

Quality and Construction Management

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Abstract

The construction industry has long tended to equate 'quality' with 'excellence at any price'. This is at last changing, and like most other industries, construction has started to accept that quality should be seen more in terms of 'fitness for purpose'. At the same time that the concept is changing, an attempt is also being made to change the way that quality is achieved. As in many other industries, construction is attempting to manage quality into its projects without compromising their cost or time parameters. This effort has been handicapped by a misunderstanding over the difference between Total Quality Management (TQM) and Quality Assurance (QA). This misunderstanding has created confusion for two reasons; one is simply related to the meaning of the terms and the other is due to a mistaken belief that the industry is one homogeneous unit. The difference in the meanings of the terms is explained and a brief examination of the characteristics of the different sectors of the industry suggests that the appropriate way of managing quality into the products of construction is by using QA in design-oriented organisations and TQM in contracting organisations.