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Total Quality Culture in Mexico

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Abstract

Organizational change implies an institutionalization process in which, within context pressures (technological change, legislation and market), an structural array transformation is developed in order to lead from conceptual to practical aspects. Transit from subjectivity to objectivity implies a process divided in three steps: appropriation, interpretation and reappropriation. A late but ongoing institutionalization process is developing in Mexico on Total Quality. It may be interpreted that one of latecomer elements on Total Quality implementation is the patrimonial character in most of firm managers as an obstacle to modernization. TQ institutionalization process is irreversible due to modernity and flexibility needs as firms heads to be world market competitors. TQ also demands more worker's participation, training and commitment as well as a substantial betterment in his life quality. Thus, TQ institutionalization in Mexican industry must be a reply to social, cultural and organizational conditions.

Keywords: Culture, Total Quality, Institutionalization.

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INTRODUCTION

O rganizational change involves a process of institutionalization in which, based on contextual pressures (technological change, legislation, and market), a transformation of structural arrangements is developed that ranges from conceptual (subjective) aspects to practical (objective) aspects. The transition from subjectivation to objectification involves a process divided into three stages: appropriation, interpretation, and reappropriation.

The outcome of the institutionalization process is the Institution, which is defined as a reciprocal typification of the routinization of actions by various types of actors. In this definition, routinized action refers to behaviors that have been empirically developed and adopted by an actor or group of actors to solve recurring problems. This implies minimal effort in decision-making as a response to a particular stimulus.

For the purposes of our work, we will refer to the study of the institutionalization process from the perspective of Tolbert and Zucker (1996), who point out that this process is supported by three stages: a) habitualization, which is the development of behavior patterns for problem-solving and the association of those behaviors with particular stimuli; b) objectification, which is the development of shared and general social meanings attached to those behaviors, a development that is necessary for the transplantation of actions to contexts beyond their point of origin; and c) sedimentation, which is the process through which actions acquire the quality of exteriority[83] (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1. COMPONENTS OF THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION PROCESS

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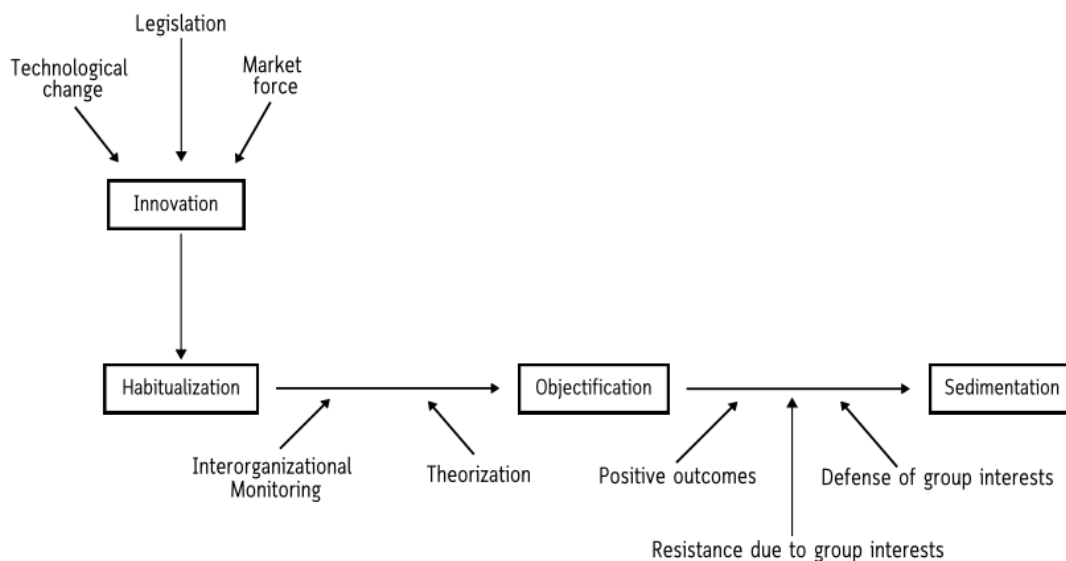
[83] Exteriority refers to the degree to which typifications are experienced as possessing a reality of their own, a reality that confronts the individual as an external and coercive fact (Tolbert and Zucker, 1996: 181).

From our perspective, the internationalization of institutionalization processes in the realm of organizations tends to deepen, creating mechanisms that, following the stages of this process, aim to consolidate specific and particular patterns of an organizational model suitable for incorporation into the globalization process. However, the internationalization of institutionalization processes faces the natural resistances inherent in regional and local cultures, which gives particular characteristics to the organizational models that result from these institutionalization processes.

In this context, one of the most relevant discourses in the institutionalization process of new organizational models is manifested through the culture of total quality. The widespread dissemination of this proposal partly responds to the assumed role it played in the competitive success of Japanese organizations initially and subsequently in American and European organizations during the 1980s and 1990s in a context of economic openness and globalization. As a result, the adoption of this proposal has become a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for all organizations that intend to survive and be competitive in an increasingly uncertain environment. However, the conditions under which this proposal is adopted are very different between nations, regions, and localities, as the discourse of total quality clashes with the specific characteristics of each organizational environment, producing a diversity of results that do not necessarily correspond to those promised by this discourse.

The objective of this work is to analyze the process of institutionalization of total quality in Mexico, based on the study of the particular characteristics of the organizational context, the cultural identity of management, and the mechanisms of institutionalization of total quality through national and international certification. To achieve this goal, in the first section, we will conduct a comparative analysis of the technological, market, and organizational aspects characteristic of Japanese, American, and Latin American business models, considering these aspects as substantive premises for organizational innovation. In the second section, we will review the main theoretical postulates of total quality, highlighting their symbolic aspects and approaching them in terms of their implications for appropriation (habitualization) within the framework of organizations. In the third section, we will analyze the interpretation (objectification) process that passes through the filter of the intercultural characteristics of Mexican management. Finally, we will develop an initial scope of the reappropriation (sedimentation) process, which is expressed, in the first instance, with the design and adoption of local certification mechanisms aimed at the standardization of organizational processes that result in total quality.

THE CHALLENGES OF ORGANIZATIONAL INNOVATION IN LATIN AMERICAN COMPANIES: THE FIRST STEPS OF THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF TOTAL QUALITY

The environment of organizations in Mexico and Latin America has transformed rapidly over the past twenty years. In the case of Mexico, from the 1950s to the 1970s, economic protectionism prevailed, which contributed to the stagnation of the incorporation of new technology and management practices in companies. Generally, most companies could

survive in this context despite their lack of efficiency and effectiveness. Poor management in Mexican companies can be attributed to various factors, including customs protection and internal corruption. Customs protection stimulated the existence of protected markets that avoided competition, allowing poorly managed companies to exist. In this context, corruption plays a fundamental role in administrative deficiencies, as it creates markets that operate independently of the price, quality, and delivery times of goods (Castaingts, 2000: 80-81).

However, starting in the 1980s, the organizational context began a radical transformation characterized by trade liberalization, which in Mexico was consolidated with the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994. The organizational environment in Mexico and the rest of Latin America that emerged in the 1990s was characterized by the demand for high technological and administrative capacity as a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for the survival of most organizations. "A significant part of the decline in growth in Latin America since the almost total opening of borders stemmed from the fact that its companies were poorly prepared from an administrative point of view." (Castaingts, 2000: 174).

In Figure 2, the characteristic profile of the administration of Japanese, American, and Latin American companies can be seen, from which their competitive capacity can be established. Among the most important aspects of this comparison are:
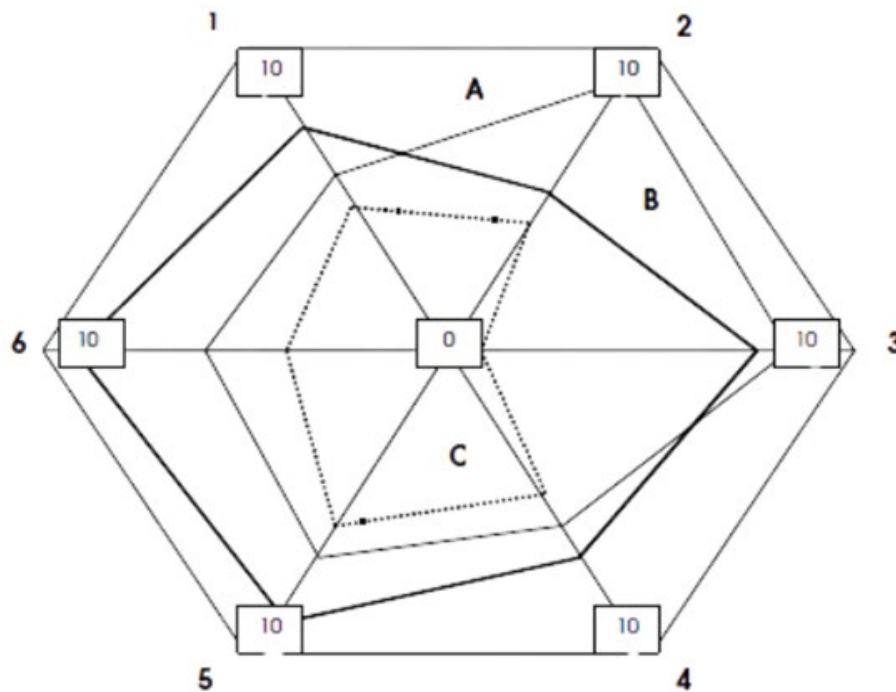
Source: G. Garibaldi (Castaingts, 2000: 176)

1. Markets	—--------- U.S. Company
2. Production and technology	—--------- Japanese Company
3. Research Company	- - - -Local Latin American
4. Finance	
5. Personnel	
6. Organization	

a) Although company C is the worst managed, it is not evident which one is the best managed, A or B.

b) The technological advantage of one company alone does not necessarily imply dominance over the competition. See, for example, the case of small Japanese companies with less advanced technologies that have a competitive advantage due to their organizational model.

c) The position of C partly responds to the price imposition by A.

d) Despite the inefficiency in market management by company C, it has the advantage over foreign companies of being directly in the market that the competition must enter. This grants it direct relationships, knowledge, and internal political connections that foreign companies can hardly obtain.

e) To sustain competition with A, company C has low wages and can even reduce them to maintain this competition. Thus, company C shifts the cost of competition to the worker.

It is worth noting that one of the cultural characteristics of Mexican companies is corruption, which opposes the principle of interorganizational cooperation that is a necessary condition for high productivity and total quality. In general terms, it is a fact that, for example, corruption along with other cultural characteristics such as patrimonialism has allowed Mexican companies to establish a counterbalance to their disadvantages compared to other companies, which partly explains their survival in a highly aggressive and changing environment. We will analyze this issue further later.

THEORETICAL AND SYMBOLIC ASPECTS OF TOTAL QUALITY

Despite distinctions, the various orientations of Total Quality share a fundamental guide of concepts. Various authors have addressed these precepts in a wide variety of forms. However, it is possible to conceptually distinguish these precepts by grouping them into three basic sets: a) focused on customer satisfaction; b) insistence on continuous improvement; and c) considering the organization as a whole system. In general terms, it can be said that the philosophy of Total Quality is reflected in these basic precepts. Specifically, the common level that supports a broad collection of approaches to Total Quality is based on the notion that organizations can substantially improve their performance if it is recognized that customer expectations are likely the basis for improving organizational performance and, therefore, if an organization is to remain competitive, it needs to strive for continuous improvements simultaneously in its processes and results.

It is clear that the profound simplicity of these philosophical precepts will hardly lead the organization anywhere. Thus, problems need to be addressed through solutions that go beyond the Total Quality toolbox to cross borders, as it considers the different components of the organization, its suppliers, and its customers as one, to achieve continuous improvement of total quality. Seen in this way, the three precepts—customer satisfaction, continuous improvement, and an integrated system perspective—are distinguishable from each other, but the woven structure by them together gives Total Quality its strength. Let us now analyze each of these precepts:

Customer Satisfaction. Commonly, Total Quality is defined as the continuous improvement of processes employed by everyone in the organization to more efficiently meet the internal and external needs of customers. According to this definition, every member of the organization has a customer. This implies that a critical point of effective Total Quality is to ensure that each of the incentive systems is sustainably supported in terms of internal or external customers. Almost all approaches to total quality require the generation of baseline objectives ("facts") that can be systematically used to improve work processes and products. In Total Quality programs, facts are generated through the use of a variety of quantitative analysis techniques. These tools are used to facilitate the recognition of the causes of variance in production and administrative processes and are prerequisites for taking the necessary actions to reduce variance or errors in the most effective way to identify customer needs. The tools mentioned in the literature and used in the industry are numerous and include analytical techniques such as statistical process control charts, quality function deployment, experimental design, cause-and-effect diagrams, and Pareto charts.

Continuous Improvement: The precept of continuous improvement expresses the desire of Total Quality representatives to increase the reliability and control of performance ("doing it right the first time") and simultaneously reflects the pursuit of increased learning and experimentation (continuous learning) according to organizations to continue developing new skills and capabilities. In practice, most quality programs focus on increasing organizational performance through continuous quality improvement, where there is an effort to discover and systematically reduce or eliminate sources of customer dissatisfaction (including errors). Total Quality incorporates an extensive collection of data, analysis, and feedback systems that help highlight and isolate problems and direct employees' attention to the issues that have been identified.

A typical approach is to focus on small key problem areas that are repeatedly encountered and can be systematically analyzed. Since these problems are selected to be routine and of low uncertainty, dramatic increases in efficiency are sometimes reported. Such efforts can be fully effective in clearly understanding the problems where it is clear what needs should be measured and what corrective action approach could be applied (for example, in automated production processes, statistical process control is used to focus on the proper establishment of key indicators).

The Organization as a whole system. The typical Total Quality approach to the organization as a whole system has a number of implications, including the incorporation of the individual as a critical part of the problem-solving team and the recognition that quality will increase

by incorporating fundamental cultural change toward honest evaluation and responding to customer expectations. In essence, an approach to the organization considered as a whole system suggests that complex production and service problems cannot be solved with a simple package of solutions. Nevertheless, it requires a rigorous assessment of how input into the production chain can contribute to both the problem and its solution.

The great enthusiasm for the approach and the dissemination of these fundamental Total Quality precepts has distracted attention from the inherent duality underlying the goals of Total Quality: the desire to control and the desire to learn. In fact, the early quality efforts refer to quality control, which was specifically implemented to improve the control of manufacturing process efficiency and to increase "quality conformance." Later, quality efforts expanded strictly to formal, measurement-oriented quality control approaches to incorporate more qualitative, emergent, and systematic results that were generally reflected in Total Quality efforts.

More specifically, the Total Quality movement was motivated in part by the recognition that the approach to quality control needed to be adapted rather than ignored within the context of the social system directed at research on human relations and sociotechnical systems, and also by the recognition that knowledge and learning were crucial mechanisms for maintaining a competitive advantage, especially during periods of rapid change. In this way, Total Quality developed as a means to filter the responsibility for quality improvement to all parts of the organization. Thus, the total incorporation of quality control was and is an end product of these processes.

With the emphasis on customer satisfaction, continuous learning, and the organization as a whole system, the quality movement was able to take a giant step beyond its insight into the control of familiar and stable processes. With the incorporation of new insights into learning, knowledge creation, and innovation processes, the quality movement could orient itself toward the potential adaptability of the organization to change under uncertain circumstances. Paradoxically, this substantial advancement carried with it the hidden seed of the previously mentioned problem: with the dissemination of Total Quality, a myopic focus on the common axioms of TQ, through the separation of control and learning, became widely confusing for some in terms of the inability to distinguish between these elementary objectives.

Thus, it is proposed that a focus on these precepts fostered a premature sense of resolution, in which Total Quality advocates quickly concluded that the quality process was not only good to understand but could also be driven through a singular set of principles. As previously mentioned, the problem with these assumptions is that the fundamental incompatibilities in the principles and practices associated with the pursuit of control and the pursuit of learning were ignored, and therefore, the importance of achieving a balance that harmonizes with situational requirements was underestimated.

Total Quality and Organizational Change. Since the 1990s, the world of organizations in general and companies, in particular, have faced the challenge of change, compelled by the changing conditions of the environment. Some authors like Tuckman (1994) argue that we

are currently undergoing the quality revolution, a period of change in which all types of businesses, companies, people, and organizations are undoubtedly affected.

From the organizational perspective, the concept of *Total Quality Management (TQM)* developed in parallel with *just-in-time* (JIT), to complement this mode of organization. Therefore, in its early principles, Total Quality Management (TQM) was applied in the industrial sector, mainly in factories related to the production of cars, electrical equipment and materials. However, over time, these principles began to move away from the activities where JIT was applied, and later, Total Quality began to be indiscriminately implemented in sectors not necessarily associated with manufacturing, such as services and public administration.

Total Quality not only possesses a way of conceptualizing the organization in postmodern terms, but it can also be interpreted as a way of legitimizing the flexible relationships demanded by the new mode of organization. This implies reconsidering the introduction of Total Quality as a reconstruction of culture around and based on work relationships. In an attempt to reconstruct hegemony in the workplace, common-sense metaphors of social and organizational life have been deployed to modify subjective relationships. Hierarchical images of power and control have been replaced by those of the market and exchange and those of the customer and provider.

The introduction of TQM implies an effort by management to modify the organizational culture. The central characteristic of TQM is the idea that cultural change is embedded in the early theoretical and practical developments of quality management. It has been argued that cultural change allows TQM to be differentiated from quality assurance and total quality control. It is clear that the notion that unifies the organizational effort and transcends sectional interests is that everyone can work together to achieve quality, although the notion of quality presented is far from being socially neutral.

Part of the quality revolution focuses on transforming people's attitudes towards their work roles. This involves the effort of both individuals and organizational groups to transcend appropriation and interpretation to achieve the reappropriation of organizational quality. This revolution aims to replace hierarchy with informality, although it actually contributes to the bureaucratization of processes. Tuckman states:

"Despite roles being bureaucratically defined within a hierarchy, TQM posits a client-supplier chain, conceptualizing an alternative market for the modern organization. TQM can be introduced in association with new flexible work methods such as JIT and the team concept (...), parallel to various forms of internal markets. This is not, in itself, an immediate change in relations, except at the level of subjectivity." (Tuckman, 1994)

Seemingly, one of the main intentions of TQM is to facilitate the transition from a traditional form of organization to a postmodern form. In this context, we believe that one of TQM's main contributions to organizations is providing ideological support to enable the flexibility and commitment demanded by new forms of organization. All of this is in the name of quality and cultural change, allowing it to confront traditional organizational practices and pave the way for postmodern ones.

However, in real terms, it can be said that TQM fundamentally contributes to changing the traditional schemes of labor relations by introducing new elements such as autonomy and workers' control over their work. The illusion is created of greater freedom and enrichment at work, greater worker participation in organizations, expanding decision-making spaces regarding their work, and it seems that all the creative capacity that Taylorism and Fordism took away is given back to the worker. On the contrary, there is greater appropriation of this process by the ruling elite.

TQM acts with more ideological relevance at the level of the subjectivity of the relationships between workers, management, and context (the latter represented by customers and suppliers). Through this subjectivity, a large number of controls are established, constructed from a metaphorical chain about quality.

INTERCULTURAL ANALYSIS AND THE IDENTITY OF THE MANAGER IN MEXICO: FROM TRADITIONAL PATRI-MONIALISM TO MODERNIZING PATRIMONIALISM

From Tuckman's perspective (1994: 730), the introduction of TQM appears as the reverse of the aggressive management style ("macho management") of the late seventies and early eighties, where high and rising levels of unemployment facilitated a return to managerial prerogatives at the expense of organized workers and some of their attempts to achieve organizational consensus. While this aggressive style seems to have been partial and distant from a coherent phenomenon linked to a rigorous corporate restructuring during the recession of this period, the attempt at a new organizational consensus represented a more universal and articulated call, with a new common sense of work culture.

As is well known, *work culture* has been one of the most important topics developed today in the fields of sociology, anthropology, and organizational studies, among others. The emergence of this approach seems to be linked to the widespread economic crisis in the Western world in the seventies, where one of the clearest managerial effects was the attempt to reconquer the culture of authority in the workplace, particularly in the context of the emergence of Japan's industrial and economic rise in the seventies. This stimulated a growing interest in the application of anthropological and structural functionalist approaches in the study of norms, values, beliefs, and rituals in organizations, as well as leadership styles considered an important factor in creating a solid cultural climate. Related to these trends, managerial notions were also developed to strengthen the construction of organizational cultures appropriate to the new challenges imposed by the environment.

One of the main characteristics of the literature on TQM focuses on the idea of cultural change, which was early inserted into the theory and practice of quality management. It was argued, as we have already pointed out, that cultural change established the difference between Quality Assurance and Total Quality Management. A clear attempt to construct a unified set of corporate beliefs and values is the development of "mission statements," although here the concept of quality serves the same role. The notion that organizational effort unifies and transcends sectional interests is that everyone could work together to achieve quality, although the notion of quality is presented as socially neutral.

As can be observed, what is important for Total Quality Management, which contributes to its full establishment in organizations from the second half of the eighties and demarcates its position from the beginning of its origin with quality assurance, is the insistence on the need to promote cultural change. While in terms of corporate culture, there is a great diversity of orientations and approaches that make it more confusing, cultural change itself is rich in art, icons, and symbols. The intentions of TQM, from the perspective of culture, focus on changing the attitude of managers and workers regarding quality control, convincing them to take responsibility for it. TQM proponents like Crosby, Lamb, and others (Tuckman, 1994) consider this proposal revolutionary:

> *"The 'Industrial Revolution' took place in the last century. Possibly, the "Computer Revolution" happened in the early 1980s. But now we are undoubtedly in the midst of the "Quality Revolution," a period of change that affects all types of businesses, companies, organizations, and people. For some companies, continuous quality improvement and cost reduction are essential if they are to remain in business..." (Tuckman, 1994: 735)*

As we know, since the 1980s, our country has been involved in a process of increasing modernization. Among the effects of this process, a qualitative change can be observed in most organizations as a premise for their survival. The manager cannot be oblivious to these changes, especially when new forms of organization demand greater individual and group autonomy, requiring a new style of management.

However, we must be very careful when analyzing the cultural characteristics of the manager in the country as well as the cultural roots that have given them a unique profile, in order to understand the particularities of their identity. In this sense, it is important to consider that a successful management style in one country, such as the United States, does not necessarily respond to the needs of companies in our country, nor does it imply that the same results would be obtained as in the country of origin.

This problem of differences in leadership styles based on sociocultural specificity has already been rigorously addressed by some contemporary authors. To illustrate the significant differences that can be found between leadership styles, expressed through managers, we present a comparative table prepared by Mills and Helms[84](see Table 1).

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[84] Mills, Albert J. and Jean C. Helms Hatfield (1998), "From Imperialism to Globalization: The Internationalization and the Management Textbook," in Clegg, Stewart R., et. al. (eds.), Global Management: Tensions between Theoretical Universalism and Local Realities, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Mexico.**

TABLE 1.

CHARACTERISTICS AND BELIEFS OF AMERICAN MANAGERS AND THEIR COUNTERPARTS IN OTHER
COUNTRIES

AMERICAN MANAGER	MANAGERS IN OTHER COUNTRIES
♦ Self-determination ♦ Sets realistic goals ♦ Achieves objectives through hard work ♦ Feels an ethical obligation to fulfill commitments ♦ Time is crucial to their performance ♦ The company is their most important commitment ♦ Their full attention is on the company ♦ Adheres to company regulations ♦ Focuses on hiring the "best person" for the job ♦ Fire the "inefficient" ♦ Has broad possibilities for mobility ♦ Is free to move horizontally ♦ Supporter of equality ♦ Decision-making is rational ♦ Frank and open ♦ Ambitious ♦ Respects all types of work ♦ Open to change ♦ Concerned with results	♦ Guided by mystical ideas or fanaticism (for example, some Muslim countries) ♦ Tend to fantasize ♦ Achieves objectives through favors ♦ Inconsistent commitment ♦ More relaxed attitude towards time ("It's part of the charm of our Latin American friends") ♦ The extended family is their most important commitment ♦ Sometimes accepts bribes ♦ Lack of respect for formal norms (for example, Arabs) ♦ Uses nepotism to hire personnel ♦ Family, personal, and political connections influence the retention of certain employees ♦ Restricted by class and other non-work-related considerations ♦ Loyalty to a single company (for example, Japan) ♦ Unconcerned with the principle of equality ♦ Makes decisions impulsively and emotionally ♦ Polite but deceptive (for example, in Far Eastern cultures) ♦ Lacks ambition ♦ Will not accept work "beneath their dignity" ♦ Resists change ♦ Concerned with appearances (for example, Latin America)

Source: Mills, Albert J. y Jean C. Helms Hatfield, 1998

Let's briefly analyze some cultural aspects of the Mexican environment from the 1970s onwards. In the case of Mexico, serious studies have been conducted on cultural characteristics in terms of types of domination within contemporary Mexico. Notably, Gina Zabludovsky's excellent work (1993) on the patrimonialist characteristics of our society, from which we will draw some concepts.

The concept of patrimonial domination is constructed in *opposition* to feudalism and from the perspective of bureaucracy. Patrimonialism is characterized by a broad sphere of arbitrariness and consequent instability. In this form of domination, leaders grant rights to those they lead in exchange for military and administrative services, in a sort of extension of patriarchal authority. Subordination relationships in the patrimonial state are based on *loyalty*, through which unconditional discipline is ensured, the most important obligation of status in bureaucracy. The legitimacy of patrimonialism is maintained by tradition and the ability of ruling groups to present themselves as carriers of a charitable ethic developed from the welfare state's policies. The common *bureaucratic-patrimonial* legend of the welfare state is marked by royal charity (Zabludovsky, 1993: 26-27).

In the Mexican case, the definition of the patrimonial character of the current regime fundamentally emphasizes the concentration of power in the executive branch. The paternalism of the Mexican State makes it appear under the ideal of "the father of the people" (a figure that can also apply to a good number of Mexican businessmen and officials), and for this reason, it can sustain a "specific social policy." The country's structure can be considered patrimonialist because different groups (workers, peasants, unions, associations of professionals and academics, among others) primarily relate through the hierarchical "administrative" organization of the central government (horizontal interrelation of different groups is rare). Most regional and state conflicts require presidential power intervention for resolution (Zabludovsky, 1993: 174).

The Weberian term of patrimonialism has also been used to support analyses of corruption in Mexico. Zaid suggests that "...corruption is something that preceded and persists against the new ideals of administrative rationality" (Zabludovsky, 1993:174). In this sense, corruption can be seen as a patrimonialist residue that emerges when bureaucratic rationality is imposed. "Patrimonialism (the private ownership of public functions) can be modernized by eliminating all that is private and personal from official power (which is the bureaucratic ideal) or by commercializing the private goodwill of those with official powers (which is the case of bribery)." (Zaid cited by Zabludovsky, 1993: 175).

It can be said that among the signs of the collapse of patrimonialism in the Mexican State is its inability to provide goods and services to promote the population's social welfare through patrimonial and clientelist relations. Consequently, it is no longer possible to obtain the population's obedience; the figure of the president is no longer seen as the people's protective father. This partly explains the crisis of the July 6, 1988, elections and the fall of the official party in July 2000.

"On the other hand, the process of political modernization in the country—and the consequent overcoming of patrimonialist attitudes—often runs contrary to the interests of those officials who claim to defend it. Despite the fact that, due to their specialized professional training, economic projects, and rhetoric, members of the cabinet have been considered representatives of a new technocracy that tends to displace the old bureaucratic establishments, in many ways, they still operate as a patrimonial technocracy that persists in exercising its

> *administrative function by defending the privileges obtained through the centralization and authoritarianism of the system." (Zabludovsky, 1993: 177).*

According to Zabludovsky, the collapse of Mexican patrimonialism will require significant changes in two of the basic spheres that have characterized it: the subordinate relationship of the other branches of government—specifically the judiciary—to the executive, and the structure of the civil service, which should be governed by efficiency and professionalism rather than unconditional loyalty to the leader.

"A regression to a new form of neopatrimonialism can only be avoided through the defense of legal formalism against moral, utilitarian, and technological demands, with the consequent transformation of the relationships between ethics, legality, and politics." (Zabludovsky, 1993: 178). Furthermore, in the early 1990s, Eva Kras conducted a study on the particularities of the cultural values of small and medium-sized enterprises and managers in Mexico. She discovered that one of the main problems in administration in the country is the excessive conservatism of organizational structures, which is reflected in the practice of traditional management and a "natural" resistance to change.

As a result of this study, Kras developed a comparative analysis between traditional and modern management in Mexico. It is important to note that between the extremes presented by the author, there is a wide range of nuances that express the complexity of the organizational problem in our country, which are not considered in her study.

However, we believe Kras's work is didactically useful for providing an approximate understanding of the characteristics of management in Mexico, and in this sense, it can help us define the appropriate leadership style to understand and improve organizational behavior. In Table 2, we present a comparative summary of the particularities of traditional and modern management, based on the data provided by this study.

TABLE 2. TRADITIONAL MANAGEMENT AND MODERN MANAGEMENT IN MEXICO

	TRADITIONAL MANAGEMENT IN MEXICO	MODERN MANAGEMENT IN MEXICO
Planning	♦ Short-term objectives, ib the owner's mind, rarely achieved, without discussion with employees, only obeyed.	♦ Team planning and documented, short, medium, and long-term objectives, with little flexibility and fear.
Organization and Delegation	♦ Delegation by areas, but authority is centralized in the owner, direct line between each manager and the director.	♦ Integration of the executive level with the administrative level, the executive facilitates and guides decision-making.
Control and Monitoring	♦ The owner rarely checks the tasks delegated, supervision can be interpreted as a threat to employees.	♦ The manager takes responsibility for their team, thus monitors tasks and seeks to maximize the team's capabilities.

Evaluation of the Subordinate Manager	♦ Loyalty, willingness, and obedience are evaluated, initiative is sanctioned.	♦ Evaluation based on results according to the level of responsibility.
Promotion of the Subordinate Manager	♦ Promotion patterns: a) being a family member or friend; b) through influence; c) loyalty, devotion, and performance from the superior's perspective.	♦ According to the needs of the company and personal goals.
Training and Development	♦ Mandatory training programs by law.	♦ Training is seen as an investment for the company, rather than an obligation.
Middle Management	♦ Based on the belief of "giving orders," discreet transmission of knowledge and information by the boss.	♦ Training is considered a privilege by the manager.
Workers	♦ The most skilled worker trains the novice or less skilled, with a tendency towards external training.	♦ Intensive training programs for novices and permanent programs for others.
Interdepartmental Responsibilities	♦ Departments tend to become small fiefdoms.	♦ The manager is a team member, not blaming others for problems.
Relationship with Superior	♦ Respect, fear, and admiration for the boss.	♦ Trust and commitment with the boss.
Manager's Attitude Towards the Position	♦ The position is considered to grant status, privileges, and power, with a focus on preserving prestige.	♦ The position is seen as a challenge, the manager works harder and is more punctual than the team, without privileges.
Manager's Attitude Towards Change	♦ Traditional resistance to change.	♦ Seeks change to improve or innovate.
Manager's Attitude Towards Conflict	♦ In conflicts, the subordinate loses, and contributions from the subordinate are rarely acknowledged.	♦ Conflict is considered a collective opportunity to deeply understand the problem.

Table prepared by Antonio Barba with data from Kras, Eva (1991).

SOME SCOPES OF CERTIFICATION IN MEXICO: THE STRUGGLE FOR REAPPROPRIATION

What has been found in the managerial sense is no less significant than the deepest religious beliefs. Diffused with Eastern mysticism, it offers to meet customer requirements with a dramatic reduction in costs through the work proposed by Crosby in *Quality is Free: The Art of Making Quality Certain* (1979). Here, the ideology and practice of TQM (Total Quality Management) is presented as a direct attack on the culture and traditional practices of work. Its application has become widespread in the manufacturing industry and is increasingly adopted by the service sectors and public administration. TQM provides ideological support to complement internal market systems incorporated into the organizational realm.

The introduction of TQM, in addition to facilitating organizational change, allows for the breakdown of labor role demarcation, increasing the development of a more flexible division of labor. This particular contribution to the general repertoire of organizational

change does not, in itself, constitute internal market relations, but rather creates a particular form of organizational relationships as if they were market relations. Hence, the concept of *quality* serves as a metaphor for the market. Therefore, this allows for a significant articulation between the new ideology, the critique of bureaucracy, the cost of services, and the restructuring that goes beyond the subtle privatization pressures that are suggested, for instance, by implying that public service, from the perspective of quality, can be seen as a business within the private sphere.

Part of the TQM proposal suggests, both for private administration and government, that quality issues should be separated from the allocation of resources. This could, proponents argue, generate considerable savings if all tasks were always "done right the first time and every time." From a critical perspective on bureaucracy, TQM also aligns with a more general transition to organizational postmodernity. However, like postmodernity itself, TQM critically transcends the limits of modern organization to return to premodern forms. This results in a managerial ideology that supports outsourcing for internal and external systems, although it is constrained by the pattern of modernity, expressed in the rigidity of Taylorist and Fordist standards. On one hand, there is support for the empowerment of individual workers and autonomous groups, which transcends the traditional demarcation of work by skill and function. On the other hand, there is a clear articulation of work processes through standards and procedures and their connections with well-known quality standards such as BS5750 and ISO9000.

In this way, the variable rigidly criticizes bureaucratic roles defined through the establishment of procedures, which are centrally affected by the construction of such roles. The development of quality assurance methods, specifically the application of quality standards like BS5750 and ISO9000, requires tasks to be documented through the separation of individual tasks on one hand and particular roles on the other. This exemplifies the significant depersonalization of roles at the heart of bureaucracy. However, the distinctive contribution of TQM is to provide ideological support to these processes in the name of "quality" and through cultural change to challenge traditional practices.

Therefore, ACT can be considered as representative of a *hegemonic project*, which begins with a relatively unlikely notion that could be related to quality improvement (Tuckman, 1994: 738). However, this statement becomes an ideological scheme of individual responsibility in a market relationship, both among individuals within the organization and between clients and suppliers, supported by the organizational hierarchy with a new legitimacy. In this sense, there is no introduction of actual market relations or real quantitative changes in the mode of exchange between participants in organizational relationships. There is no immediate transaction between these clients and suppliers in the chain. Nor is there any lubrication between the frictions of the market, except at the most subjective levels and in the market relations presented to some who may achieve the desired outcome: quality.

Despite the cultural barriers expressed, such as patrimonialism, reappropriation, or the sedimentation of the institutionalization process, this process continues. One of the clearest expressions of this latest stage of institutionalization is found in the regulation of officially instituted quality certification. However, the evidence shows that what has been

created is merely an illusion. It must be taken into account that the majority of companies are micro and small businesses, as shown by the following figures. Of a total of 2,187,427 registered companies, 1,738,877 are micro and 310,336 are small, that is, just under 90% of national companies. The rest of the companies are distributed between medium (108,540) and large (29,674), which make up just over 10% of all companies in Mexico (see Table 1)[85].

TABLE 1. DISTRIBUTION OF COMPANIES BY SECTOR AND SIZE

SECTOR SIZE	MINING	MANUFACTURING	TRADE	FINANCIAL SERVICES	NON-FINANCIAL SERVICES	TOTAL
MICRO	2,198	243,107	991,158	20,812	481,602	1,738,877
SMALL	549	16,831	155,594	5,726	131,636	310,336
MEDIUM	67	3,204	50,46	2,356	52,453	108,54
LARGE	55	2,285	12,972	522	13,84	29,674
TOTAL	2,869	265,427	1,210,184	29,416	679,531	2,187,427

Source: COPARMEX/BDA, 1998: 27

In general terms, it can be confirmed, based on the statistics, that only a very small portion of the total number of registered national companies is certified. The number of companies certified under both the national and foreign schemes, up until the year 2000, amounted to a total of 1,627. This represents less than 0.1% of all national companies. It is noteworthy that most of the certified companies were registered during the last four years (see Table 2).

TABLE 2. COMPANIES CERTIFIED UNDER NATIONAL AND FOREIGN SCHEMES

YEAR	COMPANIES CERTIFIED UNDER NATIONAL SCHEME	COMPANIES CERTIFIED UNDER FOREIGN SCHEME	Total
1992	0	1	1
1993	0	0	0
1994	0	5	5
1995	2	31	33
1996	16	98	114
1997	145	343	488
1998	254	285	539
1999	383	14	397
2000	50	0	50
TOTAL	850	777	1,627

Source: SECOFI, DGN, 2000

Therefore, it can be interpreted that most of the companies represented by micro and small enterprises find it difficult to access financial resources to implement quality systems. Furthermore, it can also be assumed that they have fewer opportunities to venture into a certification process. As shown in Table 3, there are only 94 micro enterprises and 194 small

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[85] It is important to caution the reader that they may encounter variations in the figures presented, as they come from different sources. However, they provide an approximate idea for the analysis being developed.

enterprises certified, compared to 232 medium-sized and 330 large enterprises certified under the national scheme.

TABLE 3. SIZE OF NATIONALLY CERTIFIED COMPANIES

COMPANIES CERTIFIED UNDER NATIONAL SCHEME	
SIZE	**TOTAL**
LARGE	330
MEDIUM	232
SMALL	194
MICRO	94

Source: SECOFI, DGN, 2000

If we compare the number of certified national companies with those in other countries, we can observe the scarcity of certifications in Mexico. According to statistics, by 1995, Mexico had 215 certified companies, compared to 52,591 in the United Kingdom, 10,236 in Germany, 8,762 in the United States, 5,535 in France, and 3,762 in Japan, to mention a few examples.

TABLE 4. NUMBER OF COMPANIES WITH ISO 9000 QUALITY CERTIFICATION

COUNTRY	1993	1994	1995
UNITED KINGDOM	18,577	36,832	52,591
GERMANY	790	3,470	10,236
FRANCE	1,049	3,359	5,535
NETHERLANDS	716	2,718	5,284
ITALY	188	2,008	4,814
SPAIN	43	586	1,492
UNITED STATES	893	3,96	8,762
JAPAN	166	1,06	3,762
BRAZIL	19	348	932
MEXICO	16	85	215
VENEZUELA	1	2	56
CHILE	-	3	15

Source: Montaño, 2000: 45

Finally, in Table 5, you can see the distribution of certifications under national and foreign standards, where it can be interpreted that there is greater interest or ease in getting certified under national rather than foreign standards.

TABLE 5. COMPANIES CERTIFIED UNDER NATIONAL AND FOREIGN STANDARDS

NATIONAL STANDARD	TOTAL	FOREIGN STANDARD	TOTAL
ISO 14001	30	ISO 14001	23
NMX-CC-003:1995/ISO 9001: 1994	95	ISO 9001: 1994	126
NMX-CC-004:1995/ISO 9002: 1994	690	ISO 9002: 1994	273
NMX-CC-005:1995/ISO 9003: 1994	5	QS 9000	347
QS 9000	26	VDA 6	1
VDA 6	4		

Source: SECOFI, DGN, 2000

As we have already pointed out, the process of institutionalizing total quality, as expressed through certification under both national and international schemes, is an illusion when contrasted with the progress in certification among companies in industrialized countries. However, globalization and internationalization processes compel national companies to seek certification as a survival strategy.

CONCLUSIONS

❖ In Mexico, a process of late but steadily increasing institutionalization of total quality is developing.

❖ It can be interpreted that one of the delaying factors in the implementation of total quality is the patrimonial nature of the management in most companies, which hinders their modernization.

❖ The process of institutionalizing total quality is irreversible due to the need to modernize and make companies more flexible to remain competitive in the global market.

❖ Total quality demands greater participation, training, and commitment from workers, as well as a substantive improvement in their quality of life.

❖ The institutionalization of total quality in Mexican companies must respond to their own social, cultural, and organizational conditions.

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