Quality of Management or Management of Quality?

Even well informed persons have confusion about the terminologies Quality, Quality Control, Quality Assurance, Quality Management …

Let us have a re-look at various text-book definitions.

Quality - The totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs.

Quality Control - The operational techniques and the activities used to fulfil and verify requirements of quality.

Quality Assurance - All those planned or systematic actions necessary to provide adequate confidence that a product or service is of the type and quality needed and expected by the customer.

The above definitions are well settled and understood by all. There are minor variations in definitions given by various authors. But they are fundamentally the same. All these refer to products or services.

Let us ask few questions.

- Does the term Quality Management fall into the same category?

- Does it mean "Planned and systematic actions …. to *manage* quality?

- What is *management*?

- Is the definition of the term 'Quality' given above is complete? If yes what do the terms like 'Quality of Life' or 'Quality of a person' mean?

Some definitions I got when I searched for definition of the term 'Quality Management' in the web.

- That aspect of the overall management function that determines and implements the quality policy.

- a broad term which encompasses both quality assurance and quality improvement, describing a program of evaluating the quality of care using a variety of methodologies and techniques

- The design and maintenance of quality assurance mechanisms; responsibility for the same. All aspects of the management function that determine and implement the intentions and direction of an organisation as regards quality matters. Quality management involves managing for continuous improvement, centred on a strong notion of mission, objectives setting and review.

The term 'Management' is well understood and I do not think there is any ambiguity. It refers to guidance and control of actions required execute a program. We generally relate it to a business though not necessarily.

You can do a google search for 'define:quality management' and get many more definitions. While meaning no offence to the authors of these definitions, I personally disagree with any of these definitions. The term 'Quality Management' goes beyond ISO9000, CMM and the like.

To explain my point of view I have to redefine 'Quality'. Let me redefine it.

Quality is the totality of features and characteristics of **'anything that matters to us and we are able to control and manipulate'** that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs.

I do not have a better term to replace the phrase **'anything ... manipulate'**. Anyone is welcome to suggest a better term.

Let me do some explaining. The phrase obviously includes products and services, they matter to us and we have the ability to control and manipulate them. Quality of life – it matters to us and we can and need to control. Quality of a person? Value system? … Yes. Similarly management is a function that has stated and implied needs, that matters to us and we can control and manipulate it.

Now let me redefine 'Quality Management'

Quality Management is all the techniques and activities used to fulfil, verify and assure requirements of quality of management functions.

Thus 'Quality Management' is 'Quality Control' + 'Quality Assurance' of Management functions.

It is important to customers because they can trust an organization that is trying to keep up it's 'Quality of Management' same as one can trust an individual who keeps up quality of his person.