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# Systems approaches to total quality management

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### Abstract

This paper discusses problems that are encountered when introducing and implementing total quality management (TQM), and why these problems will continue to persist unless a tailor-made or planned change approach to implementation is embarked on. A way to solve these problems is to see the totality of the organization or the area under probe, thereby giving proper meaning to TQM, and then to look for a holistic approach induced by critical systems thinking (CST). CST, apart from its critical awareness, can be seen to stand on complementarity, sociological awareness and the promotion of human well-being and emancipation. If used adequately, it complements the 'customer focus, process improvement and employee involvement' principles of TQM. The practical application of CST makes one realize that there are organizational and societal, and even political, pressures, which have led to some methodologies being more favourable than others. It seeks to develop the maximum potential of individuals in organizations and society. Being an approach to problem-solving, CST proposes that the most relevant approach to a situation be used, starting with the most

critical problem. The operationalization of CST may be done through a meta-methodology called total systems intervention (TSI). This holistic approach should be seen as a possibility for reinforcing organizational excellence and it is believed to be one of the major paradigms of the 21st Century.

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