

Have Total Quality Management, Business Process Re-Engineering and the Learning Organisation been Replaced by Knowledge Management?

An Exploration of the Meaning, Popularity and Practical Relevance of Late 20th Century Management Theories



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INTRODUCTION

Total Quality Management (TQM), Business Process Reengineering (BPR), the Learning Organisation (LO) and Knowledge Management (KM) are just four of many management techniques that emerged in the latter part of the 20th century. All four techniques have been called fads or fashions, by definition easy to dismiss with each new idea replacing the last, KM being the latest technique, subsuming the LO and superseding TQM and BPR. However, just because these initiatives are labelled as fashions, this does not mean that they do not have enduring effects. "Management fashions are not cosmetic and trivial. Management fashions shape the management techniques that thousands of managers look to in order to cope with extremely important and complex managerial problems and challenges" (Abrahamson, 1996: 279). In a turbulent and changing world there is a "desperate quest" for new approaches to management (Eccles and Nohria, 1992: 2). This desperation has led to dissatisfaction with existing paradigms of management and the search for new paradigms (Hamel and Prahalad, 1994).

This paper examines the fashion metaphor as a descriptor for the growth and decline of management initiatives. In addition, the characteristics and lifecycles

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of fads and fashions are outlined. The four discourses (TQM, BPR, LO and KM) are compared and discussed in light of the fashion metaphor, with particular emphasis on the origins of each technique, problems of definition and reasons for decline in interest. Finally, a bibliometric analysis is employed to evaluate the adherence to the fashion metaphor of the four management approaches and the results are discussed with respect to existing theory.

ARE TQM, BPR, LO AND KM FADS, FASHIONS OR ENDURING CLASSICS?

In order to answer this question a distinction needs to be made between classical management theories and management theories that adhere to the fashion metaphor. Classical management theories such as division of labour have enduring qualities that are applicable and repeatable. Classics emerge from practitioners' response to social and economic challenges and are "complex, multifaceted, and applied in different ways to different businesses" (Miller and Hartwick, 2002: 27). The four management theories under discussion have arisen in response to social and economic challenges but the main exponents of these theories are "fashion setters" and their place in management history as classics is questionable.

The Fashion Metaphor

The fashion metaphor is often used to describe the adoption, diffusion and decline of management ideas, with the terms fads and fashions being used interchangeably. However, there is a subtle difference between the two: fads peak and decline within five years, whereas management fashions are more enduring, briefly showing signs of maturity before declining (Ponzi and Koenig, 2002: 2). The two terms will be used interchangeably in this paper.

Fads and fashions are developed by fashion setters who, generally speaking, are consultants, management gurus, business schools and business mass-media publications (Abrahamson, 1996). Others hold that it is the adopters themselves that create the fads that in turn influence the management rhetoric (Carson, Lanier, Carson and Berkenmeier, 1999) or at least play a part in the diffusion of fads (Newell, Robertson and Swan, 2001).

Characteristics of Fads and Fashions

Kieser (1997) outlined two main characteristics that define a fashion. Firstly, the "new" management idea is presented as a radical departure from current practice and so is not merely "old wine new bottles". Secondly, the idea is presented as an imperative to prevent disaster. In an article in the *Harvard Business Review*, Miller and Hartwick (2002) presented a comprehensive list of qualities that typify fads incorporating Kieser's characteristics (Table 3.1). These authors contend that the characteristics of fads, which allow them to become so popular and diffuse so rapidly, are also their undoing.

Table 3.1: Characteristics of Fads

Characteristic	Explanation
Simple	Easy to understand and communicate with buzzwords and acronyms.
Prescriptive	Tell managers what to do which allows misinterpretation to occur.
Falsely encouraging	Promise outcomes such as effectiveness and performance.
One-size-fits-all	Universal relevance that apply to almost any industry organisation or culture.
Easy to cut and paste	Can be partially applied, certain fad features can be grafted onto standard operating procedures.
In tune with the Zeitgeist	Focus is on current concerns in the business world at the expense of fundamental issues and problems.
Novel, not radical	Often repackaged ideas sold as radical and new.
Legitimised by gurus and disciples	Gain prestige through their proponents rather than empirical evidence.

Source: Adapted From Miller and Hartwick (2002)

The nature of fads and fashions lends itself to rapid diffusion and popularity peaks. But not all new initiatives are taken up or popularised; some “new” ideas become dispersed and others do not. Rogers (1993) suggests this may be because innovations are subject to “Bandwagon Effects” where the more people who take up the idea, the more pressure there is to do so. Simplicity and ambiguity are linked and fashion-setters can highlight uncertainty while at the same time offering simple solutions (Scarborough and Swan, 2001). In a study in 2002, Ernst and Kieser, using a series of semi-structured interviews with managers and consultants, found that consultants tend to both increase and decrease managers’ anxiety (perceived control) by pointing out new types of organisational problems and providing new solutions that are often management fashions. Conversely, they also help re-establish managerial control by providing managers with relevant information and tools, and by enabling them to reinterpret their organisation’s current situation.

APPLICATION OF THE FASHION METAPHOR TO TQM, BPR, LO AND KM

The origins and defining characteristics of each management technique are examined using the framework for characteristics of fads and fashions outlined by Miller and Hartwick (2002) in Table 3.1.

Origins of TQM, BPR, LO and KM

The origins of all four management initiatives have their roots in other theories and can therefore be considered to be novel not radical (Miller and Hartwick, 2002). Beginning with TQM, it is not easy to establish the exact date the term Total Quality Management was first used (Martinez-Lorente, Dewhurst and Dale 1998). TQM grew out of the Quality movement in the 1950s in Japan and more recently out of the 1980s fashion of Quality Circles (Juran, 1986). The term TQM is most probably a substitute for TQC – Total Quality Control (Feigenbaum, 1961) and an examination of the definitions of TQM and TQC found that there are no apparent differences in meaning (Martinez-Lorente et al., 1998).

The origin of BPR is in value engineering, which was developed by General Electric in the 1940s as a technique to improve products through redesign: anything that did not contribute to the utility of the product was eliminated. This redesign idea was applied to processes and so to the birth of BPR, which can be traced to two papers published in 1990 (Davenport and Short, 1990; Hammer, 1990). BPR emerged partially in response to the lack of emphasis on information technology (IT) in TQM.

The LO was expounded by Senge in his book *The Fifth Discipline* (1990) and has its roots in the organisation development movement of the 1960s advocated by authors such as Argyris and Schon (1978) and Blake and Mouton (1964).

KM, according to Beckmann (1999), was first coined by Dr Karl Wiig in 1986 who wrote one of the first books on the subject called *Knowledge Management Foundations* published in 1995. KM, like BPR, came to prominence because it was seen to fill the IT gap left by the LO. The profile of the KM literature is similar to that of BPR, with 51.2 per cent of articles referring to the role of IT in BPR (Tinaikar, Hartman and Nath, 1995). "KM is not a development of, but rather a divergence from, the literature on the LO – a new fashion in its own right with a new focus on tools and systems, rather than on people and processes" (Scarbrough and Swan, 2001: 7).

Each innovation is novel, not radical, with its roots in other movements, but what all four have in common is that they address a gap in the existing management literature and are "in tune with the Zeitgeist" capturing the contemporary management rhetoric (Miller and Hartwick, 2002). BPR acknowledges the IT gap and concentrates on processes. LO highlights the importance of the organisation's culture and KM advocates the capture of knowledge within the organisation, reflecting the rhetoric of the "information era". The switch in abbreviation from TQC to TQM without any apparent change in meaning is indicative of the contemporary Zeitgeist.

All four management ideas have concomitant gurus. TQM was based on Deming's W. Edwards "14 points" (1986), Joseph Juran's "Quality Trilogy" (1986) and Philip Crosby's "Quality Maturity Grid" (1979). However, it is interesting to note that none of these actually use the term TQM. BPR is associated mainly with Hammer and Champy (1993), the LO with Peter Senge, and KM with Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) and Davenport and Prusak (1998).

Defining TQM, BPR, LO and KM

Continuing with the characteristics of fads outlined in Table 3.1, "simple", "ambiguous", "prescriptive", "one-size-fits-all" and "falsely encouraging" may be used to characterise the multitude of definitions for each management concept and their concomitant techniques. All four techniques have confusion in application of the technique and many competing definitions. All are premised on the notion that it is imperative for competitive advantage to engage in the management practice that is being promoted. It is often difficult to find one single definition; as different consultants or business schools take up the fad, they add their definitions to the already growing plethora.

One of the simplest definitions for TQM is "an organisation wide effort to improve quality through changes in structure, practices, systems and above all attitudes" (Dale and Cooper, 1992). The aim of TQM is to reduce variation in products and processes, which leads to improved quality and productivity (Banks, 2000). The customer is extremely important in TQM and this initiative has a set of statistical techniques associated with it to monitor the performance. There is, however, no singular set of practices that defines TQM with different fashion setters opting for different practices. Other paradigms, such as six sigma, kaizen and reengineering compete with TQM for prominence. These paradigms are sometimes seen as part of TQM or else separate paradigms adding to the confusion. TQM set about improving existing processes incrementally whereas BPR radically transforms them creating brand new ones, but again there is no universal or proven BPR method. According to Valentine and Knights (1997), there are two types of BPR literature: radical BPR and reflective, revisionist BPR, the latter emerging as a response to difficulties in implementing radical BPR initiatives. Radical BPR has a top-down implementation, with leaders driving change and technology enabling that change. Employees do not participate in decision-making. BPR may be defined as "initiatives large and small, radical and conservative, whose common theme is the achievement of significant improvements in organisational performance by augmenting the efficiency and effectiveness of key business processes" (Wastell, White and Kawalek, 1994: 23).

BPR was revised and as a result is more pragmatic, but now resembles the language of TQM.

One may tentatively conclude that "in practice, BPR is emerging as a new umbrella concept under which a number of quality initiatives fall" (Valentine and Knights, 1998: 84). Again, this adds to the confusion and ambiguity characteristic of fads.

Senge defined a LO as "an organisation that is continually expanding its capacity to create its future" (1990: 14). This contrasts with bureaucratic organisations, which potentially obstruct learning and prevent free flow of information. Senge described five disciplines necessary for becoming a LO: personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, team learning and systems thinking (1990: 185). The LO is often confused with the concept of Organisational Learning which, according to Schwen, Kalman, Hara and

Kisling (1998), was coined by Herbert Simon in 1953 and is "the adaptive change process that is influenced by past experience, focused on developing or modifying routines, and supported by organisational memory" (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995: 45). Organisational Learning is part of the LO but is independent and can take place in bureaucratic organisations. Again there is confusion of definition, allowing for misinterpretations. Current theories of the LO have several gaps that need filling, particularly concerning the implementation of learning processes, structures and the underlying psychodynamic nature of organisations (Starkey, 1998).

KM is an ill-defined area in the management literature. Like the previous three management theories, it is ambiguous, general, falsely encouraging and prescriptive. "The term is so vague that it is easy to dismiss. Worse, it has been jumped on by consultants, who know a good fad when they see one" (Jackson, 1998). Other theorists see KM as a genuine core competitive advantage (for example McKern, 1996; Ruggles, 1998; Skyrme and Amidon, 1997). There are many themes in the KM literature including the nature of knowledge, information management, information technology, people management (knowledge roles, knowledge workers), knowledge creation, knowledge sharing, transfer of learning, intellectual capital, tacit knowledge and so on. Scarbrough, Swan and Preston conducted a review of the knowledge management literature and produced the following broad definition: "Knowledge management: Any process or practice of creating, acquiring, capturing, sharing and using knowledge wherever it resides, to enhance learning and performance in organisations" (1999: 1). It appears that KM has taken over from and incorporated the LO, leading to confusion and a blurring of boundaries between the two management innovations.

All four theories were initially thought as having organisation-wide implications, but in practice they become easy to cut-and-paste (Miller and Hartwick, 2002). This cut-and-paste practice is seen as the reason and excuse made for the failure to deliver on promise, since managers may only implement certain aspects of the management technique grafted onto existing procedures (Banks, 2000). In terms of fads and fashions, TQM has given way to BPR and LO has been subsumed by KM. All possess the characteristics of fads and fashions as outlined by Kieser (1997) and Miller and Hartwick (2002). To examine further the fad-like qualities of all four techniques, it is necessary to look at the life cycle of each to ascertain if they conform to the typical diffusion characteristics of management fads (Abrahamson, 1996; Ponzi and Koenig, 2002).

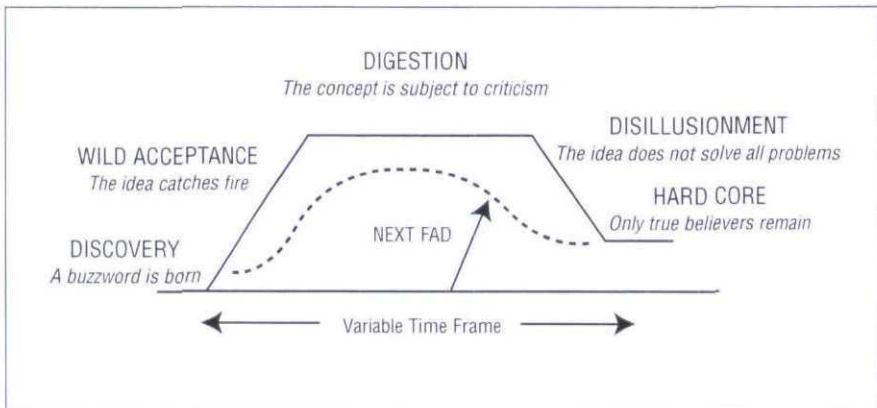
LIFE CYCLES OF FADS AND FASHIONS

TQM, BPR, LO and KM possess fashion-like characteristics and should therefore follow a bell-shaped curve life cycle, which was first demonstrated by Abrahamson (1996) in his work on the life cycle of Quality Circles in the 1980s. Using a bibliometric technique (counting published articles), he tracked

the development of the Quality Circle life cycle on the ABI Inform database and found that it had a bell shaped pattern. Ettorre (1997) proposed that a fad goes through a life cycle of 5 stages (Figure 3.1). Stage 1 is "Discovery" when articles first begin to appear. Stage 2 is "Wild Acceptance" when concept becomes very popular. Stage 3 is the "Digestion" phase where criticisms are levelled against the concept. Stage 4 is "Disillusionment" where the idea is found not to be a panacea and fails to deliver on promise. Finally, Stage 5 is "Hard Core" when only true supporters remain loyal to the technique.

In examining the life cycle, it can be seen that during the disillusionment phase the next fad has begun to emerge, showing how fads replace one another. It is useful to note that "while there may be an upward and downward trend to most fashions, the slope (rate of increase and decrease in number of articles) for each fashion is different. This is likely to depend on the existence of other fashions and events" (Spell, 1998, as cited in Gibson and Tesone, 2001: 124).

Figure 3.1: Life Cycle of a Management Fad



Source: Adapted from Ettorre (1997: 35)

It is proposed in this paper that TQM, BPR, LO and KM follow the same predictable bell shaped life cycle as outlined by Abrahamson (1996) and Ettorre (1997). Furthermore, it is expected that each new management innovation will be replaced at the disillusionment stage, as a new fad emerges. The following section presents a comparison of the life cycles of TQM, BPR, LO and KM and traces the emergence and decline of each discourse.

A COMPARISON OF THE LIFE CYCLES OF TQM, BPR, LO AND KM USING A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS

Rationale

A bibliometric technique was employed to investigate and compare the life cycles of TQM, BPR, LO and KM. Previous analyses have found bell shape distributions for these concepts, but all four have not previously been directly compared. The bibliometric technique provides a reliable analytical approach to trace the development of a concept. Previous researchers have used this technique: Ponzi and Koenig (2002), using ABI Inform and Science Citation Index, tracked TQM and BPR from 1990 until 2000, demonstrating the bell-shaped distribution of these management initiatives, with TQM peaking in 1993 and BPR peaking in 1995. Scarbrough and Swan (2001) and Scarbrough et al. (1999) also used a bibliometric technique and tracked the literature for the LO and KM using the comprehensive on-line journal databases ProQuest Direct (PQD) and BIDS. They covered the period 1990 to 1998 and found a decline in references to the LO since 1995 which was reflected in the sharp increase in references to KM. These movements follow the bell-shaped pattern. Wilson (2002) conducted a similar study, tracing KM only, and found an exponential rise in KM literature following 1997.

Method and Results

Article counts were conducted on 10 August 2003, from Web of Science and EBSCO Business Source Premier. These databases were selected because of their comprehensive coverage of the academic literature. Counts were conducted annually to cover the period from January 1990 until the end of July 2003 for each of the four management phrases located in title, abstract or descriptor fields. Each database's results were taken separately to account for overlap of journals. The EBSCO Business Source Premier contains peer reviewed and industry articles; however, only the peer-reviewed articles were counted to allow for comparison with the Web of Science (WOS) database, as the WOS articles are all peer reviewed. The counts for EBSCO and WOS are tabulated in Tables 3.2 and 3.3, respectively.

**Table 3.2: EBSCO Article Count for TQM, BPR, LO and KM from
January 1990–July 2003**

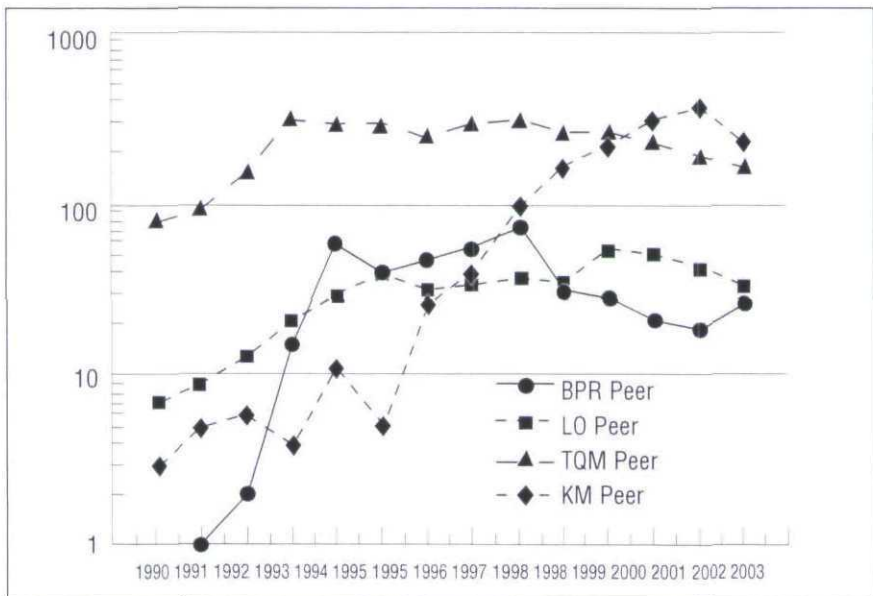
No. of Articles per Year														
	'90	'91	'92	'93	'94	'95	'96	'97	'98	'99	'00	'01	'02	'03
TQM	80	95	153	314	289	293	253	300	308	263	265	229	199	170
BPR	0	1	2	15	59	40	47	55	75	31	29	21	19	27
LO	7	9	13	21	30	40	32	35	37	36	54	51	42	34
KM	3	5	6	4	11	5	27	38	97	166	220	301	367	227

Table 3.3: WOS Article Count for TQM, BPR, LO and KM from January 1990–July 2003

No. of Articles per Year														
	'90	'91	'92	'93	'94	'95	'96	'97	'98	'99	'00	'01	'02	'03
TQM	14	40	128	187	198	251	206	179	187	157	149	143	115	104
BPR	0	0	0	2	30	43	49	57	70	48	45	30	29	26
LO	3	6	5	9	17	24	21	22	36	25	35	40	31	16
KM	3	8	2	8	9	16	12	37	69	121	151	249	274	254

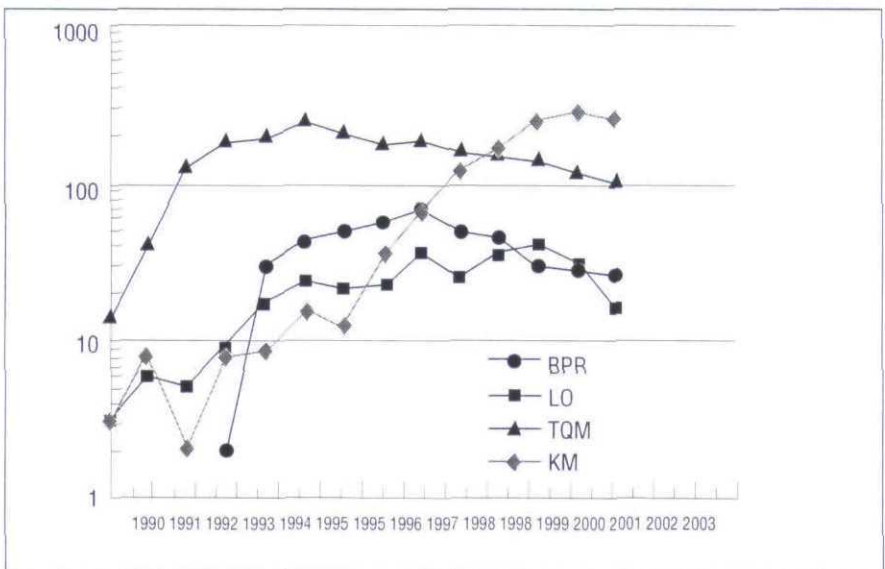
The article counts for EBSCO and WOS are graphically represented in Figures 3.2 and 3.3, respectively. These lifecycle comparison graphs of TQM, BPR, LO and KM resemble the bell-shaped pattern consistent with the previous literature (Abrahamson, 1996; Ponzi and Koenig, 2002; Wilson, 2002). The bell shapes appear smaller (although they are not), since counts are plotted logarithmically to represent all data against a single scale. The resulting plots provide a proportional representation of the different rates of increase and decrease in publications for the four discourses. Figure 3.2 shows the comparison between all four management techniques on the EBSCO Business Source Premier for peer reviewed articles.

Figure 3.2: Comparison of Peer Reviewed Article Counts on the EBSCO Database for TQM, BPR, LO and KM from January 1990–July 2003



The data depicted in Figure 3.3 is consistent with previous findings in the area. TQM reached a peak of wild acceptance in 1993 with a count of 314 articles. This was followed by a long digestion stage with article counts rising again to 308 in 1998. Then followed the disillusionment stage. As TQM reached its peak, BPR entered the discovery stage and reached wild acceptance in 1998 with 75 articles. In 2002 BPR was in the disillusionment stage of the life cycle. The LO came to prominence in 1993, had a small peak in 1995 and reached the height of wild acceptance in 2000 with 54 articles. By 2002 the LO was in the digestion stage. KM entered the discovery stage in 1996 and began to rise exponentially from 1997 reaching 367 articles in 2002. The figures for 2003 are consistent with the trend but it would be misleading to discuss actual figures, since it was not a complete annual count.

Figure 3.3: Comparison of Article Counts on Web of Science Database for TQM, BPR, LO and KM from January 1990–July 2003



The results of the article counts on the Web of Science database are similar to the EBSCO results. TQM was at the height of the wild acceptance stage in 1995 with 251 articles, while BPR entered its discovery stage and peaked in 1998 with 70 articles, the LO peaked in 2001 with 40 articles. Similar to the article trends on the EBSCO database KM reached a total of 274 articles in 2002.

DISCUSSION

These results indicate that the life cycles of TQM, BPR, LO and KM follow the bell-shaped pattern of fads and fashions (Abrahamson, 1996). The rise and

fall of the management techniques are, for the most part, consistent with previous findings by Scarbrough and Swan (2001), Ponzi and Koenig (2002) and Wilson (2002). However, Scarbrough and Swan (2001) found that the LO declined after 1995, whereas in the present study the LO showed a rise in 1995 (the LO also showed a second small peak on WOS in 1998) and then rose to new heights in 2000 (EBSCO) and 2001 (WOS). A possible reason for this relates to the theoretical origins of the concepts. The LO and KM both emerged from the organisation development movement which may have led to confusion and overlap in definitions, with KM coming under the same heading as the LO (Scarbrough et al., 1999; Wilson, 2002). Another similar pattern can be seen in the rise and decline of TQM and BPR, which both originate in the quality movement. TQM declined after 1993 but rose again in 1998, the same year BPR reached its peak. Again this is probably due to the confusion and overlap in the definitions of the two concepts (Valentine and Knights, 1998). A second reason for these findings reflects an inherent problem with using the bibliometric technique; just because a management technique appears frequently in the literature it does not follow that it is because it is being advocated.

The five stages of the life cycle proposed by Ettorre (1997) seem apt in describing how each individual fad emerges and follows a bell-shaped pattern. The results of the present bibliometric analysis show that each new fad replaces the last but not as Ettorre's life cycle indicates. New fads do not emerge at the disillusionment stage, but begin to appear earlier. BPR entered the discovery stage at the height of the wild acceptance stage for TQM, and KM began to emerge in 1997, which followed the initial wild acceptance peak in the LO literature.

Perhaps the most notable aspect of this study is that the peak count in KM exceeds the peak count of any of the other management initiatives on both databases. The article counts in this study are smaller than in previous studies (for example Ponzi and Koenig, 2002), because only peer reviewed articles were counted and these have a slower rate of publication than industry articles.

The results illustrate that fads and fashions follow a predictable life cycle: as one fad enters the wild acceptance stage a new one emerges. All of the four management techniques are still in existence, upheld by a hard core, with TQM still having a substantial body of support. If the trends found in this study continue, then the LO is about to enter disillusionment stage with KM reaching the peak of wild acceptance and moving into the digestion stage of Ettorre's life cycle. However, there appears to be confusion and overlap of definition between the LO and KM which have emerged from the organisation development literature and between TQM and BPR which have emerged from the quality movement.

Has KM Replaced TQM, BPR and LO?

The three management initiatives TQM, BPR and the LO all declined in popularity, most likely for the very same reasons they became popular (Miller

and Hartwick, 2002). They were simplistic and difficult to implement due to their ambiguity, which led to initial wide interpretations but failed to deliver on promise. Implementers of TQM and BPR initiatives did not see a return on their investment (Kearney, 1992; Rigby, 1998). Part of the reason for the decline in interest in the LO since 1995 was its lack of emphasis on practice and the apparent disregard of advances in IT and management information systems (Scarbrough et al., 1999). Conversely, it was (in part) the overemphasis on IT that caused BPR to decline (Valentine and Knights, 1998).

KM is currently at the forefront of management theory, with a publication rate that is rising exponentially. A KPMG survey conducted in 1997 found that of the 200 large US firms studied, 80 per cent of corporations had knowledge initiatives (KPMG, 2000). KM appears to have incorporated the LO and overtaken TQM and BPR in prominence in the literature. Although the literature on KM is rising, many articles now are beginning to appear which are critical of the concept, leading this researcher to conclude that KM is now entering the digestion phase and will ultimately reach the stage where there are only hard core followers.

Two problematic themes are repeatedly showing up in the KM literature: the confusion over knowledge and information, and the "conversion" of tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge. According to Wilson, it is necessary to distinguish between information and knowledge: "Failure to do so results in one or other of these terms standing as a synonym for the other, thereby confusing anyone who wishes to understand what each term signifies" (2002: 2). Knowledge involves the mental processes in an individual's mind whereas information is codifiable and easily communicated. It has been argued by Smoliar (2003) that we do not manage the knowledge that is in people's heads, we manage the people themselves, and a more useful term would be "interaction management". KM may therefore be seen as object as in managing information and also as subject as in managing people and the two should not be confused.

The conversion of tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge is a major theme in the KM literature (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). However, tacit knowledge is personal and is defined as "we know more than we can tell" (Polanyi, 1966: 4), and means simply that. We cannot make explicit that which is "inarticulable", what we can do is express previously unexpressed or implicit knowledge (Wilson, 2002). These problems have led to most of the confusion in the literature, and are indicators of fad-like qualities in KM.

CONCLUSIONS AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

TQM, BPR, LO and KM follow the predictable bell-shaped life cycle of fads and fashions, when one fad reaches a peak and a new fad begins to emerge. Although these management practices may be considered fashions, this need not necessarily have negative implications.

KM has taken over the mantle as the latest fashion in management practice,

though dismissing KM as simply a management fad could be a lost opportunity to understand how knowledge is developed, gained and used in organisations, and ultimately in society (Bouthillier and Shearer, 2002). If the confusion surrounding the epistemology is not cleared up, then it will surely go "out of fashion" like its predecessors only to be replaced by a new fad.

The problems of overlapping definitions and blurred boundaries between the concepts make them difficult to test empirically and easy to dismiss. Dismissing any of the management discourses, not just KM, as mere fads could be premature. The consequences of management fashions can be far reaching and permanent; they focus attention on neglected areas and identify gaps in the management literature. Without TQM there would be less emphasis on quality, without BPR we would have paid less attention to our business processes and without the LO we may not have highlighted the importance of culture and learning. Each fad provides an increment to our body of knowledge of how best to manage, and these increments can be incorporated into new theory. Instead of looking for a panacea or a best way to manage, perhaps we can learn from the best parts of each initiative.

In order that the potential benefits or best parts that management fashions and fads have to offer are not lost, business school researchers need to test new ideas and management practices empirically not just anecdotally. It would also be useful if management innovations were viewed with the long-term consequences in mind. The confusion and ambiguity surrounding management theories need to be clarified; this may lead to a slower uptake of the idea but will allow time for digestion and testing. If an organisation were considering adopting a new management technique, then perhaps it would be helpful to avoid bandwagon effects, especially the emotional drives to relieve anxiety and to be up to date. It is better to be a little unfashionable and check for empirical evidence, than to jump on the bandwagon at great cost.

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