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# A Capsule View of Deming's Management Philosophy

By A.Thonnaya Anopas

If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live that life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours.

*Henry David Thoreau, Walden*

**Abstract:** *This article is a presentation of W. Edwards Deming's considerable management philosophies as they apply to education in order to bring about improvement in the quality of outcomes. Deming's philosophies are worthy of being discussed particularly by those who are in the administrative areas of an institution and other organizations and be employed as their guiding principles as they exercise their management authority and duty.*

In 1991, General Motors laid off 74,000 workers and closed numerous plants by 1996 because its profits and market share were in a state of free fall.

In 1983, Bridgestone, a Japanese company bought the Firestone tire plant in Tennessee, which manufactured and sold three grades of tires: excellent, average, and inferior. Under the new management, they manufactured only one kind of tire – excellent (Walton 1990). An analogy can be established here for schools equipped to produce three kinds of students: well educated, not so well educated, and poorly educated.

Many would say that the man whose work accounts for Bridgestone's success, as well as that of Japanese industry in general, is an American management theorist and statistician by the name of W. Edwards Deming.

Lester Thurow noted that both educational and industrial reforms are essential to survive and compete at the international level. He points out that the new-world economy is one in which the quality of labor has become the chief determinant of success. He also points out that, "A good education system is one that educates the bottom of the population the best, because they man the processes. If they're not well-educated, you can't use the technologies even if you invent them" (Thurow 1990).

## A. Deming's 14 Points

Deming's 14 points apply anywhere, to small organizations, as well as to the large ones, to the service industry as well as to manufacturing. Educators have interpreted these 14 points as follows:

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*1. Create constancy of purpose toward improvement of product and service.*

The primary, though not exclusive, purpose for educators should be academic achievement, a commitment to improving the quality of education we provide to students. Such a sense of purpose is not currently obtained by the majority of our schools, where myriad other goals and activities consume much time and energy. Constancy of purpose must be vigilantly cultivated through reminders, reinforcement, and celebration of progress and improvement. Michael Fullan (1991) says that employees who have a precise understanding of the organization's mission and goals are marks of schools that realize significant improvement.

Any faculty members and students of an institution may gain benefit for themselves and their organization if they have awareness of their institution's visions and missions as they carry on their duties.

*2. Adopt the new philosophy.*

The new management must empower employees by cultivating and respecting their individual and collective expertise. Everyone in the organization must base decision on facts and data rather than on opinions. This calls for a new relationship between management and employees, one in which all decisions and improvement efforts are based on expertise, rather than on authority.

*3. Cease dependence on mass inspection.*

"Inspection", writes Deming, "does not improve quality and is costly and ineffective." Quality does not come from inspection by management of everything that workers do (an unrealistic and impossible task anyway). It comes from managing employees in ways that encourage them to monitor and inspect their own work and from teaching them to do better both as individuals and as teams. Mass inspection is antithetical to the belief that people will strive to do high-quality work where trust exists.

I am not sure if class observation is inspection or not and whether it is constructive or destructive as far as Deming's third philosophy is concerned.

*4. End the practice of awarding business on the basis of price tag alone.*

Achieving quality is more important than always trying to get the lowest price for supplies used in a product. It is more advantageous to spend more money for good supplies that add value to what you produce. Every part of a system, of a process, affects other parts; overemphasis on cost savings at every stage can jeopardize efforts to ensure quality. For instance, hiring faculty members endowed with high quality teaching caliber due to having long professional experience, and individuals who have true devotion to duty and are real-born teachers etc., though this necessitates high salary and increment



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expenses, can be more productive than employing inferior and low-paid professionals.

5. *Improve constantly and forever the system of production and service.*

Improvement is not a one-time effort. Everyone in the organization must constantly be looking for ways to minimize waste and improve quality, to save time, and to promote achievement. "Improvement," says Deming (1986), means "better allocation of human effort. It includes selection of people, their placement, their training." It involves "statistical controls through study of records", which simply means analysis of methods and processes (like teaching methods). These records help adjust and improve efforts.

Here, conducting research and studies concerning the strengths and weaknesses of employees and using the data gathered could be a superb tool in allocating who's fit for what.

For Deming's associate William Scherkenback (1991), improvement is simply that which "reduces waste" or "adds value". From an educator's view, waste includes time spent on unfocused, unproductive activities or less effective teaching strategies. Regular team discussion and analysis of every significant process and method that influences outcomes and results is required. Giving people time to think and talk about their work and methods is vital to constant improvement.

6. *Institute training.*

Insufficient training constitutes enormous waste. For Deming, "The greatest waste is failure to use the abilities of people". He also points out that training is necessary to an employee "carrying out his work with satisfaction". There should be "continual education and improvement of everyone on-the-job self-improvement" (Deming 1986).

7. *Institute leadership.*

Here, leadership is not supervision but rather ways to help workers to improve. Management must utilize objective methods to find out who needs what kind of help. In the end, a leader is a helper, one who must "remove barriers that make it impossible for the worker to do his job with pride of workmanship" (Deming 1986). Leadership for Deming, consists of enabling employees to find joy in doing quality work.

8. *Drive out fear.*

This is a vital component of Deming's philosophy. Fear is the foe of innovation and improvement. "No one", states Deming, "can put in his best performance unless he feels secure. Secure means without fear, not afraid to ask questions". Some other fears mentioned by Deming are: Fear of putting forth an idea, fear of doing what is best for the



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company (long term), and fear for performance evaluation. Fear because "My boss believes in fear... . Management is punitive" (Deming 1986).

The inverse of fear is trust. Fear keeps people from experiencing the joy of labor that is important if you want people to do their best work, to make their best contribution toward optimizing the system.

*9. Break down barriers between staff areas.*

Often staff areas – academic departments and grade levels in school or division and management levels in industry – compete with each other or have conflicting goals. Teamwork is needed both within and between units. Deming says, "Teamwork requires one to compensate with his strength someone else's weakness, for everyone to sharpen each other's units with questions".

*10. Eliminate slogans, exhortations, and targets for the workplace.*

Slogans like "Do it right the first time" are simplistic. They lay inordinate responsibility on the worker and can obscure the deficiencies in the system that makes goals difficult or impossible to attain. In the same way, targets set by the management can obscure those factors – often beyond the control of the worker – that make the target unrealistic, especially when targets are created without management commitment of support in form of training or resources.

*11. Eliminate numerical quotas or targets for the workplace.*

Specifying quotas or targets is a major concern for Deming because they usually do not include "a system by which to help anyone to do a better job". For Deming, the only proper use of data is to help employees to perform better and to take pride in their workmanship.

Much of Deming's work is devoted to the importance of gathering numerical data that provide useful knowledge with which to consider training needs, to adjust methods and processes, and to improve the way we do things within a system.

Deming insists that numerical data and evidence be gathered wherever possible to isolate important problems. The most important kinds of data are those generated by employees themselves; and many require no sophisticated knowledge of statistics.

*12. Remove barriers to pride of workmanship.*

Management must systematically remove anything that interferes with the pride people take in their work – the most vital but intangible element of quality and improvement. Deming speaks of the "joy of labor" which is central to his philosophy

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and is based on his conviction that people's desire to do good work and improve is largely intrinsic. Poor performance is a result of management's inadequacy at dispelling fear and at finding ways to ensure that employees are permitted to and equipped to do their best work. Management must be sensitive and responsive in this regard.

*13. Encourage education and self-improvement for everyone.*

There is no shortage of good people, only a shortage of knowledge and skills. Pride may play a part in resistance to knowledge. "New knowledge brought into the company might disclose some of our failing", Deming points out. One of the management's essential task is to help employees overcome this fear, because "advances will have their root in knowledge", in what people learn through training and coaching as they participate in discussion, read, and attend conferences. Ongoing training is important to professional growth and personal fulfillment.

*14. Put everybody in the company to work to accomplish the transformation.  
The transformation is everybody's job.*

The transformation must be a unified effort, with each individual contributing to the team, to the organization's goals. The emphasis is teamwork, building consensus, and using everyone's respective expertise is what makes the transformation possible. This may all seem obvious; but implicit in Deming's thinking is that, while we often know what to do, the problem is that we simply fail to do it. We need not only to learn essential knowledge but also to act on it in ways that raise achievement, self-esteem, and morale of students, employees, and management alike.

## B. Applying Deming's Management Philosophy to Schools

The most vital elements of Deming's philosophy, as they apply to school improvement, are:

1. A democratic, collegial atmosphere should prevail in schools. Ideas should be shared in a setting that recognizes and supports ongoing data collection and assessment. All decisions and practices should be information-driven; facts, reasoning and evidence, not power or authority or personality, should determine practice and govern decision-making.
2. Management should eliminate threat, encourage continuous improvement, and recognize and use the expertise that employees have acquired in their jobs. This expertise, combined with the best research, should be the basis for practice. It is also important for management to routinely recognize accomplishment, improvement, and commitment to purpose with appropriate methods of appreciation.



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3. Improvement must become an obsession that employees thrive on. This can occur only when management makes every effort to enhance employees' capabilities as well as the quality of their lives through training, trust, and professional respect.

All of Deming's 14 points stress the importance of making major changes. Educators must always be improving, conducting experiments, testing and refining innovation, and using knowledge and data acquired within and beyond the schools. This knowledge must be used as basis for practice.

All this must be conducted in an atmosphere where trust prevails and fear is dispelled, where people are encouraged to take risks and ask tough questions, where the best knowledge and research guides teaching and learning. Every employee must be considered a resource, a source of knowledge and an agent of improvement. These elements, in combination, will create the vital sense of purpose that is essential to quality and improvement.

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A. Thonnaya Anopas received her Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction from Assumption University and has been a lecturer in the Department of English, Faculty of Arts at Au since 1992. She has 22 years of previous teaching experience in Thailand and the Philippines.