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## Editorial

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The quality holds the key to competitiveness in today's global market, regardless of the size of the company. Despite the fact that quality management practices are primarily embraced in manufacturing sector, quality management in the service industries has been gaining momentum over the past decade. Today, we observe that a large number of service organisations are taking initiatives to implement total quality management (TQM). To implement TQM effectively, it is necessary to understand clearly the unique characteristics of the service operations. While much has been researched about quality management in manufacturing, the focus on quality in service industries has only been recent.

The service sector covers a very wide spectrum of differentiated organisations such as healthcare, education, banking, insurance, hotels, transport, etc., to name but a few. It involves a very large number of people in a variety of work processes. The service sector has become the dominant element of the economy in the industrialised nations. This special issue invited submission of papers that present role, barriers, challenges and issues of new quality improvement initiatives in the service sector. It will have implications for all managers and entrepreneurs responsible for quality improvement in the service sector including SMEs. Conceptual, empirical, survey and case-based papers are included in the issue.

Our 'call for paper' invited perspective authors to submit papers addressing the theme of the special issue. In total, we received 15 paper submissions in response to the 'call for papers'. Each paper was reviewed by two to three subject experts. Based on the review comments from reviewers and our own reviews of the papers, we accepted a total of seven papers. These papers provide excellent coverage of issues and concerns of quality management in the service sector across the globe.

In an effort to implement quality management tools and practices in the service sector, it is always desirable to start with providing a good comparison between manufacturing and service organisations. This comparison helps establish better understanding of issues and challenges faced by the service sector. The *first* paper, 'Geographies, motivations and benefits from ISO 9000 standard: a comparison of manufacturing and service organisations', describes the differences between manufacturing and service industries through an empirical research. The paper reveals that service organisations are more focused on national business environment and experience less coercive pressure to get certified in comparison to manufacturing counterparts. Nevertheless, both sectors gain similar benefits from ISO 9000 certification.

The *second* paper, 'The evolution of quality management in DOKPY, Magnesia – Greece: from basic quality initiatives to EFQM', shares experiences of introducing some basic quality tools and techniques in an organisation offering social services (DOKPY). The implementation process starts from basic quality tools leading to the procedure of

conformance to the first level of excellence of EFQM model. The paper illustrates both the actions taken and the manipulations that have been necessary to overcome the implementation difficulties that came up.

The *third* paper, 'An evaluation model for inbound call centres design', suggests an approach to evaluate the design of inbound call centre system in an effort to achieve better call centre performance. The paper analyses the system measuring the value of the services in functions of customer's demand and service utility. It also assesses call centre performance as a stochastic queuing system upon transition rates and subsequently combines both assessments to create an optimum policy matrix that contains maximum value in terms of customer value and serving times.

The *fourth* paper, 'From customers requirements to customers satisfaction – quality function deployment in the service sector', presents a quality function deployment (QFD) based methodology to design a service product to meet or exceed customer expectations and hence leading to customer satisfaction. A general model for service quality has been discussed and factors that influence customers' perceptions have been addressed. The framework of the general model can be applied to construct the individual QFD matrix for different service functions.

The *fifth* paper, 'A tool-based framework for applying Six Sigma methodology to services and transactional data', reports how a Six Sigma methodology, having been successfully applied in the manufacturing context, can be utilised in service organisation. The paper proposes SDMAIC methodology, which can be improvised from the traditional DMAIC technique, for improving the service processes. The paper further identifies the tools that are relevant for the service industry and provides some suggestions on how some of the identified tools can be modified, if need be, so they can be applied to services and transactional data.

The *sixth* paper, 'A fuzzy-AHP-based framework for prioritising benchmarks in the service sector', presents a comprehensive framework for prioritising benchmarks in the service sector. The framework is based on Chang's extent analysis method and effectively combines both AHP and fuzzy logic approaches. The framework is based on a philosophy wherein the viewpoint of all the stakeholders of a given business set-up is taken into account for progressive improvement.

The *seventh* paper, 'Total quality management in higher education institutions: challenges and future directions', presents an exhaustive review on implementation of quality management tools in higher education institutes. The paper further discusses the challenges TQM implementations face in higher education and provides some directions to overcome these challenges.

We hope that readers will find these papers stimulating and will understand some of the research challenges and future research directions. The main intent of this special issue is to motivate researchers to take up TQM implementation issues and challenges in the service sector.

The guest editors would like to thank all the authors for submitting and revising papers for the special issue. We also wish to extend our sincere thanks to those individuals who acted as reviewers for the papers submitted to this issue. Lastly, the guest editors would like to express their sincere appreciations to Professor Angappa Gunasekaran, the Editor-in-Chief, for his valuable advice, help and support to make this special issue come true.