math teacher is doing, and so on. Questions of how educational experiences fit together and how they lead to students' overall development do not receive much attention. Moving away from the traditional, highly segmented school would be difficult. A Z company focuses its concern on its long-term business success. Such a focus of concern in the schools is easy to identify—the learner.

Implementing Theory Z
Ouchi has suggested a series of steps for implementing Theory Z as a management scheme. These steps, reformulated to fit the school situation, are presented in Figure 2. While they are to be carried out by administrators and faculty members working together, the chief administrator is the key to success. Implementation of Theory Z must begin at the top and work its way down through the organization. The entire implementation process is slow, taking several years to complete.

Commitment to Theory Z, while absolutely necessary, will not be enough for successful implementation. Administrators and teachers alike will need to learn the skills of participative decision making. These skills cannot be assumed to exist; definitive activities for their development must be undertaken. Furthermore, strategies for collecting feedback on the attempts to change the management style need to be identified and established to guide the Theory Z implementation. These strategies may be similar to those used later to evaluate the effectiveness of decisions made in the participative process.

Should Theory Z Be Applied in Schools?
Ouchi's conclusions about what makes for effective management are not without their critics. Bruce-Briggs (1982) has charged that Ouchi has totally misinterpreted the Japanese situation. To him, the essential ingredient in Japanese economic success is the discipline of the work force, which is a product of Japanese traditions. Bruce-Briggs states that not only would it be silly, but also dangerous to try to apply Japanese methods out of the context of a "labor force disciplined by a social hierarchy controlled by an oligarchy."

Many would probably agree with Bruce-Briggs that Theory Z is simply a "new brand name to peddle an old ideological package," fit only for a utopian situation. Some will undoubtedly view the Z ideas as too "soft" and not authority-oriented enough to be effective. If these ideas really have been effective for major corporations, however, perhaps they do have some power to produce results. A decision about whether these concepts are useful for management in education, moreover, should depend on an analysis of the school situation.

The Theory Z ideas may have potential for addressing two long time problems in American education. Lortie's excellent analysis describes the weakness of teaching as a subculture. Prominent among the factors contributing to this condition are the lack of a common language among teachers, the failure of teachers to establish adequate supporting relationships with each other, and the statelessness of teaching as a career, which depresses teacher motivation. The emphasis in Z on the development of the worker-teacher through broader participation and work experiences and on the exercising of collective responsibility for decision making and implementation may have promise for dealing with this weakness.

The second problem is that of the segmented nature of the school. Individual teacher entrepreneurship may provide the basis for much of what teachers enjoy about their jobs, but it is inconsistent with the development of the student. Learning is a long-term, multifaceted process. According to Lortie's study, teachers desire to "reach" every student, develop a positive attitude to learning on the part of their students, and produce moral students. These ends will not be accomplished through a group of isolated efforts. Again Theory Z may provide a basis for coordinating the efforts of the school.

Would it be worth our while to study the application of Theory Z management to schools? I'll think about that some more as I drive home from work in my Honda.

References
in American industry, quality circles are a specific way to solving organization problems.

Quality Circles

LARRY CHASE

Educational Techniques and Values to Discover If It Can Be Used to Reduce the Costs of Education and Improve the Morale and Productivity of Teachers, Administrators, and Others Involved with the School Enterprise.

Whether or not the quality circle will have the kind of success in public school settings that it is producing in a large section of the American business establishment remains to be seen. That the technique is worth investigation and study is beyond question.

How Quality Circles Function

A quality circle is a small group of employees (5-12) who voluntarily meet on a regular basis to identify, analyze, and solve various problems. Ideally, members of each circle should be from the same work area, do similar work, or interact closely to get a particular job done so that the problems they select will be familiar and important to all of them. There is no limit to the number of circles that can be created within an organization. Typically, circles meet for an hour a week, but this may be changed based on local circumstances.

Once trained, circle members go through specific steps to accomplish the goal of the circle. Figure 1 reflects this process.

In conducting quality circle workshops for school administrators, I'm sometimes confronted with skepticism that the concept is really anything new or better than the participative management processes that schools are currently using. For instance, some administrators say, "Perhaps this technique has some value on the assembly line where managers have never asked anybody's opinion before, but I often involve my staff in planning and decision making."

Figure 1. How a Quality Circle Operates.

Management Decision Required

1. Problem identification
   - Members
   - Management
   - Others

2. Problem selection
   - Members only

3. Data gathering to verify existence and scope of problem
   - Members

4. Problem analysis to determine cause
   - Members
   - Others invited by members

5. Data gathering analysis and decision as to "true cause"
   - Members
   - Others invited by members

6. Solutions generated for recommendation to management

7. Management presentation to review solutions
   - Members
   - Invited guests

8. Response
   - Management

Management Decision Not Required

9. Solutions implemented
   - Management
   - Members
   - Others

Management Approval
Methods

Figure 2. Fishbone Diagram.

- Unclear instructions
- Poor planning skills
- No objectives
- Teachers dislike kids
- Kids ill
- Kids sleep through math
- Kids don't do homework
- Teachers/kids overworked
- No math background
- Little wait time
- No practice

Machines

- Xerox broken
- Chalk missing
- Old texts
- No paper
- Reading level

Materials

Personal Power

- Teachers dislike kids
- Kids ill
- Kids sleep through math
- Kids don't do homework
- Teachers/kids overworked
- No math background

Students

- Fail Math Final

My response to this legitimate defense is to challenge the skeptic to understand the integrity of the quality circle tool and to consider the effects of the disciplined, almost ritualistic, principles that make it a quality circle. Regardless of what a school administrator calls the process, if it is consistent with all of those principles it will function like a quality circle.

Quality Circle Techniques

Quality circles are very different from the task forces and committees typically used in education. Quality circle leaders and members are trained in the specific language and procedures of the circle process. These techniques are used at each step of the quality circle process to achieve the results of that step. There are eight separate techniques.

1. Round Robin Brainstorming. Most educators are familiar with brainstorming. When managed properly, a brainstorming session produces the maximum number of alternative ideas on a given topic. It increases the originality as well as the quality of ideas. The rules for brainstorming are very specific and are designed to eliminate ego involvement and negative feelings that might interfere with the generation of many ideas. Brainstorming allows participants to break out of their normal conceptual limits to think of possibilities they would not normally consider. The round robin structure also guarantees increased participation of all of the members in the group rather than domination by a few individuals.

   The purpose of the brainstorming session, which is used in every step of problem solving, is to produce a large quantity of ideas before narrowing to the best ideas.

2. Voting to Achieve Group Consensus. Educators know the value of achieving consensus, and they know it is a time-consuming process, which is why it's rarely used in schools. The circle voting technique to achieve consensus is an efficient procedure that works well in any consensus-seeking situation, not only in quality circles.

   There are two levels of voting in this process. During the first vote, circle members raise their hands to indicate which ideas generated in the brainstorming session warrant further consideration. Individuals are allowed to vote for as many ideas as they wish. The number of votes for each idea is tallied and those ideas receiving no votes are eliminated from further consideration.

   The remaining ideas are reorganized according to priority; those getting the most votes are ranked highest.

   Next, group members discuss the ideas to clarify their interpretation of them. Individuals who feel strongly about the importance of promoting one particular idea are given an opportunity to convince other members of its worth. The group is reminded that the consensus model requires the participation of all members equally rather than allowing a few verbal or articulate people to dominate the decision process. When this discussion phase is completed, the group votes again. During this step the number of times an individual can vote is limited by the number of ideas. Typically, if five ideas remain, each member gets one vote. If ten ideas remain, each member gets two votes. This process forces group members to choose from among alternatives to determine which ideas have maximum support. Through this process the ideas are reordered and the ones at the top of the list are now accepted for further consideration. Other ideas are kept for later consideration. Typically, brainstorming and voting are used at steps 2, 4, and 6 of the problem-solving process.

3. Cause and Effect Analysis. There
are many cause-and-effect analysis systems. Each system provides a rational structure through which data are manipulated to determine the "true" cause of a particular problem. The method most often used in quality control circles is the fishbone technique. Circle members fill in a fishbone diagram, beginning with a statement of the problem—the effect—in a box on the right side of the diagram. Possible causes of the problem usually fall into one of four categories: methods, machines, materials, and people power. As group members think of what might have caused the problem, their ideas are added to the diagram in the appropriate categories. The fishbone diagram in Figure 2 gives a sense of the way data are organized by this structure.

Other cause-and-effect formats include work flow analysis, force field analysis, process cause-and-effect analysis, job target analysis, and so forth. Before a cause-and-effect analysis tool is adopted by a circle, group members must be thoroughly trained in the exact application of the model.

4. Data Collection. In certain stages of the quality circle process data collection and verification become very important. At these times circle members call on any and all data gathering tools and techniques that can serve the purpose at hand. Which tools and techniques are chosen depend on the data that are needed to analyze a particular problem. Typically data gathering involves the use of check sheets, checklists, surveys, sampling techniques, graphs, and simple statistical techniques like mean, median range, frequency distribution, inferential data analysis, and so on.

5. Decision Analysis. Cause-and-effect analysis provides the data necessary to determine the most likely causes of a problem and the direction for data gathering and verification. Decision analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing the results of data gathering and verification in order to determine if the hypothetical culprit or cause is the actual cause before solutions are considered. The decision analysis method used most often by quality circles is the Pareto Decision Analysis Technique, often referred to as the 80-20 method.

The Pareto method—named after the Italian economist and sociologist who created it—assumes that certain variables in any situation determine 80 percent of the results or nonresults, while all other variables combined account for only 20 percent of the results or nonresults. In time management workshops, this is often illustrated with the example that typical school administrators accomplish 80 percent of their tasks in 20 percent of their time at work, while spending 80 percent of their time on activities that rarely produce significant results. Good time management realigns time spent with activities that will produce results. The Pareto chart is a bar graph arranged in such a way that the most likely cause of a problem appears significantly larger than all other possible causes. It can be an emotional moment in the quality circle process when the Pareto chart is finally completed and displayed for all to see. It is as if we had been on a hunting expedition for the one variable that is most important to alter. The Pareto chart visually verifies if the suspected culprit is the one in fact.

The following example illustrates the use of the Pareto decision analysis technique. A quality circle composed of intermediate grade teachers had identified the need to increase students' engaged learning time as the problem to be solved. During the data analysis process, they created a check sheet to identify various categories of interruptions of the learning process during prime morning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples of Check Sheets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Case 1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A. Problem Identified:</strong> Teachers feel threatened by clinical supervision program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B. Major Causes Analyzed:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Teachers fear supervision is really evaluation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Teachers don't understand the new teaching methods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Principals lack communication skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Conference time is insufficient.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Inservice program lacks practice time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Other.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Principal's supervision evaluation</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>xxx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Don't understand methods</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Principals lack communication skills</td>
<td>xx</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Conference time is insufficient</td>
<td>xx</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Inservice program lacks practice time</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Other</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Case 2** |
| **A. Problem Identified:** Student reading levels deteriorated in 8th grade. |
| **B. Major Causes Analyzed:** |
| 1. Entry skills are lower with more transient population. |
| 2. Less time spent on reading skills in content area. |
| 3. Lack on coordination among staff on remedial methods. |
| 4. Teacher expectations are lower. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
<th>(4)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Lower entry skills</td>
<td>xx</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Less time spent on reading skills</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Lack of coordination</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Lower teacher expectations</td>
<td>xx</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 3. Barriers to Student Engaged Time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mon. 9-11:45</th>
<th>Tues. 9-11:45</th>
<th>Wed. 9-11:45</th>
<th>Thurs. 9-11:45</th>
<th>Fri. 9-11:45</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P.A. System</td>
<td>▼</td>
<td>▼</td>
<td>▼</td>
<td>▼</td>
<td>▼</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning activity transitions</td>
<td>▼</td>
<td>▼</td>
<td>▼</td>
<td>▼</td>
<td>▼</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom management interaction</td>
<td>▼</td>
<td>▼</td>
<td>▼</td>
<td>▼</td>
<td>▼</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving directions</td>
<td>▼</td>
<td>▼</td>
<td>▼</td>
<td>▼</td>
<td>▼</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonproductive student behavior</td>
<td>▼</td>
<td>▼</td>
<td>▼</td>
<td>▼</td>
<td>▼</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| One tally mark equals one minute of nonengagement

Figure 4. Pareto Bar Graph.

CAUSE OF NONENGAGEMENT

- Learning activity transitions
- Nonproductive student behavior
- Classroom management interactions
- Giving directions
- P.A. system

Figure 5. Sample Checklist for Management Presentations.

10 Essential Points
1. Make Positive Statements
2. Use the Personal Viewpoint
3. Have a Leader
4. Use an Appropriate Meeting Area
5. Follow an Agenda
6. Follow the Chain of Command
7. Have a Theme
8. Keep It Short and Simple
9. Use Instructional Aids
10. Cover All Achievement, Progress, and Accomplishments

gets the most leverage possible out of it. The tone of the presentation is usually formal. The presenter acknowledges anyone who helped the circle achieve its result and circle members themselves are acknowledged by management for their efforts in tackling the problem. Figure 5 is an example of a checklist one quality circle used to ensure a smooth management presentation.

8. Evaluation. Like any self-renewing organizational process, the management presentation is followed by self-evaluation so that circle members can critique the way they functioned during the previous weeks or months. Upon completion of this phase the process begins again, with the group using problem identification techniques to determine what they'll tackle next.

These procedural steps are followed ritualistically, which ensures disciplined guidance for members during each step of the process. Time is used efficiently and groups are often surprised at how much they're able to accomplish in a short time compared to other forms of participative problem solving or decision making.

Examples of School Problems Appropriate for Quality Circle Processes

A broad range of problem areas could be addressed by a quality circle. Remember that while any member of the organization can suggest a problem to a quality circle group for consideration, the circle itself, through its normal process, determines what problems will be analyzed and solved. Administrators may not approve of the choices of a particular circle. Circle members may perceive that a problem affecting them in a minor but nagging way on a daily basis is more important than a problem critical
to the school district as a whole, especially in the beginning. Often, such decisions are made by circle groups to test the administrators' integrity and commitment. The group seeks assurance that it will be allowed to make its own decisions.

It is fundamentally important that groups be supportive in these decisions. A danger in the area of problem selection arises when administrators encourage circle groups to select only problems important to administrators. While those problems with the potential to save money for the organization are important to solve, solving problems that interfere with job satisfaction, employee morale, and general working conditions may be more important in the long run. Quality circles are a long-term change effort to increase the quality and productivity of the organization. They are not a quick fix nor a substitute for hiring effective managers, negotiating carefully with bargaining units, or supervising staff appropriately.

### Typical Problems for Quality Circle Consideration

#### Teachers
- Improving student discipline
- Improving the use of materials, audiovisual equipment, or other school resources
- Scheduling of school activities that interfere with the learning process
- Increasing time on task with students
- Teaching certain difficult-to-teach subjects
- Relative amount of emphasis of different curricular areas
- Expectations regarding student performance
- Appropriate use of tests and other student evaluation methods
- Teaching skills and the need for staff development to upgrade teaching skills
- School community relationships
- Parent/teacher conferences
- Assemblies
- Articulation between grade levels, between elementary and junior high, between junior high and high school
- Orienting new teachers
- Coordinating regular teachers and substitute teachers
- Establishing schoolwide norms and rules for student behaviors
- Reducing accidents in gym
- Reducing stress

#### School Principals
- Finding more time to conduct instructional improvement activities
- Reducing paperwork flow
- Motivating teaching staff
- Improving communication vertically between the school and central office
- Reducing stress and pressure
- Time management problems of being a principal
- Improving delegation to school secretaries and other support staff at the school level to get more done
- Handling communication with parents and other citizens at the school level
- Managing committees, task groups, and other decision-making activities of teachers and other staff
- Scheduling problems
- Managing time to include all necessary staffings for various purposes
- Maintaining a school climate appropriate for learning
- Ensuring the teaching staff continues to update their skills
- Developing and maintaining high expectations of teaching staff about student learning disabilities

#### Library Aides
- Books coming back damaged
- Books that are overused by teachers and students and aren't there when needed
- Patterns of student traffic in the libraries and learning centers to avoid confusion
- Discipline problems in the library
- Library organization
- Scheduling problems with various classes using the library
- Student management skills of library aides who aren't trained as teachers

#### Central Office Secretarial Staff
- Managing telephone calls to the district and among the schools
- Improving communication among all the schools and the central office
- Managing personnel data appropriately
- Duplication and information processing problems
- Keeping track of district capital equipment for inventory purposes
- Handling irate citizens in a positive manner
- Assisting school secretaries in handling excess work load
- Improving job satisfaction and reducing stress
- Considering more efficient technological methods for managing various forms of district data

#### Custodians
- Graffiti on lockers and bathroom walls
- More efficient ways to clean a building in less time
- Overload on demand to use cleaning equipment throughout the district
- Safety problems regarding cleaning and maintenance equipment
- Monitoring major heating and maintenance functions to save costs; energy saving programs
- Developing long-range plans for scheduling building maintenance
- Handling interpersonal conflicts within the custodial staff and between custodians and teachers
- Dealing with communication problems of limited-English proficient custodians in an English-speaking school.

#### Bus Drivers
- Student discipline on the buses
- Defensive driving techniques during winter months
- Orienting and training new drivers

#### Food Service Workers
- Reducing student waste of school food
- Improving the appearance and quality of food to compete with fast food alternatives
- Interpersonal problems between food service workers and students
- Managing the time problems associated with serving lunches to a large school population
- Keeping the lunchroom clean
- Handling special food orders for medical problems, special clubs, and the like
- Maintaining and reducing costs associated with food service equipment
Creating and maintaining a positive environment for eating.

Implementation: The Politics of Quality Circles

The politics of quality circles are no different from the politics of any innovation. Those of us who have participated in educational improvement programs in public schools during the past ten years have learned that unless innovators give careful attention to "political" factors, any innovation, no matter how well thought out, will fail to be adopted. Successful implementation, therefore, includes a systematic plan for addressing these issues.

Following is a step-by-step plan for implementing quality circles to ensure proper involvement of the appropriate power groups. While modifications in these steps can be made, the administrator wishing to implement successfully should not deviate far from the basic structure.

1. Obtaining top administration support for the program. A commitment to quality circles must be perceived as a long-range attempt to enroll more brain power and employee creativity in solving critical organizational problems. In private settings, it is generally accepted that it will take 18 months before the initial financial investment in the quality circle is recovered. This implies the need to invest organizational resources, primarily staff time and some financial resources, to set up, train, and supply quality circle leaders and participants.

No matter how positive your organization is, there will always be foot draggers, nay sayers, and negative thinkers. No process of essential human change can predict in advance all the intricacies and dynamics that will emerge as the process moves along. We know problems will be encountered and mistakes will be made.

For all these reasons, active commitment and support from the top administrator and the board is essential. While it is not necessary that the top administrator participate directly as a quality circle member, the idea makes good sense. For example, the Illinois State Board of Education expressed its commitment by installing quality circles in its 900-employee bureaucracy, and created a pilot circle among the superintendent's cabinet. The circle leader for this group is the state superintendent of education and circle members include the deputy and assistant superintendents for the various administrative departments.

2. Establishing a steering committee. The steering committee is responsible for monitoring the installation and evaluation of the quality circle program. It is composed of representatives from various organizational power groups. The steering committee:
   a. Establishes policy for the initiation and operation of quality circles within the organization
   b. Plans implementation
   c. Selects a facilitator to supervise the implementation
   d. Monitors progress of the circle program and recommends changes to keep it on target
   e. Suggests ways to improve and expand the quality circle program
   f. Periodically informs top management and other employees of results being achieved.

In a school environment, the steering committee should include minimally the following representatives: (1) the superintendent or the superintendent's designee who clearly represents the superintendent's authority on the steering committee; (2) a representative of the principals' organization; (3) a high level representative from the teachers' collective bargaining unit; (4) the business manager or other business-oriented official; and (5) representatives of support staff groups including custodial/maintenance personnel, school secretaries, and food service employees. Any other groups in the organization to be considered as areas for pilot circles should be represented on the steering committee.

Other representatives could include community participants, board members, students, or individuals with specific technical abilities that may be useful to the success of the circle program.

While the steering committee need not devote a lot of time to meeting as a steering committee, certain key responsibilities must be handled by this group. The most important of these is the identification of a facilitator.

3. Appointing the quality circle facilitator. The facilitator is the key individual who is the most knowledgeable and resourceful regarding the quality circle concept. The facilitator:
   a. Sets up a circle system within the organization
   b. Serves as quality circle program coordinator
   c. Trains members, leaders, and management as appropriate
   d. Monitors progress of the circle program
   e. Periodically informs top management and other employees of results being achieved.

Whether or not to hire the facilitator on a full-time basis is an important and difficult decision. It is not mandatory that the facilitator be assigned full-time to quality circle activities. On the other hand, the position should not simply be added to the job description of a central office administrator, principal, or department chairperson who already has many responsibilities. While it is difficult to estimate the amount of time needed by the facilitator to adequately manage the quality circle program, some companies have found that a full-time facilitator is not necessary if six or more circles are established during the pilot year.

4. The management presentation. The management presentation provides the appropriate celebration for the completed ritual of the quality circle process. It is a powerful opportunity for accomplishing goals. Most important, it is the management presentation where the quality circle members present their recommendations and supporting data in a convincing fashion to their assigned supervisor. In a school setting, this may be a building principal, a central office administrator, or the superintendent. The individual receiving the management presentation must be open and willing to go along with the recommen-
Quality circles, like any innovation, must eventually become integrated into the ethos of the local organization. If implementation is going well, the integrity and ritual aspects of the circle, which are its power, will be maintained even as the circle process takes on the characteristics of the specific organization.

What Circles Don’t Deal With
Quality circles are not an alternative management system to the system existing in an organization. They are a management tool designed to increase the leverage of the organization at solving problems efficiently. The decision to establish a quality circle program is a management decision, even though participation in quality circles must be voluntary. Since we are human, certain areas must be identified up front as off limits for circle problem solving. Any problems that relate to the collective bargaining agreement that exists between the various employee associations and the board are to be handled within the structures delineated in the agreement, not in the quality circle. Any issues that relate to the legitimate prerogatives of management, such as hiring and firing employees, assigning employees, and establishing policy are not the prerogative of the quality circle. Any issues that focus on individual personality problems or characteristics of individual employees are off limits as well. Other locally determined, sensitive issues unique to an organization may also be identified in the beginning as off limits. This need not inhibit circle development or threaten the integrity of the circle process. It is important that these areas are articulated in the beginning, and that the facilitator and group leader ensure that groups comply with these rules of conduct.

The Quality Circle Is Not a Con
I make this assertion because many administrators have implemented what I call pseudo-participation programs in which the hidden agenda was to manipulate staff into feeling involved in the decision-making/problem-solving processes of the organization when, in fact, the leader was not sincere. The sincere commitment of the top administration will be tested early in the quality circle program. For instance, a quality circle may request sensitive and closely guarded information only available to a few administrators, but which is needed for problem analysis. The willingness of the administration to share openly any and all information that is requested within legal and ethical limits is a critical test of the whole system.

Some managers fear empowering their employees. They believe that if their employees understand their power, they will lose control, look bad, or be fired. Research, however, clearly shows this is not true. In any hierarchical organization, the results achieved by employees are recorded against the account of the manager in charge. The more responsibility employees are willing to take, the more participation they have in problem solving, the more energy they devote to improving the organization, the better it will be for the manager in the eyes of those higher up. Yet, make no mistake. It is scary to give up power to employees knowing that you will be hard pressed to go against their recommendations. Few things worth doing are without their risks.

There is no way to know whether or not quality circles will work in a particular public school setting. That the concept is working in a variety of organizations is well documented. Final responsibility for examining this particular tool rests with the individual school administrator who may have a lot to gain or a lot to lose by considering quality circles.

As a final note, I’m reminded of one of the more positive contributions of the former Director of the Office of Management and Budget, Bert Lance, who said, “If it’s not broke, don’t fix it.” So if your school’s not “broke,” you may see no purpose in investing the resources necessary to implement quality circles. On the other hand, if it’s “broke... . . .

Resources for Information on Quality Circles

Training Sources
Northwest Educational Cooperative
500 S. Dwyer
Arlington Heights, 111. 60004
(312) 870-4100
Contact person: Lawrence G. Chase, Executive Director

Educational Improvement Center, N.E.
2 Babcock Place
West Orange, N.J. 07052
(201) 731-8400
Contact person: James Lewis, Executive Director
Quality Circle Institute
1425 Vista Way
Airport Industrial Park
P.O. Box Q
Red Bluff, Calif. 96080
(916) 527-6970

Contact person: Robert D. Collier, Executive Director

International Association of Quality Circles
P.O. Box 30635
Midwest City, Okla. 73140
(405) 737-6450

Contact person: Donald Dewar, President

Monographs on Implementing Quality Circles in Educational Settings
San Mateo County Office of Education
333 Main Street
Redwood City, Calif. 94063
(415) 363-5400

Quality Circle Training Materials for Educational Applications
Educational Improvement Center, N.E.
2 Babcock Place
West Orange, N.J. 07052
(201) 363-5400

Contact person: James Lewis, Executive Director

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Introduction to Quality Circles. Audiovisual slide and cassette presentation consists of 80 slides and cassette tape.

Quality Circle Leader Manual by Donald Dewar (250 pages).

Quality Circle Member Manual by Donald Dewar (160 pages).

Basic Quality Circle Techniques. Eight audiovisual modules by Donald Dewar.

Quality Circles: Answers to 100 Frequently Asked Questions by Donald Dewar, 1979 (48 pages).

Audio-Visuais (Set of 3 Advanced Training Techniques) by Donald Dewar: (1) Histograms, (2) X R Control Charts, (3) NP Control Charts.

Hewlett-Packard Video Tape. Videocassette on quality circles in action at Hewlett-Packard.

Suggested Bibliography


