

TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN THE BRAZILIAN IRON ORE INDUSTRY: LIMITATIONS AND POSSIBILITIES

1BOEIRA,J.L.F.1IG/UNICAMP - CAMPINAS, BRASIL

The aim of this paper is to verify the limitations and possibilities of success for Total Quality Management in the major iron ore exporting companies that account for ca. 95% (in value) of total production in Brasil. From the analysis of literature and interviews, it was possible to detect a suite of improvements made possible through the implementation of Total Quality Management in the companies studied, e.g.: reduction of vertical and horizontal management levels; greater participation in the decision-making process by operators; minimization of conflicts between areas; strengthening in the formal education and training; increase in productivity; reduction of accident indices and inventories; compliance with client's specifications; and the development of suppliers. The limitations, on the other hand, are imposed by the steel industry demand, by the very nature of iron ore deposits, by punitive public policies and by the belief that a certificate might guarantee the perpetuity of those companies in a highly competitive market. The information level in this market leads to the convergence of the world class producers in strengthening their natural competitiveness towards a won competitiveness. The race to obtain certification in Quality Systems, occurred in the 90's, and the trend to integrate several managerial systems aiming improve quality and productivity through Total Quality programs, are indications that only technological changes will not be capable to guarantee market shares to those producers. A privileged position and the winning of markets will happen even more frequently by changes in the relationship with clients and suppliers, and by a better management of production processes.