



## INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE, IT AND MANAGEMENT

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## QUALITY MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES AND COMPETITIVENESS - CASE STUDIES ON SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES

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### ABSTRACT

*Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) form an important part of Indian economy. They contribute immensely to the economy through employment generation, investments, innovations and exports. Today in global competition, many of these SMEs are struggling hard to survive. Thus, there is an urgent need to improve the competitiveness of Indian SMEs. The current investigation is an attempt to establish the relationship between SME competitiveness and quality management initiatives. The process of qualitative analysis involves a series of individual case studies based on semi structured interviews. The use of multiple sources, establishment of chain of events and review of drafted case studies by experts are the techniques employed to improve construct and external validity. Multiple case studies are developed using semi structured interviews, documentation inspection, and direct observation at multiple sources. Several semi-structured interviews were conducted with the entrepreneurs and quality professionals from SMEs in the region who have implemented ISO 9000 quality management system, to investigate the role of quality initiatives in enhancing the competitiveness and to validate the proposed model. Based on the results of qualitative methodology, suggestions are made to the small and medium engineering industries to effectively manage quality and to enhance their competitiveness.*

### KEYWORDS

Qualitative Analysis, Quality Management, SME Competitiveness.

### INTRODUCTION

ustained and healthy growth of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and their widespread diffusion are necessary to ensure balanced development of different regions of any nation. SMEs form an important part of Indian economy. They contribute immensely to the economy through employment generation, investments, innovations and exports. They are the backbone for large corporations in supply of parts, components, and finished products. Today in global competition, many of these SMEs are struggling to survive. These SMEs need to overcome their technological backwardness and compete in the global environment. Thus, there is an urgent need to improve the competitiveness of Indian SMEs. There is widespread acceptance of quality management initiatives as tools to improve competitive advantage of large enterprises. However, their applications to enhance competitiveness of SMEs are yet to be established. The current investigation is an attempt to understand the relationship between SME competitiveness and quality management initiatives. Thus the present study has given insights into the concepts viz. potentials, processes and performances of Small and Medium Engineering Industries in the semi-urban places viz., Belgaum, Harihar, Hubli, Dharwar and Shimoga of Karnataka State in India who have implemented ISO 9000 quality management system.

### QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

The process of qualitative analysis involves a series of individual case studies based on semi structured interviews. The Qualitative approach strives to understand the perspective of the program stakeholders, looking to firsthand experience to provide meaningful data. The qualitative design focuses on a holistic view of what is being studied (via documents, case histories, observations and interviews). Thus threats to internal validity are realized and addressed. [1] The use of multiple sources, establishment of chain of events and review of drafted case studies by experts are the techniques employed to improve construct and external validity. Multiple case studies are developed using semi structured interviews, documentation inspection, and direct observation at multiple sources. The narrations of cases were reviewed by experts to correct misinterpretations if any. In order to ensure reliability uniform protocol was employed for developing case studies [2]. The details of these case studies and their analysis are presented in this paper.

### INDIVIDUAL CASE STUDIES

Individual interviews were conducted with SME entrepreneurs to understand their perception of quality management, competitiveness and the influence of quality management initiatives on SME competitiveness. Twelve semi-structured interviews were conducted with the entrepreneurs of small and medium engineering industries in the region. The interviewees were asked to define quality management, competitiveness and talk about their experience regarding quality management implementations. They were also asked to explain the influence of quality management in improving various components and factors of SME competitiveness included in the conceptual model of the current study.

Based on the individual interviews with entrepreneurs, twelve case studies were developed, to evaluate the influence of quality management on SME potentials and processes. Some of these case studies are presented in the following paragraphs.

### CASE STUDY # 1

SME-1 is an enterprise manufacturing automobile components for domestic market and exports. Founded by an engineer with professional experience, this

enterprise has grown over the years. Customer suggestions, certification, and acceptance have helped this enterprise. "What is essential is an urge within to be creative and innovative" says this entrepreneur. He thinks that self motivation and commitments are helping in motivating his employees. These aspects and the attitude of the entrepreneur have helped this enterprise. The entrepreneur strongly believes that, behind ISO 9000 there is a hype created by the consultants and certifying agencies. "An ISO certificate cannot ensure quality unless people are sincere and honest" says the entrepreneur.

According to him, quality refers to manufacturing the products as per the specification and tolerances. And competitiveness is nothing but improving quality and reducing cost and to achieve this is a challenge. Quality initiatives like ISO 9000 have not helped this enterprise. What has helped is sincerity, honesty, and the team work. This is consistent with literature findings that behavioural factors such as executive commitment, employee empowerment and an open culture can produce competitive advantage more strongly than quality initiatives [50].

Quality Initiatives have not helped the top management, or even at supervisory level. Some benefits in the area of training workers have been derived here. Employee awareness regarding the quality and customer service is the benefit derived in this firm. The success depends on extent to which employees are prepared to learn and transform. He is undecided about the effectiveness of these initiatives in promoting innovativeness. Quality initiatives have not provided any major breakthroughs and financial benefits for this firm. Continuous improvements have been taking place in the firm over the years even before the implementation of ISO 9000. So it is difficult to attribute continuous improvements to ISO certification alone. Small firms should not implement ISO 9000 in haste and for the sake of certificates only. "Implement it for standardizing the operations and participate in it sincerely, it may work" says the entrepreneur.

The entrepreneur attributes the small improvements in process standardization, marketing, customer service and employee skills and awareness to successful implementation of quality initiatives. Quality initiatives have not helped in improving entrepreneur's competencies. They are also not influencing competitive scope factors like supply chain, clustering, networking etc. Quality implementations have not assisted this firm to improve their competitive processes like Supply chain management, financial management, product development, and information systems management. Overall no significant advantages are attributed to Quality initiatives.

## CASE STUDY # 2

SME-2 is known for its Ethical Management. People from all over the country visit this firm to interact and understand the systems. It has become a kind of "Pilgrimage Centre" for the corporate world of India. The company Mission is to nurture an Ethically Managed Organization, and not to exploit Customer, Employees, Suppliers, Government, Society and Nature. Vision is to create an island of Excellence through focus on Customer, Employee Empowerment and Continuous Improvement. This firm is manufacturing hydraulic pumps, valves, actuators, flow control devices and accessories.

The foundation for quality in this firm is based on ancient Indian cultural heritage. The entrepreneur, a mechanical engineer who quotes examples from Bhagavadh Gita and thoughts of Swami Vivekananda and their relevance to modern industry even today. Western Efficiency and dynamism combined with Indian spiritual values will create the best management system in the world, argues the entrepreneur.

The firm is known as a temple of ethics. "Growth is Life; stagnation is Death" the entrepreneur quotes Swami Vivekananda. This requires lot of sacrifice on the part of management and renunciation of ownership mentality. Company states, "Honesty is not the best policy--- It is the Policy here". The management has declared that they are honest, transparent, and they do not pay bribes. Business and ethics people say are oxymoron. An ethical business ensures sound growth and the growth is sustainable. An individual, a society, a nation, a civilization cannot exist peacefully without spirituality. Same is the case with any organisation or business. This enterprise believes that spirituality has to be an integral part of Organizational culture. When people work at places of worship or charity, they work selflessly and at near Excellence. Indian work culture is practicing karma – Yoga.

No ISO documentation or manuals are used here. Most things work here with human memory, its only intuition, says the entrepreneur. Employees are motivated to perform, and exhibit excellence. The culture is highly traditional, same time innovation is visible in the enterprise. Technology is constantly updated with an eye on future. Profits and surplus are reinvested here to provide necessary infrastructural facilities. The firm has a good list of satisfied clientele, and dedicated single source suppliers. Processes are standardized and being continuously updated, customer service is excellent. Very high performance and growth are the success story here. High level of entrepreneur's commitment to quality, productivity and, corporate social responsibility is visible in the firm. Entrepreneur is humble in attributing all these achievements to the dedication, hard work, and excellent teamwork of his employees. No ISO or any borrowed quality initiatives belonging to western world can be directly implemented in the Indian environment, believes the entrepreneur. He says the quality culture should be in line with our tradition, culture and beliefs.

With innovative ideas this enterprise has proved that, it is possible to achieve success in all areas of competitiveness. Organizational potentials and capabilities have improved. External scope has also been enhanced including government and state support. Entrepreneurial competencies also have been influenced positively. It is a journey of continuous improvement and perfection. Processes are being updated continuously and the results are positive.

Product is only a means to create wealth. Management system is an integration of several functions. When all these functions are efficient the system becomes efficient. Value for money is a product cost, quality, delivery and service which decides customer satisfaction. Systems like JIT, KanBan, MIS, TQM, TPM Employee Empowerment, Kaizen etc have helped this enterprise in the process of generating wealth.

A transparent system of wealth generation and a link of compensation to employees ensure that the employees earn their wages and need not be paid. This system has made employees responsible for their returns and in turn has improved wealth generated per employee. It has promoted multiple skills and cut down manpower requirement.

Corporate social responsibility is helping the organization fulfil its social obligation.

## CASE STUDY # 3

SME-3 is a unit manufacturing alloy steel components for automobile and tools for earth moving industries. Company exports up to 25% of its turnover. Company has implemented ISO 9001: 2000. Entrepreneur has good understanding of quality concepts like ISO, TQM and six sigma. Quality initiatives are helping this firm moderately at all levels of organization structure. Firm is reaping the benefits of process innovations. Entrepreneur is also trying to achieve continuous improvements so as to ensure competitiveness. Quality initiatives have reasonably helped this firm in areas like technological capability, infrastructural capability and even to some extent in financial capability. Quality initiatives are especially useful in customer service and marketing, and to some extent in procurement and supply chain management. Initiatives have helped in standardizing various processes and activities and to improve performance. The firm has not influenced the areas like human resource development in the region, training, education, institutional interactions. Employee attrition is the major problem this firm is facing today. Shortage of skilled employees is affecting its business. Retaining skilled, trained manpower is a challenge. Quality initiatives are not helping in other external factors like networking and state support. They will help to some extent in entrepreneurial competencies provided entrepreneur finds time and shows inclination, willingness to learn, practice and implement. Otherwise most ISO documentation is a waste of money, time and resources says the entrepreneur. Entrepreneur looks at future with lot of hope and confidence that Quality Initiatives empower the firm with real competitive advantage.

## CASE STUDY # 4

SME-4 is a professionally managed, fast growing enterprise. This firm manufactures and exports precision machined components. Entrepreneur is a post graduate in industrial engineering. Entrepreneur considers quality as a competitive weapon and customer requirements as driver of continuous quality improvements. Quality awareness programs are conducted to provide necessary exposure to employees in quality procedures and systems. Firm has implemented ISO, QS, TS, ERP etc, Advantages of ISO is facts documented on paper and it has helped in improving human resource, technological expertise, and infrastructural facilities. It has also helped in marketing and understanding customer requirements. A commitment and participation in quality initiatives also helped in some areas of entrepreneurial competencies like opportunity and relationship. Engineers and managers are also trained in statistics, computers and

leadership skills to improve organizational efficiency. Networking is useful hence he is trying to solve problems of SMEs with clustering and networking. "Quality initiatives are strategies to be ahead in all domains of an organization" says the professional, dynamic entrepreneur. Competitiveness is what is essential today to achieve the vision of the enterprise. It is being excellent and the enterprise is way ahead of competitors. Entrepreneur illustrates many examples like waste minimization, energy savings, cost control, product development etc as consequence of quality initiatives in the firm. He firmly believes that quality initiatives are major tools of competitive advantage because they encompass all areas of organizational management. "Longevity depends on the lifestyle, whether it is for a firm or a human being" says the professional entrepreneur.

#### CASE STUDY # 5

SME-5 is a small partnership firm manufacturing automobile components for domestic original equipment manufacturers. Firm has implemented ISO 9001: 2000. Entrepreneur says it is useful in marketing and convincing customers.

Quality initiatives are standards to convince customers regarding the ability to ensure consistent quality. Competitiveness is what is needed today to face the cutthroat competition. There are no significant improvements in the employee attitude and work culture reiterates the entrepreneur. Quality initiatives have not helped in organizational capabilities and potentials like technology, infrastructure or our competencies and management skills. There are no tools and techniques with possibilities of improving other external factors. Company has not achieved any significant overall improvements in its performance on implementation of quality initiatives. Improved production processes and customer service are some of the benefits achieved in this firm. The main advantage is the availability of data regarding the operations. Better interactions with supplier and customers are the other benefits accomplished by this firm.

#### CASE STUDY # 6

This SME-6 is a firm, having Japanese collaboration manufacturing high quality vacuum pumps for both domestic market and for exports. In fact, exports amount to nearly 70% of its sales, while remaining 30% is domestic sales. The firm has customer certification for its plant, facilities and products. The firm is also implementing ISO 9001. According to the management representative, quality is what the company delivers to the customers and competitiveness is the customer's perception of value they are receiving from the firm.

Many of its key employees are trained abroad by the collaborator. Firm also has a good network of sales and dealers and even suppliers. Firm has not received much support from Government and quality initiatives have hardly influenced this says the entrepreneur. Customer certifications have helped them to improve quality of their products and manufacturing processes. Benefits include moderate improvements in technology and infrastructure. But the quality initiatives have not significantly helped in creating external scope for the firm. Production processes are being upgraded so as to improve process capability and reduce wastages and delays. Since the entrepreneurs and top management are trained abroad by the collaborators they have acquired necessary skills and competencies. Overall impact on productivity, quality and competitiveness is reasonable.

#### CASE STUDY # 7

SME-7 is a firm manufacturing alloy steel investment casing components for chemical process pumps, valves and other engineering industries. Company's exports income is nearly 25% of its turnover. This firm initially obtained ISO 9002, which was subsequently upgraded to ISO 9001: 2000. Reputation of high quality is an integral aspect of functioning of the organization says the entrepreneur. Company's growth chart reflects the compliance of customer quality requirements, service, delivery and competitive pricing. According to the entrepreneur, quality policy in place is to deliver value to the customer. Quality practices include root cause analysis, innovations and the objective is waste minimization. Customer feedback so far is very positive and encouraging. Cost reduction exercises include continuous improvement programs like power savings, rejection minimization, material procurement and inventory management. Quality initiatives have helped the firm at all levels especially at higher levels. Quality initiatives are helping the company in continuous improvement programs. There are absolutely no financial risks involved in implementing quality initiative; rather it promotes continuous improvement which is helpful in the long run. His suggestion to new entrepreneurs is - implement ISO, without bothering about certificates; what is essential is commitment, not the certificate. There is no substitute for quality initiatives to ensure competitiveness, reiterates the entrepreneur.

Quality initiatives have helped in achieving moderate improvements in potentials like human resource, technology, infrastructure and to some extent in finance. Waste minimization is achieved and has resulted in financial benefits. Entrepreneur himself has shouldered the responsibility of management representative for ISO; the regular meetings and brainstorming sessions have helped him in sharpening his communication skills and his competencies. ISO has helped this firm in improving sales, expanding markets, rising input quality reducing input cost. Entrepreneur declares that ISO has no tools and techniques to promote mutual cooperation between firms and empowering to bargain better. It does not provide any platform for spreading knowledge, skills, literacy in the neighbourhood. Government and state support is nothing but lip sympathy. Like in most areas, the budgetary support provided is not reaching SMEs since the bureaucratic machinery is inefficient and corrupt. Finally quality initiatives are indirectly helping the firm in ensuring productivity. ISO is also helping this firm to some extent in product and process innovations. Other advantages include promoting growth and profitability.

#### CASE STUDY # 8

SME-8 started 10 years ago as a small firm to fulfil the needs of a local industries. Later it started manufacturing some products independently. Now the firm is supplying components to automobile industry. Entrepreneur says there is ample demand but margins are very much low. To manufacture and sell at the prices offered by the customers is difficult for this small firm. Withstanding competition and surviving over 10 years is the greatest achievement of this firm. Though there is no dearth of orders for an ISO company, if one can manufacture and supply. When margins are negative, not producing is profitable compared to producing more. There is no shortage of raw materials but price fluctuations are creating havoc for the firm. There is no dearth for man power but skilled or trained ones are not available in the region. Employee attrition is a problem. Well trained employees are not staying in these places.

According to the entrepreneur, quality is what a customer expects in their products. Competitiveness is ability to withstand the shocks in the business environment. Today, obtaining ISO certificate cannot be considered as a competitive advantage but not having it is a disadvantage. Quality initiatives are of little help at management and supervisory levels. But at grassroots level, training is useful to develop employee skills. Documentation is a burden which badly affects efficiency. People are lost in documentation and data. Quality initiatives have also adversely affected innovation. Today if we declare we do not have ISO we are finished, says the entrepreneur. Coming to financial risks, ISO is costly and hence a firm which is not making sufficient profits cannot afford it. But for a profitable organization, it is advantageous and is financially viable. Quality initiatives today involve a lot to be spent on aesthetics, decorations, and luxury. These are not productive investments for a small firm.

Continuous improvement is taking place here whenever the firm gets good orders with advance payments. ISO documentation is not useful here because, most things can run without putting them on paper. Documenting it on paper introduces inefficiency and the illiterate workers are not good at it. Usefulness of documents is disputable according to the entrepreneur. Today it is all tricks of trade which has become more important than trade itself. Getting orders in business is the trick and everything follows it, argues the frank entrepreneur.

Quality initiatives can contribute to human resource capability but retaining efficient employees is the real challenge. If they are trained better and trained to communicate better then there are more chances that they may quit early. Technology is helping to offset the shortage of employee skills to some extent. Any case it is not related to quality initiatives, says the entrepreneur.

Infrastructure is required to ensure quality and not vice versa. And finance is required to implement quality, initiatives believes the entrepreneur. As customers insisted on ISO certification this firm has obtained it. The firm is facing difficulties in procuring good raw material at reasonable price. Clustering and networking is not happening in this region. A problem with human resource management is paucity of skills. To train them, make them useful, is difficult; may be labour laws



are to be amended. Interactions with educational institutes are not productive, because academicians are too busy with their business. Government and state support are not fruitful; rather SMEs are supporting the government with taxes and contributions to exchequer in terms of income tax, professional tax, excise duty, sales tax, vat and what not, argues the entrepreneur. Coming to entrepreneur competencies, no quality initiative can help transforming an incompetent person competent and incompetent firm competent, argues the entrepreneur. Where there is a will there is a way. Individual's will to change is what is required. Regarding competitive processes, materials and supply chain, ISO is of some help in evaluating suppliers. Some benefits are achieved in production management but it ultimately depends on the worker and his attitude. The entrepreneur admits his failure to convince employees in spite of ISO certification. Significant advantage this firm has derived from ISO is in the functions related to marketing and customer relation. No major advantages are achieved in product development due to ISO. Even before the implementation of ISO 9000 quality products were being developed in this firm.

Small firms do not have much information requirements like larger ones. Short cycle times, small product range and small number of components per product etc. have made information system requirements trivial for this firm. The link between management information system and quality initiatives is not clear, declares this entrepreneur.

Coming to productivity, higher quality means lower is the productivity, that is what he believes. Product and process innovation are taking place but these achievements cannot be attributed to ISO alone. Growth, profitability and achievements are the part and parcel of modern business. Overall the firm has not derived these performance enhancements from ISO implementations. Hardly any changes or improvements have taken place in this firm which can be attributed to ISO certification.

### CASE STUDY # 9

SME-9 is a machine shop, ancillary of a local SME. Acquiring ISO certification is a major achievement of the firm. According to the entrepreneur quality initiative means producing quality products. Competitiveness is flourishing in present day cutthroat competition. Quality initiatives have helped the firm to get more orders, expand markets and customers.

Quality initiative has helped management to get overall quality awareness. At supervisory cadre working has become more systematic. And at grassroots level, training has enhanced employee skills a little.

Quality initiative has also helped in making people innovative. Process innovations are quite successful in this firm in bringing down the cost. Continuous improvements are taking place here since the entrepreneur himself is constantly working towards improvements as a management representative for quality implementations. This entrepreneur stresses the need for the personal involvement of management for the success of ISO 9000. He considers competitiveness as being excellent in all areas of the modern enterprise.

Significant improvements in organizational capability are the result of human resource, technology and infrastructure enhancements in the firm. Moderate improvements in human resource capability with quality training and skill enhancement have been realized in the firm. Similarly some improvements have taken place in technological capability. Even infrastructural capabilities are being upgraded slowly and steadily. Thus quality initiative is promoting some improvements in the internal potentials of the firm. Small improvements in financial capability of this firm are associated with quality initiatives undertaken here.

In this globalized circumstances market opportunities are enormous. Having a few trusted suppliers is easy to manage. Employable human resource availability in the region is a problem. Entrepreneur is working on them. Entrepreneur feels it is the responsibility of government, society, community as well as parents and the role of SMEs in this endeavour is limited. Clustering and networking is not possible here because entrepreneurs are not yet mature enough to cooperate. These SMEs are not able to lobby and get government support. It requires different political orientation; SMEs are not yet organized to handle this. Problem is of leadership. Quality initiatives are not influencing these areas of external potentials.

Quality meetings are helping to enhance managerial skills of this entrepreneur. Quality initiatives have brought out some changes in his perception. Customer focus and quality point of view have long-term benefits. Initiatives in supply chain management are helping in maintaining low inventory levels. Production efficiency and cost reduction are the benefits derived from quality initiatives in production management function. There is a gradual shift from quality control to process control in this firm. The firm is trying to improve human resource utilization by better training workers in multiple skills. Customer focus is helping to a great extent in marketing. Documentation related to financial management provides data whenever required and is useful in budgeting. Company is yet to implement full-fledged management information system. Computers and database systems are being used here.

Moderate improvement in productivity, growth and profitability are attributed to quality initiatives implemented in the firm. SME is yet to realize the major benefits of organizational excellence and innovations.

### CASE STUDY # 10

SME-10 is a small firm manufacturing automobile spares mainly catering to the local market. Today this firm is getting small orders from domestic auto ancillaries. The firm has no major milestones, achievements or breakthroughs to claim. This firm is yet to introduce computer aided systems to assist design and manufacturing. According to the entrepreneur, quality initiatives are actions taken in the right direction. Competitiveness is nothing but survival strategy.

Quality initiatives have not really helped this firm and no benefits are seen at any level. Entrepreneur is unable to perceive how quality initiatives promote overall improvements. The firm is operating in a market segment where customers prefer low cost compared to better quality. Hence the firm is focusing on low quality cheaper products segment. Low price is our strength, claims the entrepreneur. According to the entrepreneur low cost is the major competitive weapon for this firm.

Firm has obtained ISO to satisfy a few customers. But the ISO has hardly helped this firm. Very little benefits in marketing are attributed to ISO certification in this firm. In its journey of keeping cost down, ISO is becoming an obstacle for this firm.

### CASE STUDY # 11

SME-11 is a general engineering workshop, manufacturing products for local markets like grills, welded and machined parts for construction and agricultural sector.

Quality initiatives reflect the trend towards high quality requirements in this modern age. Today without competitiveness it is impossible to do any business says the entrepreneur. Quality initiative helped this firm to a very small extent. Very little benefits are derived by the firm from ISO implementation. Quality initiatives promote improvements in thinking process, but the firm is facing problems in implementations. Financial risks in quality initiative if any are insured by the government. But maintenance cost is becoming costly for this firm. Entrepreneur finds it difficult to spare time towards quality initiatives, as he is bogged down with the routine work. Better to standardize early if customers insist, so that firm may be able to reap benefits later, advises the entrepreneur. Pricing is the main weapon for this SME. The question is how to keep price low without undergoing loss.

Capability enhancements in this firm are yet to happen. Competitive scope is yet to get any benefit. A few customers are recognizing quality initiatives and ISO certification. No changes have taken place in entrepreneurial competencies here owing to ISO certification. Very little benefits are attributed to competitive processes enhancements. Moderate improvements are seen in marketing. Small benefits are seen in production management and information system along with ISO implementation in the firm. Information availability is an advantage for this entrepreneur.

### CASE STUDY # 12

SME-12 is a small unit manufacturing inputs to the local SMEs. The firm has obtained ISO certification, as some of its customers wanted it to be certified. A private consulting firm helped the SME to quickly obtain ISO certification. Entrepreneur has no major achievements and break-through to talk about. His concept

of quality is whims and fancies of the customers who want everything. There are no limits for customer expectations. Entrepreneur also is sceptical about competitiveness as exploitation of weaker entity.

Quality initiatives are helping the firm to a small extent only. Some improvements at supervisory level have happened, as they started thinking about quality. This is a first step towards improvement. To what an extent one can change workers' attitude is the question posed by the entrepreneur.

It is difficult to perceive the interrelation between quality initiatives and improvements in this firm. Entrepreneur does not want to take additional financial risk by investing more money on any improvements. Since there are incentives offered by the state, there is no major onetime investment needed for quality initiatives. No investment is made on aesthetics as the firm could not afford it. No major continuous improvements attributed to quality initiatives are taking place. Do not over spend on quality initiatives, if you cannot afford it, advises the entrepreneur. Quality initiatives are not the only tools of competitive advantage. Customers are bargaining for price cuts. Many strategies are possible. Winning strategy is the major competitive advantage says the entrepreneur. SME-12 has small benefits derived in human resource capability, marketing management, production and operations management on implementation of quality initiatives. Hence meagre benefits are achieved in organizational performance. Otherwise the firm has no significant benefits derived in any other areas of SME competitiveness.

## INFERENCES

Summary of these case studies is presented in Table-2 and 3. An analysis of these case studies indicated that marketing management and customer relations management are the two factors that benefited most from quality implementations. Some improvements in operations and production management are also revealed. Similarly a little positive influence is observed in the areas of technology, materials and supply chain management. And very little influence is also observed in areas like human resource management and organizational infrastructure. However, other factors of competitive scope and entrepreneur competencies have not benefited by the quality implementations. Mainly areas like clustering and networking, institute interactions, state support have not influenced by quality management systems. In fact a very important area of entrepreneurial competencies is the one which is not at all influenced by quality management systems. This is mainly because of apathy of top management and most of them are interested in acquiring more profits rather than providing better quality products and services. And this is the main drawback of SMEs in this region.

High cost of implementation of quality management systems and laborious paper work and documentation are indicated as the disadvantages in SMEs. Many of these small and medium enterprises have obtained quality certification without any improvements in their quality outlook and system. Some of the entrepreneurs have hardly involved in the process of quality implementation. A few units have assigned the responsibility of implementing ISO quality management systems to external quality consultants. Thus no one in the firm is involved in the implementation process. Hence they maintain two parallel documentation systems one for their routine process and the other for ISO 9000 documentation. This only adds to the cost without any addition to value. Many of these firms are not making use of any of this documentation. All this paperwork is maintained just to satisfy the certifying agencies. Result of these case studies is presented in the table-1.

**TABLE - 1: FACTORS OF SME COMPETITIVENESS INFLUENCED BY QUALITY MANAGEMENT**

#	Positive Influence	No Influence
1	Marketing Management and CRM	Clustering and Networking
2	Operations and Production management	HR availability and institute interactions
3	Technology Management	Government and State Support
4	Materials and Supply Chain Management systems	Entrepreneur Competencies
5	Human Resource management and capability	Financial Management
6	Infrastructure	

At the same time a few SMEs who have systematically implemented quality management systems are reaping the benefits. Thus there is a strong need to educate the entrepreneurs of small and medium enterprises regarding the benefits of quality management implementations. Today when these enterprises have to compete in the liberalized global market it is impossible for a small enterprise to survive without quality approaches. It is impossible to ensure process capability in the absence of modern quality tools and techniques. Based on these results conclusions are drawn with respect to the influence of quality management on SME competitiveness. And appropriate suggestions are made to small and medium enterprises to effectively manage quality and enhance their competitiveness.

## REFERENCES

1. Kathryn A. Bowen. (1996), *"The Sin of Omission - Punishable by Death to Internal Validity: An Argument for integration of Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods to Strengthen Internal Validity"*, Ithaca, NY; Cornell University, Dept. of Policy Analysis & Management, [www.socialresearchmethods.net/Gallery/Bowen/hss691.htm](http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/Gallery/Bowen/hss691.htm)
2. Yin, R. K. (1994), *"Case Study Research: Design and Methods"*, Second ed. Sage publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.

## TABLES

TABLE-2: SUMMARY OF RESPONSES OF CASE STUDIES( SME-1 to SME-6)

#	Queries	SME # 1	SME # 2	SME # 3	SME # 4	SME # 5	SME # 6
1	Overall benefits of Quality Mgmt	No major benefits	Remarkable	Moderate	Significant	No major benefits	Moderate benefits
2	Benefits at different levels	At workers level	All levels	All levels	All Levels	None	Mgmt & supervisory
3	Does it promote innovation?	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
4	Financial risks?	No	Not at all	No	No	No	No
5	Continuous improvements?	Cannot say	Is the way of life here	Possible	Yes	No	Possible
6	Suggestions to other SMEs	Certificate No System Yes	Practice Ethical Management	Implement it at the earliest	Start with ISO	Avoid it if you can	Quality initiatives is useful
7	Is this a major tool? If not what else?	No, Will to succeed	Yes, Ensure value	Yes	Yes	No, marketing	No Networking
8	Organizational Capability	Very Little	Yes	Moderate	Yes	No	Moderate
9	Human Resource	A little	Yes	Moderate	Yes	No	Moderate
10	Technology	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
11	Infrastructure	No	Yes	Moderate	Yes	No	Moderate
12	Finance	No major benefits	Yes	Moderate	Yes	No	No
13	<b>Competitive scope</b>	<b>A little</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>A little</b>	<b>A little</b>
14	Customers and Markets	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
15	Suppliers and Supply Chain	No	Yes	A little	Yes	A little	Moderate
16	Clustering and Networking	No	Not happening	No	No	No	No
17	HR availability and institute interactions	No	Moderate	No	No	No	No
18	Government and State Support	No	Moderate	No	No	No	No
19	<b>Entrepreneurial competencies</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Little</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>A little</b>
20	Opportunity Competencies	No	Yes	No	Moderate	No	No
21	Relationship Competencies	No	Yes	Little	Moderate	No	Little
22	Organizing Competencies	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
23	Conceptual Competencies	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
24	Strategic Competencies	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
25	Commitment Competencies	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
26	Competitive Process	Yes process stds.	Yes	Yes	Yes	A Little	Moderate
27	Materials and Supply Chain	No	Yes	Moderate	Yes	A little	No
28	Production Management	Moderate	Yes	Yes	Yes	A little	Moderate
29	Financial Management	No	Yes	No	A little	No	No
30	Marketing Management & CRM	Moderate	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Moderate
31	Human Resource Management	Moderate	Yes	Moderate	Yes	No	Moderate
32	Development and Engineering	No	Yes	Moderate	Yes	No	No
33	Information System and MIS	No	Yes	Moderate	Yes	No	A little
34	<b>Organizational performance</b>	No	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Very little</b>	<b>A little</b>
35	Productivity	No	Yes	Moderate	Yes	Very little	Moderate
36	Products and Process Innovations	No	Yes	Little	Yes	No	Very little
37	Growth & Achievements	No	Yes	Moderate	Yes	No	Moderate
38	Influence of quality SME Comp.	Insignificant	Significant	Moderate	Significant	Very little	Very little

TABLE-3: SUMMARY OF RESPONSES OF CASE STUDIES (SME-7 TO SME-12)

#	Queries	SME # 7	SME # 8	SME # 9	SME # 10	SME # 11	SME # 12
1	Overall benefits of Q Mgmt.	Moderate	No Major Benefits	Significant	Not Significant	Very little	Very little
2	Benefits at different levels	All levels	Workers level	Lower level	No Benefits at all	Uniform at all levels	Supervisory level
3	Does it promote innovation?	No	No	Yes	No	Can't say	No
4	Financial risks?	No	No	No	No	No	Possible
5	Continuous improvements?	Yes	No	Possible	No	On People	No
6	Suggestions to other SMEs	Go for it	do you afford it?	Get involved	No- if you cannot	Implement early	Dont spend more
7	Is this a major tool? If not what else?	Yes	No Business tricks	Yes	No Low cost	No Bargaining capacity	No A winning strategy
8	<b>Organisational Capability</b>	Yes	Very little	Significant	No	No	Very little
9	Human Resource	Moderate	No	Moderate	No	No	A little
10	Technology	Moderate	No	Moderate	No	No	No
11	Infrastructure	Moderate	No	Moderate	No	No	No
12	Finance	Moderate	No	Insignificant	No	No	No
13	<b>Competitive scope</b>	<b>A little</b>	<b>Very little</b>	<b>A little</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>
14	Customers and Markets	Yes	A little	Yes	No	A little	A little
15	Suppliers and Supplies	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
16	Clustering and Networking	No	No	No	No	No	No
17	HR availability & institute interactions	No	No	No	No	No	No
18	Govt. and State Support	No	No	No	No	No	No
19	<b>Entrepreneurial competencies</b>	<b>A little</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>A little</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>
20	Opportunity Competencies	Yes	No	Little	No	No	No
21	Relationship Competencies	Moderate	No	Little	No	No	No
22	Organizing Competencies	No	No	No	No	No	No
23	Conceptual Competencies	No	No	No	No	No	No
24	Strategic Competencies	No	No	No	No	No	No
25	Commitment Competencies	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
26	Competitive Process	Yes	A Little	Yes	Very little	Very little	Very little
27	Materials and Supply Chain	Yes	A little	Yes	No	No	No
28	Production Management	Yes	A little	Yes	No	A little	A little
29	Financial Management	Moderate	No	A little	No	No	No
30	Marketing Management & CRM	Yes	Yes	Yes	Very little	Yes	A little
31	Human Resource Management	Moderate	No	Yes	No	No	No
32	Development and Engineering	Little	No	A little	No	No	No
33	Information System and MIS	Moderate	No	Moderate	No	Very little	No
34	<b>Organizational performance</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>
35	Productivity	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
36	Products and Process Innovation.	Little	No	Little	No	No	No
37	Growth and Achievements	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
38	Influence of quality management on SME Competitiveness	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Very little



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