PRINCIPALS AND COMMITMENT TO QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN SCHOOLS

(PENGETUA DAN KOMITMEN DALAM PENGURUSAN KUALITI DI SEKOLAH)

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Abstract

This article emphasizes the need for commitment to quality management in Malaysian daily schools. This is a concept paper on the commitment needs for quality management in schools. Hence, some issues related to the need for commitment to quality management were analyzed. To enable the importance of commitment to quality management to be examined, content analysis was conducted to discuss the rationale for commitment in quality management. Several definitions related to commitment and quality management have been examined. Preliminary findings explained that commitment is the principals' performance contract. This is in line with the Ministry's efforts to emphasize quality integration in the management in schools. This means that in quality management, the leadership aspect alone is inadequate if not emphasized by the need for commitment in managing the Quality Management System (QMS). To ensure that schools benefit from QMS implementation, several components related to commitment by the principals were emphasized.

Keywords: Commitment, Quality management, Principal, Schools' quality management and education

Abstrak

Artikel ini memberi penekanan kepada keperluan komitmen dalam pengurusan kualiti di sekolah harian di Malaysia. Ia merupakan kertas konsep tentang keperluan komitmen dalam pengurusan kualiti di sekolah. Oleh itu beberapa isu yang berkait dengan keperluan komitmen dalam pengurusan kualiti telah dikupas. Bagi membolehkan kepentingan komitmen dalam pengurusan kualiti diteliti, maka analisis kandungan telah dilakukan bagi membincangkan rasional komitmen dalam pengurusan kualiti. Beberapa definisi yang berkait dengan komitmen dan pengurusan kualiti telah diteliti. Dapatan awal menjelaskan bahawa komitmen merupakan kontrak prestasi pihak pengetua. Hal ini selari dengan usaha pihak Kementerian yang memberi penekanan terhadap usaha intergrasi kualiti dalam pengurusan di sekolah. Ini bermakna dalam pengurusan kualiti, aspek kepimpinan sahaja tidak memadai jika tidak ditekankan dengan keperluan komitmen dalam mengendalikan Sistem Pengurusan Kualiti (SPK). Bagi memastikan sekolah mendapat manfaat daripada pelaksanaan SPK, maka beberapa komponen yang berkait dengan komitmen oleh pengetua juga diberikan penekanan.

Kata kunci: Komitmen, Pengurusan kualiti, Pengetua, Pengurusan kualiti sekolah, Pendidikan

INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental mechanism in enhancing national development in order to be internationally competitive. Education requires efforts from all parties to uplift Malaysia's status in providing world-class education. To enable the national education standard to achieve a world-class status, various improvement factors need to be executed. The focus is on systematic work systems, especially those related to the quality of knowledge. In this case, the school should respond to the various changes to be made. For Drucker (1995), the main challenging issue relates to appropriate school management.

This means that not only the things that the school should manage changed, but it involves changes in the way the schools manage them. This coincides with the view of John West Burnham (2010) which states that when demand becomes larger, while the resource base is getting smaller, it is certain that the old management base needs a suitable alternative to increase production.

It is therefore the responsibility of the management to understand the role of quality for quality. Hence, in the school context, the top management needs to demonstrate high commitment and even encourage quality enhancement programmers. This is because management's commitment is one of the important factors in ensuring the continuity of an organization, especially for the long term (Syed Shirazi Syed Husin Affandi et al. 2015).

COMMITMENT TO QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Basically, the quality system is a guide for establishing a broad general principle and is then being effectively implemented through the application of the quality procedure. In this regard, one of the best features of the management system is responsibility and commitment. Brent Davies & John West-Burnham in Zol Azlam Hamidin (2010) defines responsibilities and commitments as clear and inevitable. What is important in responsibility and commitment is the verb, will, must, be responsible for the accomplishment of a task. But Block (1987) showed the difference between commitment and sacrifice. Some say that commitment to the organization is the same as the willingness to sacrifice for the organization. While Ong (1995) explains commitment as a performance contract.

David Barret (2014), explains that there is an articulation between leadership and commitment. Through commitment, several plans can be planned to enable the goals to be achieved. Therefore, he states that there are five types of commitments;

a) For self - working to develop yourself as a human being, to be the best leader possible. It even involves self-awareness, which is the first major step to be truly committed.
b) For the people around - how much we really focus on establishing relationships with the people around to work effectively with them.
c) For organizations - how much has been devoted to the workplace performance and intention so that it can emerge with maximum energy and confidence.
d) For the truth - how much we have stated the truth, though difficult, to care for ourselves, others and organizations in the right way.
e) Leadership - how many have responded to the quest to lead and choose to engage and act as an effective leader.

These types of commitments are basically essential for the top management to enable the quality process to run smoothly and to fulfill the organizational vision and mission.

Syed Shirazi Syed Husin et al. (2015), defines commitment in the context of management, as an important factor in ensuring the long-term sustainability of an organization. He also described commitment in steadfastness terms, as a strong principal in true, consistent, continuous and trusting beliefs. Consequently, the steadfast individual will work diligently, striving actively and intensely, to achieve his goals.

For Noralai and Norhasni (2010), commitment is defined as the attitude and behaviour to work hard, retention and loyalty in an organization, acceptance and trust towards organizational goals, engagement and participation in work, emotional bonding and identification with the organizations, that help improve the organization's efficiency and effectiveness.

Deming (1981) defines commitment as an action that encourages, supports and facilitates efforts to improve quality. This is because the main responsibility to achieve quality is shouldered by the top management. An organization's top management normally involves the directors, managers, and executive officers who demonstrate their commitment to the quality objectives which they proposed. This situation led to the aspect relating to the principals' commitment, to be the main focus. This is because commitment does not only involve performance contract, but the main focus is the responsibility of which there are no compulsory elements to engage in and involve in striving to achieve the goal for the benefit of the organization.

Therefore, even when the principals apply various leadership approaches in their management, if it is not followed by the fighting spirit and the sense of responsibility to the organization, certainly organizational effectiveness would not be achieved. Hence, it can be concluded that commitment is a responsibility that is shown and described in the context of describing the attitudes and behaviors, loyalty, acceptance and trust of the organizational goals, engagement and participation, as well as emotions and identification of the organizational efficiency and effectiveness.

QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS IN SCHOOLS

It is a Quality School Management system in accordance with the MS 9001:2008 Quality Management System (QMS) procedure to enhance and improve the learning process and to meet customer needs (Razali Zainal 2018). The implementation of Quality Management System in the field of education has started at Indera Kayangan National School, Kangar as the first primary school in Malaysia to be certified by ISO 9002 in 1996. Meanwhile, for secondary schools, the Derma National Secondary School, Kangar, Perlis is the first national high school in Malaysia to receive ISO 9002 certification in the same year (Leadership Management News, 1997).

To achieve that goal, the emphasis on the PDCA (Demming Cycle) method has been highlighted. The cycle explains that there are four components to be given attention to enable QMS to play an effective role. The four components emphasized in the PDCA method (Cycle Deming) can be seen in Figure 1;

PDCA Method (Demming Cycle)

- Standardization
- Follow-up

A

P

- Identify customers' needs
- Plan

- Observation
- Monitoring
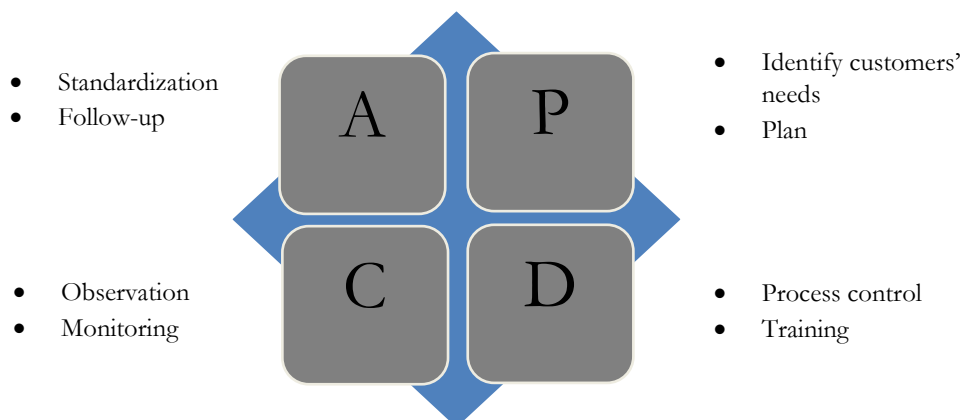
C

D

- Process control
- Training

Figure 1. Demming Cycle Method (PDCA)
Source: Mazzleza Ab Wahab 2012; David L Goetsch & Stanley Davis 2010

In the PDCA method (Refer to Figure 1), it is clear that each of the components is articulated and influenced by the achievement or goal of a school. In this regard, it is definitely a commitment at the school management level to be very dominant. This means that the commitment of the top management is essential to enable the organization to play its best role (Samia Javed 2015).

Basically, the school's QMS can help teachers and management to work as a team. The spirit of teamwork will encourage them to know their duties and roles. The QMS implementation has several key features which include;

a)   Preventive measures

b)   Continuous review of corrective measures

c)   Work consistently and conform to the principle of "right the first time and every time"

d)   Adhere to policies, rules, laws, and procedures documented

e)   Maintenance of quality records

The QMS MS ISO 9001 2008 model emphasizes the output of a process into the following input process and should be managed as a system to achieve the agency's objectives. Through the ISO 9001 2008 model, several improvements in quality management systems need to be done to enable the customers' needs (output) and customers' satisfaction (inputs) managed in a system to achieve the agency's objective. In this regard, the management system that is reciprocal with the management responsibility, resource management, service delivery and measurement, analysis and improvement. Hence, it is not surprising if QMS emphasizes the eight key management principles;

a)   The first principle – emphasizes on Customer-Oriented Organization. This is because an organization relies heavily on the customers. Therefore, the organization should understand the current and future needs of its customers. For the purpose of meeting the customers' needs and striving to exceed the customers' expectations, several strategic actions need to be established to enable the organizational goals to be achieved. Theoretically, the organization needs to go through a certain transformational process to enable a quality culture to be appreciated, which should originate from the top management of the organization.

b)   The second principle - relates to Leadership.
     Leaders create unity for the purpose and the direction of an organization. They must create and maintain an internal environment so that all parties can be fully involved in achieving the organizational goals

c)   The third principle - focuses on Workforce Engagement.
     The workforce at all levels is the essence of an organization and its full involvement can use their capabilities to benefit the organization.

d)   The fourth principle - focuses on Process Approach.
     The desired result will be achieved more effectively when resources and related activities are managed as a process.

e)   The fifth principle – emphasizes on System Approach for Management.
     Identify, understand and manage the interrelated system of processes for the goals provided. In addition to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization.

f)   The sixth principle – focuses on Continuous Improvement.
     Continuous improvement should be a permanent goal for an organization. In this regard, innovation becomes a requirement for achieving the goals outlined.

g) The seventh Principle – highlights a factual based approach to decision making. In the case of an effective decision based on data analysis and information.

h) The eight principles – emphasizes mutually beneficial relationship with the suppliers. An organization and suppliers are interdependent, and the mutually beneficial relationships enhance the ability of both to create shared values.

Through the eight principles of QMS management, it is the responsibility of the management to clarify the requirements in the quality document hierarchy. In this regard, it is the responsibility of the top management to clearly explain each requirement for each existing hierarchy. At the same time, the top management needs to be clear and understand the needs of each hierarchy before the work is carried out.

ISSUES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (QMS) IN SCHOOLS

The main focus of this study is to discuss the extent to which principals' commitment can influence the success or failure of quality management in schools. The focus of the study is on the need to study the impact of the commitment of top management in implementing quality management system in schools. This is because in the era of globalization, the quality option is a must when customers' satisfaction becomes a priority (West-Burhan 2010). This is further supported by Advant & Makhirja (2003) who explained that the quality of education is not a change but involves a choice. In this regard, the school needs to respond to the transformation required in the school management, taking into account the responsibility that quality is a must, necessary, and an inevitable responsibility (West-Burnham 2010). Therefore, an effective mechanism is needed to provide the school as an organization capable of providing continuous and integrated responses (West-Burnham 2010).

Hence, the response required in the context of standard and quality of education in Malaysia is touching on the transformation of national education. Therefore, the Malaysian Education Development Plan (2013-2025) has been launched with five core educational outcomes which include access, quality, equity, unity and efficiency (Ministry of Education Malaysia 2010). In this regard, it is the desire of the ministry to improve quality by establishing a clear vision and aspiration to address quality issues in education. Among the issues that often arise is the high allocation provided to schools, but the improvement of the students' achievement does not match the resources that have been channeled into the system (National Education Development Plan 2013-2025). This situation certainly requires monitoring in the context of quality control up to the year 2010 when the Malaysian Education Quality Standards Document (SKPM 2010) was created. The school has been given the responsibility to implement SKPM by focusing on the right process, ongoing monitoring and enhancing accountability (National Education Development Plan 2013-2025).

Since the schools were given the responsibility to implement the SKPM, commitment from the leadership is crucial to ensure its success (Samuel 1997). This is because any improvement in the monitoring and assessment process requires commitment from the top management. In the school organizational structure, the top management will definitely refer to the school's management committee headed by the principal in strengthening and stimulating the quality environment in the school. This means that improvements in the quality process tend to start from the management's commitment to quality (Samia Javed 2015). Therefore, the approach used by top management becomes very important in implementing quality. This is in line with several studies from several countries such as Nigeria, Bolivia, and Islamabad which argued that organizational leadership has a very strong implication on the success or failure of quality management (Samia Javed 2015).

If Davies and West Burnham's (2010) views are referred, they stated that one of the best features of the quality system relates to commitment, as an inevitable obligation. In this case, the primary responsibility lies with the management as they need to demonstrate their commitment to

the quality objectives that have been proposed. Therefore, if quality management is seen as a process rather than a product, it is definite that aspects which relate to commitment will be neglected. This is because quality is seen as a form of communication rather than a goal to be achieved (Davies and West-Burnham 2010). Therefore, focus on commitment is important because the experience of executing ISO 9000 certification programme shows that the expected effect of the implementation is not achieved (Kanapathy Jabnoun 1998; Werss 1995; Choi & Behling 1997). This situation certainly raises doubt and cynical attitude towards the quality programme (Rozhan 2001). This means that in implementing quality management, actions that reflect the responsibility alone is not sufficient if it is not accompanied by commitment (Waddock Bodwell 2017).

Therefore, an understanding of the role of commitment in quality is important to increase the success rate of an integrated quality management programme. For example, when the top management first learns about quality, they quickly understand and often make changes in planning and strategies to ensure the efforts carried out are successful. However, the top management team who uses this approach without a serious commitment of the vision and mission needs and efforts, will find that they will fail in its implementation (Ciaran Heavey & Zeki Simsek 2017).

In this regard, the top management should not only adopt the slogan to improve quality but are actually involved in the effort to improve quality at various levels such as planning, implementation, and monitoring. Hence, the top management's commitment to quality management was found to have an impact on quality management. Therefore, the commitment and clarity of quality by the leadership are very important to ensure success in quality management (Javed 2015; Samuel 1997). However, the extent to which success or failure of the fully government-assisted schools is influenced by the commitment of the schools' top management. This study will unwind the extent to which the principals' commitment can influence the success or failure of schools in quality management.

In implementing the quality management system, the implementation commitment and responsibility should be carried out by the schools' top management. Commitment is needed to ensure that schools will benefit once they have implemented the quality management system. This is because the schools' function can be more effective if the school can learn ways to improve and adapt to its environment (Cheng 1996). The QMS is typically implemented on the needs and importance of the school by focusing on proper work processes, continuous monitoring, as well as enhancing accountability (PKSM 2010). Therefore, improvement is needed to overcome any weaknesses, support strengths and focus on process, monitoring, and assessment (Charles Sisum in Zol Azlan Hamidin 2010).

Hence, the commitment and clarity of quality by the top management are very important to ensure success (Samuel 1997). Oakland (1995), explains that the quality system does not happen by itself unless it is well managed and follow the required procedures. Any improvement in the process, monitoring and assessment require commitment from the top management. Therefore, leadership's commitment is seen to have a significant impact on quality management in schools. This is because only through the top management's commitment, the quality of the school environment can be stimulated and enhanced. This is in line with Samia Javed's opinion (2015) which clarifies that improvement in the quality process has indeed come from the management's commitment to quality.

The impact of management's commitment to the success of the implementation of quality efforts has been described as something very critical (Ahire and O'shaughnessy 1998). Understanding the role of top management's commitment in quality is important in order to increase the success rate of an integrated quality management programme. For example, when the top management learns about quality, they quickly understand and often make changes in planning and strategies to enable success. However, the top management that uses this approach without a serious commitment to the efforts and needs of the vision and mission is found to have failed in its implementation (Adler 1988; Ahire and Rana 1995). In this regards, the top management should not only adopt slogans to improve quality but are actually involved in improving quality at various

levels such as planning, implementation, and monitoring. Hence, the top management's commitment to quality management has an impact on quality management. It is found that the effect of top management's commitment to the quality of quality management and the quality of the resulting product is often neglected.

The study on quality management has found that the top management's commitment is important to ensure success in efforts aimed at transforming the operational philosophy of the organization. Without the management support, organizational behavior is unlikely to change (Ahire and O'shaughnessy 1998). There is a change that will be more successful if the top management is committed to the changes to be made (Senge 1990). Top management plays a critical role in the effort to establish strategic changes within the organization to ensure the successful implementation of the quality management system (Bourgeois and Eisenhardt 1988). Therefore, top management should play an important role in the transition of paradigm in critical areas such as quality management, product development and innovation (Hoffman & Hegarty 1993; Johne & Snelson 1989). In this regard, the top management should demonstrate its commitment to the given strategy. As firms strive to implement planned changes, employees at all levels will be more likely to be involved in the programme when top management provides support and credence in its implementation (Krantz 1989).

For Alexander Wood (2016), leadership alone is not sufficient if it is not associated with commitment. Leadership without commitment is inadequate to ensure quality activities would take place. This means that the top management must be actively involved in QMS operations and their quality should be embedded in business operation routines and not treated as a separate activity. In this case, top management refers to the person or group who directs and controls the organization at the highest level. At the school level, the top management is the principal. Hence, in the pursuit of quality activities, principals must be fully involved in organizational activities although there is no element of coercion to do so, and strive to achieve the ideals for customers' benefits (Ciaran Heavey & Zeki Simsek 2017). This is in line with the views of Wim J. Nijhof (1998) which explained that commitment is strongly related to the colleagues and management styles.

In addition, Beckford J (2002) concluded that quality management from the aspect of a system perspective is very much associated with the management commitment in the pursuit of quality. In this regard, top management shall provide evidence relating to its commitment to the development and implementation of a quality management system. The study found that the employee's commitment to the organization could lead to expected results such as achieving shared goals, values and work culture in a one-way manner, and the desire to implement the organization's mission (Bennett and Durkin 2000)

In summary, the quality management study emphasizes the efforts to achieve, maintain and improve the quality. However, the management and support that lead to the effectiveness of quality management in the organization are not examined in detail. This is clear when most of the studies on the effectiveness of quality system are more focused on leadership style as an important aspect of organizational structure. However, aspects relating to the appreciation of the quality culture which includes the leaders' commitment to quality are not discussed by most local researchers. The main issue of ISO 9000 is related to management's commitment, besides staff and resource factors, quality system, and customer related factors (West Burnham 2010).

Towards an effective quality standard, logically commitment is part of the quality process required in the school's quality management system. Referring to Figure 2, it was found that leadership alone is not enough if it is not associated with commitment. In achieving quality activities, principals must be fully involved in the organizational activities with no compulsion element to do so, and endeavour to achieve the desire for customers' benefits (Ciaran Heavey and Zeki Simsek 2017).
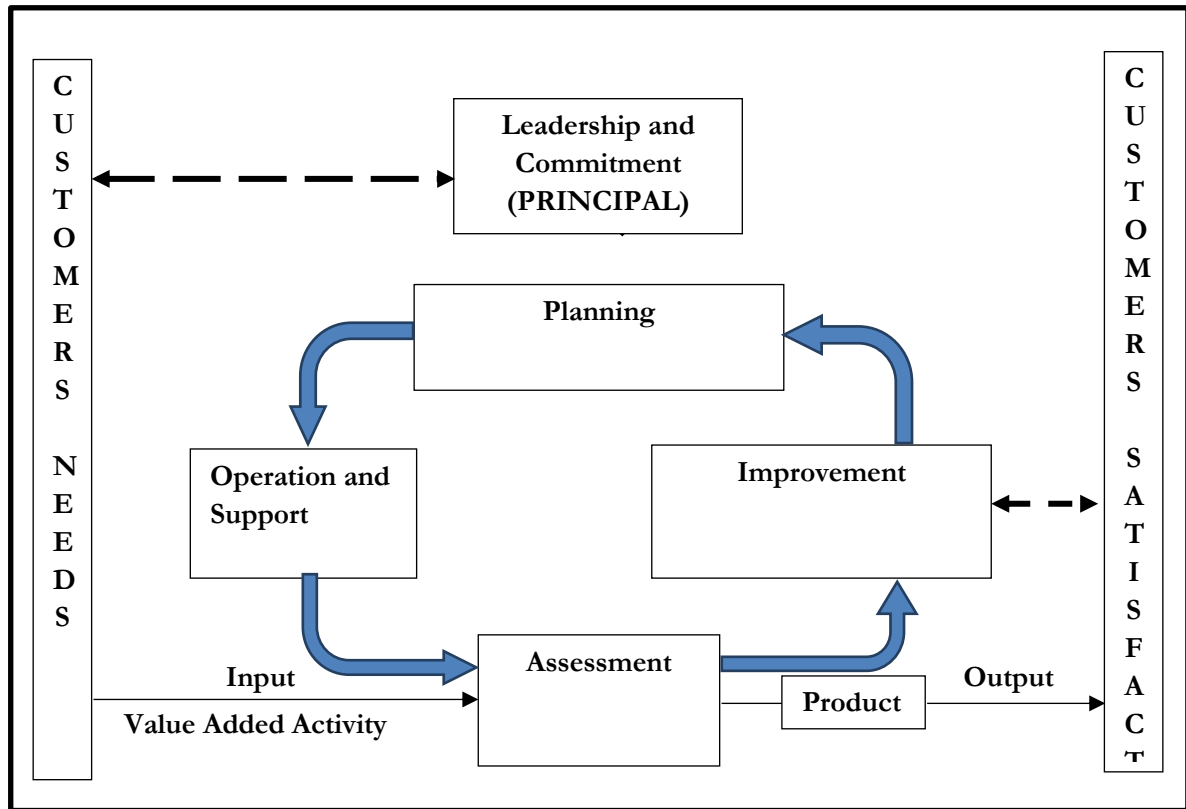
QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Figure 2. Commitment in Quality Management System
Source: Adapted from Ciaran Heavey and Zeki Simsek (2017); John West Burnham (2010)

COMMITMENT IN QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Management's commitment is important to be examined, as experience in implementing the ISO 9000 certification programmes demonstrates that the expected effect was not achievable (Kanapathy and Jabnoun 1998; Werss 1995; Choi and Behling). Sandra Waddock and Charles Bodwell (2017), point out that without a strong management's commitment, the implementation of quality management systems will not succeed. Only through the management's commitment that the effort to achieve customers' satisfaction can be achieved. Commitment is not only in terms of words but it is a constant and active demonstration to everyone in the organization. Continuous commitment is a necessity and is important in meeting customers' expectations. Based on the commitment, top management must perform some of the following responsibilities. Top management must:

   a) Communicate to the organization of the importance of meeting the customers' needs
   b) Communicate with the organizations about the importance of meeting regulatory requirements
   c) Ensure that quality objectives are set
   d) Ensure that the quality measurement is taken and recorded
   e) Ensure that the quality measurement is compared to quality objectives
   f) Manage periodical management reviews
   g) Review the quality system and make changes if necessary
   h) Provide proof of management reviews

       For Waddock and Charles Bodwell (2002), to ensure the success of quality management, responsibility alone is not enough if it is not accompanied by commitment. In other words,

commitment is a performance contract related to responsibility. This is evident through the research conducted by Kevin Eikenberry (2016), that leaders' commitment has a direct correlation with their success in management.

In the context of the principals' leadership, it was found that the emphasis has been placed on the use of the 2010 Malaysian Quality Education Standards document which has outlined three key elements related to the responsibilities to be undertaken by the principals, and to be implemented at schools. Referring to Figure 2, implicitly, the procedure of implementing quality system procedures practiced in schools still does not affect the principals' commitment aspect. But the emphasis is on the principals' responsibility that is, principals as leaders, guides and motivators. The question arises as to how commitments are, and where is the framework of commitment needs in the principals' leadership? To what extent does the commitment requirement set out by Keven Eikenberry (2016) which involves three top management's commitments, namely, commitment to organization and mission, commitment to the team, and commitment to self, can influence the successful implementation of the quality management system in schools?

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the commitment and clarity of the quality of leadership are very important in ensuring success (Samuel 1997). This is because in the context of quality assurance, the institution has to implement its own system to ensure that the institution provides what is being claimed. In this regard, the principal is regarded as a professional leader in the school, acting in quality implementation of all aspects of leadership and management of the school. This is because the total quality management will only succeed when it received a full and clear commitment to the quality system from the responsible team in the organization. Additionally, in the context of ISO 9000, the benefits of its use will only be effective when it involves a comprehensive commitment to achieving quality and excellence in organizations.
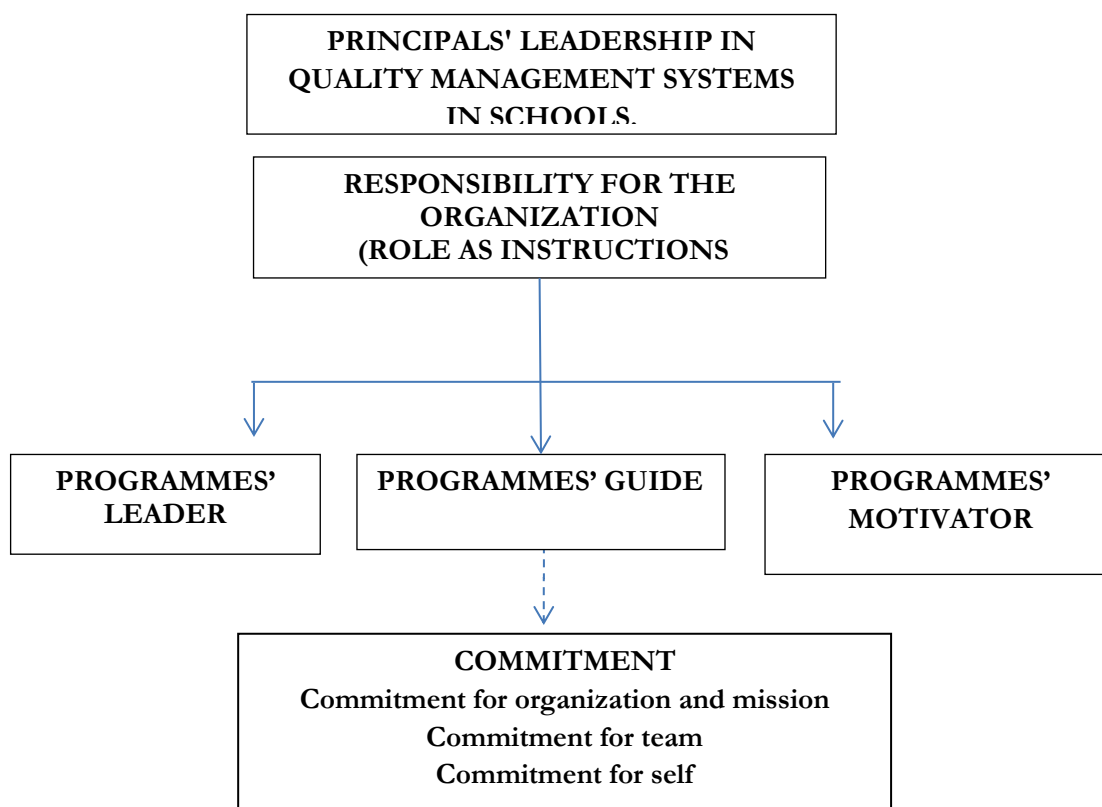

Figure 3. Commitment requirements in quality management system at school
Source: Adapted from Keven Eikenberry (2016); Charles Bodwell (2017)

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