



Southern Public Administration Education Foundation



PAQ



GVER



IJED



JHSA



PAM



GPS



PFM



Search



RSS

Does Quality Management Work in the Public Sector?

Author: SHAND H. STRINGHAM

Published in PAM, Vol. 9 No. 3

This article examines the quality movement in the United States during the past two decades in the context of public management. Its primary focus is on the utility of quality management approaches in the rapidly changing public organizational environment today in which stability is rare and change, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity are frequently the only constants. The fundamental issue explored here is the appropriateness of the application of a management approach that was originally designed specifically for the corporate manufacturing environment to public management needs and requirements. Supplementing empirical evidence from several short-term applications of TQM in federal and state agencies, the paper reviews the impact of the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation's twenty-year experience with its quality improvement program on overall organizational performance and productivity. The synergistic effect of a comprehensive strategic management program on a public quality program is also examined. The article concludes with a discussion of the challenges of sustaining a quality program through the frequent changeover of senior political appointee leadership and the inherent tension between process improvement quality approaches and cost savings/cost avoidance approaches that surface during times of government fiscal crises.

[Download PDF](#)