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Aid for Quality

-Quality Assurance in Swedish Party Affiliated Organizations

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Abstract

Title: Aid for Quality – Quality Assurance in Swedish Party Affiliated Organizations.

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Five key words: Quality assurance, party affiliated organizations, aid, Total quality management, Sida

Purpose: The aim of the thesis is to shed light over the relationship between aid organizations, TQM and overall quality assurance. More specifically, we aim to identify the challenges with quality assurance work in the context of Swedish party affiliated organizations.

Methodology: Our study is a qualitative study with an abductive approach.

Theoretical perspectives: Our theoretical perspectives consist of total quality management and quality assurance in relation to new public management.

Empirical Foundation: We have conducted seven interviews with key individuals that have insight in the application of the quality assurance process within the party affiliated organizations.

Conclusions: Our purpose to identify the challenges with quality assurance in this specific context has been reached. We have found six areas of challenge that can be divided into two groups. The first group consists of the challenges in relation to create the quality assurance system and the second of a more fundamental character with challenges that must be undertaken to create the right premises for the first group. The six areas of challenge include defining quality, measure quality, create a quality assurance system, finding the proper level of control, establish clear communication and make sure that all involved parties have the right set of competence.

Table of Contents

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

In September 2010, the minister of aid presented the new guidelines concerning aid for party affiliated organizations (PAOs). These new guidelines included the launch of system audits, creation of measurable results and quality assurance of activities. In order for a PAO to receive funding from Sida they now need to match these requirements (Sida, 2010). According to the earlier guidelines, no such requirements or standards needed to be met for funding, consequently creating complexity for Sida regarding the evaluation and monitoring the PAOs' different projects (Sida, 2006). With the new guidelines the PAOs now need to evaluate their internal organizations, their projects and redesign them to meet the new requirements in order to continue to receive PAO-aid funding from Sida. Even though this creates an opportunity to raise the level of professionalism and become stronger organizations, it also creates a range of challenges. Among the new requirements of system audits, measurable results and quality assurance is also the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness from 2005. This treaty and its implications are included in the new guidelines to which the PAOs must adhere, which in practice is difficult and almost impossible to harmonize.

In our study we have had cooperation with The Centre Party's International Foundation (CIS). This has included a continuous flow of information, contacts and discussion concerning their context as a PAO and their challenges. The different PAOs vary in size and organization and some of the PAOs have reached longer in their development towards the new requirements. As for CIS', their organization is mainly based on the PAO-aid and needed a complete reconstruction. Our study does not however only include interviews from CIS, but also from other PAOs and other interested parties.

This context, the new guidelines from Sida and the above mentioned challenges for the PAOs can clearly be linked to the NPM (new public management) phenomenon. NPM strategies often include adopting strategies and methods from the private sector into public organizations daily operations. These waves of ideas have been well established in the Swedish public sector and have also been a part of Sida's demands when distributing funds to their member organizations. However, these demands from Sida, influenced by NPM ideas, has not until now concerned the PAO-aid funding.

The challenges for the PAOs will be analyzed through a body of literature based on Total Quality Management (TQM) and previous research on quality assurance in public organizations.

Since the challenges that will be analyzed in this thesis can be derived from the emergence of NPM ideas, namely quality assurance, into the guidelines of the PAO-aid funding, we will in the next section give a short introduction to the ideas of NPM.

1.1.1 New Public Management

The phenomenon of New Public Management can be referred to as the last twenty five years' attempt to transfer ideas and models from the private sector into the public sector. This is a field of research that has grown into an established phenomenon since the end of the 1980's and was conceptualized by Christopher Hood in the early nineties (Rövik, 2008). In Hood's article (1995), he presents what NPM entails as a set of themes that overlap:

"For Example, the idea of a shift in emphasis from policy making to management skills, from a stress on process to a stress on output, from orderly hierarchies to an intendedly more competitive basis for providing public services, from fixed to variable pay and from a uniform and inclusive public service to a variant structure with more emphasis on contract provision, are the themes which appear in most accounts". (Hood, 1995, p. 95)

The field of research is not based on one theoretical platform and is the concern of researchers with economic, political or organizational backgrounds. However, NPM can still be considered a rather distinct field of research since it circles around one empirical phenomenon: Applying ideas from the private sector on to the public sector as so called NPM reforms. These NPM-reforms have a distinct ideological-political dimension with strong international organizations as OECD, WTO, The World Bank and IMF tried to implement the economical logics into the public sectors. However, this does not only include the economical logics but also values of democracy and rule of law (Rövik, 2008).

According to Hood (1995), most commentators agree that there are seven dimensions of change associated with NPM. These seven dimensions of change are separated into two parts. The first part includes four elements that concern the issue of methods of accountability and to what extent they should be derived from the private to the public sector. The second part and thus the remaining three elements concern the issue of how far the managerial doctrines should be used. This is summarized in table 1 (See below).

These dimensions broadly represent the basic elements and practical reforms of NPM. According to Rövik (2008), there are two different camps within the field of research. One camp is pro reforms and bases its arguments primarily on economic theories. The other camp is critical to NPM-reforms and argues that not all private sector ideas are compatible for the complexity of the political and democratic systems in the public sector (Rövik, 2008). As mentioned in the previous section our study will focus on certain NPM ideas, namely the complexity that comes when applying private sector ideas, in our case applying quality assurance work into aid organizations conducting democracy aid. However, with this focus being articulated, we do not intend to argue neither for nor against NPM-reforms. We will only focus on the challenges that can be derived from the quality assurance process that the PAOs are in.

No.	Doctrine	Typical justification	Replaces	Operational significance	Some possible accounting implications
PS distinctiveness					
1.	Unbundling of the PS into corporatized units organized by product	Make units manageable; and focus blame; split provision and production to create anti-waste lobby	Belief in uniform and inclusive PS to avoid underlaps and overlaps in accountability	Erosion of single service employment; arms-length dealings; devolved budgets	More cost centre units
2.	More contract-based competitive provision, with internal markets and term contracts	Rivalry as the key to lower costs and better standards; contracts as the key to explicating performance standards	Unspecified employment contracts, open-ended provision, linking of purchase, provision, production, to cut transaction cost	Distinction of primary and secondary public service labour force	More stress on identifying costs and understanding cost structures; so cost data become commercially confidential and cooperative behaviour becomes costly
3.	Stress on private-sector styles of management practice	Need to apply proven private-sector management tools in the public sector	Stress on PS ethic fixed pay and hiring rules, model employer orientation centralized personnel structure, jobs for life	Move from double imbalance PS pay, career service, unmonetized rewards "due process" employee entitlements	Private-sector accounting norms
4.	More stress on discipline and frugality in resource use	Need to cut direct costs, raise labour discipline, do more with less	Stable base budget and establishment norms, minimum standards, union vetoes	Less primary employment, less job security, less producer-friendly style	More stress on the bottom line
Rules vs discretion					
5.	More emphasis on visible hands-on top management	Accountability requires clear assignment of responsiblity not diffusion of power	Paramount stress on policy skills and rules, not active management	More freedom to manage by discretionary power	Fewer general procedural constraints on handling of contracts, cash, staff; coupled with more use of financial data for management accountability
6.	Explicit formal measurable standards and measures of peformance and success	Accountability means clearly stated aims; efficiency needs hard look at goals	Qualitative and implicit standards and norms	Erosion of self-management by professionals	Performance indicators and audit
7.	Greater emphasis on output controls	Need for greater stress on results	Stress on procedure and control by collibration	Resources and pay based on performance	Move away from detailed accounting for particular activities towards broader cost centre accounting; may involve blurring of funds for pay and for activity

[Ref: Hood, 1995, p. 96]

1.1.2 Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)

Sida is a Swedish authority under the jurisdiction of the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and has an overall goal to improve life conditions for poor people around the world. Sida is organized in nine departments and has a governing board with full responsibility of all operations. However, all work performed by Sida must be aligned with the guidelines from the government. Moreover, the volume of funding to Sida is set each year with the government's annual letter of appropriation. This Letter also states how the money should be divided and allocated between the agency's different areas of activity, the PAOs being one small part of this (www.sida.se, 2010).

The total development aid for 2010 was SEK 31,4 billion where approximately SEK 16 billion was allocated to Sida and the rest to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Then it is up to these two actors to allocate the funding to their different areas of activity (www.sida.se, 2010).

1.1.3 The new guidelines: Government Decision UF2010/34078/UP (Sida, 2010)

The 16th of September 2010 the minister of aid, Gunilla Carlsson, presented the new guidelines concerning aid for party affiliated organizations (PAO). The guidelines or "*strategy for certain democracy aid by Swedish party affiliated organizations*" concerns the period of 2011-2015 and involves a number of new reforms. However, the overall goal remains the same, to support democracy development and increased respect for human rights in developing countries. In order to achieve these goals, Sida and the PAOs will focus their aid on two fields of activities: 1) aid to sister party or related political movements or organizations and 2) aid to multi-party systems. The reform concerns the strategic execution of these goals (Sida, 2010).

The second activity concerning aid to multi-party systems will now be put under competition between different PAOs. This involves 30% of the total PAO aid funds in volume except the one million SEK each PAO receives as a base for administration (Sida, 2010). This has the purpose to higher the overall professionalism and quality of their work.

The largest reform with the new guidelines is the program based system along with its audit and monitoring for quality. This implies a number of changes. Instead of launching projects, PAOs will focus on long-term programs. Consequently, when a PAO applies for funding from Sida they will assess whether the PAO's goals with its program and indicators of their activities can fully match the new quality requirements and then prove results in advance, during and afterwards. The quality of the program will be assessed by Sida continuously through monitoring and reports sent from the PAO. As a result, Sida will evaluate the PAO's capacity through regular system audits (Sida, 2010).

These changes in strategy for PAOs are more an up-to-date adjustment to the requirements on system audits and monitoring that the civil society organizations already have. Consequently, some PAOs can already meet these new requirements since they have funding from Sida's civil society section as well and not only the PAO section. While others who rely mostly on PAO-aid funding have to reshape and reconfigure their entire organizations (CIS included). Moreover, in the new guidelines it clearly states that all actors including PAOs must adhere to the principles on aid effectiveness

according to the Paris Agenda (Sida, 2010). However, these principles are difficult to align with in the new guidelines in practice. The Paris agenda claims that the donor should let go of control in favor of the partner while the new guidelines for PAOs emphasize monitoring, audit and control of their funding. This results in a conflict of principles.

1.1.4 The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness

In 2005, an international agreement was signed by over one hundred countries and larger organizations, the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. This was the result of a long discussion on aid effectiveness. With the new treaty, the purpose was to reform the ways countries and organizations manage and deliver aid. As a result, it was recognized that the volumes of aid and resources for development needed to increase as well as aid effectiveness in order to help the developing countries efforts for development (OECD, 2005). By strengthening the developing country's governance and own systems they will have a chance to achieve higher developing performance. The Paris Declaration, also referred to as The Paris Agenda, is founded on five principles for joint progress towards aid effectiveness:

Ownership – *Partner countries exercise effective leadership over their development policies, and strategies and co-ordinate development actions.*

Alignment – *Donors base their overall support on partner countries' national development strategies, institutions and procedures.*

Harmonization – *Donors actions are more harmonized, transparent and collectively effective.*

Managing for Results – *Managing resources and improving decision-making for results.*

Mutual accountability – *Donors and partners are accountable for development results.*

(OECD, 2005)

This treaty affects most Swedish aid organizations but to different extents. However, all concerned aid organization ought to promote it and subject themselves to the guidelines and implications according to the treaty.

1.1.5 Party Affiliated Organizations

A party affiliated organization (PAO) is a non-profit organization owned by a party in the Swedish Parliament and has the purpose to work primarily for democracy in developing countries. Today all parties except Sverige Demokraterna (SD) have a PAO. The existing PAOs are the following : The Center Party's International Foundation (C), Green Forum (MP), Jarl Hjalmarson Foundation (M), Christian Democratic International Center (KD), Olof Palme International Center (S), Swedish International Liberal Center, and The Left International Forum (V). (C. Isaksson, personal communication, April 23rd, 2011)

Aid for democracy through the PAOs was introduced in year 1995 and became permanent first in year 2002. In order to receive funding as a PAO, it needs to be founded by a party within the parliament who has been there for at least one full term of office (Sida, 2010).

All PAOs receive their primary funding through the PAO-aid from Sida according to the new guidelines (Sida, 2010) but can also receive funding from other parts of Sida or any other donor, tax-

funded or not. For this reason, the structures of the different PAOs vary. However, since they all receive funding through the PAO-aid, all need to align with the new guidelines.

1.1.6 The Center Party's International Foundation

The Center Party's International Foundation (CIS) is a non-profit organization owned by the Swedish Center Party and is thus labeled a party affiliated organization (PAO). The foundations primary purpose is to support and promote democracy in developing countries. CIS is founded on three pillars representing their focus in following order: democracy, human rights and equality. However, in some projects a fourth pillar can be added: HIV/Aids prevention. Today CIS is active with programs in eight different countries with a total of eleven projects. This number will however be adjusted within the coming year since some projects are being shut down and new ones founded (The Centre Party's International Foundation, 2011).

CIS works primarily with civil rights organizations, political parties or other movements in countries where they own projects. Women and youths are often the target groups for CIS due to democratic underrepresentation in developing countries (The Centre Party's International Foundation, 2011)(C. Isaksson, personal communication, April 23rd, 2011).

CIS' board consists of seven people and a chancellery of four employees. They receive 85% of their total volume of funds from Sida's PAO-aid. The exact volume of this funding is mainly based on the number of the Center Party's seats in the parliament. However, as described earlier some parts of the total PAO-aid are being put up for competition between the seven PAOs according to the new guidelines and one million SEK is granted to each PAO as a base for administration. The remaining 15% is funded to 90% by Forum Syd, a framework organization which also receives its funding from Sida, where 10% must be collected from charity or other donors. The balance between the PAO-aid and other funding is not fixed. This means that CIS can by all means apply for more funding from Forum Syd, other organizations or the part of the PAO-aid that is put up for competition (The Centre Party's International Foundation, 2011)(C. Isaksson, personal communication, April 23rd, 2011).

1.2 Practical and theoretical challenges

Due to the new guidelines from Sida concerning the PAO-aid, all PAOs will have to reorganize their organizations in order to meet these demands. The Previous PAO-aid guidelines did not require auditing, monitoring or program based systems to the same extent as the new ones (Sida, 2006). For this reason, all projects undertaken by the PAOs are now being evaluated and renegotiated considering whether they can match the new requirements. However, some PAOs do also receive funding from Sida's civil society department where these higher demands on control have been part of the requirements for several years. Nonetheless, all PAOs face the same requirements according to the new PAO guidelines and need to align their work according to it.

In other words, in order for the PAOs to align with the guidelines from Sida they are forced to assure the quality of all their operations according to these demands. This implies that the PAOs have to face a number of challenges when designing or evaluating their quality assurance systems. Moreover, due to the fact that quality assurance in aid organizations is a rather narrow field of research, few have studied its implications. Consequently, the literature concerning this phenomenon is rather limited.

1.3 The Aim of the Thesis

The aim of the thesis is to shed light over the relationship between aid organizations, TQM and overall quality assurance. More specifically, we aim to identify the challenges with quality assurance work in the context of Swedish party affiliated organizations.

Our research question to answer is therefore:

What specific challenges may occur with quality assurance programs in the setting of Swedish party affiliated organizations?

1.4 Delineations

Since the aim is to study the challenges with quality assurance in the context of Swedish party affiliated organizations, the effects of the challenges or how the challenges should be managed will not be included in to the thesis.

2 Methodology

2.1 Methodological Assumptions

In the authors (our) understanding of what reality, society and knowledge is; it is a social construction that has become institutionalized over time through the interaction of people. When a set of people and groups interact in a social system, they will over time start to share a common understand of reality and of what knowledge is. When this social system becomes available for the rest of society and these beliefs and understandings are shared and considered a general truth, it has become institutionalized and embedded in society (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The society norms and rules are constructed over years of social interactions and affect how we perceive reality. Our understanding of reality, society and knowledge is therefore socially constructed (Bryman & Bell, 2005) (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). It is our understanding that an objective truth does simply not exist. Nothing is black or white, there are probably extremes at both ends, but reality is according to our understanding constructed through complex social interaction between individuals that over time institutionalizes what we perceive as "reality", which makes reality subjective rather than objective (Sandberg, Sjöstrand, & Tyrstrup, 2001). This view of reality is also incorporated into our understanding of knowledge. Being aware of that our prior knowledge affects our new impressions leads to that it is impossible to be objective, however, the awareness might at least increase our possibilities to be neutral (Bryman & Bell, 2005)

The TQM philosophy is constructed with an approach more leaning towards the objective perspective. This does not affect our views or believes as authors, that the society and the world are socially constructed phenomenon. TQM is from our perspective not an absolute truth, but rather one of many ways to catch a simplified picture of how to perceive the more complex reality it reflects. This may give us a more open mindset when investigating Quality Assurance in Swedish aid-organizations.

2.2 Scientific approach

Within research, the scientific approach is normally either inductive or deductive. We have conducted a qualitative research which in most cases is inductive (Backman, 2008). However, our research has been a mix of the inductive and the deductive. An inductive approach is based on observations and empirics which later is formulated into theories, while an deductive approach uses hypothesis based on theory and then later tested to prove them true or false (Bryman & Bell, 2005). Our approach in this thesis has had influences from both the inductive and the deductive approach. We started with formulating an initial research question based on our study object, this was followed by acquisition of theory by studying literature of quality assurance and as the research progressed, our knowledge was deepened and we thereby reformulated our research question and the focus of our research. This procedure is more similar to an abductive approach where the researcher is moving back and forth between the deductive and inductive approach (Björklund & Paulsson, 2003).

2.3 Data Collection

2.3.1 Selection of Organizations and Individuals

Through contacts we gained information about the ongoing quality assurance process with the PAOs. We found this interesting and investigated further which organizations were appropriate for the purpose of our study. After an initial discussion with our contact person and further research of the

PAOs we selected three of them to be studied closer. The chosen PAOs had all reached different stages in the quality assurance process and could therefore give a broad spectrum of challenges with quality assurance in aid organizations. Moreover, in order to gain a more nuanced picture we needed to involve more concerned key actors in this process. This involved Sida as the government and consultants as experts in this kind of processes. Furthermore, we also included an individual from another aid organization who earlier had conducted a study closely related to ours. This person was recommended as one having great insight with the challenges of quality assurance in aid organizations. In total we singled out seven individuals to be contacted for interviews. Out of these seven, three were representatives from different PAOs, two consultants, one Sida representative, and one researcher/representative for a Swedish aid organization within the civil society.

Due to anonymity we cannot disclose any more specific details regarding our interviewees. However, all are closely connected directly or indirectly to the PAOs. After an initial research we concluded a set of seven key individuals appropriate for our research. All key individuals were invited to participate in interviews, all accepted and interviews were conducted.

2.3.2 Procedure

All interviewees were contacted initially by phone and then emailed information about us, the purpose with our research and a short description of the intended interview. No specific information concerning the interview questions was given but rather the concerned themes.

The interview guide consists of 16 questions spread out on three themes plus one consisting of initial questions concerning the interviewee's background. The main themes covered quality assurance, control and governance. These chosen themes and the questions included were designed to align the interviews with our analysis. After our initial research within the theoretical field of TQM and discussions with C. Isaksson (personal communication, April 23rd, 2011), the questions were designed. These three themes cover the three areas of challenges that we have identified to be representative for the contextual issues for PAOs but also aligned with the analysis linked to TQM theory. The interview guide has a semi-structured design and in some cases questions were rephrased to match the right organization. Example of this: *"Is quality assurance work something you do at organization X?"* Here we would switch the last word to represent the organization of the concerned interviewee.

In order to have successful interviews we needed to be well-oriented and have a good understanding of the whole PAO scene. Thanks to our continuous discussions with CIS (C. Isaksson, personal communication, April 23rd, 2011) and then web browsing on our own, we created an understanding of the most important variables and expressions. We scheduled the interviews for 40 minutes, which in most cases were over exceeded by 10-20 minutes. Before we started to record we presented ourselves, our study and the design of the interview in terms of the concerned themes. We asked for permission to record and assured that it would be anonymous.

In the course of the interviews, new interesting questions emerged based on their answers. Some that we considered especially interesting and relevant, we followed-up on. Other questions that emerged during the interview were requests of explanation or development of previous answers. We kept our talking time as short and clear as possible, and when given answers we tried to at all times

show respect for the interviewee by letting them finish and then continue with our desired structure. We also avoided mentioning key words unless the interviewee did so first, in order to get as open answers as possible. However, to understand some long responses we did formulate ourselves in a sum-up manner to assure that we grasped the point, sometimes referring to key words earlier mentioned or asking for a short sum-up from the interviewee.

All interviews were digitally recorded and fully transcribed.

After conducting the interviews we gathered the fully transcribed interviews and processed the material by searching for patterns and themes and took notes of them. In the next phase we labeled the themes to turn it in to a manageable and structured mass of data which gave us a better overview of the gathered material to form the empirics from.

2.3.3 Secondary data

A part from primary data (interviews) we have used two documents, the official guidelines for the PAO funding provided by Sida. This includes the previous guidelines from 27th of July 2006 and the current guidelines from the 16th of September 2010.

2.3.4 Critique and Quality

The weakest link in our thesis is the limited number of individuals we interviewed. One could see a problem to validate and to draw any certain conclusions when viewing the results since we only held seven interviews. A larger number of interviews would give a wider study, increase the portability and make the study more generalizing. However, our purpose is not to give generalizing answers to the field of quality assurance, but to shed light over the subject in the specific setting of aid organizations. We found the number of interviews in our study to be appropriate in relation to the numbers of possible candidates and organizations we had available. We therefore found it to be of best interest to find interview objects that represented different stages of the process, as well as interview key individuals from other interests groups connected to the PAOs.

It should also be taken into consideration that we made two out of seven interviews over telephone consequentially meaning that different body expressions apart from the vocal becomes left out (Bryman & Bell, 2005, p. 140). However, we found it important to include these interviews into the empirics and the only option we had was to conduct the interview by phone.

3 Theory

NPM-reforms have been applied to different public organizations and authorities in Sweden since the 1990's and include a range of different doctrines. As can be derived from the seven dimensions of change presented in our first chapter, these include among other things: explicit measures of standards, performance and success, emphasis on output control and more stress on prudence and discipline with resources (Hood, 1995). More or less all seven dimensions of change can be either explicitly found or interpreted in SIDA's new guidelines for the PAOs. However, those more visible are the ones just mentioned above, all circling around the concept of *quality assurance*. For this reason, we have chosen to design our theoretical framework around the principles of Total Quality Management, a field of research concerning quality assurance in the private sector. It is from this sector where ideas of quality assurance have been drawn as NPM-reforms into the Swedish public sector since the 1990's (Erlingsdóttir & Jonnergård, 2012) and have since 2010 made its way to the PAOs.

In this chapter we will present our theoretical framework by first introducing a discussion of how to define quality. Thereafter we will shortly present the evolution of the quality movement before presenting the field of TQM. But in order to get a more nuanced picture of quality assurance as part of NPM-reforms, we will finish the chapter by presenting earlier research on quality assurance in various organizations within the public sector.

With the basic theories of quality assurance together with earlier findings and implications of quality assurance work, we will have a nuanced and applicable theoretical framework for analyzing our empirical findings and thus serve our purpose to illuminate the difficulties of quality assurance in aid organizations.

3.1 What is Quality?

Quality is a very broad concept with many definitions. Depending on the context and individuals, quality can be interpreted in many different ways. Due to this variety of definitions, confusion and misinterpretations may occur with or without being acknowledged. Let us say that two people believe that they share the same definition of quality but in reality do not. Once revealed, it may lead to unnecessary complications. Therefore, it is essential that the one who communicates the word as well as the recipients share a similar understanding of its definition (Dale, 2003).

The word quality originates from the Latin word "qualitas" which means "of what". Throughout history, definitions of quality have always varied (Bergman & Kläfsjö, 2010) and even today, there exists no global definition of quality (Sebastianelli & Tamimi, 2002). However, Garvin (Fall 1984) has gathered different definitions of quality from four disciplines: philosophy, economics, marketing and operations management and categorized them into five different approaches. These are: 1) the transcendent approach, 2) the product-based approach, 3) the user-based approach, 4) the manufacturing-based approach and 5) the value-based approach.

The transcendent approach

"Innate excellence" is synonymous with quality according to the transcendent approach. In this approach, proponents argue that quality is not possible to define, it is rather abstract and has to be experienced and only then one can know what quality is. It derives from the philosopher Plato and

his definition of beauty with its surrounding discussion. Quality consequently relies on the interpretation of its beholder (Garvin, Fall 1984).

The product-based approach

This approach derives from early research on quality from an economics perspective. Consequently, it is a rather straight forward definition where quality is an objective and measurable variable. This implies that the level of quality refers to the quantity of a desirable attribute or ingredient. Moreover, this also implies that a higher level of quantity is equal to a higher cost. Therefore, a linear function between high cost and high quality is an objectively observable fact. However, this approach on quality is only adoptable if there is a consensus among the buyers that the added quantity of desired attributes raises the perceived quality (Garvin, Fall 1984).

The user-based approach

In this approach quality is defined by the idiosyncratic user's preferences, making it a subjective interpretation by its user, buyer or beholder. It retrieves its roots from operations management, economics and marketing literature. In the operations management literature it is mainly captured from Juran's notion of "fitness for use" (Juran, 1974); in the economics literature, this approach refers to the shift in a products demand curve; in the marketing literature a product which delivers a precise amount of carefully selected attributes which creates the highest possible satisfaction for the targeted consumer. However, each of these concepts inherits two different issues: the first is a practical issue of how to combine all the aggregated individual preferred specifications of a product into meaningful definition of quality on to a market level. The second is a more fundamental issue of how to single out product attributes which increases the level of quality from those who only gives a higher consumer satisfaction (Garvin, Fall 1984).

The first issue is often resolved in a rather simplistic way: by assuming that high quality products are the ones that meet the needs of the majority and a consensus is assumed on certain attributes. However, this ignores the quality characteristics that some individuals may normally emphasize and have in many cases been ignored by theorists. Moreover, a product that gives higher satisfaction to consumers does not necessarily mean that it has higher quality. In practice this would imply that a consumer may enjoy a product for its unusual characteristics but may still consider another product as one with a better quality, thus, this makes it hard to judge what quality really is, since "objective" and subjective meanings are mixed together (Garvin, Fall 1984).

The manufacturing-based approach

The focus of this approach is on the supply side of the product equation and relies heavily on engineering and manufacturing practices to make sure that the quality of the product is as high as possible. In short, the approach focuses on finding the ultimate design for producing the goods and when reaching that point, any changes made will reduce the quality of the product. There is a standard within the manufacturing-based approach literature that quality is understood as "*conformance to requirements*"- (Crosby, 1979, p. 17), thus, quality is achieved when a product conforms to the requirements. The road to quality consists of two parts; the first is designing the product, which is a case for pure engineering as the main feature; the second is the process of manufacturing the goods where statistical methods is used to control and ensure quality. These two parts, important to the approach for achieving quality, is there to sort out deviations as early as possible, in order to change any defects in the design or the manufacturing procedures. For the

manufacturing-based approach, the biggest win of the quality creating process, lies in the reducing of costs. It is believed that it is less costly to be very accurate when trying to prevent faults than it is to repair or rework the products, thus improving quality will reduce costs (Garvin, Fall 1984).

The value-based approach

The value-based approach is closely connected to the manufacturing-based approach, but adds a second variable; price. Quality is defined on the one hand by costs and on the other hand by the price. In this sense, quality is a cross-function between acceptable prices versus acceptable costs. As a result, this equals delivering a product that meets customer expectations in form of performance and price and at the same time producing it at a cost level that leaves an acceptable profit margin. Due to this mixture of distinctly different variables and unclear limits for evaluation of quality, it may be hard to apply in reality (Garvin, Fall 1984).

Conflict

In practice however, a company manufacturing products usually define quality differently within its very own organization: A marketing department would usually take the user-based approach or the product-based approach to define quality, based on the performance and features of the product or satisfaction of the consumer; the manufacturing department on the other hand, would define quality by the manufacturing-based approach. To them quality is to produce products with conformance to specifications with a low level of defects and rework. As a result to these two different views, conflict is likely to occur. However, this is not necessarily a bad thing, rather the opposite: If a company relies only upon one approach, crucial parts, such as either consumer satisfaction or manufacturing excellence, may be ignored. The company needs to acknowledge the different approaches to quality for different stages of a product from design to market. For this reason, starting by defining quality by the user-based approach in the research phase, converted into recognized attributes in the product-based approach and constructed in a detailed process according to specifications using the manufacturing-based approached. All these steps must be carefully assessed and acknowledged (Garvin, Fall 1984).

Eight dimensions of quality

However, the five approaches to quality all share the same problem; individually they lack precision and are rather indefinite in explaining the fundamental elements of product quality. Consequently, Garvin (1984) suggests a framework of eight dimensions to product quality as a way to complement the major approaches but also with the intent to create a vocabulary to describe differences and point out strategic advantages with quality in competition. The eight dimensions are: *performance, features, reliability, conformance, durability, serviceability, aesthetics and perceived quality.* Moreover, each individual dimension is independent; if one dimension is high, another can be low (Garvin, Fall 1984).

3.1.1 The Evolution of Quality

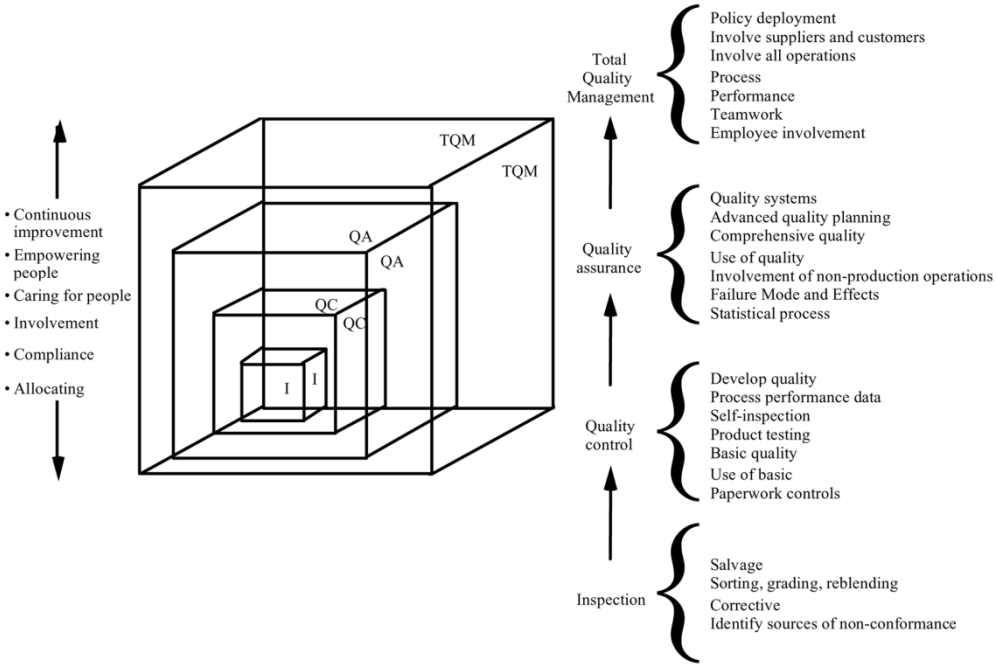
Due to the lack of a proper basis within management theory and with the fact that most of its development is based by the work of consultants, it is not until recent years that the quality movement has well-established itself within the academic world. The evolution of TQM can be divided into four phases (See figure 2): *Inspection, quality control, quality assurance* and *total quality management*. The first phase belongs to the years after the Second World War. During this period of time, most western companies used quality inspection after production. In this matter, defective

products were sent to re-work or thrown away. This method was soon abandoned for *quality control*. The basic idea of this novel method was that any defect unit told you something about the production process, so instead of focus on re-working defect units they began to look over the production processes. Consequently, small improvements to the processes were applied when defect units appeared. In the next phase managers started to look before production. By allocating responsibilities, formulating routines for procurements of raw material and how to administrate measuring instruments and claims, costs could be lowered and consequently improve quality. This was called *quality assurance.* The last and contemporary phase is *total quality management*. This comprises all previous phases by focusing on quality work before, during and after production with a focus on continuous improvements. This is an integrated part of the organizations work and assures that no low quality product reaches the market (Bergman & Kläfsjö, 2010).

There is however other theories concerning the evolution of TQM. One quite influential theory by Kroslid (1999, cited in Bergman and Klefsjö 2010) states that the quality management literature can be divided into two schools of thought, *the Deterministic School of Thought* and *the Continuous Improvement School of Thought.* The former is based on Taylorism, where the inspector is responsible for the quality. Moreover, the Deterministic School of Thought is further developed by the American military standards that later became the foundation of the international standard ISO 9000. This school was then taken further with Crosby's Zero Defect approach (Bergman & Kläfsjö, 2010).

The Continuous Improvement School of Thought on the other hand, is based on the Shewhart and his notion of improving processes. Moreover, the understanding of variation through control charts was another important milestone for this school. However, most notable is the work of Deming, Juran, Feigenbaum and Ishikawa, who all belong to this school of thought according to Kroslid (Bergman & Kläfsjö, 2010). These last mentioned Gurus: Deming, Juran, Feigenbaum, and also Crosby, will all be presented and their work illuminated in following section.

Figure 2. The four levels in the evolution of TQM



(Dale, 2003, p. 21)

3.2 TQM

TQM is a series of techniques and methods for companies or organizations to control and manage quality in an effective way. “(T)he key elements of TQM – commitment and leadership of chief executive officer (CEO), planning and organization, using tools and techniques, education and training, employee involvement, teamwork, measurement and feedback, and culture change” - (quoted from Dale, 2003, p. 4) (Dale, 2003).

3.2.1 Gurus of TQM

In this section, we will briefly go through the work of the most influential experts within TQM and the quality movement. In the western world, the most influential and known gurus are four Americans, Deming, Juran, Crosby and Feigenbaum. Ishikawa along with a handful other Japanese quality gurus as Imai, Mizuno, Nemoto, Ozeki and Asaka, Shingo and Taguchi have all been very influential within the field of TQM primarily in Japan, but in recent times even translated and widely published in the western world (Dale, 2003). However, we have chosen to only focus on Deming, Juran, Crosby and Feigenbaum since their theories represent the fundamental parts of TQM that we aim to describe.

W. Edwards Deming

Deming is known for his work with statistics and quality. By reducing variation in product quality (defects), it is possible to reach higher productivity and competitiveness. In his statistical methods he measures quality against conformance of specification, which also implies how he defines quality. He further suggests that organizations must transform into a ‘new religion’ of quality, meaning that from top management down and in all processes, a new way of working and improving quality must be employed (Dale, 2003). His philosophy on managing quality is presented in his 14 points for management:

1. Create constancy of purpose for improvement of product and service
2. Adopt the new philosophy
3. Cease dependence on mass inspection
4. End the practice of awarding business on the basis of price tag alone
5. Improve constantly and forever the system of production and service
6. Institute training
7. Adopt and institute leadership
8. Drive out fear
9. Break down barriers between staff areas
10. Eliminate slogans, exhortations, and targets for the work force
11. A) Eliminate numerical quotas for the work force. B)Eliminate numerical goals for people in management
12. Remove barriers that rob people of pride of workmanship
13. Encourage education and self-improvement for everyone
14. Take action to accomplish the transformation
    (Deming, 1986, p. 90)

However, Deming pointed out 'Seven deadly diseases' or obstacles that the organization must overcome before the 14 points can be implemented: 1) The crippling disease: lack of constancy of purpose, 2) Emphasis on short-term profits, 3) Evaluation of performance, merit rating, or annual review, 4) Mobility of management, 5) Running a company on visible figures alone (counting the money) and the last two who are according to Deming *"Peculiar to industry in the U.S. and beyond the scope of this book"* (Deming, 1986, p. 91) 6) Excessive medical costs and 7) Excessive costs of liability, swelled by lawyers that work on contingency fees (Deming, 1986). Moreover, Deming also contributed to the field of TQM with his PDCA-cycle (Plan, Do, Check, Act) as a tool for continuous improvement (Dale, 2003).

Joseph M. Juran

Juran is known for being one of the most influential thinkers within the field of quality. He is known, among other texts he has published, for his Quality Control Handbook, with its first edition published 1951. Juran launched the word *fitness for use* as his definition of quality (Bergman & Kläfsjö, 2010). One of Juran's main focal points in his extensive quality work was to emphasize the importance of management and the need for support systems in that process. Juran was the first to emphasize this point and to integrate the quality control into the heart of the decision making room became an important part of his work. Juran, together with Crosby and Feigenbaum, strongly argued for the importance to reduce the costs of quality, which Deming simply was ignoring in his work. In Juran's definition of quality, *fitness for use*, Juran breaks the definition apart into quality of design, quality of conformance, availability, and field service. Juran's approach main goals are; increasing the conformance and reducing the costs of the quality, and setting annual goals for the program as a planned phase every year. His quality approach is like Deming's summarized into a list of points (Dale, 2003). The Juran Method, the 10 point plan that summarizes his approach:

1. Build awareness of the need and opportunity for improvement.
2. Set goals for improvement.
3. Organize to reach the goals.

4. Provide training.
5. Carry out projects to solve problems.
6. Report progress.
7. Give recognition.
8. Communicate results.
9. Keep the score.
10. Maintain momentum by making annual improvement part of the regular system and process of the company.
    (Dale, 2003, p. 57)

Juran is known for his quality trilogy which consists of; quality planning, quality control and quality improvement. According to Juran and his approach, the approach is built with concerns to three segments that quality struggles with; "*(A) programme to attack sporadic problems, one to attack chronic problems, and an annual quality programme , in which top management participates, develop or redefine policies*." (Dale, 2003, p. 56). Juran explained the quality improvement process as a two stage route, diagnosis as the first one (from symptom to cause) and the second stage, diagnosis to solution (cause to remedy). The responsibility for the quality work in Juran's approach is mainly allocated to middle management, who should act as quality consultants to top management, while top management gives support and the rest of the work force should participate as members in teams that all assist in the quality improvement process (Dale, 2003).

Philip Crosby

Crosby's philosophy is very much like Juran's. Crosby is also stressing the importance of top management. He, like Juran, defines quality as conformance to requirements, that increased quality reduces costs and by that also is increasing profits. Crosby's philosophy regarding quality work is summarized by Dale (2003) in four points which describes Crosby's absolutes when managing quality work and looks like follows;

- Quality as conformance to requirements.
- The system for achieving quality is prevention not appraisal.
- The only performance standard is zero defects
- The measurement of quality is the cost of quality
  (Dale, 2003, p. 52)

Crosby's 14-step quality improvement programme

1. Management commitment
2. Quality improvement team
3. Quality measurement
4. Cost of quality evaluation
5. Quality awareness
6. Corrective action
7. Establish an ad hoc committee for the zero defects programme
8. Supervisor training
9. Zero defects day
10. Goal-setting

11. Error cause removal
12. Recognition
13. Quality councils
14. Do it over again
    (Dale, 2003, p. 52)

Crosby's philosophy is that higher quality will always lead to reduced costs and therefore higher profits, which lead to that he thereby, does not believe in finding the optimum quality level for maximizing the revenues. He has also generated something he calls "quality vaccine". The "quality vaccine" consists of 21 areas which are turned into 5 categories; integrity, systems, communication, operations and policies, which are areas that organizations should concentrate on to prevent bad quality. Top management has the most important role in the quality work, they are then using quality professionals as support in the quality improvement process and the general workforce are there to report problems to management. Quality can be measured according to Crosby by using a matrix "*One way that Crosby measures quality achievement is with a matrix, the quality management grid, that charts the stages that management goes through from ignorance to enlightenment*." (Dale, 2003, p. 52) (Dale, 2003).

Armand V. Feigenbaum

Feigenbaum is the one who created the term "total quality control" in his first publication of *Total Quality Control* in 1961 (Dale, 2003). According to Feigenbaum (1995), the principle and the actual difference with Total Quality Control compared to other concepts is that it truly provides effectiveness. Feigenbaum states that Total Quality Control is a chain of actions, starting with identifying which requirements costumers has, in concern of quality and ends only when the product reaches the end costumer who remains pleased with its quality. Quality Control is *"(A)n effective system for coordinating the quality maintenance and quality improvement efforts of the various groups in an organization so as to enable production at the most economical levels which allow for full customer satisfaction*" (Feigenbaum, Quality Control: Principles, Practice, and Administration, 1951, p. 1). In Feigenbaum's approach, everyone in the organization has an important role in the process of quality work; the entire workforce has to contribute. It is a process that goes from top management all the way down to the single workers at the bottom of the organization. Therefore everyone has to have an understanding of why the work is carried out the way it is done, the management has to give sense to the workforce of the undertaken process as well as the workforce has to understand why top management is doing what they are doing (Dale, 2003).

Feigenbaum has placed much focus on the costs of quality. He has divided the costs into categories; appraisal costs, prevention costs, and failure costs. He labels the sum of these costs *Total quality cost.* The quality improvements aim is to reduce the total quality costs and to raise profits. Feigenbaums approach is like Crosby's and Juran's approaches invented to give organizations a competitive edge, but instead of X-point program Feigenbaum has identified 10 benchmarks for organizations to succeed with TQM (Dale, 2003);

Feigenbaums 10 benchmarks –

1. Quality is a company-wide process
2. Quality is what the costumer say it is
3. Quality and cost are a sum, not a difference
4. Quality requires both individual and team zealotry
5. Quality is a way of managing
6. Quality and innovation are not mutually dependent
7. Quality is ethic
8. Quality requires continuous improvement
9. Quality is the most cost-effective, least capital-intensive route to productivity
10. Quality is implemented with a total system connected with customers and suppliers (Dale, 2003, p. 56)

3.2.2 Summary of the TQM-gurus' ideas

The work of the gurus within the field of TQM has been influential in many ways and there are similarities between them as well as differences. According to Reed, Lemak and Mero (2000) there are two areas where the gurus have total agreement upon. The first area where the authors point out consistency among the gurus are that it is the costumers who define quality, and by reaching the quality set by the customers, customer satisfaction is created, which will lead to an improvement in the competitive position. The second area where the guru's theories agree is that eliminations of reworks and wastes in production will reduce costs, which is an effect of improved quality. Beyond this, the authors have found that within the management of the quality work process, four areas share similarities in the theories; leadership and commitment, training and education, using teams, and having the appropriate culture (a comparison of the similarities is shown in the table below) (Reed, Lemak, & Neal, 2000).

Commonalities among seminal TQM work

Concept/ author	Crosby (1979, 1996)	Deming (1982, 1986)	Feigenbaum (1951, 1961, 1983, 1991)	Ishikawa (1985)	Juran (1951, 1962,1974,1988,1989, 1992)
Customer satisfaction	Maturity grid: from goodness and delighting the customer to satisfaction and conformance.	Customers define quality; consumers are the most important part of the production line.	Quality is what the customer says it is; customer focus is embedded in the management of quality.	Total quality control (TQC) means having a consumer orientation.	Customer satisfaction, which drives market share and profits, comes from product satisfaction.
Cost reduction	The price of non-conformance means that quality is free.	Doing it right first time means less waste, less rework, and lower costs.	Controlling quality costs less than correcting mistakes.	TQC reduces costs over the long term, not the short term.	Costs of poor quality remain unknown, but they are very high.
Leadership and top management commitment	Leadership by example – commitment is demonstrated by participation and attitude.	Management's job is leadership (to show constancy of purpose in their focus on	Requires complete support of top management, who realize that it is not a temporary cost	Top management commitment should be shown by adopting the lead role in	Top management's job is motivation, which includes participation in quality programs.

		quality).	reduction project.	implementation.	
Training and education	Use training in quality, from the CEO down, to internalize concepts; training and education should be continuous.	Vigorous, continuous program for (re)training employees in new knowledge and skills; statistical methods to check training efficacy.	Training (on-the-job, classroom, problem solving) and education are fundamental to achieving full commitment to quality.	TQC is a revolution in thinking, so training and education must be continuous for all employees (from the CEO down).	To make quality happen, training should include the entire hierarchy, starting at the top: purpose of training is to create or update skills.
Teams	Use management team on quality for internal communication, quality councils for internal/external communication.	Cross-functional teams can create improvements in product, service, quality, and reduce costs.	Quality control committees should have representatives from all functional areas.	Cross-function management committees (teams) facilitate the responsible development of quality assurance.	Major quality improvement projects are multifunctional in nature, thus requiring multifunctional teams.
Culture	Quality commitment – genuine belief by employees in importance of good quality, workmanship, good designs, and service.	A new philosophy is required: drive out fear (of quotas, questioning accepted methods, etc.), and instill pride in quality.	Quality control is a ``spirit of quality mindedness,'' from CEO to the shop floor; it is a communication channel and means of participation.	TQC requires organization-wide participation; where there are no (voluntary) quality circle activities, there is no quality control.	Changing to a company-wide quality system means changing existing cultural patterns; there may well be cultural resistance.

(Reed, Lemak, & Neal, 2000, p. 8)

These theories developed by the gurus within the field, was mainly invented for manufacturing industries, but these are as relevant for service organizations. The focus on the employees, the culture and the functioning of the organizations becomes maybe even more important in service organizations. This because of the increased presence of customers, the increased interactions with customers and certainly because of that the employees are in large parts the product. Therefore, the quality of the products becomes more tacit and could make the difference between a compatible organization and one that is not. This makes the TQM theories very applicable to service organizations (Dotchin & Oakland, 1994).

3.3 Quality assurance in public and non-profit organizations

The ideas and theories invented by the gurus of TQM are mainly described from a positive point of view by the gurus and other researchers that preach these philosophies. The theories are described as generally applicable to any organization and therefore, if implemented, they will generate a positive impact for those who use them (Sitkin, Sutcliffe, & Schroeder, 1994). However, because of the fact that the theories of TQM are primarily designed for manufacturing- and profit driven organizations, we will in this section provide a more nuanced picture of quality assurance. In this section, we will present key implications of quality assurance in relation to NPM-reforms that we have found in earlier research made on public or non-profit organizations.

Rhetoric

In the work of Erlingsdóttir (1999), you follow how the idea of quality assurance is being institutionalized within the Swedish health care. She illuminates the complications of letting public sector organizations become "seduced" by private sector ideas. She presses how management fads or success stories seduce public organizations with promises of productivity, control and improvements of effectiveness. The problem with these seductive ideas is that there is a risk that the theories or models are unable to capture the whole complex reality of the organizations' different operations and therefore fails to produce any valid results.

The ideas of quality assurance in public organizations often come from ideological beliefs and previous success stories. The ideas are often preached with strong and grandiose rhetoric which is hard to criticize and aims to seduce the organizational members. The theories are extensively described with a very wide application which legitimizes them to be used on all forms of organizational activities; this makes them almost untouchable to any skeptic voices. When discussions of how to practically use the theories are brought up, a more defensive rhetoric is used. In this rhetoric, the issue of having difficulties of adapting the theories is normalized; it is natural that it takes time and effort to put the quality assurance processes in place. This part of the rhetoric, just like the offensive, makes the theories hard to criticize, but at the same time it makes them less attractive. To shortly summarize the rhetoric of the quality assurance process, the theories are better fitted in the theoretical world then it is in the world of actual practice. The rhetoric used when producing/implementing a quality assurance system is many times contradictive and seldom produces the intended results (Vabö, 2002).

Models and theories has to fit the context

Studies have shown the difficulties of adapting the techniques and models from the private sector into the public sector. Depending on the kind of operations that a specific organization is carrying out, the adaption process and its results can vary. Because of different settings, preconditions, and environments of the organization, quality assurance programs have to be modified to fit its situation and context. In theory, quality assurance is rather straight forward and presents a somewhat easy explanation to how organizations should solve efficiency or quality issues. That is seldom the case in reality. There is not only one solution, but many, and therefore when initiating a quality assurance program one of the major concerns is to find the most suitable one due to the complex context that many of the public organizations are working in (Lager, 2010, p. 62) (Vabö, 2002). This can be compared with Mintzberg's (1983) discussion of organizational structures, were an organization has to fit the design of the organization to their situation and context. The parameters that Mintzberg mentions are; age and size, technical structure, environment and power relations. These parameters become equally important and must be understood and taken into account when developing a quality assurance program, if it is to be successful. Furthermore, as the quality assurance program is developed, so is the organizational control. Since quality assurance in the end comes down to controlling organizational resources in order to be able to distribute them as efficient as possible, the type of control that will influence the organization will be derived from the situation and context they are in. According to Ouchi (1979), three types of control exists, market control, bureaucratic control, and clan control. Where market control has focus on output, bureaucratic control on input while clan control focus more on controlling the peers within the transformation. Ouchi is arguing that there can be a mix of the different types of control, and that they can coexist within the same organization. In turn this is determined by the parameters that Mintzberg mentions and thereby the

complex context the organizations are working in. Finding the right control methods becomes crucial. Since an organization's reality consists of many parameters, taking a theoretical model and apply in practice becomes very difficult.

Complex contexts and difficulties of measurability

In the quality assurance process, measurability and results are central. The idea is taken from the private sector and by using numbers rather than words you ought to easily grasp the complexity of an organization and act thereafter. With the NPM-reforms, demands of measurability and results also became a reality for public organizations. However, having an organization represented with numbers and facts instead of words, detached from their complex origins, you risk getting a feeling of a more easily controllable reality than the complexity it really is (Erilingsdóttir, 1999). In many non-profit or public organizations, a common variable is the difficulties of measurability and measuring the quality of results. Since many non-profit and public organizations provide services that many times focus on education, development or other service-focused activities, the output can be seen as something soft or rather abstract and is therefore many times difficult to measure.

In a study concerning quality work in preschools and municipalities by Karin Lager (2010), she identifies difficulties of how to measure quality. She notices a conflict or tension between the key persons of whether quality is measurable or a subjective experience. In her empirics, she identifies that different key persons interpret quality assurance work in different ways. For this reason, some municipalities raise this question in a forum for discussion in order to reach a consensus of how to interpret and work with quality assurance, yet in most municipalities no forums were being held and the tension caused by this could often lead to frustration. However, the chosen interpretation of quality assurance and how preschools ought to work with it will still be insufficient due to its often either narrow or generalized translation into numbers. The municipalities' different goals and intentions of quality do not align with the pedagogical perspectives of quality. Furthermore, according to Lager there is a difficulty in measuring the right variables and in most cases the variables that get measured are the ones that most easily can be measured, but these are not the variables that reflect quality in the best way. She adds that this often can be understood as variables easy to measure and variables difficult to measure or measureable quality contra experienced quality. Where the latter in both are the desired ones and the former the one usually measured.

It is not only preschools that experience difficulties with measuring quality. Öhrming and Sverke (2002) claim likewise regarding the health care. Focus on quality has always been an implicit part of the work within the health care. Nevertheless, along the NPM-reforms and the quality movement came models and tools with focus on continuous improvements and measurable results from the private sector that were claimed to be applicable to any organization, with no matter if introduced in some heavy production industry, knowledge intensive firm or highly specialized health care. However, Öhrming and Sverke (2002) emphasize that due to the nature of highly specialized health care, which is characterized by vague goals, uncertain technology, non-standardized work and results difficult to analyze, standardized models of quality assurance are not applicable. Since health care is a matter of learning and problem solving rather than routinely and controlled health production, it is difficult to assess quality by measurable results. If using the doctrines of quality assurance too stubbornly in contexts of science and higher learning, it may even be counterproductive. Moreover, not only does the complexity and the nature of health care make it difficult to measure or assess its

quality, but for whom is the quality assurance work initiated? Is it for the patients, the administrators or the politicians? With rather abstract purposes as to “improve the health of the public” it becomes difficult to measure quality when quality itself can be defined differently depending on its purpose and means to get there (Erlingsdóttir & Jonnergård, 2006).

All above studies are all characterized by complex contexts to different extent. This is also something we can find within the Norwegian elderly care. When experienced employees were to compress their daily work into easily described processes they found it impossible due to the needed individual efforts to each and every situation. This made the quality assurance work in many ways unnecessary and of limited value since it was not only one precise way of satisfying the elderly. Detailed descriptions of their work would be too extensive and unmanageable, while simplified ones would be too general and obvious (Vabö, 2002).

However, it is not only public or non-profit organizations that can be characterized by complex and non-standardized work. Knowledge intensive firms in general are characterized by an ambiguity of results. The work of a professional service firm (such as a consultancy firm) or the work of a science based R&D firm (such as pharmaceutical firms), both base their core activities on intellectual skills of their employees and are to the nature difficult to assess due to their subjectivity. Due to the subjective and ambiguous nature of results, they earn their income on the appreciated value from clients or stakeholders. For this reason, image and rhetoric are crucial for the knowledge intensive firm. Moreover, the knowledge intensive worker has to be autonomous in his work due to its complexity. Control in a knowledge intensive firm thereby has to be characterized by indirect control where direct control would restrain their innovativeness or creativity (Alvesson M. , 2004).

Increased control, costs and administration

Even though Crosby titled one of his books ”Quality is free” and later ”Quality is still free”, the old saying ”There are no such thing as a free lunch” comes closer to the truth. When designing and implementing a quality assurance programs within an organization, one always has to pay a price, with both time and money. In many organizations where they work with implementing quality assurance programs, they experience that they have to take time from their ordinary work tasks to put into administrational work in order to satisfy the required quality assurance processes. This meant that the patients, preschool children’s and others received less time with the personnel because of the extended administrative duties. This cost in time was a price that the organizations had to pay for the ensured quality (Sverke & Öhrming, 2002; Lager, 2010). Another price that has to be paid for the quality assurance is the development costs for designing the programs, which also has to be added in to the equation. As Feigenbaum argues, to determine if the quality assurance program has been successful, one has to measure the perceived increase in quality against the costs for improved quality. If the equation turns out negative the program has failed to deliver what it was supposed to do (Dale, 2003). However, when an organization works in a complex and ambiguous environment, it becomes difficult to judge if higher quality is achieved and therefore becomes problematic to judge if the quality assurance process is a success or a failure. This is a dilemma that these organizations have to struggle with and it becomes more of a subjective opinion from the people involved instead of a black or white answer.

In a study by Lisa Sjöblom (2009), she analyzed the effects on Sida’s new requirements of monitoring (this did not include the PAOs). The new requirements were supposed to induce a higher level of

learning and control, however the effects seemed to result in the opposite. Due to increased control, the partner organization felt that the donor organization did not trust them. Therefore, they tended to share even less information than before since they were afraid that the donor would withdraw their funding the more they knew, which could continue into a spiral of mistrust. Moreover, the more the partner would close up, the less it would contribute to a learning environment for both the partner and the donor. This resulted in a paradox of control, where increased control would actually result in reduced control. However, if the relationship between the partner and donor were based on trust and mutual understanding in a partnership, less control would produce increased information and increased control. In a good partnership, the partner would dare to expose shortcomings and therefore also be more open for learning. Still, she admits that the dimension of control has to exist since the perfect partnership seems unattainable. Therefore it becomes a matter of finding a balance between the right level of control with the right level of partnership.

3.4 Summary of Theory

Quality assurance theories have emerged from the private sector where quality in the end of the day has been measured by financial results. However, when applied to non-profit organizations this becomes problematic when the success of their work is not measured by this kind of results. Consequently, this boils down to the definition of quality. The gurus of TQM also had different opinions on how to define quality, but agreed upon two things: 1) the customer defines quality and 2) quality is achieved when eliminating rework. The general idea with TQM is to assure quality in all parts of the organization and as a result increase its profitability.

However, when applying quality assurance theories on non-profit organizations a series of difficulties occurs. The definition of quality in a non-profit organization is very subjective, there is no well-defined customer and the results are difficult to measure due to its soft and abstract nature. To assure the quality, control systems must be implemented and this creates high costs for administrative work. To evaluate the quality assurance process, the associated costs must be lower than the actual outcome. However, in non-profit organizations results are often difficult to measure, thus to judge if an implementation has been a successful or not is hard to determine. In conclusion, the central components of our chosen theories, circles around the definition of quality and how to implement control systems to measure it.

4 Empirics and Analysis

4.1 Introduction

The quality assurance process has been initiated due to the new guidelines made by Sida. In these new demands Sida are forcing the PAOs to assure the quality of their work but with no specific instructions of how to do it. Because of this, CIS and the other PAOs, have started the process of creating systems to meet the instructions by Sida. Due to the rather vague instructions of how to design their quality assurance systems, the organizations have been required to interpret the demands and design systems based on assumptions which then must be approved by Sida. By interviewing several participants in this process, we have seen a pattern of how they have interpreted these new demands. We have interpreted these patterns as six different themes, which we have labeled as the following: 1) Quality, 2) Systems, 3) Control, 4) Measurability, 5) Competence and 6) Communication.

The new guidelines from Sida have been described in an earlier chapter, but to somewhat summarize them; they implicate that the PAOs have to strengthen their organizations by increasing the control of their financial and administrational systems. As a result, this should increase the ability for the PAOs to deliver measurable and qualitative results. This was identified by the participants of the process, Sida, the PAOs, and involved consultants, as a process of quality assurance.

We will in this chapter, the empirical analysis, break apart the found themes above, present the found patterns and then analyze them. This will be done with support from the interviews, the theory of quality work and TQM, and the quality assurance theories in non-profit organizations as a part of the new public management wave. The presented themes are the results of the interviewees' definitions of quality assurance and its components, which partly derives from Sida's new guidelines. Since the new guidelines have been described earlier in the thesis, and because of our aim is to study the challenges of quality assurance when an aid-organization attempts to implement a quality assurance program, we will not describe the guidelines any further in this section. However, we will start off our empirics with presenting the themes in the mentioned order and then break them apart to study the different aspects of them so that we can present a clearer picture of the challenges and its implications. By doing this we will allow ourselves to distinguish the specific challenges with the quality assurance processes in the PAOs as a result of Sida's new demands.

4.1.1 Quality

Quality Assurance is the keyword that we involved and circled around in the first part of our interview guide. When analyzing our empirics, all interviewees gave a broad and very varying set of answers around this key word. It varied from concerning quality, systems, control and measurability. There were no clear consensus of how to define Quality Assurance, the interviewees would instead in a somewhat messy way include all four components mentioned above. For this reason, we decided to start our empirics and analysis by presenting their varying definitions of quality and a set of general challenges with quality assurance.

Quality

A common spontaneous description of quality assurance among the interviewees was that quality assurance is to make sure that you do what you suppose to do and to do it well. This quickly led into a discussion about the definition of quality. Many of the respondents also said that for them and for

their organizations, quality is to reach their goals and quality assurance was therefore to make sure that they reached those goals. Other interviewees pushed that it was about making sure that the right activities were done, in contrast to only making sure that things get done. But after reasoning with themselves, they all came down to a more or less similar conclusion, a conclusion that incorporated both those definitions, in a systemized and controlled way.

Quality is, that the one who orders a product, receives a product that reaches predetermined specifications. Quality assurance for me is to have systems. You should create systems so that you can assure the principals that you distribute the funding in the best possible way. I should be able to inform the funder how I act to assure the quality of the two hundred thousand SEK that they send, that they really goes to Madagascar and that these two hundred thousand are spent in the correct way in the villages and coastal areas there. (Interviewee C)

This interviewee put more emphasis on hard facts and quantitative financial variables. This was one out of two extremes. The other was leaning more towards soft variables that is more complicated to measure and therefore also more difficult to assure. The interviewees drifted a little bit between the two extremes, some supported one of the two fully and others were somewhere in between.

Quality can be that you do, you do what you've told you should. That is one kind of quality. But that doesn't indicate that the things you do that are the right ones. Well, it could be that we have a meeting where we decides what things we should work with for the next twelve months, but that says nothing about if that is good things. (Interviewee E)

General challenges with quality assurance

The interviewees all had the opinion that the aim of the quality assurance process was to gain control so that the organization's activities surely were of a high quality. A central aspect of a quality assurance process, according to our empirical material, is control. This was followed by arguments by a number of the interviewees, that for them and their organizations, control and quality has to be harmonized for the quality assurance program to work properly. But still, they had a hard time defining what level of control that should be imposed.

It's hard.., you can talk about quality and being equal but, it is hard to be a controller and being equal. So somehow, it is maybe easier to discuss quality than it is to discuss control inside an organization. If only looking at us, at Plan Sverige, our control processes and quality assurance processes are quite similar. Because this is about us knowing that we are doing the right things, and that's the reason for why we have quality assurance programe and quality assurance is a form of control. (Interviewee G)

So even if the organizations tried to avoid the word control, at the bottom line, they all exercised control but used words that sounded more positive, like monitoring or follow-up. As the respondents further argued, to be able to assure the quality of one's work, the quality has to be revised and controlled in some way. Because if the claimed quality of the work never is controlled, the word quality has no meaning and is therefore the control dimension of the quality assurance process is central. Moreover, the quality assurance process and the control that followed were considered as a necessity by the interviewees. Many of the interviewees stressed that the quality assurance process needed to bring an additional value to the organizations without being too costly, in order to be

successful. But there were on the other hand inconsistency about the matter of how extensive the control should be.

This is partly about doing what we are told to do, thus, to implement those activities we've said we should. But above all, to ensure that those activities are relevant and that these activities leads to concrete results. (Interviewee G)

When the interviewees provided longer discussions, the general opinion were that the different parts and constrains presented above, should be incorporated into a more comprehensive system so that the daily work with quality assurance could work in a more automatic and structured way.

4.1.2 Discussion – Quality

As Dale (2003) suggest, there are not only one definition of quality. Quality is a very broad concept with as many definitions as individuals interpreting it. This phenomenon of different interpretations of quality is directly coherent with our empirics. Our respondents definitions of quality were clearly varying between two extremes. One focused rather on soft variables or as one expressed "doing the right things" that would mean emphasizing the development work itself. The other one considered quality to be making sure that predetermined goals had been reached, often focusing on hard or financial variables. According to Dale, there is a potential risk for complications when there is no consensus of the definition of quality. In this case, Sida forces the PAOs to be evaluated after their definition of quality. However, since Sida's definition of quality is vague to non-existent, it is hardly a surprise that our interviewees gave varying definitions. As a result, this could lead to future complications in the evaluation process that Sida conducts on the PAOs. In the work of Lager (2010), she highlights similar issues with quality work in schools and preschools. According to her, tensions and complications may arise when no discussion concerning the definition of quality is held. There must be an explicit consensus of what quality really is to minimize the risk of setbacks with quality assurance work. Therefore, if comparing this to the case of Sida and PAOs, we can identify a risk for unnecessary complications due to a lack of consensus with the definition of quality both on an inter- and intra-organizational level.

Garvin (1984) presents five different approaches of how to define quality. These definitions may in practice be difficult to apply since they are all quite vague and usually overlaps within an organization's different functions or departments. This claim by Garvin is based on manufacturing or profit driven organizations and therefore makes it difficult to apply to the PAOs. However, one of the approaches, the user-based approach, can be used to understand the difficulties and challenges of defining quality in an aid organization.

According to the user-based approach, quality is defined subjectively by the idiosyncratic user, buyer or beholder. This method is primarily derived from Juran's notion of fitness for use (1974) which implies that a product or service must fit a customer's defined purpose. In this case we can consider Sida as the buyer and therefore quality is defined by them. On the other hand, Sida is not the user of the service and it therefore makes the approach less accurate for application. Moreover, a fundamental issue of defining quality in the specific setting of the PAOs may be understood from this approach. According to Garvin (1984), it is difficult to single out attributes of the product or service that increases the level of quality from those who only increases customer satisfaction. In this case, customer satisfaction would relate to how satisfied Sida is with the PAOs work while the quality would relate to the actual contribution of the development aid. This fundamental issue of defining

quality is critical for the PAOs since they aim to satisfy both the buyer and the user, Sida and the partner. From what we can derive from Sida's new guidelines and from our empirics, Sida's main concern is to make sure, by monitoring and evaluating, that the tax payer's money does not end up in corruption. Therefore, satisfying the buyer (Sida) would imply a focus on hard financial facts rather than on soft variables, which development work often implies. On the other hand, this does not exclude that Sida wants successful development aid.

4.1.3 Systems

Many of the interviewees provided discussions surrounding the entire process of quality assurance, the discussions were giving a more comprehensive picture of the process and made points that concluded that the program was about providing a system for the whole process. The systems provided in the discussions had influences from several of the things that the interviewees mentioned when they described what quality assurance was about, but incorporated in slightly different ways and putting emphasis on different aspects.

Too much focus on results and not enough on core activities.

Many of the interviewees expressed the importance of designing the systems so that they really fitted their activities. However, many of them were worried that the systems that followed the quality assurance process would not cover the things that they thought were the essential parts of their work, that too much focus would be put on the results and not enough on the true core of their operations.

It is clear that many forget… Organizations often only look at results and forget to look at work methods. They often strive to quality assure results, internal processes, decision processes and so on, but many tend forget to quality assure the work method. (Interviewee B)

The new guidelines from Sida, were according to the interviewees, putting more emphasis on the "hard" values and it would therefore lead to that the organizations had to focus more on producing results that easily could be measured and evaluated. All the participants agreed that the quality movements within the PAOs were good, but by putting the emphasis on hard goals, the focus would be turned away from what they classified as truly important. The systems required a certain design because of the guidelines; this design had implications that forced the organizations to put more time into collecting and making reports to verify this hard variables. The interviewees described that there were a risk that the change of focus had the effects that fewer resources made it to the end receivers and therefore also that fewer people could benefit from the aid work.

Along with agreeing that the initiated process of quality assurance was good, the interviewees had an understanding for why the new guidelines now were instituted. Many of them thought that the PAOs had not been very good at demonstrating their quality work and that they had lacked work methods for doing so. Many of them explained that the culture of control systems had not been a part of Swedish aid organizations and that the PAOs were no exception. However, when they now introduced these systems, the knowledge of why and how the systems should be used were essential.

Both the focus and the capacity at the Swedish organizations are very activity-based and thus, the systems have been lagging behind, maybe because people seem to think systems are a bit boring. Instead, the soft variables have been more important, like, "What is this money accomplishing?". Further, the organizations hasn't really had the competence to produce valid systems, there hasn't been enough economists or controllers, which I believe is needed. But Sida has tightened up these demands on functioning systems now, so the organizations are now forced to deal with this. (Interviewee D)

What kind of quality is produced by the systems?

As described above, the interviewees were afraid that the systems were emphasizing on the wrong activities and the wrong assurance of the quality so that they just would be producing empty results. Many of the interviewees had the opinion that the quality assurance systems would produce quality that had little importance for the democratic aid work and that too many of the hard variables were incorporated. The systems were according to them more beneficial for humanitarian aid and quantitative variables but that Sida and the government had little understanding for the requirements of democratic aid.

To learn how… Which systems should we build to gain a natural control and governance or routines that aren't too demanding, that is crucial for me. Because I think that this is what we try to prevent, we don't want that the control shall suffocate the local initiatives. And this is a fine balance that we have to tune in. (Interviewee B)

Further, a number of the interviewees said that it was important that the system could deliver the right variables so that the system could be understood and accepted by the users. Without the understanding and acceptance by the users, they had little hope that the systems could deliver the quality it was supposed to do.

You can have all bloody systems in the world and they can be the best there is, but if no one can use them and knows how to handle them, then they have no relevance. It is very much about motivation…, everybody that handles the systems should feel that they are a part of it and that they all are owners of this system. Only then, if you reach this belonging, that's when you get quality, even if it is control functions, you are creating quality. You have to start in the right end and work out the right models for you and your organization. (Interviewee A)

The participants all stressed that one of the biggest challenges with the quality assurance systems was to design it so that it would catch the soft values and variables that their aid work was all about, so the right kind of quality is delivered.

Mismatch between the systems

A common theme when the interviewees had discussed the systems was circulating around mismatch. Two different mismatches were brought up; the mismatch between the old and the new systems and the mismatch between the PAOs' systems and their partners systems.

Since the PAOs have not worked with quality assurance systems in this way before, a mismatch between the old and the new ones were expressed. According to some of the interviewees this mismatch is most visual within the competence of the personnel, the people working in the aid

organizations have no or little experience working with that kind of systems and therefore problems occur when the new systems are being introduced. The interviewees spoke about the problem of adapting their routines and working procedures to the new systems and that the transaction was both costly and time-consuming.

The second mismatch between adapting the new systems to the partner-organizations systems, were according to the interviewees maybe even more problematic, since the new systems did put more emphasis on how to assure the financial procedures and the partners had limited competence in that area. The interviewees mentioned societal structures in the countries where their partners worked as something that made this harder, receipts were one example were the systems crashed.

I mean, only such an simple thing for us as the need to always getting a recite in order to keep books in order, but in some under developed countries or in the Amazons, a recite could be rather difficult to get. So off course, some issues may occur when using our rigid and bureaucratic systems. Moreover, in some of the countries that we work in, our partners are even illegal since the regimes in those countries are against them. This means that some of our demands might be practically impossible to meet for our partners, so sometimes we just have to compromise. (Interviewee F)

Those clashes or mismatches were two problems that the new systems had to struggle with and be adapted to.

So by their definition, a quality assurance system in an aid organization is about having a system that can in a very exact way report what every single crown (SEK) is used for and providing measurable variables that reflects the work in a clear way so that it can be reported back to the principals.

4.1.4 Discussion – Systems

When the PAOs are to design their new quality assurance systems and thus new work routines after Sida's new guidelines, focus will be put on "hard" or financial variables. Many of the interviewees expressed their fear of too much focus on routines concerning control functions and financial results. They feared that they would have too many templates and routines for control functions with their new quality assurance system so that their actual core activities of doing development aid would get too little attention. At the same time, all of our interviewees agreed to different extent that some level of increased control systems was positive. This ambition of Sida, to make sure that no funds would end up in the wrong pockets can be compared to Crosby's (1979) strive for zero defects. Simply put according to Crosby, zero defects will lead to higher quality and thus lower costs. For the PAOs this would mean that by having no funds ending up in the wrong pockets, the quality of their work would increase and also to a lower cost. However, just because funds do not end up in corruption, does not guarantee that the core activities of the development aid reach a higher quality. As expressed by our interviewees, too much focus on control routines and other hard variables may restrain their core activities or even be counterproductive. As Erlingsdottir and Jonnergård (2006) argue concerning quality assurance in health care, one could question for whom the quality assurance systems are made for. In our case, are the new guidelines and thus the new quality assurance systems made to improve the situation for the receiver of the aid? Or, are these new demands in show only so that Sida officials can clear their name to the public? Or, is this the result of a political debate in respect for the voters? What we can derive from our empirics is a sense of concern that the partner, or the receivers of the aid, ends up being prioritized last.

In Erlingsdottir's work (1999), she presses how management fads or success stories seduce public organizations. The problem with these NPM ideas and quality assurance models is the risk of them not being able to grasp the complex reality and thus fail to deliver positive results. This concern can clearly be found in our empirics as most interviewees stressed the difficulties of designing a quality assurance system that can capture the soft variables in their work and assure the quality and not only hard, financial ones.

When implementing the quality assurance systems at the PAOs, parts of these systems must also be implemented by the partner and must thereby adapt their systems to the donors (PAOs). Our interviewees expressed that during this adaption by the partner, there is a potential mismatch or conflict between the systems. The reason for mismatch could be a result of many different parameters as culture clashes, fiscal years, competence, social structures or political instability among other things. This mismatch identified in our empirics was not found to be similar to the chosen theoretical framework of ours. However, this phenomenon is not unique since aid organizations are not the only ones working with partner organizations in complex contexts.

4.1.5 Control

Quality assurance systems inhibit a range of activities and variables. As we in our empirical analysis have chosen to understand them in a descending chain of activities and next after systems appears control. Systems may exist for various reasons, but one of the main purposes is to have control over the organization's activities. In our empirics we have found a number of themes regarding control that will be presented in this section.

Definition of control

In our interviews two patterns emerged when we asked them to define control. The first pattern we found included that the interviewees almost equated control with systems which would include, among other things, the handling of policies, documents, contracts, deadlines, manuals, coordination with other donors and work routines. Moreover, these activities must also be integrated, updated and monitored on a regular basis.

But, what characterizes good control? That the control is a well-integrated part of the operations that it just isn't something that is carried out alongside the core activities. There has to be manuals and documents to explain how to use and integrate the systems, as well that these are well known within the organization. (Interviewee E)

The second pattern circled around the word transparency. This was also one of the major areas or key words that most of the interviewees many times looped back to during the interviews but in different contexts. On the specific question of how to define control, transparency circled around money. It concerned the ability to derive and show how every single penny was spent in a project. Focus on this kind of transparency regarding control was expressed, if not at the specific question but later on in their reasoning, by most of the interviewees.

A complete transparency… With transparency I mean that every single penny should be traceable down to the specific activity it ends up in and I should be able to follow this route with help from the bookkeeping's. (Interviewee C)

Positive effects of control

The new guidelines require increased control. The implications of increased control have been a central theme all through the interviews by all respondents. All have expressed their concern on challenges that come along with increased control, but all did also recognize its necessity. We found two patterns within our interviews describing positive effects from increased control. The first pattern concerned a more general and positive picture of control and as something that can strengthen an organization from the top down. This mostly included control functions, control systems and creating an atmosphere of attitude towards control and that this created legitimacy for the organizations.

If control is supposed to lead the operations forward and to enforce development of the organization, then it is a positive thing… we want to control that these actions actually are generating the things that they are supposed to do. If the control is generating this positive effects, if the control is producing the constructive development that we are aiming for, then control is a device that we can use. We have to know that the control contributes and is a complement for us in our work. (Interviewee A)

The other pattern found concerned control's effects on corruption. Some interviewees expressed how the difficult and complex situations in their partners' contexts invited corruption. One respondent even explained how cultural differences, as peer pressure or social norms, many times could trigger this behavior, even if the concerned person not had been corrupt nor wished to be. However, the majority of our interviewees expressed how corruption could be prevented by having control systems. By introducing strict control systems in connection to their funding they could keep track of every penny they received. As a result, it becomes difficult for anyone to put aid-funding in to their own pocket.

We work in aid-countries and we work with politicians and a big problem in these countries is the corruption which is present all the time. It is therefore we have to work with control systems to minimize the risk of corruption, so for me, control is A and B. (Interviewee B)

Costs of control

As suggested earlier, not everything with control is positive. The overall impression from our interviewees was rather the opposite, where some almost considered control a necessary evil. The negative effects of control expressed in our interviews were many and we found four patterns in different areas. The first pattern concerned the issue of increased administration and financial costs at both the PAOs and the partners. All interviewees expressed that the increased demands of control has resulted in heavy administration efforts, such as reporting, auditing and monitoring. Most interviewees continued this by reasoning around the effects of increased administration. Since all activities in democracy aid need funding, increased costs due to administration means that core activities receives less. The negative effects from this payoff were expressed by five of our interviewees; how much may administration for control cost in relation to the total funding spent in a project? Some of the interviewees did even take it one step further of explaining that some projects even had to be shut down due to that costs for administration almost exceeded the money spent on aid activities.

No, but I would say that the administrational work has increased, mostly at our partners and that's were consequences will be largest and most painful. We work with this sort of stuff on a daily basis, but the work out in the field is normally characterized with other work tasks. They will have to put a lot of time in to administration to satisfy all the demands from their funders which will leave very little time and money to their actual aid-work. (Interviewee F)

Or as expressed by another interviewee:

A conflict of interest could be, in this case, that how much money does actually go to aid-work and how much goes to administration back in Sweden? That is a conflict of interest. And there can be similar conflicts of interest the aid receiving country. So how much money does actually go to those beautiful or horrible pictures we see on television, newspapers and all over? (Interviewee C)

Mistrust

Another possible effect of increased control expressed by the majority of the interviewees was the risk of mistrust from the partners. Even if a PAO had a good partnership with a partner new demands on reporting, auditing and monitoring could easily ruin or jeopardize the relation of the partnership and lead to mistrust. As a consequence, the partner may withhold information or work in the opposite direction of transparency.

Well, I can see how good it can get if you are very precise in the matter of control. But I have also seen how the wrong kind of control has created a lot of fear and distrust, which is negative for the operations, the projects and the people working within it. So it's kind of double-edged sword. (Interviewee D)

Or as expressed by another interviewee:

I would say that, if you are too controlling, there is a tendency that the partners are not as open as they otherwise would have been and openness is A and B for us if we want to reach the results that we aim to do. (Interviewee F)

No spillover effects

Another pattern that we found in our interviews was that too strict control could prevent positive spillover effects. In some cases this could also appear as a justification for lower level of control since they were concerned that strict control could prevent unexpected positive outcomes. However, there was a clear point made by all responses concerning this pattern that some kind of spillover effects would be prevented if too strict control were established.

If you go in and micromanaging everything, then I think you're undermining all the incentives for innovative thinking and so on. So that does not always match. Because that is sometimes how the most successful projects is created. Just like in science, sometimes the most successful discoveries are created by accident. (Interviewee E)

Control as an intrinsic value

Some of our interviewees expressed their concern for the increasing focus on control. In their responses circling around control, they mentioned a fear for an almost zealous approach to control. Fearing that the effect of the new guidelines could result in a focus on control to the extent where they would control activities, processes or cash flows for the sake of control itself. This pattern shows the concern for control gaining intrinsic value.

In an organization were control is absent, then it is of course positive with increased control. But if the control is given an intrinsic value and not as a mean to reduce poverty… but what's important is to know what the money is spend on. In that sense is control something good, but it doesn't say anything about long term goals. That is just what my worry is about, that you are staring yourself blind on numbers without any real perception of where you are heading. Because the actual purpose of aid-work is not to control, but to fight poverty. How should we have time to save the world when we are spending more and more time on controlling? (Interviewee E)

The balance between control and partnership

The last pattern found in our empirics whom we labeled under control, is the issue of balancing the increased control with a good partnership. As expressed by all our interviewees, wrong kind of control or too much control will damage the partnership. In our interviews we found a pattern of surrounding balance and partnership in relation to the negative effects of control mentioned above. All interviewees mentioned a payoff or balance between too much control and some kind of desired output variable like good partnership or quality.

It is a very fine balance you have to consider all the time, the balance between the control and the partnership. The partnership is very important for us, but that is in danger if we are to controlling. We have been forced now to be more controlling, so it is a very fine balance. Because we are often working with quite small and weak organizations and some of those might not be able to bear this increased control and administration that we now have to demand from them. (Interviewee F)

Some interviewees took this further and expressed this issue of balancing control and partnership in relation to quality, where control and quality strongly affect each other. Too much control would result in undesired quality, a balanced control and partnership could result in good quality, as well as too little control could lead to corruption.

I think that those think like when you don't have control over your contracts, then it is very hard to prove the quality in partnerships. If we don't have control over what the money is spent on, then we will have a very hard time to demonstrate the quality in our organization. But a very strict and hard control is not equivalent to good quality, the ownership from both parts in the partnership is crucial for achieving quality and too much of control can work against this. We have to work together with our partners, provide guidelines and give them the help they need so that both organizations goals can be achieved. (Interviewee B)

4.1.6 Discussion – Control

As the interviewees gave different definitions of quality, they also did concerning control. However, the span of variation was not as extensive regarding control and the different definitions all carried the same underlying message. For this reason, we find it unnecessary to discuss its different definitions further.

In our empirics we found both positive and negative effects of control. Regarding the positive effects we found two patterns; the first pattern circled around legitimacy. As control functions increase, so does legitimacy. Control is one of the cornerstones of TQM and all following models and theories involve control to different extent. The idea of control is to make sure that your product or service keep and lives up to the expectations of quality. Juran, Crosby and Feigenbaum also express the importance of controlling the costs to gain a competitive edge. All this together will raise the quality and give legitimacy on the market. Crosby (1979) even explicitly states the importance of recognition as part of his 14-step quality improvement program. For the PAOs, increased control could thus give them both a competitive edge against each other for the small part of the PAO-aid which is put up for competition, but also an increased overall legitimacy for their donors. Due to the fact that most of the funds come from Sida and indirectly the tax payers, this may increase the legitimacy for Sida and thus the public opinion on democracy aid.

The other positive effect identified in our empirics; that increased control restrains or prevents corruption primarily in the partner organization. To prevent corruption is of course of importance for all aid organizations since they often work in areas suffering from a high risk of corruption. Being able to prevent corruption is also in direct relation to the legitimacy aspect for the PAOs. Since the PAOs funding is relatively small compared to other larger aid organizations and is also to a large extent related to their political parties, having solid financial control is of existential necessity. All theories by the gurus focus on control to different extent and would therefore indirectly prevent some kind of corruption. However, no theory or model in our theoretical framework explicitly covers the challenge of preventing corruption, but the control mechanisms in the quality assurance techniques aims to prevent faults from occurring within the organizations and corruption could be considered as such.

On the side of negative effects of control many of the interviewees expressed concerns for increasing costs that would primarily revolve around increased administrative tasks. The expressed risk was that too much funding would get stuck in controlling work rather than core activities. This is a phenomenon we can find both in health care, schools, preschools and municipalities (Sverke & Öhrming, 2002) (Lager, 2010). In these cases the administrative work took time from actual caretaking or teaching and was considered extra unnecessary work taking time from their actual work. In the case of the PAOs, this cost for administration might even be more severe since most of them have relatively limited funding. Severe administrative costs can be devastating for PAOs and even result in projects being shut down or cancelled. However, costs might not be the only cause to cancelled projects. Some partners might not have the capacity, competence or time to manage the extensive administrative work and therefore chose to cancel the partnership.

The increased demands on control were perceived as a potential risk for gaining intrinsic value by many of the respondents. This could easily lead to a rigorous bureaucratic framework where control is exercised without any constructive meaning but simply for the sake of bureaucracy. This type of bureaucratic control (Ouchi, 1979) can create a stiff and non-dynamic organization with small possibilities to adapt to changing conditions. The context and environment the PAOs work in are the opposite; they are ever-changing and every project has its unique conditions and variables that must be taken into account. As a result of more rigorous control, learning processes and positive spillover effects might be restrained. Since the control activities are a response to the type of results and monitoring that Sida requires, these possible spillover effects might not have a chance to develop. The quality that is produced is a result-oriented quality, based on hard variables mentioned earlier in

the discussion under the definition of quality. For this reason, quality deriving from the soft variables may not have room to evolve or develop in such an environment. Consequently, the type of quality that our interviewees expressed desirable might become suffocated and thereby the overall quality would decrease. This leads us into a paradox of control, as illuminated by Lisa Sjölund (2009). The PAOs are put into a dilemma where they have to increase control over their partner according to Sida's demands, which in reality could lead to decreased actual control over the partner, the opposite of the intended purpose. This means that the partner would share less valuable information since they fear that they may lose their funding if showing their shortcomings. However, this would also imply that less pressure on control over the partner could result in increased actual control due to a higher level of trust, openness and thus an increased transparency of their organization.

4.1.7 Measurability

The discussion of control and its complications naturally continued into a discussion of results. Controlling what? All of the interviewees stressed the complications of fair measurable results in democracy aid. We identified two areas of complications in our interviews. The first area concerned the difficulties of measuring results in democracy aid and the second concerned the need of measurable results for quality assurance. The two areas are very closely related to each other where the second area is a consequence of the first, but both with their own complexities.

Complexity of results

Expressed by all of the interviewees were the difficulties of measureable results regarding democracy aid. The discussion that followed around this complexity regarded what variables to measure. Some of our interviewees stressed the importance of following the money and activities as receipts, attendance lists and so on. Others emphasized more soft variables and the usage of indications on different levels and time periods for results. However, if either using hard or soft variables, all interviewees expressed the relation between measureable results and quality. Do these measured variables tell us anything about quality, and if so, can we claim that quality is assured?

The definition quality can be very subjective. For me, quality is to reach the group of people that you've said you should and if you don't do that, the quality has decreased according to me. If you don't reach those goals that you intend to do, the quality is not met. But it is very difficult to measure the kind of quality that our projects are characterized by, there is really no concrete way of measuring this type of quality and that's why quality becomes kind of subjective. (Interviewee F)

The complexity of democracy aid expressed by an interviewee:

The results are more visible within some areas of aid-work than others. I mean, it is easier to prove the results if the aid-work is focused on infrastructure, a road is a road. It should of course consist of good quality, been built at the right place, have the correct materials, that worker conditions are good and so on. But the Party Affiliated organizations aid- work is much more difficult to assess and measure and that also makes it very difficult to formulate exactly what you should demand from the partners. Moreover, the PAOs are very small aid-organizations in compare to many others, where projects justare a piss in the sea, which makes it difficult, and it is foolish to believe that their efforts could change the world. You have to take into account that size matters. (Interviewee E)

Some interviewees further expressed an effect of the increased demands on control and consequently results. That due to the difficulties of measure the soft, and according to them the important variables, you turn into a too narrow definition of qualitative results. Since hard variables are easier to measure, it is more convenient to adopt models of measuring output results rather than outcome results. Soft variables and consequently outcome results take longer time to scrutinize and can also involve unexpected variables, making it difficult to assess qualitative results of a project in a short period of time. However, as expressed by some of our interviewees, it is around these variables you see if their activities and efforts did aid to development or not.

In my opinion, the way we are measuring what we call quality has become much more technocratic and this definition is maybe too narrow. So the matter of defining quality depends on who you are…I mean, who has the right to define what quality is? This makes it necessary for us to design different templates to give guidelines for how to apply for funding, how reports should be written and so on. But that doesn't say anything of what's going on at the field…is that good? Is that creating the changes in the world that we are looking for..? (Interviewee E)

Or as expressed by another interviewee:

It is so much harder to measure the progress in democratic aid-work. How do you measure how people develop? How do you measure how people are growing and develop in the role of becoming the politicians of tomorrow? Or how do you measure how an organization has evolved and grown stronger? This requires totally different kind of indicators, indicators that are very hard to determine.

Measure for results

The second area where we found patterns from the interviews concerned the discussion of a need to measure results. How do you know if your efforts and activities actually aid to development if you do not have any results that represents quality work and development? Some interviewees stressed the implications of implementing quality assurance systems without knowing if the actually do assist to measure and aid for development in what really matters, their core purposes. Consequently, do the quality assurance systems really assure the right kind of quality from the variables that are being measured?

I can try to measure the quality by measuring how many people that has received the supposed message, how many documents of this kind have I published, what do I believe are the effects of this? But to do this in some way, to be able to put this in comparison, I have to in advanced determined the criteria's that I'm investigating. And that is where quality makes its entrance into the equation. (Interviewee C)

4.1.8 Discussion – Measurability

The issues expressed with measurability are due to the complex nature and context of democracy aid. Due to this complexity, central and important variables of a project's success are difficult to evaluate and measure. To be able to measure and evaluate the success of a project, one has to use indicators spread out over a rather long period of time. Since projects have to be evaluated on a yearly basis and on performance it becomes difficult to use vague indicators providing results possibly first after ten years. Because of Sida's new guidelines, the PAOs have to provide explicit results and must therefore take use of hard variables as financial reports, receipts, documentation

and other control routines to measure quality even though they are not alone the best ones to reflect the quality of democracy aid.

A similar complexity of measuring quality can be found in health care and preschools (Erlingsdottir, 1999; Lager, 2010). To measure quality in health care one has to choose which variables to measure. It becomes a question of definition and who you ask; are you to measure how satisfied patients are or how many patients of a certain decease you can cure and for what costs? Or the capacity of patients each doctor can treat a day? Even though you choose certain variables, it becomes difficult to know whether or not they represent the right type of quality. This can be seen in preschools as well, how do you measure quality with small children? Since they do not have grades as later on in school you will have to look at other variables around the core activities and hope that they represent some kind of quality. Furthermore, if you take the difficulties of defining quality in these complex contexts one step further and try to create a quality assurance system out of it, how are you to assure that quality has been captured? In contexts such as highly specialized care (Örming and Sverke, 2002) or democracy aid, which is characterized by non-standardized work, results are difficult to analyze which require problem solving and learning, thus making it difficult to use standardized tools and models of quality assurance invented for routinized work. This clearly makes it complicated for the PAOs in their efforts to measure what most of them consider being quality.

When creating quality assurance systems in the Norwegian elderly care they ran into challenges of creating manuals and task description of their daily work. The problem with these manuals and this documentation was that they either became too extensive and detailed or too generalized and simplified (Vabö, 2002). As a result, either way it would end up being useless for its purpose as part of a quality assurance system. If the PAOs would go as far as starting to produce manuals, work descriptions and other intense documentation for their daily work, they would risk ending up in the same situation as in the case of the Norwegian elderly care. Even though this is not the intention of Sida, increased control and bureaucracy might lead to extensive quality assurance systems involving more than was intended.

The complex nature of democracy aid can be compared to Alvesson's notion of knowledge intensive work (2004). The ambiguity of results in knowledge intensive work is due to the difficulties of being able to assess whether or not the work of a consultancy firm is of high quality. For this reason, they will have to rely on image and rhetoric to create a picture of them delivering high quality services. The quality assurance processes at the PAOs might not be able to deliver what we have interpreted as the right kind of quality. However, what the quality assurance program might deliver is a certain legitimacy deriving from an image of performing high qualitative democracy aid, which in turn could legitimate the governmental funding they receive.

4.1.9 Competence

Competence was a theme that emerged a little bit here and there all through the interviews. Consequently, this theme seems to play a part as a factor affecting most of the other themes. Many issues or challenges with quality assurance problems can be derived back to competence, but not competence alone. In this theme of competence we found two patterns, one regarding the PAOs and their own competence and one regarding the partner. Furthermore, competence could also involve

the capacity of an organization as the educational level of their employees or experience within the right context.

Competence and PAO

The first pattern concerns competence as a factor important enough to affect the outcome of a project to be successful or not. The majority of the respondents stress the importance of having employees in their own organizations with the experience and competence relevant for the tasks and various contexts. It is expressed how the incompetence of employees or hired people can cause whole projects to fail. This is further expressed as how we Swedes many times have an undeserved faith in our own competence or how we rather expect incompetence at the partners and then for example force them to adopt our mismatched systems or auditing routines, many times without enough knowledge about either the context or culture.

There have been a rather scary "von auben" attitude in this business. I mean, no matter how poor qualities you may have, you are always better than those people in the developing countries and that is not true. Because they had a really good accounting firm in that city, in that case, local was better. And their rates were nothing compared to the ones they charge here. So installing a poor system that leads to corruption… You have to excuse me, but there are so much strange things in this world. (Interviewee D)

Expressed by another respondent on this matter:

In one country that we looked at, a country where we looked at the land survey office... This was a country where all land had been owned by the government, or more specifically, it was the almighty god that owned the land. This was when they were going to start measurements for the city plan so they could start owning their own land. How do I get my land from the almighty god? That is the first question you have to consider in this case. It is foolish to believe that you can do like we are doing here in Sweden, it is more complicated than that. (Interviewee C)

Competence and partner

Competence recurred in the interviews not only around the PAOs, but also at the partner as a determinant for a project's success. Some of the interviewees stressed the importance of having competent partners, so they really know what they get into, on what premises, when entering a partnership. This was in some cases also referred to as the partner's capacity, not only their knowledge but also their pooled knowledge and experience. If the partner did not possess the required competence it would definitely make it difficult for a project to be successful, but not impossible. Some interviewees talked about doing evaluation of their partners before or in the initial phase of the partnership and then educate them in the areas needed. However, sometimes even this could be difficult for the partner, since they often were afraid to show their insufficiencies and consequently would lie about their competence in the matter, just to receive funding.

Of course, increasing peoples' competence can be part of a project. But that should maybe be a part of the preconditioning work so that the aid-receiving organizations have enough competence to receive 5 million sec. It is not fair to punish the partner if you do not give them the abilities to handle such amount of money before they received it. (Interviewee C)

Expressed by another interviewee:

It is not enough to only send over the.., like, this is our general terms and this is the audit instructions and expect that the partner will understand all of it. Because it is not obvious that the partner organization is asking questions if they do not understand, so it is important that we sit down with them and work out a well-structured plan for how to carry out the changes. If the partner lacks the ability to carry out the changes by themselves we have make sure that they do. (Interviewee G)

4.1.10 Discussion – Competence

For a quality assurance system to be successfully implemented and useful, all members of the organization must be trained and educated in the new ways of working (Reed, Lemak & Mero, 2000). All gurus of TQM mentioned in our theoretical framework emphasize the need of training personnel in order to have a competent workforce. This is considered a crucial step in all n-step models or in Feigenbaum's benchmarks in order to have a successfully implemented program. Educating personnel is to make sure everyone have the competence it takes to be working in the new system. As expressed by our interviewees, it is of utter importance that everyone within their organization has the right set of skills and competence to be able to work with the new designed quality assurance system after Sida's demands. For many of them this involved education and training in order for a successful implementation. What takes this one step further for the PAOs is their need to not only educate themselves but also their partners. This brings a whole new aspect of challenges where they need to educate people from different cultural, political and societal contexts. The next step of making sure that the partner organization has the right set of education lies within the ability to communicate the training and education to them.

4.1.11 Communication

Communication was a recurring theme that was brought up by the respondents during the interviews and reported as an important feature in all of the components of the quality assurance process. Communication was described as an overall feature that needed to be incorporated in every step of the process. Except being an important component in the quality work, communication was described by many of the interviewees as a potential reason to why many of the attempts of quality assurance initiatives had failed. The communication was also believed by many of the respondents to be a success factor in the process and was described to be of utter importance when implementing the systems. Many of the interviewees stressed the importance of communication to gain acceptance for the implementation of the systems, so that an understanding for why the systems needed to be implemented could be established.

Some of the interviewees described the importance of communication with the partners because of the different cultures and contexts that they worked in. Since the contexts and cultures between Sweden and the countries where the partners work in are so different, the communication between the two parties becomes crucial and therefore also essential to avoid different kind of conflicts.

There are a lot of things that can contribute to a conflict or distress in a partnership. One such thing is that we are coming from two very different contexts, two different cultures and need to find a way to get along in this partnership. That is why we are trying to get our partners to Sweden so that they can

meet Sida and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs so that they hopefully can get a better understanding for the kind of demands we are making. This has been a good and constructive way to prevent that conflicts and dissatisfaction occurs. (Interviewee B)

One of the interviewees even described that providing an understanding for the whole quality assurance process was one of the biggest challenges of them when implementing the program and the communication therefore became a key factor.

To make our partners understand under what conditions we work under in Sweden. And after all, it is the conditions for these, for in these international collaborations, if you enter a partnership with, a Swedish organization like us, have certain… we have certain demands on us from our donors. And how to communicate - make some kind of sensemaking for our partners - all these demands on auditing and financial control and follow-up and so on. (Interviewee A)

Many of the interviewees stressed that there always was a potential risk of mistrust in their work and that this mistrust was extra sensitive during the implementation of the quality assurance systems. They further argued that both the underlying factor to the mistrust as well as the solution to avoid mistrust was spelled clear communication and that it was extremely important to be very clear about what these systems would implicate and what they would expect from all parties.

If you introduce a new way of working and thereby also new demands, is such case, I think it is extremely important that you are very clear with why you are doing these changes. It is very important to have good communication, to explain that we are undergoing these changes in Sweden, we are doing this because of this reason, and it will mean this and this for your organization. You will also have to be sensitive and have to be understanding if the new conditions mean that they have to reconsider the partnership. It is extremely important to always keep an open dialogue so that you not only make demands, that you instead are explaining the reason behind these new demands and trying to get the partner to understand them. (Interviewee G)

To conclude, communication was considered a key factor in the process of implementing the quality assurance systems, it was considered to be an underlying function to all other components. Good communication was of particular interest for the sensegiving process, to provide an understanding for the ones involved, to transfer proper information of what the quality assurance process implicated and so that all parties could understand the different contexts and cultures. Communication was considered to be the one thing that was necessary for success but if managed poorly also could be the thing that ruined it.

4.1.12 Discussion – Communication

When implementing a quality assurance system, it is essential that top management is dedicated and act as role-models. The gurus emphasize the importance of management taking the role of communicating the need of the quality program (Reed, Lemak and Mero, 2000). Feigenbaum further develops this and claims that everyone in the organization needs an understanding of why the quality program is carried out as well as being an active part of the process. Thus, it is up to management to facilitate sensemaking for the organizational members (Dale, 2003). This would imply that the PAOs need to show a high level of dedication in order to succeed with their implementation. However, dedication as well as training within their own organization does not seem to be the challenge here, rather the process of transferring the quality assurance programs to

the partner organization. Furthermore, if this is to be achieved, there must be an understanding of why the increased demands on control and reporting are at hand. Although, this was according to the respondents one of the most challenging parts with the new demands resulting in quality assurance programs. Due to the cultural differences and overall complex contexts, this becomes a difficult sensegiving process. One of the PAOs even took it as far as inviting their partners to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Sida just to try communicate what is behind the new demands and to give them an understanding of the Swedish system.

The grandiose rhetoric that is often used in NPM reforms to promote quality assurance programs described by Vabö (2002), is often criticized for promising more than it can deliver. This often results in a more defensive rhetoric once the quality assurance program is facing challenges in the implementation phase. However, since the PAOs right from the start have to begin in the other end by explaining the difficulties and yet the necessity of quality assurance programs, the partners then understand why and the backlashes of unfulfilled promises ought to be reduced. As a result, the contradictive messages from the rhetoric used for both promoting and then normalizing the difficulties of the quality assurance process might in case for the PAOs be reversed. The PAOs will always have to start by motivating a long uphill and difficult process of quality assurance in contrast to other cases of NPM reforms where they begin by selling promises. As a result, compared to other cases of NPM reforms, the PAOs will always have to keep a complete transparency to their partners and put all cards on the table.

4.2 Summary of Empirics and Analysis

To summarize the empirics and analysis, we first found six themes that we derived from the interviews: *Quality, Systems, Control, Measurability, Competence and Communication*. We used these themes as subtitles and discussed our empirics in relation to fitting theories to each theme. The theories often state that there is a lack of a common definition of what quality is, so is the case in our empirics. What we also have seen is that there is no common definition of quality within the PAOs or in the communication from Sida to the PAOs. This creates a lot of uncertainty in the quality assurance process due to the lack of a common definition. The second theme revolves around the creation of quality assurance systems. Due to the nature of Sida's new demands, this has resulted in systems that focus on financial or hard variables to make sure that no funds end up in the wrong pockets. However, because of this there is a potential risk of losing focus on core activities and the actual purpose of the aid work. This could also result in the partners suffering due to difficulties of implementing these systems in their complex context. Parallels can be drawn to the theories where there is a purpose to create systems to strive for zero defects, thus increasing quality and lower costs. However, just because the systems would not allow a high level of corruption, they do not automatically assure a high level of quality in the complex context of democracy aid. The third and most extensive part of our themes revolved around different discussions of control. To claim that you have a high level of quality implies that you regularly control that this high level quality exist, otherwise it will not have any actual value. The discussion of control was a bit controversial since it contained both essential and positive effects as well as negative and restraining effects. The positive sides included increased legitimacy for future funding and reduced corruption to assure that tax-money did not end up in the wrong pockets. The negative sides included increase costs for a high level of administrative tasks, a risk for repressing positive spillover effects and a risk for increased bureaucracy creating organizations not adaptable to the ever changing context of democracy aid. A parallel that can be drawn from this is the paradox of control. Simply put that efforts made to

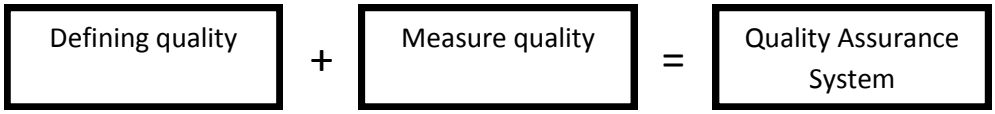
increase control can result in actual less control. The fourth theme and one of the major concerns for the PAOs concerned the implications of how to measure results in their work. The complex nature of democracy aid where results might not be recognized until years after the project or efforts made, makes it very difficult to analyze any fair results and therefore also any to draw any conclusions if any quality is assured. Many similar conclusions have been drawn in studies of quality work in other public organizations and parallels can be made to the context of the PAOs. The fifth and sixth themes concern competence and communication. Both themes are involved in all parts of the quality assurance process and are vital parts of it. In order to have a successful quality assurance system, all involved need the right set of competence. This does not however only include the PAOs put also the partner organizations. For this reason, efforts made to communicate and educate the partner organizations become a central part of the quality assurance process. All involved need to share an understanding of why the quality work is implemented in order for its success. Parallels can be drawn to the theories to some extent but no theory fully covered the difficulties of competence and communication in relation to the partner organizations.

5 Conclusions

In this final section we first aim to briefly summarize our analysis as we have interpreted it. Based on this interpretation we will then draw our conclusions and give our suggestions of how to face and understand the challenges with quality assurance work in party affiliated organizations.

In our analysis we have identified two groups of challenges, where one group includes the actual parts defining the quality assurance system: Defining quality, measure quality and the quality assurance system. And the other group of variables is more of a fundamental character: control, communication and competence. The second group of variables functions as a platform to build the quality assurance system upon. Once these are in place, the work of defining quality, measure it and create a system to integrate and sustain it can be put into place.

The first group of challenges as part of our conclusion contains three areas, where the first two forms a product resulting as the third. The first two areas include the challenges of defining what quality really is in relation to the context and the difficulties of measuring the desired quality. These two areas are interrelated and will together constitute the design of the quality assurance system, which is the third and last fundamental area. We have understood these three areas as the major challenges when designing and implementing a quality assurance system in a PAO.



The first step when designing a quality assurance system must be to define what quality really is and assure that everyone involved in the process share the same definition. However, as shown in our analysis, this can easily be overseen as the discussion of how to define quality seems to be non-existent. This is line with Dale's (2003) suggestion that there are as many definitions of quality as there are people, where each individual form their own understanding of what quality is. In our empirics and analysis we found that everyone seems to believe that they all share a similar definition of quality, although this was not the case. Due to the fact that they believe that they do share a similar definition of quality, they automatically oversee this part and continue on to design the quality assurance system based on different understandings. The risk is that the resulting implemented quality assurance system will not be as successful due to a non-existent consensus of quality. Just as Lager (2010) argues, that without any discussion concerning a common definition of quality, there is a potential risk for tensions and complications in the quality assurance process. By having different definitions of quality that tacitly coexists may create an ineffective and malfunctioning system that will not accomplish the desired purpose. Evidentially, to have a common definition of quality throughout the organization is a critical step in the creation of the quality assurance system.

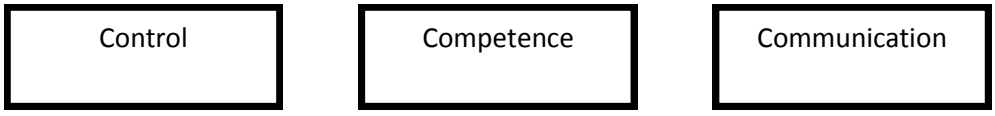
The second step is the difficulty of how to measure quality, which is directly dependent on the set definition of quality in the previous step. In this case, the purpose of a project is to increase democracy, equality or human rights. If you can assure that this purpose is met, that also implies that it has been measured, that democracy, equality or human rights actually have increased, one can then also assure that quality is reached. The difficulty lies in finding what variables to measure, how to measure and if the chosen ones represent the desired quality. Öhrming and Sverke (2002)

highlight the issues of measuring quality in highly specialized care, where finding the right set of variables representative for the desired quality is difficult due to the non-standardized and complex context, which is similar to the characteristics of democracy aid. This is in no way unique for the PAOs, Erlingsdottir (1999) and Lager (2010) have both identified similar difficulties of measurability within health care and preschools due to their complex contexts.

Once you have these two parameters in place it becomes a matter of creating a system to incorporate work methods, documents, routines and standards among other things. The challenge with creating a system for this is to make sure that the system focuses on the right set of activities, representing the desired definition of quality. For this quality assurance system to be successful it needs to be a natural part of the organization as well as harmonized with the organization's fundamental values. All organizational members must have both accepted and incorporated this system as part of their natural way of working if it is to be successful. It is not until the system is fully adopted by the organization that the intended value can be produced. As Erlingsdottir and Jonnergård (2006) elaborate in their case of Health Care, one can question for whom the quality assurance system is designed. In our case, is the quality assurance system designed to satisfy and match Sida, the PAOs or the partner organizations. The system has to be designed to fit the context of all involved parties, not only to fit the interest and reports to Sida.

In these first three steps, what is specific for the PAOs compared to other organizations? As found in our analysis, for a quality assurance system to generate the desired outcome, it must be harmonized with the values and work routines of the organization. However, when it comes to an aid organization, this quality assurance system needs also to be harmonized at the partner. This adds an extra variable that must be taken into account when designing the quality assurance system. Moreover, since the partner is in another cultural setting, often have other norms and values, and have other social or economic premises, this certainly creates a challenge for the PAO compared to other organizations only working in one cultural setting. However, everything bounces back to defining quality. Without a common definition, it is difficult to find representative and measurable variables and then to design a quality assurance system.

The second group of variables is in relation to the first group more of a fundamental character. These three variables: control, competence and communication can be understood as three pillars upon which the quality assurance system can be built. In other words, these variables are a necessary precondition in order to have a successful quality assurance system. This also implies, as from our analysis, that each one of these variables has a range of challenges that must be undertaken.



Control is a necessary part of the quality assurance system. If quality is claimed to be assured but never controlled, the word quality assurance will be insignificant. In other words, control must be part of every function in the quality assurance system. However, as highlighted in our analysis, there are a range of challenges concerning control and where the main issue can be understood as finding

the right balance of controlling activities. Too much control can result in, creating a bureaucracy not suited for its ever changing environment (as Ouchi (1979) elaborates in his notion of bureaucratic control), a too intense focus on hard financial variables not representing the desired quality, no positive spillover effects, or the risk of suspicion and mistrust from the partner resulting in even less control (the paradox of control as referred to by Sjölund, 2009). Moreover, due to intensified controlling activities, one can also expect increased costs for extended administrative work. This concern found in our empirics, is supported by similar findings by Sverke and Öhrming (2002) and Lager (2010). On the other hand, control is there for a reason, to ensure that funding is allocated to the set out activities and not ending up in the wrong pockets. This is part of creating legitimacy as an organization being able to use aid funding for a set out purpose in respect to the tax payers, which can be compared to the importance of recognition that can be found in Crosby's (1979) 14-step quality improvement program. The legitimacy is important for the PAOs to receive further funding and not to be questioned concerning the quality of their work.

The positive and negative effects of control must be balanced for a successful quality assurance system and aid project, which creates a challenge that must be undertaken. This is even further complicated by the paradox of control, where efforts to increase control can result in actual less control due to the response and interpretation of the partner feeling mistrusted and thus being less willing to share information or even shares misleading information.

The second fundamental variable is competence. From our empirics and analysis we can draw the conclusion that competence is crucial for a successful quality assurance system when to be designed and implemented. The challenge for the PAOs is that they often do not possess the competence themselves and thereby has to acquire the competence from external sources as consultants. Moreover, this challenge becomes even more significant as the PAOs need to transfer their somewhat inadequate competence to the partner, which was expressed as one of the major challenges with the quality assurance work. However, this is in no way an isolated feature in the context of the PAOs. As Reed, Lemak and Mero (2000) states, all involved members of the process must be trained and educated in the new ways of working in order for the quality assurance system to be successful. Competence is a crucial part of any organization, the quality assurance process and the PAOs are no exceptions.

The third and last fundamental variable derived from our empirics and analysis is communication. The PAOs do not only face the challenge of communicating the changes resulting from the new demands from Sida within their own organizations, but they must also communicate this one step further to the partners. As from our empirics and analysis, none emphasized any challenges with communicating this internally since everyone within the PAOs were well aware of the context of the new demands from Sida and the existent bureaucracy. The emphasized challenge was to communicate this to the partner and provide them with an understanding of the need for a quality assurance system from a Swedish point of view. This process of sensegiving was crucial for the partner to accept the new conditions of the partnership and thus have a successful quality assurance implementation. This is coherent with Feigenbaum's claim that everyone in the organization needs to understand why the quality assurance process is at hand as well as be an active part of the process, which is discussed by Dale (2003). Furthermore, in contrast to other NPM reforms we found that the PAOs used the quality assurance rhetoric in a rather opposite matter compared to other organizations implementing NPM reforms. Instead of starting off by using rhetoric promising a

smooth downhill ride with the quality assurance work (as described by Vabö, 2002), the PAOs have to start off by explaining that this is going to be a tough uphill struggle. If a PAO is to enter a partnership, the partner will have to live up to the new demands of quality assurance. Consequently, the partner must be aware of all the demands and why they exist, and this certainly create a challenge for the PAOs to communicate. Therefore, communication is a fundamental variable and a key success factor in all parts of the quality assurance work for the PAOs.

In conclusion, the challenges with quality assurance work in the PAOs are many and must be seen from a holistic point of view. From our empirics we identified a wide range of challenges which we narrowed down into six areas in our analysis. These six areas of challenges we then divided into two groups. The first group involves the challenges revolving around creating the quality for the system to assure. The areas of challenges in this first group are more abstract and ambiguous in the aspect that it may be interpreted in many different ways. On the other hand, the areas of challenges in the second group are more distinct and concrete. The challenges in this group are easier to understand and involve more straight answers. If solved it creates the premises for the first group of challenges to be managed and thus creates a foundation upon which the quality assurance system can be created. The groups are interrelated and both need to be taken into consideration when implementing a quality assurance program. However, the most central aspect in our conclusion is the definition of quality. It is crucial for the entire quality assurance process that a common definition of quality is established among all involved participants. The definition of quality is the underlying variable that when identified defines all other parts of the quality assurance process and is also the key factor when solving the equation of each challenge. This gives us an understanding of the challenges when creating a quality assurance system in this type of aid organizations, the PAOs. However, the challenges found in our thesis are of no unique character per se, although we have not found them being studied in this specific context earlier. Thus giving us an understanding of how earlier research can be used in this context.

For further research, it would be of great value of finding a common definition of quality in setting of democracy aid. This would help the finding of representative measurable variables for quality so that a common platform for quality assurance systems in democracy aid can be developed. Furthermore, it would be of interest to study if the identified challenges in our study are applicable for other groups of aid-organizations and thereby of more general value.

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7 Appendix

Vi anpassade alla våra intervjuguider beroende på vem vi intervjuade, bortsett när vi intervjuade projektmottagare så såg alla relativt lika ut. Den nedan kan ses som en standard intervjuguide.

7.1 Intervjuguide

Syfte

Vår studie syftar till att studera problematiken med kvalitetssäkringsarbete i biståndsorganisationer.

Vi har dels ett teoretiskt och mer akademiskt syfte att se problematiken ur ett TQM perspektiv.

Och dels att se praktiskt på det, vad det finns för faktiska problem. Och då se om det finns lösningsförslag genom vårt teoretiska fält.

CIS fungerar som vårt case, men vi vill att det ska vara applicerbart på liknande organisationer. Övergripande är målet att det ska vara applicerbart generellt på biståndsorganisationer.

Längd

Inspelning

Sekretess

Inledande frågor:

Vad har du för yrke?

Hur skiljer ni er från CIS och andra PAO?

Vad har du för tidigare erfarenheter med biståndsorganisationer?

Problem

Kvalitetssäkring

SIDA har höjt kontrollkraven för biståndsorganisationer,

Är kvalitetssäkringsarbete något ni arbetar med på KIC?

I din arbetsroll, hur definierar du kvalité?

Med den här definitionen, vad innebär kvalitetssäkring för dig?

Tror du att det skiljer sig hur man ser på kvalitetssäkring inom din nisch?

Vilka unika problem tror du att ni ställs inför i er arbetssituation?

Tror du att kvalitetssäkring skiljer sig åt i den kontexten du arbetar i jämfört med ett mer generellt företagssammanhang?

Kontroll

Inom CIS arbetar de nu väldigt mycket med kontroll och kvalitetssäkring,

Vad anser du kännetecknа kontroll i en organisation?

Finns det några kopplingar mellan kontroll och kvalité?

Vad finns det för positiva sidor med ökad kontroll?

Vad finns det för negativa sidor med ökad kontroll?

Styrningsproblematik

I CIS fall, där man vill säkra processer, öka kontroll och kvalité,

Hur utnyttjas kontroll som styrmedel?

Kan det uppstå intressekonflikter mellan givare och mottagare i kvalitetssäkringsprocessen?

Har du något som du vill tillägga?