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Full Length Research Paper

Performance of local authorities: Analysis on two different levels of quality adoption

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This paper presents the findings of a study comparing the performance of local authorities with two different levels of adoption of quality management (QM). Data for this study were collected from 205 managers of local authorities in West Malaysia. The results revealed that local authorities with high intensive QM secure better results as compared to local authorities with less intensive QM in performance dimensions of customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction. This study contributes significantly to the literature by presenting evidence on the difference of performances achieved by high intensive and less intensive implementations of QM. This would suggest that QM implementers need to implement QM to the fullest in order to reap the optimal benefits of implementing it, since less intensive implementations gain performance at a significantly lower level as compared with more intensive implementations. The managerial implications of these findings are also discussed.

Key words: Quality management, organizational performance, public service.

INTRODUCTION

The literature of quality management (QM) is replete with evidence concerning the positive significant relationship between the practice of QM and performance (Brah et al., 2000; Claver et al., 2006; Fening et al., 2008). However, there is also a group of researchers who had reported an insignificant relationship between QM and performance achieved (Eskildson, 1995; Claver and Tari, 2008). This inconclusiveness of the relationship between QM and performance has led researchers to study the issue of why do some organisations fail to successfully execute it. According to the literature, one of the prerequisite for QM to be successful is that the implementation must be executed with full commitment and not just for the purpose of fulfilling the minimum requirements of being certified as an ISO organisation (Lee et al., 2009).

Furthermore, QM has been described in the literature as consisting of critical factors that are interrelated with each other (Madu et al., 1995). Their symbiotic relationship requires the implementers to integrate or implement all of these critical factors. In other words, any missing critical factor would bring negative consequences on its results (Claver and Tari, 2008). The implementers have no choice but to implement QM as a packaged menu, where all critical factors must coexist together. In contrast, the approach of implementing these critical factors as a buffet, where the managers may pick their preferential critical factors, would possibly be difficult to gain good results (Claver and Tari, 2008). Although, previous studies had investigated the difference of performance achieved by the less experienced QM adopters and more experienced QM adopters (Brah et al., 2000), ISO and non-ISO practising organisations (Sun, 2000), low adopters and high adopters of ISO principles (Lee et al., 2009), and organisations before receiving quality award and after receiving quality award (Eriksson and Hansson, 2003), little is known about the difference of performance between two different intensive levels of adoption of QM. Among the few studies on the relationship between the rigour of QM implementation and performance is a study reported by Brah et al. (2000). They investigated this relationship in the business service sector in Singapore. As a scientific effort to lessen this gap, this study postulated that the less intense the implementation of QM would cause an organisation to achieve different results as compared to a highly intensive implementation. This issue is pivotal since previous study had indicated that the different approaches of implementing QM would bring different results (Prajogo and

Brown, 2006).

Therefore this study aimed at comparing the performance of highly intensive and less intensive adopters of QM among local authorities. The rational is that all local authorities in Malaysia have implemented QM at different rate of intensity, thus to perform a study on the non-adopters among local authorities would seem irrelevant. Furthermore, the comparison between high intensive and less intensive implementers focuses on the extensiveness of the implementation rather than the yes or no implementation. This comparison would shed light on the issue that QM would not bring benefit to all organisations by presenting evidence that this lack in results would probably be due to the less intense implementation rather than the QM itself not being able to produce results. As an analogy, a medical treatment process taken by a patient does not achieve any significantly good results perhaps not because of the ineffectiveness of the treatment given, but rather the patient himself does not fully follow the prescribed treatment.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The introduction of QM in Malaysia has received wide acceptance from public institutions. This is proven based on the data reported by Muhammad et al.(2003). According to them, commitment of public institutions toward the implementation of QM is very encouraging. As with other public institutions, local authorities in Malaysia have not lagged behind in this development. However, the effectiveness of implementation of QM among local authorities is questionable, since the performance of this sector is not free from consistent public criticism (Said et al., 2009). However, there are also local authorities which have been recognised at the national quality award presentation day due to their excellent performance (Yaacob, 2008). This scenario perhaps could be linked with variation in the intensity of implementing QM (Prajogo and Brown, 2006). The existing differences between internal characteristics among organisations, such as local authorities, might be a reason for them to modify the pattern of QM implementation (Lee et al., 2009). A previous study reported that the performance achieved by QM implementers would be higher if the managers provide full support to its implementation (Prajogo and Brown, 2006). Therefore, the performance amongst local authorities is believed to be different between the more intensive implementers and less intensive implementers. The dimensions of performance investigated in this study cover customer satisfaction, cost savings, employee satisfaction and effectiveness of work process. This approach is deemed appropriate with the existence of multi stakeholders of a local authority (Yaacob and Meutia, 2008). Derived from issue narrated here, this study had aimed to answer the question: Does the performance of local authorities with high intensive QM implementation differs with the performance of local authorities with low intensive QM implementation?

Objectives of the study

The following objectives were set for this study. These objectives developed accordingly with the background of the study and problem statement are:

(1) To test the different levels of customer satisfaction between the high intensive and low intensive QM implementation organisations;
(2) To investigate the different levels of cost savings between the high intensive and low intensive QM implementation organisations;
(3)To study the different levels of employees satisfaction between the high intensive and low intensive QM implementation organisations; and
(4) To examine the different levels of effectiveness of work process between the high intensive and low intensive QM implementation organisations.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

The Malaysian government has been introducing various strategies to cater for the issues of performance of public service organisations, and QM is among the significant mark of this effort. The QM initiatives taken by the government can be traced back to 1989 through the launching of the “Excellent Work Culture Movement” campaign. Since then, QM initiatives have spread to all levels of governmental institutions across central, state, and local governments. This development is consistent with the quality awareness at the global level, where the strategy of zero-defect, six-sigma, ISO, Total Quality Management, and the like become eye-catching quality strategies for the managers (Claver and Tari, 2008).

In the literature, many authors have reported the significant relationship between QM and performance. As such, Claver et al. (2006) had reported that QM is positively related to customer satisfaction, employee morale, productivity, cost of waste and rework, defect reduction, as well as financial performance. In a study conducted by Lakhal et al. (2006), the authors reported a positive relationship between QM and three dimensions of organisational performance, namely financial performance, operational performance, and product quality. Similar findings were also reported by Claver and Tari (2008). In their study using data from small and medium industries, they found a significant relationship between QM and organisational performance in the following dimensions; customer results, people results, productivity, and reduced cost. In another study conducted in Ghana by Fening et al. (2008), the relationship between QM and performance

was also documented to be positively significant.

Although, the preceding paragraph has discussed the studies that report significant relationships between QM and organisational performance, the literature also reported that the findings of the link between the two variables are mixed (e.g.: Claver and Tari, 2008). Furthermore, there are also critics toward QM, where QM is only regarded as a management fad (Brockman, 1992) that will be reaching its end day sooner or later. There are several issues that are associated with the successful implementation of QM. In other words, there are prerequisites for QM to be successful; the inability of a QM organisation to secure good results is probably due to these factors:

(a) The implementers are imitators (Yusof and Aspinwall, 2000). They probably do not understand the internal and external environments of their organisation before implementing QM. Although, QM consists of generic practices that are appropriate with various organisations (Roonback and Wtell, 2008), the process of its implementation requires the organisation to analyse other contingency factors such as size (Yusof and Aspinwall, 2000) and type of business (Brah et al., 2000). As an analogy, QM is not a free size that fits all.
(b) They do not implement QM as a full set. QM consists of a set of critical factors that must coexist together before an organisation can reap the good benefits (Madu et al., 1995). An organisation should not implement QM based on their preference and ignore the other critical factors. For example, the implementation of customer focus also requires the organisation to ensure the human resource training is consistent with the requirements of QM.
(c) The time frame of implementation (Eriksson and Hansson, 2003; Prajogo and Brown, 2006). Literature has discussed that QM should not be treated as a one-off implementation (Lee et al., 2009). It is a long term agenda, where the implementation of QM requires persistent action and strategy, as the practice of QM requires continuous efforts.

As a long term agenda, the positive effect of implementing QM is probably illusive in the short term period. This situation would contribute to the managers to be less committed toward the implementation of QM, particularly to those managers who focus on short term vision (Sohal and Terziovski, 2000). As found by Lee et al. (2009), there are two types of ISO organisations, namely organisations that purposely implement ISO for getting the certificate and organisations that are highly committed toward ISO implementation. The second group of organisations would intensify the adoption of quality initiative, which in turn would secure the intended results.

Previous researchers had documented that QM adopters have achieved better performance than non-QM adopters (Sun, 2000; Hendricks and Singhal, 2001). This comparison was done between two extremes of the continuum, namely adopters and non-adopters. However, the comparison among intensive implementers with different rates of intensity, namely very intensive adoption and less intensive adoption seem to receive less attention from scholars. The implementation of a quality programme is not a guarantee for obtaining good results. This is true as reported by Terziovski, Power, and Sohal (2003). They have reported that the companies who have been certified with ISO 9000, but do not believe the positive result of implementing it, have failed to obtain good results. Full commitment of managers toward the implementation of QM is not an option for successful implementers (Lee et al., 2009).

Based on a study reported by Costa and Lorente (2007), an organisation would only gain the positive effects of QM, if the implementation was done seriously and not just as a trial activity to add new quality certification. In other words, the different intensities of QM being in place would have different effects on its results. A study conducted by Lee et al. (2009) reported that the organisations with high levels of adoption of ISO principles outperformed the organisations with lower levels of adoption of ISO principles. The same finding was also reported by Prajogo and Brown (2006). The *minimalist* and *committed* implementers gain different results for implementing QM. The minimalist refers to an organisation that only puts minimum effort just for the sake of getting certification from a quality awarding body. The committed refers to organisations that implement all possible actions to practice QM. The above discussion portrays the variation of performance achieved by QM implementers due to their different approach of implementing it. The performance effect is also reported to be better for implementing organisations that implement QM to the highest possible intensity.

Although, the ultimate goal of implementing QM is to increase the level of customer satisfaction (Deming, 1986), QM is also reported as a significant predictor of various dimension of performance including cost saving (Tari and Sabater, 2006), employee's satisfaction and effectiveness of work process (Fening et al., 2008; Lakhal, et al., 2006). The working environment of QM-organization is said to promote teamwork culture among the organizational members (Cooney and Sohal, 2004). Working as a team would foster the coordination among the departments. The high coordination among members would improve the ability of an organization in meeting customer expectation without requiring an organization to allocate fund for cost of redo and rework (Flynn et al., 1995). Producing output with error-free is not an option for satisfying customers under the customer's first culture.

Therefore, through the discussion narrated above, had led this study to postulate the following four hypotheses:

H_1: There is a difference between the level of customer satisfaction of high intensive QM adopters and less intensive QM adopters.

H_2: There is a difference between the level of cost savings of high intensive QM adopters and less intensive QM adopters.

H_3: There is a difference between the level of employee's satisfaction of high intensive QM and less intensive QM adopters.

H_4: There is a difference between the effectiveness of work process of high intensive QM adopters and less intensive QM adopters

METHODOLOGY

Development of research instrument

Data of this study were collected using a questionnaire. The development of the questionnaire was done with care and followed all necessary steps as suggested in the literature (Bradburn et al., 2004). The pilot test of the instrument had involved 31 respondents as follows: eight respondents from Kota Bharu Municipal Council (MC), eleven respondents from Seremban MC, ten respondents from Kajang MC and seven respondents from Kuala Terengganu MC. They had given positive feedback toward the content and format of the questionnaire and no substantial changes were required. The items to represent constructs were adapted from previous study as tabulated in Table 1. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree). A higher score indicates a higher intensity of QM being practiced or higher performance achieved (Table 1).

Sampling and data collection

The sampling frame of this study consisted of departments attached to local authorities in West Malaysia. The rational of conducting this study at the departmental level rather than organisational-wide level was due to the possible varying intensity of QM implementation between departments attached to the same local authorities. The certification of ISO to local authorities is given based on the activities and not to the organisation as a whole. Therefore, the QM in departments with activities that secure ISO certification is deemed to have higher intensive QM than departments without activities certified by ISO.

The respondents of this study were the heads of department. The samples of the study were selected using stratified random sampling. This approach is deemed the most appropriate sampling technique due to the nature of local authorities which is homogeneity between local authorities and heterogeneity between departments under the same local authorities. This is because all local authorities have similar responsibilities and are governed by a similar Act, as prescribed in the Local Government Act, 1976. However, to run a function of a government, there are departments under one roof but with different activities, such as law enforcement department and engineering department (Table 2). Three phases of sample selection were organised as follows:

1st Phase: all local authorities were grouped according to the status (city councils-CC or municipal councils-MC).

2nd Phase: all 75 departments attached to seven city councils were chosen due to small number involved.

3rd Phase: out of 29 municipal councils, 18 of them were randomly selected one by one. The total number of departments attached to these 18 municipal councils is 175 departments.

The total number of departments decided as targeted samples is 250 departments (75 departments attached to CC and 175 departments attached to MC). This target number was taken into consideration because of the possibility of non-response or incomplete responses. Table 2 tabulates the number of samples and percentage of response rate. Out of 250 questionnaires distributed, 205 (82%) replied and were deemed usable for further analysis. Two persuasive follow-up calls were made to all samples as an effort to increase the percentage of response.

Reliability and validity test

Table 3 reports the reliability and validity tests of instrument used. The results indicated that the alpha coefficient for all constructs surpassed the benchmark of 0.70 (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994), thus indicating that the constructs have acceptable levels of internal consistency. In other words, the instrument used was reliable. The validity of the constructs was tested using exploratory factor analysis. Table 3 indicates all the items of each construct had loaded nicely on their single factor since the values of their factor loading were all above 0.40 (Hair et al., 1998). The eigen-values of all constructs were higher than the threshold value of 1.0, thus indicating that all items are collectively meaningful to represent their respective construct. The value of KMO was higher than the minimum benchmark of 0.5 (Kaiser, 1970, in Hair et al., 1998), thus indicating the appropriateness of data to be analysed using factor analysis.

FINDINGS

Table 4 tabulates that 55.1% of the sample fall into the category of less intensive implementers of QM. The rest is classified as high intensive implementers of QM. The less intensive implementers refer to the sample with scores of less than 40 out of a possible 50 points. The high intensive implementers refer to the sample with a score of 40 and above. The score was calculated based on the responses given by all respondents for all ten items related to the construct of QM which were asked in the questionnaire. The score for each item ranged from one to five. By adding the points for all ten items, the cumulative score of each sample for ten items ranged from a score of 10 to 50.

Table 5 tabulates the means and standard deviations of each dimension of performance under study for two different levels of implementation of QM. According to the results, high intensive implementers scored higher means in all four dimensions of performance as compared to less intensive implementers.

Hypotheses testing

Hypotheses of the study were tested using Levene's T-Test. The results are reported in Table 6. As given in the table, there is a significant difference between the customer satisfaction level of high intensive implementers and less intensive implementers at the F value = 10.625 and $p<0.05$. It means that H_1 of this study was supported. However the H_2 of this study was not supported based on

Table 1. Constructs under study and their respective items.

Construct	Items asked (sources to support content validity)
Quality management (ten items)	(a) Commitment of top management on quality initiatives (Black and Porter, 1996) (b) Actively seeks way to improve quality of service (Black and Porter, 1996) (c) Customer complaints is seriously attended to by manager (Black and Porter, 1996) (d) Quality related training is given (Black and Porter, 1996) (e) Quality related training is adequate (Black and Porter, 1996) (f) Employees are encouraged to provide suggestions for continuous improvement (Black and Porter, 1996) (g) Employees are recognised for quality achievement (Anderson et al., 1995; Black and Porter, 1996) (i) Continuous improvement is practised in all operations (Anderson et al., 1995; Black and Porter, 1996) (j) Quality related data is well collected (Anderson et al., 1995; Black and Porter, 1996) (k) Engage in extensive benchmarking (Black and Porter, 1996)
Customer satisfaction (three items)	(a) Customers satisfied with the services delivered (Chan, 2004; Fuentes-Fuentes, 2004; Kaplan and Norton, 1996) (b) Service delivered to customer in stipulated time (Chan, 2004) (c) Have good reputation among customers (Chan, 2004; Fuentes-Fuentes, 2004; Kanji, 2002)
Cost savings (three items)	(a) Operation cost savings (Zu, 2009) (b) Decrease in work defect (Zu, 2009) (c) Reduced unit cost of service delivered (Zu, 2009)
Employee satisfaction (three items)	(a) Maintain motivation of employee (Chan, 2004) (b) High job satisfaction among employees (Chan, 2004) (c) Having good work environment (Hoque, 2004)
Work process (three items)	(a) Has successfully introduced new product timely (Chan, 2004) (b) Has successfully developed procedures to improve quality of service offered (Kanji, 2002) (c) Utilises latest technology for increasing effectiveness (Kanji, 2002)

the F value = 3.2555 and $p > 0.05$. In other words, there is no significant difference in the level of cost savings between the high intensive implementers and less intensive implementers.

Next, testing for H_3 indicated that the hypothesis was supported. Table 6 indicates that the difference of employee satisfaction between high intensive and less intensive is significant at the F value of 12.546 and $p < 0.05$. However, the H_4 of this study was not supported based on the F value = 7.365 and $p > 0.05$. This meant that there is no significant difference in the effectiveness of work process between high intensive and less intensive implementers.

DISCUSSION

The implementation of QM should not be treated as a one-off project, but its development should be consistently monitored. Its implementation requires full commitment from the managers (Yusof and Aspinwall, 2000). In other words, divided commitment would bring the organisation to no where or make the positive effect of implementing of QM as just an imaginary outcome. The failure of QM may cause people to put blame on QM, without associating it with the level of commitment given by the managers to its implementation. Managers of local authorities should not institutionalise QM by focusing on certain critical factors and ignoring the other critical factors. It is essential for managers to implement QM as a whole all-in-one package because all the critical factors associated with the practice of QM are highly interrelated with each other (Claver and Tari, 2008).

This study reported that QM does impact the performance of local authorities. However, the significant difference between the performance of high intensive

Table 2. Sampling and responses.

	Sampling frame (number of departments)	Randomly selected samples	Number of questionnaires returned	Percentage of response (%)
City hall /council				
Kuala Lumpur	22	22	14	63.64
Johor Bahru	7	7	6	85.71
Alor Setar	8	8	5	62.50
Melaka	13	13	10	76.92
Ipoh	9	9	9	100
Shah Alam	12	12	10	83.33
Petaling Jaya	14	14	12	85.71
Municipal council				
Batu Pahat	6	6	5	83.33
Johor Bahru Tengah	9	9	8	88.89
Kluang	6	-		
Muar	7	7	5	71.43
Sungai Petani	10	10	8	80.00
Kulim	10	10	8	80.00
Langkawi	8	8	7	87.50
Kota Bharu*	8	-		
Alor Gajah	11	11	9	81.82
Seremban*	11	-		
Nilai	6	-		
Port Dickson	9	9	7	77.78
Kuantan	11	11	10	90.91
Temerloh	13	13	10	76.92
Manjung	10	-		
Taiping	8	-		
Kuala Kangsar	7	7	6	85.71
Teluk Intan	8	-		
Kangar	8	8	7	87.50
Pulau Pinang	10	10	8	80.00
Seberang Prai	10	10	10	100
Ampang Jaya	10	10	8	80.00
Kajang*	10	-		
Klang	10	10	8	80.00
Selayang	11	-		
Subang Jaya	9	9	9	100
Sepang	7	-		
Kuala Terengganu*#	7	-		
Kemaman	7	7	6	85.71
Total	342	250	205	82.00

Kuala Terengganu MC was granted the status of City Council since 1 Jan 2008. * These local authorities were the local authorities involved in the pilot study.

implementers and less intensive implementers was only reported for two dimensions of performance, namely customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction. These findings are in the same vein with a study conducted by Brah et al. (2000). They reported that the rigour of QM implementation was significantly related to the performance of small and medium sized companies in Singapore. The other two performance dimensions, namely costs savings and effectiveness of work process did not reveal any significant difference between the two

Table 3. Reliability test and factor analysis.

Constructs	Number of items	Factor loading	Eigen-value	Cronbach's alpha
QM	10	0.499 - 0.655	9.180	0.825
CS	3	0.487 - 0.633	1.638	0.741
CSg	3	0.592 - 0.669	1.425	0.769
ES	3	0.513 - 0.721	1.194	0.723
WP	3	0.483 - 0.521	1.171	0.712

KMO = 0.881; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, sig. = 0.00, QM = Quality management, CS = Customer satisfaction, CSg = Cost savings, ES = Employee satisfaction, WP = Work process.

Table 4. Frequency of samples.

Groups of samples	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative percentage (%)
Less intensive	113	55.1	55.1
High intensive	92	44.9	100
Total	205	100	

Table 5. Mean and standard deviation of performance dimensions.

QM adoption level	Customer satisfaction		Cost savings		Employee satisfaction		Effectiveness of work process	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Less intensive	3.39	0.691	3.38	0.615	3.36	0.625	3.37	0.626
High intensive	4.01	0.644	3.91	0.470	4.05	0.474	4.18	0.457

Table 6. Independent sample t-test – Levene's test.

Variables	Levene's test for equality of variances	
	F	Sig
Customers satisfaction	10.625	0.001*
Cost savings	3.255	0.073
Employee satisfaction	12.546	0.000*
Effectiveness of work process	7.365	0.007

*$p < 0.05$.

levels of intensiveness.

This study found a significant difference between the customer satisfaction of high intensive and less intensive QM implementers. A possible explanation for this finding is that the high intensive implementers would take care of every single aspect related to customer satisfaction. They would have good customer management systems ranging from research for identifying customer preferences and characteristics, training front-line workers to assure the best possible service delivered to the customers, integrating all related departments and functions so that customers feel more comfortable completing their needs at a one-stop centre, having easy customer complaint systems where customers can forward their complaints easily at any time, attending to customer complaints quickly, and always offering a faster and definite solution for complaints received from the customers. In contrast, local authorities who implement QM less intensively would lack in offering a complete customer management system solution. As such, they may have e-complaint systems but the complaint may not be entertained by a professionally well-trained customer relation officer. This situation would lead to ineffectiveness of customer management which in turn would reduce the satisfaction level of their customers. This result is consistent with the findings reported by Claver and Taric (2008). According to

them, the implementation of QM would help the organisation to solve customer's complaints faster. This is achievable due to the implementation of QM having helped organisations to decrease unnecessary bureaucracy (Costa and Lorente, 2007).

This study also reported the significant difference of employee satisfaction of high intensive and less intensive QM implementers. This finding is in the same vein with findings reported by Claver and Tari (2008). Under the high intensive implementation of QM, employees feel more recognised since they are given opportunities to deliver suggestions, actively participate in the programme, and are awarded on quality day. In contrast, employees under the less intensive QM programme may have limited opportunities to participate in the QM related activities. The QM literature has reported that high levels of employee's involvement would be positively related to their job satisfaction (Yusof and Aspinwall, 2000). In less intensive QM organisations, the responsibility of planning, monitoring, implementing, and evaluating QM may be solely given to the quality department. As a consequence, employees may feel that they are not part of QM initiatives.

In other two dimensions of performance, namely cost savings and effectiveness of work process, this study found that there was no significant difference between high intensive and less intensive QM implementers. A possible explanation for this finding could be linked to the nature of local authorities as government institutions. They have to follow the stated laws and regulations on how to use their funds. The way they use their funds is audited yearly by the Audit Department. Furthermore, local authorities as with other government institutions, still put high emphasis on the financial aspect when awarding contracts or selecting suppliers. In contrast, the literature on QM suggested that organisations should not only consider the monetary elements in awarding contracts and selecting suppliers, but covers the elements of time delivery, quality of product and strong background of supplier (Deming, 1986). Due to requirements to conform to statutory laws, the intensiveness of QM would probably not make any difference for local authorities to give more emphasis to consider quality aspects when selecting suppliers. However, this study leaves this assumption for future study to find a probable answer.

In terms of work process, the insignificant difference between less intensive and high intensive implementers perhaps could be linked with the nature of work done by a local authority. Generally, local authorities in Malaysia are not full-autonomy bodies in designing their work process. In contrast, local authorities in Malaysia are much related to the administration of the state govern-ment. The less flexibility given to them in designing their services is perhaps one reason that the intensiveness of QM would not bring significantly different effects on the effectiveness of work process. According to Gatchalian (1997), the practice of empowerment must exist for QM-organization to secure good results. As such, the front-line workers should be given trust to settle their daily operational problems without requiring them to ask permission from their supervisor for each time

The managerial implications of these findings are that managers of local authorities should intensify the practices of QM. As proven in this study, the mean of performance for all four organisational dimensions as tabulated in Table 5 indicated that highly intensive QM implementations achieve better scores than less intensive QM. In other words, high intensive QM would bring higher benefits to its implementers. More focus should be given on the impact of QM on customer satisfaction as well as employee satisfaction since higher QM intensity has significantly different results as compared to the relatively less QM intensity.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The findings of this study are subjected to the following limitations. Firstly, this study measured QM as a single construct. In other words, this present study investigated QM as a package rather than deeply investigate each critical factor of QM. Future research would validate the findings by investigating the difference of performance between different levels of adoption for each critical factor of QM. Secondly, this study measured the construct of performance using a questionnaire as the research instrument, thus findings of this study are subjected to the limitations attached to this approach, such as subjectivity, bias, and the like. Future research may consider using readily-available data of performance like financial reports, reports of employee absenteeism, numbers of customer's complaints, and the like.

Conclusion

This study found that high intensive implementers of QM benefits significant different performance in two dimensions, namely customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction. In other words, the local authorities that implement QM less intensively had achieved lower customer satisfaction as well as lower employee satisfaction. Therefore, it is of no surprise that customers or employees in certain local authorities perceive that QM brings no benefits to them. Their conclusion is perhaps due to the fact that the implementation of QM was not intensively performed by the related organisation. Their view could be different if the organisation implements QM intensively. For those who are sceptical toward the benefits of implementing QM, they have to scrutinise the intensity of QM in place at the organisation and should not evaluate the performance of QM without analysing the intensity of QM implementation.

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