt 2000)	Customer-orientation (van der Wiele et al. 1997)	Not just immediate clientele, but all citizens (Swiss 1992); taxpayer is the ultimate determiner of the quality and quantity (Löffler 1996)
Being performance-driven (targets, standards) not rule-bound (Pollitt 2000); greater emphasis on output controls (Hood 1991)	Quality requires continuous improvement of outputs as well as of inputs and processes (Löffler 1996); process flow management is crucial (Dale et al. 2001)	Emphasis on Human Resource Management (HRM) instead of process management (Löffler 1996); output goals and measurements (Swiss 1992)
Using performance-related systems for recruiting, posting, promoting and paying staff (Pollitt 2000)	Performance management has to consider “person factors” as well as “organizational/system factors” (Yong and Wilkinson 2001, 252)	“Reformed” TQM can be first step in introducing performance management (Swiss 1992); extrinsic motivation (individual rewards) important in low-salary positions (Löffler 1996)
Displaying a commitment to continuous quality improvement (targets, standards) (Pollitt 2000)	Continuous improvement (Wilkinson and Willmott 1995); plan-do-check-act cycle (Dale et al. 2001)	Indicators of quality must be defined, depending on the kind of public service, to create common understanding of quality, involve employees (Löffler 1996) and create continuous improvement (Swiss 1992)
Definition of goals, targets, indicators of success, preferably expressed in quantitative terms (Hood 1991); performance auditing (Gruening 2001); practicing tight cost control (Pollitt 2000).	Quality data and reporting (Dale et al. 2001); measurement and feedback on the cost of quality and on client reactions (van der Wiele et al. 1997); using (quantitative) quality management techniques and tools to improve the performance of processes (van der Wiele et al. 1997).	Focus on improvement of efficiency and effectiveness due to limited resources (Löffler 1996); quantitative tracking of product quality and of client reactions (Swiss 1992).
Empowerment of street-level staff for them to be flexible and innovative (Pollitt 2000)	Involvement and teamwork (everybody has responsibility for quality) (van der Wiele et al. 1997)	Employee empowerment (Swiss 1992).
Move away from “military-style” public service ethics, greater flexibility in hiring and rewards (Hood 1991); changed management style (Gruening 2001)	Culture change; (van der Wiele et al. 1997); positive work attitudes of employees (Dale et al. 2001)	More quality-oriented culture than in traditional public administration, but quality is not the sole parameter of excellence (Löffler 1996)
Active, visible, discretionary control of organizations through performance planning and contracts (Hood 1991); strategic planning and management (Gruening 2001)	Planning and organization (van der Wiele et al. 1997)	
Personnel management (incentives) (Gruening 2001)	Education and training (van der Wiele et al. 1997)	Emphasis on HRM instead of process management (Löffler 1996)

Freedom to manage (Gruening 2001)	Commitment and leadership of top management (Dale et al. 2001)	
Decentralization and break up of formerly “monolithic” units to create “manageable” units (Hood 1991); rivalry between public agencies as the key to lower costs and better standards (Hood 1991)	The development of the single dominant organizational culture to improve the participation rates and commitment of employees and to enable the organization to become more competitive (Dawson 1995); collaboration with stakeholders (internal and external customers, suppliers) (Dale et al. 2001)	Heterogeneity of personalized services may be used to increase choice (Löffler 1996)

First, customer-orientation is important to both NPM and TQM. “Reformed” TQM claims that one has to be careful when deciding who his/her clients are and what are their expectations, client capture has to be avoided by considering the interests of all stakeholders (including politicians, public and peers). But in principle, the diversification of one’s “client base” is thinkable even taking the political environment into account.

Second, both NPM and TQM intend to measure performance and establish standards and targets¹¹. The difference lies in the fact that classical TQM emphasizes the performance of processes besides the improvement of outputs while NPM considers predominantly the outputs. “Reformed” TQM stresses the output goals and measurements (Swiss 1992, 360) and HRM instead of process management (Löffler 1996, 24), being more close to NPM than to classical TQM. The development of appropriate performance criteria is difficult but feasible in case of some services (e.g. divisible services like passport delivery or services which have short-term consequence) and using individual rewards is recommended in low-profile public service positions (Löffler 1996, 25).

It can be said that NPM as well as TQM aim at continuously raising the standards. In doing so, both establish targets and observe the progress via performance auditing and reporting on quality data. Similarly, “reformed” TQM involves employees in defining the quality characteristics of public services to create commitment to continuous improvement among civil servants. Quantitative tracking of product or service quality and of client reactions characterizes also “reformed” TQM. All three approaches aim at lowering the costs. Nevertheless, the question of cost in TQM might mean the pursuit to find the best relationship between quality and cost in the view of a customer, not just being economical. Tight cost-control characterizes earlier versions of TQM (e.g. TQM as quality management).

Next, the empowerment of employees is practiced in the framework of NPM and “reformed” TQM, as well as in “soft” versions of TQM¹² (involvement through cross-

¹¹ Although some forms of TQM (e.g. Deming’s views of TQM) do not favor management by objectives and performance-related pay, TQM often incorporates the use of performance measurement and management (as also demonstrated by Yong and Wilkinson (2001)).

¹² There is a kind of tension between empowerment and using contracts to control people in NPM, and similarly empowerment and pursuit for strong culture in TQM that remains unsolved. “Reformed” TQM articulated by Swiss also stays relatively unclear about how to de-emphasize organizational culture and empower people at the same time. Therefore the suggestions made by Khademian that public manager has to approach culture in a manner that is mindful of the institutional context of

functional teams, quality circles). Culture change is represented in both NPM and TQM, but one has to keep in mind that TQM emphasizes culture change relatively more than NPM and is prone to create centralized organizations through the means of uniform culture. “Reformed” TQM de-emphasizes cultural continuity (Swiss 1992, 360) departing from classical TQM, but nevertheless recognizes the need for more quality-oriented culture than in traditional public administration.

Planning and organization are typical to NPM and TQM since measuring performance presupposes target setting. In case of NPM, performance planning is important and control of organizations is visible. In TQM the control of organizations may be subtle by seeking consensus on the part of employees and controlling their actions through uniform culture. “Reformed” TQM does not stress the planning aspect of management.

Finally, HRM or personnel management is mentioned by all three ideologies. All of them use rewards, but in TQM the rewards do not have to be financial, e.g. education is provided instead. In fact, TQM is very clear about the need for thorough training while NPM and “reformed” TQM do not stress specifically the importance of education. In addition, TQM brings more clearly out the role of managers in reaching the goals – managers have to be the leaders of improving the performance of organization and motivate employees as role models.

In sum, the major components of the NPM paradigm, namely customer orientation, increased managerial freedom in resource and personnel management, performance measurement, investment in human and technological resources and receptiveness to competition (Löffler 1996, 3) are (at least to some extent) represented in one or another version of (“reformed”) TQM.

But as the analysis reveals, NPM and TQM have also some divergent features. An important aforementioned difference is that TQM (especially “hard” versions of it) relies relatively more on processes, while NPM stresses outputs. The control of processes is to ensure a uniform output within the framework of required performance standards. On the other hand, as in case of services, it might be hard to standardize the outputs, and therefore processes are kept under surveillance. One way to do this is to provide extensive training and education and create a culture of quality, which is less important in case of NPM. The development of the single dominant organizational culture in TQM is needed to improve the commitment of employees and to enable the organization to become more competitive (Dawson 1995), TQM cherishes collaboration between units and organization’s stakeholders. NPM, on the other hand, disaggregates the units to create rivalry as a key to lower costs and better the performance (Hood 1991, 5). Another difference that came out from the analysis is that top management leadership is not as crucial in NPM as it is in TQM. NPM provides freedom to manage but does not outline the importance of managerial commitment.

All in all, NPM and TQM have several features in common, “reformed” TQM provides an opportunity to implement the ideas of NPM to public organizations to some extent. In that sense one could agree with Mathiasen (1999, 104) that “TQM

agencies and attentive to the potentially varied strengths and weaknesses of organizations (Khademian 2001, 47), sound most appropriate.

provides a systematic and quantified rationale for the NPM idea of government that both works better and costs less.” On the other hand, “soft” versions of TQM have more in common with NPM (due to the emphasis on performance management and HRM practices) than “hard” versions of TQM (that focus more on processes). One can argue that different versions of TQM suit different conditions – in spite of the similarities, there are also important dissimilarities that point to bureaucratic features of TQM (e.g. importance of procedures and extensive training).

TQM and Bureaucracy

Traditional public administration (i.e. the one based on theory of bureaucracy¹³) and NPM are often contrasted¹⁴ (Mathiasen 1999, 93; Behn 1998, 131; Rhodes 1996, 86). It follows that the combination of bureaucracy and TQM is frequently considered to be an oxymoron in public organizations (Mathiasen 1999, Hazlett and Hill 2000). Mathiasen (1999, 104) indicates that “traditionalists” object the application of TQM to public sector institutions because it violates the principles of law, equity, public interest, and due process on which administration is based. However, regardless of the view that TQM contradicts with traditional public administration, the two have common areas.

A critique of TQM, as mentioned above, is that TQM creates mechanistic and bureaucratic solutions; it has also been argued that TQM is an attempt to create new forms of managerial and political control (Tuckman 1995, cited in McCabe et al. 1998; Kirkpatrick and Lucio 1995, 278). The idea of strict political control or/and executing managerial control is in line with the tenets of bureaucracy. In other words, TQM (at least some forms of it) and bureaucracy have in common the quest for building up a standardized and stable system for running and developing an organization. In Weber’s words (1978, 973):

“The decisive reason for the advance of bureaucratic organization has always been its purely technical superiority over any other form of organization. /.../ Precision, speed, unambiguity, knowledge of the files, continuity, discretion, unity, strict subordination, reduction of friction and of material and personnel costs —. these are raised to the optimum point in the strictly bureaucratic administration.”

These characteristics coincide to a great extent with some forms of TQM – especially TQM as quality management and TQM as systems management. TQM as quality management emphasizes (besides the use of mathematical and statistical tools which may be taken as a Taylorist approach) a comprehensive management of quality through quality inspection and control (as opposed to “soft” versions of TQM which

¹³ Hughes demonstrates that the most important theoretical principle of the traditional model of administration is Weber’s theory of bureaucracy. Throughout its long history, the traditional model followed Weber’s theory virtually to the letter, either implicitly or explicitly (Hughes 1994, 28).

¹⁴ This does not, however, exclude the possibility for them to co-exist in some way, for instance Hoggett (1996, 11-12) states: “I wish to argue that in British public sector restructuring, far from describing a smooth movement from bureaucratic to post-bureaucratic forms of control, in fact it combines strong elements of innovation with the reassertion of a number of fundamentally bureaucratic mechanisms.” Samier (2001, 258) asserts that: “The most significant effect of the NPM is an alteration of civil service ethos allowing for a continued dominance of rationalization in the historical development of the public sector, which Weber anticipated particularly with respect to “technical” qualifications in bureaucratic organizations.”

stress quality of management). The ideal of TQM as quality management is the technical effectiveness including (using Weber's expressions) precision, speed, knowledge of the files, reduction of friction and material costs etc. TQM as quality management examines the characteristics of services or products like speed and quality (including precision) with the help of dedicated staff who know the standards/specifications in order to safeguard smooth running of production/service provision.

As in Weberian bureaucracy where public administration presupposes expert training (Weber 1978, 958), TQM as quality management stresses training, which is necessary for understanding the systems (knowledge of the files/procedures) and mastery of tools, so that every worker performs his/her part of the job as well as possible (the quest for unambiguity). People should specialize and thus learn to do one set of activities well. In bureaucratic organization jobs are made into small and well-defined or regulated tasks, which are explained to employees (Weber 1978, 956). This is also a feature of organizations using quality management and planning because people have to understand their role in overall operations and know how they can affect the performance of an organization.

Likewise, training is needed to allow some discretion. Independent decision-making and imaginative organizational capabilities in matters of detail are usually demanded from the bureaucrat (Weber 1978, 1404). TQM as quality management entails discretion within the rules laid down in order to let the workers do the job without excessive control by supervisors. Employees should know how to fix (minor) problems without wasting their time asking guidance from people above in hierarchy. "Self-inspection by approved operators" is very much the same as "bureaucrats as professionals" (Dale 1999, 6).

Hence, the underlying feature of bureaucratic organizations and TQM as quality management is that to ensure conformity (e.g. pre-determined quality, speed, precision) and to make sure that authority and responsibility are clearly defined, employees' actions are regulated by rules and procedures. Under a system of quality control one might expect to find paperwork and a procedures control system in place (Dale 1999, 6). A function of quality management procedures is also to ensure the continuity of action outlined by Weber (1978, 956).

Regulated organization of tasks means systematic planning of activities that leads us to the concepts of quality assurance and TQM as systems management (which have even more extensive regulation in place than TQM as quality management – TQM as systems management presupposes that there are rules for every aspect of organizational life, not just production or service provision)¹⁵. This can be compared to a Weberian approach (Weber 1978, 223):

"Experience tends universally to show that the purely bureaucratic type of administrative organization /.../ is, from a purely technical point of view, capable of attaining the highest degree of efficiency and is in this sense formally the most

¹⁵ In many respects, e.g. reliance on rules, TQM as quality management and TQM as systems management are similar. The difference between them is that TQM as quality management deals mostly with manufacturing organizations and therefore emphasizes the use of statistical tools that are not common in service organizations. On the other hand, TQM as systems management tries to balance the lack of quality management tools by developing a comprehensive system of management.

rational known means of exercising authority over human beings. It is superior to any other form in precision, in stability, in the stringency of its discipline, and in its reliability. It thus makes possible a particularly high degree of calculability of results for the heads of organizations and for those acting in relation to it. It is finally superior both in intensive efficiency and in the scope of its operations, and is formally capable of application to all kinds of administrative tasks.”

These arguments resemble quality management rhetoric like “a comprehensive and formal QM system to increase uniformity and conformity along the lines of quality assurance”, “emphasis on (quality) planning”, “improving control over processes” (Dale 1999, 9). In Weber’s words (1978, 1404): “Bureaucracy has a rational character. With rules, means-ends calculus and a matter-of-factness predominating, its rise and expansion has everywhere had “revolutionary” results.” Weberian characteristics of a rational organization are in line with TQM as systems management that entails adequate organizational structures, responsibilities, procedures, processes and resources for implementing QM (British Standard 4778: Part 1, 1987; cited in Yong and Wilkinson 2001, 249). The definition of TQM as systems management seems to take guidance from Weberian job specification and well-defined or regulated tasks (Weber 1978, 956). Weber’s emphasis on decision-making based on facts (“matter-of-factness”) is the same as “hard” TQM’s “management-by-fact” (Hill 1995, 38).

Because of the extensive regulation that can be learned, employees can be substituted without disrupting continuity in TQM as systems management – there is a guiding framework to ensure that every time a process is performed, the same information, methods, skills and controls are used and practiced in a consistent manner.

Documented procedures, work instructions, specifications and methods for all functions and aspects of the organization provide employees with a reference system to assess their work and work improvements (Yong and Wilkinson 2001, 249). This corresponds to management based on written documents and general rules, which are more or less stable, more or less exhaustive, and which can be learned (Weber 1978, 958).

TQM has evolved into a philosophy incorporating the “hard” aspects of QM (the statistical techniques, systems tools and documentation, performance measurements) and also “soft” aspects (teamwork, education and training, employee recognition) (Yong and Wilkinson 2001, 252-253). Table 2 tries to summarize the relationship between Weberian bureaucracy and forms of TQM with the aim to show which versions of TQM suit with bureaucracy and which do not. The table shows general directions¹⁶.

Table 2. A comparison of bureaucracy and different forms of TQM

¹⁶ This comparison should not be taken as absolute because of the differences in understandings of what constitutes TQM. The fact that the ideas of “original gurus” of TQM are contradictory, gives opportunities to use contra arguments; furthermore, some linkages are indirect and therefore rest on the comprehension of the author. Nevertheless, the table illustrates broader trends and connections.

Weber's bureaucracy¹⁷ Forms of TQM	Fixed official jurisdictional areas	Principle of hierarchy	Management based on written documents	Thorough/Expert training	Use of full capacity of the official	General, stable, exhaustive rules
TQM as quality management	Yes	Yes/no	Yes	Yes/no	Yes/no	Yes
TQM as systems management	Yes	Yes/no	Yes	Yes	Yes/no	Yes
TQM as people management	Yes/no	Yes/no	Yes/no	Yes	Yes	Yes/no
TQM as new management paradigm	Yes/no	No	Yes/no	Yes	Yes	No
TQM as re-engineering	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No

This general comparison shows that TQM as systems management has a great deal in common with Weber's bureaucracy. TQM as quality management with its primary emphasis on (quantitative) tools is of secondary importance (i.e. the linkages are more indirect).

The other, "soft" versions of TQM, namely TQM as people management and TQM as new management paradigm, differ relatively more from bureaucratic organization and management (though they have quite a few analogous traits with bureaucracy). TQM as re-engineering, at least according to orthodox definitions of BPR, has little in common with bureaucracy and is in fact meant to reorder Weber's "technical organization". If we drop "radicalism" (which is the primary principle of BPR), the difference is eroding.

There is still one more aspect that Weber's bureaucracy and TQM as people management have in common (especially in public organizations) – it is their approach to culture or ethos of employees. The common thread is unconditional commitment to certain values. Weber (Weber 1978, 1404) considers the ethos to be important guide of action¹⁸:

"An official who receives a directive which he considers wrong, can and is supposed to object it. If his superior insists on its execution, it is his duty and even honor to carry it out, he has to demonstrate that his sense of duty stands above his personal preference. This is the ethos of office."

In other words, in public office, civil servants have to obey the orders of superiors and do it in a most efficient way. To do so is their moral obligation. TQM as people

¹⁷ The characteristics of bureaucracy as a modern form of organization (Weber 1978, 956-958).

¹⁸ Weber (1978, 1403) argued that despite of the irresistible advance of the bureaucratization, its effectiveness has definite limitations in the public and governmental realm as well as in the private economy: "The "directing mind", "the moving spirit" – that of the entrepreneur here and of the politician there – differs in substance from the civil service mentality of the official (Weber 1978, 1404).

management also presupposes unconditional commitment to the values of organization. TQM seeks to ensure commitment to organizational goals by changing people's mindset so that all people in an organization share the same values. Both approaches aim at the managerial and political control, although TQM "is not a traditional form of control on the lines of further coercion but much more subtle in the sense that it attempts to secure a consensus on the part of employees" (McCabe et al. 1998, 405).

This is not to say that TQM and bureaucracy are the same. To continue with previous thoughts, the quest for strong culture is all that TQM and bureaucracy share in respect to cultural issues - a significant difference is that the object of change, the values, are different to politicians (and also entrepreneurs) and to bureaucrats. The difference lies in the kind of responsibility, and this does indeed determine different demands addressed to both kinds of positions (Weber 1978, 1404). To remain outside the realm of the struggle for power – is the officials' role, while this struggle for personal power, and the resulting personal responsibility, is the lifeblood of the politician as well as of the entrepreneur (Weber 1978, 1404). TQM tries to implement the concept of customer to the focus of all actions. In public sector, citizens are the customers. Bendell et al. (1994, 10) claim that since citizens-customers used to be neglected under bureaucracy, public administration is a place to implement TQM. But the problem here is that the ethos of entrepreneur, advocated by "ecstatics" of TQM in public sector¹⁹, and ethos of civil servants, might conflict (du Gay 1994, 670). Samier (2001, 261) continues that managerial imperatives exclude contemplation of the ethics of conviction - an ethics of responsibility, normally required to choose among a diversity of values, is reduced in managerial mentality to a prescriptive adherence to rationalization (ibid.). Consequently, there is a lot of ambiguity between pursuing the goals of providing client-oriented services and being accountable to the whole public. This seems to be the weakest part of implementing TQM to public institutions; other problems (setting the targets, measuring the performance, changing the mindset of people) begin to unravel from that. In a nutshell, it is a question of how clear is the message of the leaders (be it politicians, top management, etc.) about the mission of the organization to guide the actions of people in diversified environment.

The Effects of TQM in Traditional Public Administration and NPM

What is the outcome of the previous analysis? What is the role of TQM as a management theory and as a set of management instruments in various public organizations? The comparison of TQM in relation to NPM and traditional public administration, i.e. bureaucracy leads to the following conclusions:

1. TQM (especially its "hard" versions) and bureaucracy share emphasis on processes, reliance on written rules, clear definitions of rights and obligations, expert training etc.

TQM as systems management is closest to Weberian bureaucracy while TQM as new management paradigm or TQM as people management have fewer common traits with traditional public administration. Since reliance on written rules to ensure the continuity and stability of action, clear division of work and training in order to

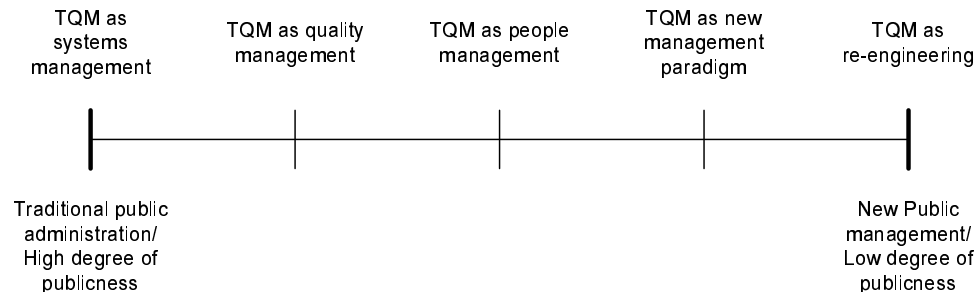
¹⁹ One of 5 E's in NPM is "entrepreneurship" (Hazlett and Hill 2000, 515).

realize the full capacity of people, are the cornerstones of both TQM as systems management and bureaucracy, it seems logical that bureaucratic organizations, or organizations with a high degree of publicness, might find it easier to accommodate some versions of TQM than other systems based on NPM.

This serves to prove the hypothesis that despite the linkages between NPM and TQM and contrary to popular apprehension, TQM and bureaucracy are not opposites. TQM does not have to turn into an oppressive or coercive concept, it can be treated as a framework for sound operations. How to create and preserve enabling rules or system is a more complicated question and beyond the reach of this paper. However, involvement of employees and pursuing continuous improvement might constitute a partial answer.

In short, TQM as systems management might suit relatively better to organizations with a high degree of publicness compared to other versions of TQM, e.g. TQM as quality management is too manufacturing centered to suit public services. Figure 1 pictures on a continuum²⁰ a simple view of the relationships between different versions of TQM and paradigms of public administration on the one hand, and TQM and the degree of publicness on the other hand²¹.

Figure 1. TQM, bureaucracy, NPM and organizational degree of publicness



2. TQM as people management and TQM as new paradigm resemble NPM because of their emphasis on customer-orientation (including internal customers), decentralization and empowerment, drive for better results and measurement ethos of entrepreneurship.

NPM and (classical) TQM relate in having “an emphasis on managerial skills and competencies, particularly leadership skills, /.../ evidencing the shift from policy expertise to a belief in a universally effective managerial knowledge and skill set and performance pay” (Samier 2001, 247). Thus, one might expect that “soft” versions of TQM (like TQM as people management and TQM as new paradigm) are easier to accommodate in organizations with lower degrees of publicness.

²⁰ The suggestions are not absolute in the sense that they show tendencies or trends and are not final credos, because in reality it would probably be hard to find “pure” examples of organizations representing one or another version of TQM.

²¹ The degree of publicness and the paradigms of public administration are certainly related (for instance Haque (2001) is concerned about the diminishing of the degree of publicness of public organizations due to NPM influences; Antonsen and Jorgensen (1997, 337) state that all organizations ranked high on publicness are reluctant to adopt organizational changes stemming from NPM and organizations with low degree of publicness are the opposite – keen to adopt new ideas), although the relationships are more complicated than the figure demonstrates.

Still, one should be careful with the potential danger stemming from “the belief in universally effective managerial knowledge and skill set” as pointed out by Samier (ibid.). Current paper is another study among others proving that there is no such thing as a universally effective managerial knowledge and skill set - different facets of TQM, for example, demonstrate clearly that it should not be treated as something uniform and straightforward. This concerns especially organizations with a high degree of publicness and represents the reason why TQM has to be “reformed” or tailored to suit different kinds of organizations.

The analysis of circumstances of an organization gain even more importance when choosing the managerial approach if we consider that besides the differences, the "soft" versions of TQM have something in common with bureaucracy (e.g. the importance of expert training; the great importance omitted to organizational values or (in case of bureaucracy), values of office, i.e. service to community). If TQM is to help public organizations to reach quality services necessary for legitimate government, public managers (or politicians) have to be aware of the differences and linkages between the paradigms of public administration, the degree of publicness of their organization and the different facets of TQM.

These remarks associate with the aim of the paper – regarding the preconditions that help to adopt TQM, the author agrees with Samier (2001, 236) who claims that the ideas of Weber deserve deeper insight if we are to understand administrative systems:

“An examination of the development of the public sector requires the combined use of Weber’s administrative and authority typologies in order to determine causes of change and the manner in which it occurs, and to understand the struggle for authority, changing styles of authority, and the conflict of values associated with a shift of ethos²².”

To paraphrase Samier, an examination of the development of public organizations requires the combined analysis of Weber’s (and/or NPM’s) principles on the one hand, and the tenets of different versions of TQM on the other hand. Besides, every public organization needs to define how they comprehend quality to guide their actions. To the extent that government agencies undertake subjective activities, a different understanding of quality must precede any attempt to introduce quality principles and TQM practices into agencies (Cox 1995, 94). Defining quality is the most critical step in the process rather than something that is given (ibid.). In other words, there is no substitute for managerial analysis and judgment (Sitkin et al. 1994, 559) – the outcome relating to the aim of the paper is that TQM needs a more comprehensive understanding since it is a multi-faceted concept that offers various ways for operationalization. Similarly, Sitkin et al. conclude that the effectiveness of TQM can be enhanced by tailoring the particular type of TQM approach to the requirements of the task and context (Sitkin et al. 1994, 559). In practical terms it means providing extensive training and education for public administrators, and not relying on compulsory decrees (that are probably counterproductive) for adopting some form of TQM.

²² Weberian types of authority represent another set of variables that might provide more insight to the relationship between bureaucracy and TQM, especially concerning the paradox of controlling employees via culture or ethos, but are not primary factors from the perspective of this paper.

The finding that TQM can be at least partially applied to bureaucratic organizations (as well as to organizations influenced by NPM) might help to find new roads of how to make use of TQM in public organizations and improve the performance and quality of public services.

TQM and Governance: Some Remarks for Future Agenda

The concept of governance is sometimes considered to be a new paradigm in public administration (Kim et al. 2005, 647). Nevertheless, there is no consensus whether governance represents a paradigm shift or not (see for example Olsen 2006, Drechsler 2004). Furthermore, the concept itself is manifold; there is no universal definition of governance. The definitions used by scholars are usually quite ample. For example Lynn et al. (2000, 235) define governance as regimes of laws, administrative rules, judicial rulings, and practices that constrain, prescribe, and enable government activity, where such activity is broadly defined as the production and delivery of publicly supported goods and services. In its broadest sense, the study of governance concerns the relationship between governance so defined and government performance (Lynn et al. 2000, 235). Bovaird and Löffler (2003b, 316) understand public governance to be the ways in which stakeholders interact with each other in order to influence the outcomes of public policies.

In spite of the vagueness of the definition of governance, there is now widespread interest in, and the need to, improve both the quality of services and the quality of governance at the national and local levels (Kim et al 2005, 647; Bovaird and Löffler 2003b, 313). Quality of public governance has two complementary aspects – first, the achievement of quality of life outcomes which really matter to the stakeholders within the public governance system and, second, the achievement of processes of interaction between these stakeholders which correspond to the agreed criteria or norms (Bovaird 2005, 220). There are several possibilities to evaluate quality of life (or policy) outcomes (e.g. Human Development Index, indicators of the Governance Group of the World Bank, indicators developed by Audit Commission in UK for local authorities in England etc.; see Bovaird and Löffler 2003b for further information).

Bovaird and Löffler (2003, 318) put forward that the need for measurement of quality of life outcomes does not mean that there is no longer an interest in or a need for measuring the quality or quantity of services provided by the public sector. However, these must be seen as purely instrumental, rather than as ends in themselves. As a consequence of the change in orientation, there is now a major challenge to find ways in which quality of life improvements can be assessed (Bovaird and Löffler 2003, 317-318). It was mentioned earlier that TQM's influence on this kind of macro-quality is not substantial. In spite of that, there is some potential contribution that some form of TQM or some of its elements can make to the quality of life assessments and good governance. For example, there are some similarities between TQM as new management paradigm and assessments of governance since some award models contain categories that can be associated with governance (e.g. citizen and stakeholder engagement; see Bovaird and Löffler 2003b, 326). The nature of relationships between quality of life assessments and TQM, as well as the extent to which TQM bears upon governance broadly defined, needs further exploration.

The need for further research is accentuated by the fact that TQM as such is also a developing concept. Besides, micro and meso levels of quality remain topical in providing public services. It is envisaged that future models of TQM will consist not so much of a fixed set of precepts, but of a series of strategic and operational choices, which managers can consider in planning their implementation of TQM (Silvestro 2001, 286). Such choices will make explicit the contingencies that render management practices and tools appropriate or otherwise (see table 3).

Table 3. TQM past and future (Silvestro 2001, 286)

Twentieth century TQM	TQM into the new millennium
TQM as the “holy grail”: a state of excellence to strive towards.	TQM as a journey; a process of continuous improvement.
Universalist approach to implementation.	Contingency sensitive approach to implementation.
Prescriptive, evangelical promotion of tools and techniques.	Revisionist approach: recognition of the evolutionary nature of best practice.
Fixed, static models of TQM.	TQM conceptualized as a series of strategic and operational choices.
Focus on management control systems to support TQM.	Development of the “softer” aspects of implementation, particularly in professional services.

Paradoxically, the adoption of TQM can be partial as long as decision-makers are able to posit their organizations against the other alternatives available, i.e. one has to understand the system of relationships between decisions and the consequences of each choice. “Partial” implementation still needs commitment. It is important to be able to distinguish paying lip service to TQM from actual implementation. The barriers of TQM in public organizations provide a framework of organizational analysis because it is wise to focus on public-management-in relation, rather than as a separate factor in assessing and explaining results (O’Toole 2001, 32). In addition, the characteristics of good governance outlined above have to be taken into account in using rationalizations of TQM in public organizations (also considering macro and meso levels of service quality or, put otherwise, in improving governance processes).

In sum, TQM will not lose its relevance in future public administration. Still, closer analysis of different modes of TQM in comparison to governance practices has to be carried out. The growing need for better quality public governance necessitates new approaches to operationalize TQM. It might well be that one has to “loan” ideas and practices from different rationalizations of TQM to build a contingency sensitive model of TQM in a particular public agency, taking into account its degree of publicness. As a matter of fact, the kind of QM system that comprises elements associated with bureaucracy, NPM and governance might be helpful in reconciling different challenges posed for public organizations (e.g. bureaucratic elements of TQM can be enabling, instead of being coercive²³ in developing governance processes).

²³ Adler and Borys (1996, 84) suggest that the dilemmas created by the organic/mechanistic contrast are largely illusory. If the bureaucratic form is only discussed in its disfigured variants – synonymous with rigidity, goal displacement, and authoritarian command and control – our ability to grasp the changes taking place in organizational landscape is terribly limited. Adler and Borys argue further that there are two types of bureaucracy: enabling and coercive. The first enables employees to perform their tasks better, the latter is a means to coerce employees’ effort and compliance which creates problems (Adler and Borys 1996, 61).

Conclusions

This paper addresses the question of how TQM suits different paradigms of public administration. The aim of the paper is to analyze the suitability of TQM to public organizations and to identify the broad conditions that have to be met in order to gain success in implementing TQM. Taking the barriers as terms of reference, “reformed” TQM could in principle be applied to public institutions. The particular way of implementing TQM to a public organization is dependent on the degree of publicness that characterizes the organization. Organizations with a high degree of publicness find it harder to accommodate “soft” approaches to management (e.g. motivating and empowering people, entrepreneurial attitude towards solving problems) and organizations with a low degree of publicness do not tend to rely on elaborate rules. In addition, decision-makers in public organizations have to be aware of the relationships between the paradigms of public administration that influence their organizations and management ideas or instruments in choosing the appropriate management approach for their agency.

As the analysis of TQM in relation to NPM and traditional public administration reveals, some versions of TQM are remarkably similar to bureaucracy. For example, TQM as systems management and Weberian bureaucracy contain the same basic principles. It is indeed so that although the implementation of TQM in public sector is usually associated with the ideas of NPM, it shares several similar tenets with traditional public administration (i.e. bureaucracy). TQM also remains topical in governance, but there is a wide array of factors that have to be taken into account if we are to implement some form of TQM. Antonsen and Jorgensen (1997, 355) summarize the argument as follows: “The world is full of simple solutions to complex problems – and they are all wrong. So many current prescriptions fail to meet their author’s expectations because they ignore public sector values and variations in the degree of publicness. We may have no simple solutions, but we can avoid some simple mistakes.”

The different definitions of quality prove that there are several strategies to pursue when improving the performance of organizations. Different people select different approaches to make sense of (quality) management ideas or make use of (quality) management practices. Decision-makers ought to make up their mind how they operationalize TQM in their existing reality and what are the respective consequences. A thorough analysis comprising comprehension of environmental or organizational variables and the knowledge of management ideas and techniques is a precondition for improvement initiatives in public sector. An understanding of linkages between paradigms of public administration and TQM could lead to a better match between policies and their implementation and make governance more effective.

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