



A PROPOSED MODEL OF CONTINUOUS  
IMPROVEMENT IN TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT  
FROM AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

BY

AFROZA BULBUL AFRIN

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## ABSTRACT

Managing and assuring quality is vital for corporate survival in an increasingly competitive, open and globalised business environment. Since its inception immediately after World War II, Quality Management (QM) has now been regarded as a philosophy, not merely a concept. Many individuals, as well as organisations, invest intellectual power and efforts to develop tools, techniques and models for continuous quality improvement. All of those are being done from conventional viewpoint or from materialistic worldview. Muslims are also using those literatures and models without making any attempt to reshuffle or adapt those to their own culture. Continuous improvement (CI) models developed by Western scholars are rooted in the concept of worldly gain which is contradictory to Muslim state of mind. A number of scholars suggested to develop some models based on Divine knowledge and principles focusing the benefits of both the worlds (Here and Hereafter). The available literatures show that some improvements have been made in the field of Economics, Finance and Banking, Management, HRM and Leadership; but very few in Total Quality Management (TQM). No model has yet been developed on continuous improvement from Islamic worldview. Efforts of this exploratory qualitative research was to minimise this null and void gap by developing a new model of continuous improvement (CI) in Total Quality Management (TQM) from an Islamic perspective. This was the prime objective of this particular research. The present study took the affirmative postmodernism philosophical stance. The distinctive subjectivist-epistemological and ontological position of affirmative postmodernism induced particular appraisal norms for such management research. The epistemological paradigm of this particular study is based on the idea of Unity (*al-Tawhīd*). The fundamental epistemological foundations are the Qur'ān and the Sunnah and the contributions of scholars in Islam. The philosophical stance, epistemological and ontological paradigm induced to follow the qualitative methodology to conduct the research. To satisfy the research objectives and to answer the research questions, the researcher collected data by applying the interview (focus group discussion- FGD and semi-structured in-depth interview) method only. Having the conceptual model (primarily developed after extensive literatures review), the FGD was conducted involving 11 academics and practitioners. Based upon the FGD findings, the researcher finalised the components which helped her to finalise the new model named NAMS Cycle. Some issues and challenges were found out which are associated with the implementation of the model. Thirty informant were selected from practitioners for in-depth interview by using purposive sampling technique. The collected data were analysed manually by following the six-step qualitative data analysis method. The newly proposed NAMS Cycle is applicable for both the individuals and organisations. It is equally significant for organisations, individuals, academics, practitioners, students and research groups having interest to conduct research on the same area. This particular research has provided recommendation for future researchers to test the practicability of this newly proposed model by implementing it in the organisations.

## خلاصة البحث

. ومنذ تأسيس الجودة الشاملة بعد الحرب العالمية الثانية مباشرة، فقد تم اعتبارها الآن فلسفة، وليست مجرد مفهوم. ويستثمر الكثير من الأفراد، والمنظمات، القوى الفكرية وبذل الجهود لتطوير أدوات وتقنيات ونماذج من أجل التحسين المستمر للجودة. ويتم كل ذلك من وجهة النظر التقليدية أو من النظرة العالمية المادية. والمسلمون أيضا يستخدمون تلك الأدبيات والنماذج دون أي محاولة لتعديلها أو تكييفها مع ثقافتهم الخاصة. فنماذج التطور المستمر التي وضعها علماء غربيون متأصلة في مفهوم المكاسب الدنيوية التي تتناقض مع العقل المسلم. وقد اقترح عدد من العلماء بعض النماذج للتطوير على أساس المعرفة العقائدية والتركيز على المنافع الدنيوية والأخروية. وتظهر الأدبيات المتاحة أن بعض التحسينات قد تحققت في مجال الاقتصاد والمالية والبنوك والإدارة، وإدارة الموارد البشرية، والقيادة؛ ولكن عددا قليلا جدا تمّ في إدارة الجودة الشاملة. ولم يتم تطوير أي نموذج للتحسين المستمر من وجهة نظر إسلامية. وتأتي جهود هذا البحث النوعي الاستكشافي لتقليص هذه الفجوة من خلال تطوير نموذج جديد للتحسين المستمر في إدارة الجودة الشاملة من منظور إسلامي. وهذا هو الهدف الرئيسي لهذا البحث. وأخذت هذه الدراسة الموقف الفلسفي الإيجابي لما بعد الحداثة. وقد أدى الموقف الموضوعي - المعرفي - والوجودي المتمثل في ما بعد الحداثة الإيجابية إلى وضع معايير تقييم خاصة لمثل هذه البحوث الإدارية. ويستند النموذج المعرفي لهذه الدراسة بالذات إلى فكرة (التوحيد). وأن الأسس المعرفية الأساسية هما القرآن والسنة، ومساهمات العلماء المسلمين. أما الموقف الفلسفي والمعرفي، والنموذج الوجودي، فقد أدى إلى اتباع المنهجية النوعية لإجراء البحث. ولتحقيق أهداف البحث والإجابة على أسئلته، فقد جمع الباحث البيانات من خلال تطبيق المقابلة (مقابلة مركزة للمجموعة- والمقابلة شبه المقننة المتعمقة). وبعد أن تم وضع النموذج المفاهيمي (الذي تم تطويره

في المقام الأول بعد استعراض الأدبيات المكثفة)، تم إجراء مقابلة مع مجموعة مكونة 11 أكاديميا وممارسا. واستنادا إلى نتائج مقابلة المجموعة ، قام الباحث بوضع اللمسات الأخيرة على المكونات التي ساعدت على وضع الصيغة النهائية للنموذج الجديد المسمى "نامس سايكل". وقد وجدت بعض القضايا والتحديات المرتبطة بتنفيذ النموذج. وتم اختيار ثلاثين مشاركا من الممارسين لإجراء مقابلة متعمقة باستخدام تقنية أخذ العينة القصدية. وتم تحليل البيانات التي تم جمعها عن طريق تحليل البيانات النوعية باتباع ست خطوات. وتبين أن نموذج "نامس سايكل" المقترح حديثا يطبق على كل من الأفراد والمنظمات. وأنه مهم للمنظمات والأفراد والأكاديميين والممارسين والطلاب والمجموعات البحثية التي لها مصلحة لإجراء البحوث في ذات المجال. وقد قدم هذا البحث توصية خاصة للباحثين في المستقبل لاختبار قابلية النموذج المقترح حديثا من خلال تنفيذه في المنظمات.

## **APPROVAL PAGE**

The thesis of Afroza Bulbul Afrin has been approved by the following:

---

Rafikul Islam  
Supervisor

---

Md. Yousuf Ali  
Co-Supervisor

---

Rodrigue Fontaine  
Co-Supervisor

---

Thameem Ushama  
Internal Examiner

---

Juhary Ali  
External Examiner

---

Lailawati Mohd Salleh  
External Examirer

---

Amir Akramin Bin Shafie  
Chairperson

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own investigation, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Afroza Bulbul Afrin

Signature.....

Date .....

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*This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved husband and parents*



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| AACSB | Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business |
| AMBA  | Association of MBAs                                   |
| BSC   | Balanced Score Card                                   |
| CI    | Continuous Improvement                                |
| Cp    | Process Capability                                    |
| DMAIC | Define, Measure, Analyse, Improve and Control         |
| EFMD  | European Foundation for Management Development        |
| EPA   | Environmental Protection Agency                       |
| FGD   | Focus Group Discussion                                |
| HRM   | Human Resource Management                             |
| INS   | Inspection  |
| ISI   | Islamic Standard International                        |
| ISO   | International Organisation for Standardisation        |
| JIT   | Just-in-Time  |
| LSS   | Lean Six Sigma  |
| MIP   | Management from an Islamic perspective                |
| MNCs  | Multinational corporations                            |
| MOW   | Meaning of Work                                       |
| NAMS  | Niyyah Amal Muhsaba and Shukr.                        |
| NEASC | New England Association of Schools and Colleges       |
| NGOs  | Non-government Organisations                          |
| PDCA  | Plan-Do-Check-Act                                     |
| PDSA  | Plan-Do-Study-Act                                     |
| PWE   | Protestant Work Ethic                                 |
| QA    | Quality Assurance                                     |
| QC    | Quality Control                                       |
| QCC   | Quality Control Circle                                |
| QIS   | Quality Improvement System                            |
| swt   | Subhanahu wa Ta'ala                                   |
| TPS   | Toyota Production System                              |
| TQM   | Total Quality Management                              |
| USA   | United States of America                              |

## LIST OF TRANSLATION

| Arabic | English | Arabic | English | Arabic  | English |
|--------|---------|--------|---------|---------|---------|
| ء      | '       | ش      | Sh      | ن       | N       |
| ب      | B       | ص      | ṣ       | ه       | H       |
| ت      | T       | ض      | ḍ       | و       | W       |
| ث      | Th      | ط      | ṭ       | ي       | Y       |
| ج      | J       | ظ      | ẓ       | اَ      | a       |
| ح      | ḥ       | ع      | ‘       | اِ      | i       |
| خ      | Kh      | غ      | Gh      | اُ      | U       |
| د      | D       | ف      | F       | اَ + اِ | ā       |
| ذ      | Dh      | ق      | Q       | اِ + يِ | ī       |
| ر      | r       | ك      | K       | اُ + وُ | ū       |
| ز      | Z       | ل      | L       |         |         |
| س      | s       | م      | M       |         |         |

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

The practice of management is as old as civilisation and is a highly researched topic. Within management studies, research on total quality management (TQM) began in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and matured in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Managing and assuring quality is vital to corporate survival in an increasingly competitive business environment. The term ‘quality’ does not comprise only the features of commodities that satisfy or exceed the expectations of the clients, but also those features enriching and differentiating them from rival products. A business achieves success through identifying and satisfying the desires (expressed and hidden) of customers.

Open economies and globalised trade have made the business environment competitive crucial to survival and growth. To grow in such an environment, ‘quality movement’ was introduced in Japan after World War II. Quality management has surpassed being a concept and is considered a philosophy which comprises company-wide efforts that include all employees, suppliers, and customers, and that seeks continuously to improve the quality of products and processes to meet the needs and expectations of customers (Dean & Evans, 2005). Many individuals, as well as organisations, invest intellectual power and efforts to develop tools, techniques and models for quality management systems.

One of the fundamental elements of total quality management (TQM) is continuous improvement (CI). ‘Good is not good enough; there is always a scope to be better’ – keeping this proverb in mind, TQM espouses continuous quality improvement (Mannan & Ferdousi, 2007). TQM is not a one-step activity, but a

continuous approach and a never-ending process. With a long-term focus, quality improvement becomes an everyday activity. Organisations must continuously improve the quality of products and services to strengthen competitive advantage in the market which result in cost-savings and increased market share due to a reputation for quality products or services. CI of quality is an essential requirement for any product that a firm produces or any process through which an organisation delivers services to its customers and clients (Plenert, 2012; Ahbabi & Alshawi, 2015).

CI is a programme devoted to enriching the intellects of all associates in the system. This programme helps staffs to improve quality by educating them and providing freedom to implement their talents in the work premises (Bigelow, 2015). Teamwork, discussion, integration, inspiring pleas, sensible encouragement and strong conjecturers of employee commitment to CI ingenuities are significant drivers of quality (Lam et al., 2015). The supervisor-subordinate relationship is directly related to CI initiatives. One may call it Jidoka, or Kaizen, but the purpose is the same, namely to improve either product/service quality or process quality continually.

Imai first used the term 'continuous improvement' (CI) in 1986 (Murry & Chapman, 2003) but the concept was used in the 1930s when Walter Shewhart oriented three-step scientific process of improving quality naming specification, production and inspection (Shewhart, 1939). Subsequently, this straight-line idea was revised into a cycle. Shewhart (1939) wrote that these three steps must go in a circle instead of in a straight-line. This cycle was treated as steps in the systematic way of operations. Therefore, the three steps- specification, production, and inspection- constitute a dynamic systematic way of gathering knowledge. This concept was known as the Shewhart cycle.

W. Edwards Deming closely reviewed Shewhart's works. At the age of 39, he edited a series of speeches provided by Shewhart to the U.S. Department of Agriculture and ultimately became the basis of Shewhart's 1939 book. Deming presented an edited form of the cycle in 1950 (Deming, 1950). This new version refers to as the Deming cycle or PDSA (Plan-Do-Study-Act) Cycle. Deming stated it as a flow diagram for acquiring knowledge and enhancement of a product or a process. To relate, from Islamic literatures, it is observed that the concepts of quality and continuous improvement were being studied and practised by The Prophet (peace be upon him) and his companions and many other Muslim leaders in the history (Musa and Salleh, 2005a, Jabnoun, 2008).

The development of the Deming cycle was not enough. Many studies have been conducted and a number of alternatives have been developed for CI, such as quality control circle (QCC), business process re-engineering, 5-S, Six Sigma, Lean production, Just-in-time (JIT) production system, quality improvement system (QIS), benchmarking, ISO 9000, ISO14000, and ISI 2020 series.

The Japanese word *Kaizen* means continuous improvement activities and is often seen in the special context of shop floor improvement activities. This concept is now broadly defined to include ongoing improvement activities involving everyone in the organisation (Imai, 1986). *Kaizen* is based on the belief on people's inherent desire for quality and work. It requires sharing, caring, commitment, and a different kind of leadership based on personal experience and conviction. It generates both process-oriented and people-oriented thinking in the sensory faculty that it is aimed towards the improvement of operations. It is concerned more with the process than the forthcoming results.

5-S is another important method for CI. Over the last century, the Japanese have formalised the technique and named it as 5-S Practice. 5-S has five Japanese words *Seiri*, *Seiton*, *Seiso*, *Seiketsu*, and *Shitsuke*. *Seiri* means structure the organisational structure and the processes so that there will be as minimum number of people as possible and at the suitable places. The process should be so that there will be minimum wastage of resources and easy movement of items are ensured.

Systematise (*Seiton*) is a study of how fast one is able to fix the equipment s/he needs and how swiftly s/he can lay them off. Here one has to analyse why getting things out and putting them away takes a long time. S/he has to study this for both the people using the things frequently and those who seldom use them and then s/he has to invent a system that everyone can understand.

Everyone is a custodian means everyone (top to bottom) in the organisation ought to practise sanitisation (*seiso*). They are obliged to keep their surroundings cleaned. This is why the Japanese do not need street cleaners in residential areas. They believe that while they are doing the cleaning, they are cleaning their minds, too.

Standardisation (*Seiketsu*) emphasises the visual management and 5-S standardisation. Revolution and total visual management are used to attain and maintain standardised conditions in the organisation. Visual management, recently pronounced, has used for improvement in production, quality, safety, and customer services. Wearing white and other light-colour shirt in workplace is also a standard which induce people to keep everything clean in workplace.

Self-discipline (*Shitsuke*) emphasises on creating a workplace with good habits. Self-discipline is important because it spreads over discipline. Self-discipline generates the continuity of a daily routine. The Japanese are a very self-disciplined nation in the world.