

Structure of Quality Circles in Educational Institutions of Higher Learning

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Abstract

The basic structure and fundamentals of Quality Circles have remained the same irrespective of factors like time, place, type of organization, size of organization, etc. Its constituents are non-members, who may be called as potential members because they are those people who yet have to join the Quality Circles, active members, leader or deputy leader, facilitator, steering committee and top management. This is known as six steps Indian pyramid structure of Quality Circles. There is coordinating agency or coordinator ensuring a harmony among all the constituents.

KEYWORDS : Structure, Quality Assurance, Quality Circles, Educational Institutions

Introduction :

An explosive growth of Quality Circles took place in Japan and rapidly spread around the world. Today its worth is well established and recognized and it has stood test of time. A well designed structure is a pre-requisite for performance. For the effective functioning of Quality Circles the policies of top management should be clearly defined. The policies should have integration with clear cut objectives and goals of the organization. The organization must have strategies and operational plans to attain those objectives and goals. This all is followed by a supportive structure.

Material:

The basic structure and fundamentals of Quality Circles have remained the same irrespective of factors like time, place, type of organization, size of organization, etc. The generally recommended structure is shown in fig. 2.1 and this is followed by Indian industrial organizations. Its constituents are non-members, who may be called as potential members because they are those people who yet have to join the Quality Circles, active members, leader or deputy leader, facilitator, steering committee and top management. This is known as six steps Indian pyramid structure of Quality Circles. There is coordinating agency or coordinator ensuring a harmony among all the constituents.

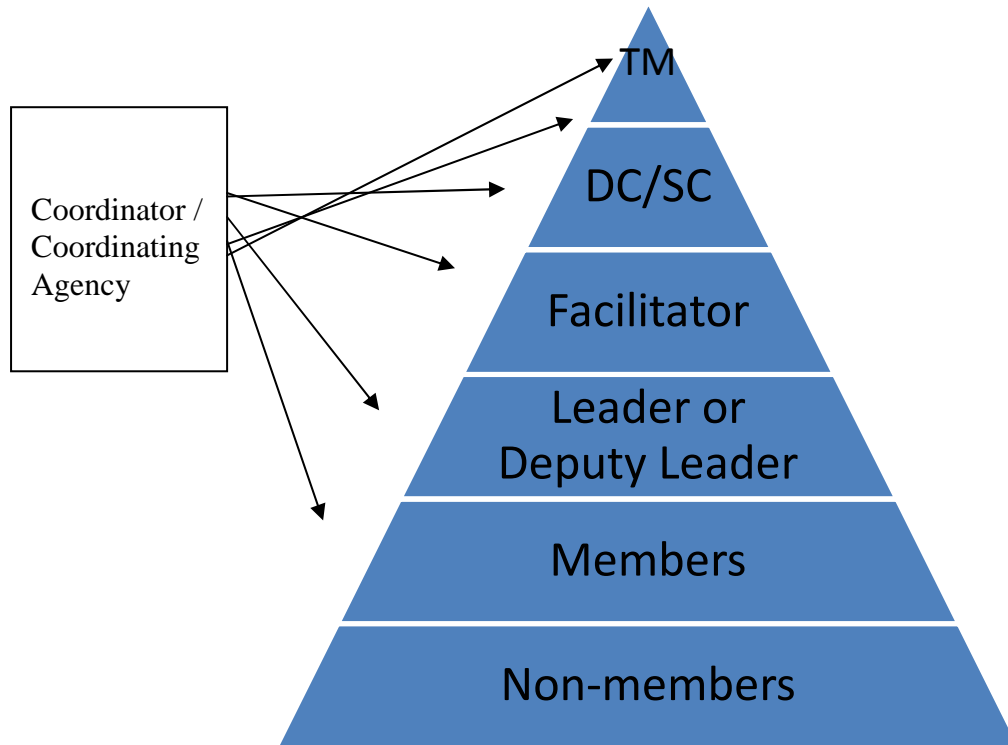


Fig. 1 Structure of Quality Circle Applicable to Indian Industrial Organizations

Method :

Though there is no need of a coordinating agency in the quality circle structure, a ‘Quality Assurance Deptt.’ is recommended in all organizations to coordinate smooth functioning of quality circle activities, prepare quality control manuals, quality plans for various products, quality audit, annual quality improvement plans, creating quality awareness through seminars, exhibitions etc.

The structure of Quality Circle is governed by unique conditions obtaining in different countries and organizations and also has to suit the set-up that already exists. As Quality Circles get integrated into total operations of the organization, it is advisable not to give a separate entity to the structure of Quality Circles in any organization.¹ Every department and every work area should feel personally responsible to make the operations of Quality Circle a success. In Japan too, Quality Circles fall under the umbrella of Total Quality Control (TQC) and do not have a separate position in the organizational structure. As such, Quality Circles are seen to be operating in every department of an organization irrespective of its function. The aim is to see that concept gets woven into very fabric of organization and becomes a way of life with everyone on every sphere of work. This is emphasized that this basic structure can be used with required changes according to the situation. Further, structures of Quality Circles have been recommended for education in general and for teachers, administrative staff and students, in particular.

1. Udpa S.R., “ Quality Circles in India – Participation for Progress,” Tata McGraw Hill Publishing Co. Ltd.; New Delhi, 1991

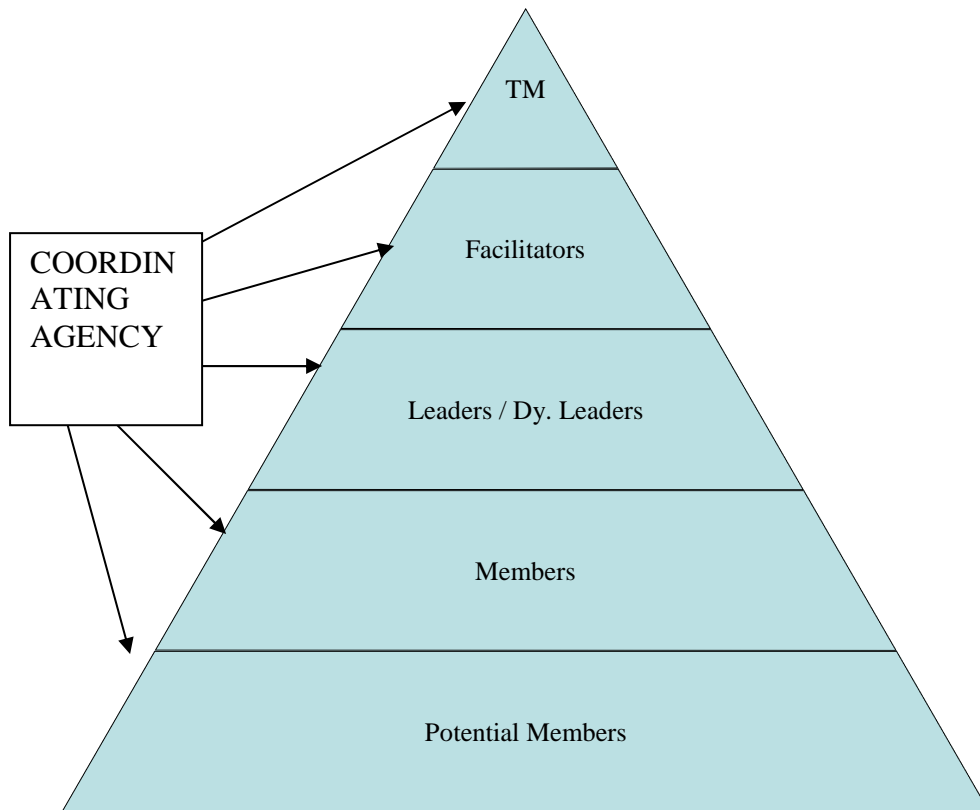


Fig 2 Quality Circle Structure for Educational Institutions

The Indian educational institutions of high learning may have five steps pyramid (Fig 2.2) consisting of potential members, members, leader or deputy leaders, facilitator, and top management. The steering committee or departmental committee can be afforded to be ignored. This educational Quality Circle structure has been explained for teachers, administrative staff and students under Fig 3 to 5.

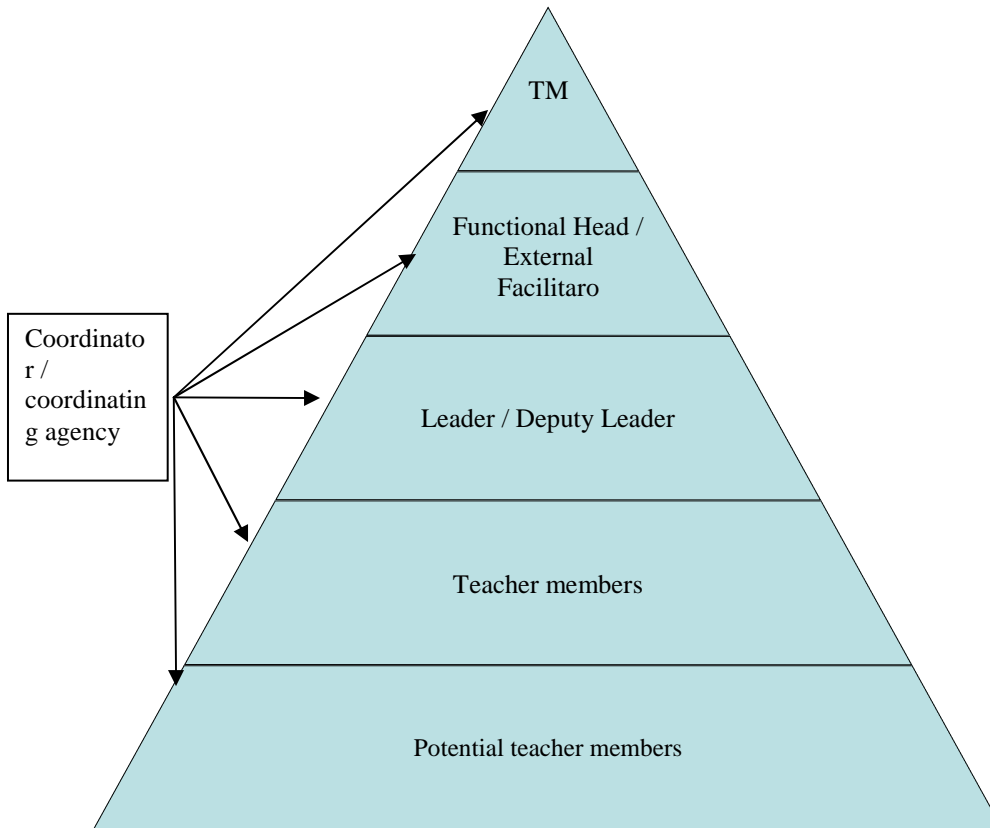


Fig 3. Quality Circles Structure for teachers

Top management is represented by governing body and/or principal, facilitator can be a senior knowledgeable functionary like registrar or controller of exams or dean of a faculty or departmental head, leader or deputy leader should be a senior teacher or departmental head, teacher members must be drawn from various departments and activities and others regarded as potential members who have not yet become the members of Quality Circles. They attend the meetings and observe proceedings minutely. This process motivates them to become the members of the Quality circles.

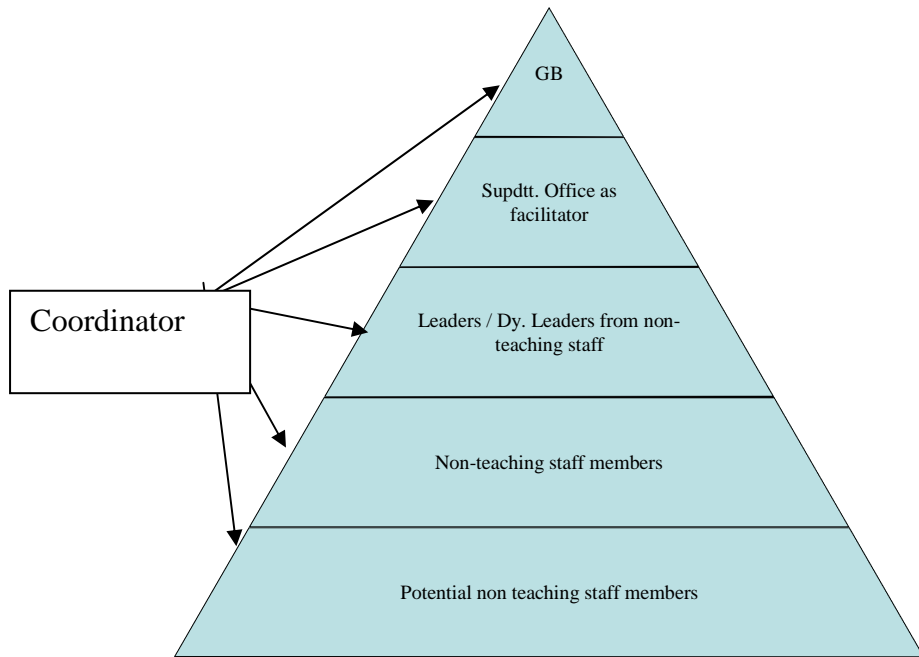


Fig. 4. Quality Circle Structure for Administrative Staff

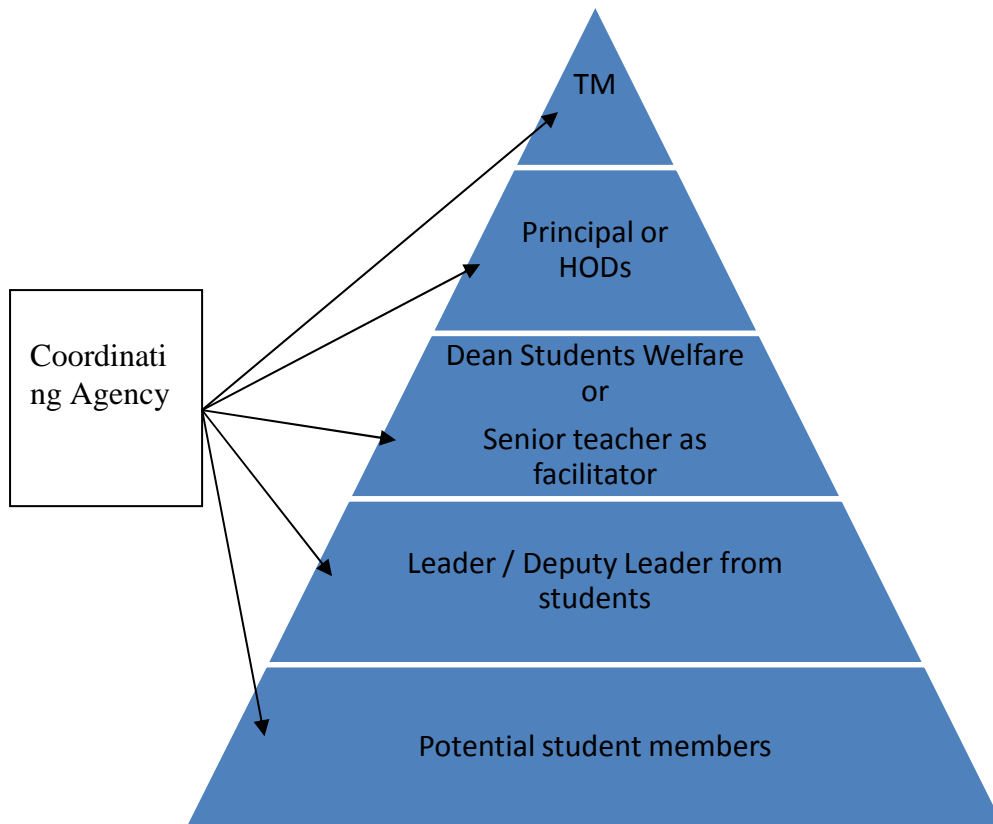


Fig. 5. Quality Circle Structure for Students

In the Quality Circle structure for administrative staff, Head Clerk or Superintendent may become facilitator and 'top management may be represented by Principal.

Similarly, in the structure of Quality Circle for students, facilitator may be represented by Dean, Students Welfare, or functional head or senior teacher and top management by principal alone. On the basis of above discussion, it can be concluded that basic structure and fundamental are same and changes can be effected as per situational requirements to make the operation of Quality Circles effective in educational institutions of higher learning.

NAAC RECOMMENDED IQAC STRUCTURE

Composition of IQAC: In pursuance of the National Action Plan (NAP) of the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), Bangalore for performance evaluation, assessment and accreditation and quality upgradation of educational institutions of higher learning, it has been made it compulsory by NAAC that every accredited institution establish an Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) as a post accreditation quality sustenance measure. Since quality enhancement is a continuous process, the IQAC will become a part of an institution's system and work towards realizing the goals of quality enhancement and sustenance. The prime task of IQAC is to develop a system for conscious, consistent and catalytic improvement in the performance of the institutions. During the post accreditation period, the IQAC will channelise the efforts and measures of an institution towards academic excellence. The IQAC will evolve mechanism and procedure for ensuring the following:

- a) Timely, efficient and progressive performance of academic, administrative and financial tasks.
- b) The relevance and quality of academic and research programmes.
- c) Equitable access to and affordability of academic programmes for various sections of society.
- d) Optimization and integration of modern methods of teaching and learning.
- e) The credibility of evaluation procedures.
- f) The adequacy, maintenance and proper allocation of support structure and services.
- g) Research sharing and networking with other institutions in India and abroad.

The IQAC may be constituted in every institution under the chairmanship of head of the institution with heads of important academic and administrative units and a few teachers and a few distinguished educationists or representatives of local committee. The composition of the IQAC may be as follows:

- 1) Chairman: Head of the institution.
- 2) A few senior administrative officers.
- 3) Three to eight teachers.
- 4) One or two members from the management.
- 5) One / two nominees from local society.
- 6) One of the teachers as the coordinator of the IQAC.

The composition of the IQAC will depend on the complexity of the organization. The norms given therefore indicate how best the planning and monitoring need to rest on cross sectional involvement and responsibility without the system itself becoming

cumbersome. It is necessary for the members of the IQAC to shoulder the responsibilities of generating and promoting awareness in the institution and to devote time for working out the procedural details. While selecting these members several precautions need to be taken. A few of them are listed below:

- It is advisable to choose members from various backgrounds who have earned respect for integrity and excellence in their teaching and research. Moreover, they should be aware of the ground realities of the institutional environment. They should be known for their commitment to improving the quality of teaching and learning.
- It would be appropriate to choose as senior administrators and persons in charge of institutional services such as library, computer center, estate, student welfare, administration, academic tasks, examination and planning and development.
- The management representatives should be persons who are aware of the institutions' strengths and are committed to improvement. The local society representatives should be of high standing and should have made significant contributions to society in general and in particular to education.
- The role of the coordinator of the IQAC is crucial in ensuring the effective functioning of all the IQACs. He may be a senior person with expertise in quality aspects. She / he may be a full-time functionary or, to start with, she/he may be a senior academic / administrator entrusted with the IQAC as an additional responsibility. She / he may be supported by a secretariat with one or two professional assistants on full time or on part time basis. The secretarial operation may be made technology mediated.

To initiate Quality Circles in an educational institution, it is essential to ensure the total commitment of top-level management before starting. Then, discussions within the institution with the heads, teachers, administrative staff and unions should be carried out to take them in confidence about your intents and actions. Only then, a facilitator from outside should be called for guidance to implementing the Quality Circles programme. Quality Circles can be introduced in an educational institution according to the following steps:

- Appreciation programme for principals and teaching staff (formation of steering committee)
- Appreciation programme for members of students' union (results in greater awareness)
- Training of tools for students and staff (formation of facilitator coordinators).
- Formation of experimental quality circle.
- Experimental Quality Circles presentation to the steering committee.
- Propagation of Quality Circles throughout the institution

Not only NAAC has suggested the composition of IQAC but it has also observed that 'Quality Circles in industries operate on similar lines'. Moreover, NAAC has also opined that any structure may be used at the level of the educational institutions of higher learning for sustenance of quality. *The educational institutions of higher*

learning must attempt to practice the structure of industrial Quality Circle for teachers, administrative staff and students to harness maximum benefits of this philosophy. Alternatively the Quality Circles can be operated at the levels of institutions, departments and services or activities. It is to be kept in mind that Quality Circles are meant for quality creation and sustenance and not for quality accreditation or certification.

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