

**BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES OF MIDDLE  
MANAGERS TOWARDS QUALITY PROGRAMS IN  
THEIR ORGANISATIONS**

**by**

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## Glossary

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AQC	Australian Quality Council
EI	Employee Involvement
ISO 9000	International Standards Organisation's standards on quality management systems
SPC	Statistical Process Control
SQC	Statistical Quality Control
TAFE	Technical and Further Education. Former Technical College system.
TQC	Total Quality Control. An earlier version of TQM.
TQM	Total Quality Management. Defined for this research as:  The management philosophy that seeks continuous improvement in the quality of performance of all the processes, products and services of an organisation. It emphasises the understanding of variation, the importance of measurement, the role of the customer and the involvement of employees at all levels of the organisation in pursuit of such improvements. (TQMI, n.d.)
UTS	University of Technology, Sydney

## ABSTRACT

This overall objective of this research was to identify factors that were important in forming middle managers' attitudes toward quality and quality programs in their organisations. An underlying assumption of the research, supported by the literature, was that a middle manager's attitude toward his/her quality program could be an important indicator of behaviour toward the program e.g. resistance, willingness to be involved. Reviews of the literature on middle management, quality, attitude measurement and research more specifically related to the research topic was undertaken. The work of Ajzen (1988) was particularly useful in devising an overall theoretical framework for the research. A number of hypotheses related to the overall research question were formulated.

Twenty-one organisations agreed to participate in the research. These all had a quality program. Some of the organisations were quite advanced in quality, a number had won Australian Quality Awards, others were much less advanced. Organisations were drawn from manufacturing and services in both private and public sectors. Data was collected in two main ways. Firstly, a questionnaire was designed, piloted and distributed to approximately 1100 middle managers in participating organisations. The response rate was approximately 50%. Secondly, in depth interviews were carried out with middle managers, senior managers and quality managers in a number of the participating organisations.

The results generally confirm the importance of the middle management group as key to the success of a quality program. Middle managers across all of the participating organisations generally believed that the TQM approach to management was an effective one. Their views on the effectiveness of ISO9000 were less positive. Middle managers generally believed that the quality programs were more likely to benefit their organisations rather than to directly benefit themselves, although quality programs did provide some opportunities for some middle managers. Middle managers generally believed that their quality programs provided both operational and strategic benefit for their organisations.

Paradoxically, a widely held belief among middle managers was that quality programs did not reduce short term thinking and over-reacting to short term goals.

Positive attitudes to quality in the organisation were associated particularly with the values and beliefs that middle managers held regarding: a) program support from top management, from their direct boss and from their colleagues; b) a range of program outcomes for the organisation and c) a range of program outcomes related to the individual middle manager. For middle managers actively involved in their organisations quality program the clarity of their program role was positively related to program attitudes. Training/education in quality was also significantly related to some beliefs and attitudes towards quality and quality programs. Middle managers generally believed that quality programs involved a significant increase in paper work and bureaucracy. However this was not a significant influence on their attitudes toward quality in their organisations. An important finding was that for a wide range of beliefs and attitudes related to quality no significant differences were found between the types of jobs held by middle managers. An exception was the quality specialist group who generally had significantly more positive attitudes and beliefs about quality and their quality programs than did other job categories.

Middle managers seemed relatively at ease with most of the changes that were taking place as part of their programs. In particular they had relatively positive views on devolution of responsibility to lower level employees. Middle managers also seemed relatively at ease with their own performance being more tightly monitored with program implementation. The research supported the more optimistic view of middle management that has been reported recently (e.g. Fenton-O'Creevy 1998). The notion of the middle management still had currency in all of the organisations participating in the research despite the many structural changes that had taken place.