

## Factors influencing the effectiveness of Quality Circles in the public sector in Sri Lanka

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The Quality Circle (QC), which is now being practised in more than seventy countries in the world, is a method of motivating employees, by providing opportunities for them to reach their full potential. A QC is a small group of workers, usually at non-executive level, who have got together voluntarily to analyse and solve their own work related problems with a view to enriching their own quality of work life. In recent years, many Sri Lankan organizations including government institutions introduced QCs to their organisations in order to improve productivity. The Ministry of Public Administration issued a special circular, No 9/97, directing all public sector institutions to setup QCs. However the experience is that only few ministries have succeeded. This may be a result of poor implementation rather than being the fault of the concept it self. This study attempts to identify the reasons for failure and barriers for implementing Quality Circles in the Public Sector in Sri Lanka.

A sample of thirty five QC members from six ministries where QCs have been started and implemented for a reasonable period were selected for the study. Information was collected through members of QCs and facilitators. While a structured questionnaire was used to collect information from members of circles, interviews were conducted to gather information from facilitators and other relevant institutions.

This study revealed that lack of proper monitoring and evaluation at the top management level, lack of support of officers at the executive level, lack of interest of employees in QC activities, and misunderstanding of the concept by employees are main reasons for failure of QCs. There are some misconceptions, which make the implementation of QCs in the Public Sector difficult. These misconceptions can be eliminated through correct awareness programmes. It was also revealed that the main reason for the success of QCs was the commitment, co-operation, and dedication of the management, particularly, the facilitator. Dedication of circle members, the team spirit of the members, and awareness and training given to members are the other key factors. Though the study was conducted only in selected ministries, the findings can be applied to the entire Public Sector because the culture of other ministries, departments and boards is very similar.

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