



Quality Politics

12 critical questions about quality for governmental excellence and societal value



A non-ideological and research-based publication
on quality, written for politicians



About the Author

Lars Sörqvist is an internationally recognized thought leader, researcher, and author in the field of quality. For over 30 years, he has supported and trained executives, specialists, and researchers in effective quality and improvement practices. He has worked across most industries and in many countries on various continents.

Lars Sörqvist is the author of numerous articles and books on quality and systematic improvement. He also regularly speaks and inspires at conferences and seminars worldwide.

Sörqvist has been the CEO of Sandholm Associates, a leading provider of consulting and education, for many years. He holds a PhD and is a professor connected to several universities, where he teaches and conducts research in quality management and organizational excellence.

Lars Sörqvist has long been actively involved in Swedish and international quality organizations and activities. Today, he serves as the chairman of the International Academy for Quality, an UN-affiliated organization founded in 1966 with the purpose to advance quality throughout the world for the benefit of humanity.

Learn more about and from Lars Sörqvist at his blog: larssorqvist.com

Explore quality and improvement work further at sandholmassociates.com, where you can find a range of publications and available training programs.

Quality is the key to higher societal value

A crucial task of politics is prioritizing how to utilize limited resources in the most effective way. But this is not just about allocating a budget across various activities and organizations. Equally important is using the existing resources efficiently to create maximum value for citizens, and doing so in a sustainable manner.

How to do this is a well-established field of knowledge that has long been applied across both business and society. It is about quality management and continuous improvement work.

Unfortunately, this area of knowledge receives far too little attention in the political sphere. Partly, this is because many politicians lack an understanding of what can be achieved with established methods for quality and improvement. It may also be because many politicians do not fully recognize their personal role as leaders in the development of quality and efficiency.

That's a pity, because the potential in quality work often amounts to many millions of Euros for a single organization. And when it comes to public operations in the country as a whole, we are likely talking about hundreds of billions of Euros annually. These are resources that can be saved and/or used to create more value for citizens. The fact that the potential is so great is well known from both research and practical experience.

Throughout my more than 30 years in the quality field, I have witnessed numerous excellent examples of how systematic quality work has transformed organizations across every imaginable sector, both public and private. The effect of successful quality work is that you achieve more value and benefit with less resource consumption and impact. This is critical in a world of finite resources.

Quality is about meeting the needs of those the organization exists to serve. But there is a significant lack of understanding regarding citizens' needs and how these can be met most effectively. This results in massive waste. In the quality field, we refer to this as "costs of poor quality."

By focusing on doing the right things the right way, there is great potential to deliver more value to the country's citizens at a lower cost. People could gain significantly more benefit from the tax money currently available. International comparisons show that countries with significantly lower tax revenues per capita can sometimes deliver societal value that is at least as good, and in some cases even better, than what citizens in countries with higher taxes receive.

Of course, politicians at all levels want to continuously improve their country and its citizen support system. How this should be done differs depending on political ideology. But succeeding in delivering quality is not about ideology. Quality management is a knowledge and research field that has existed for over a hundred years, and the understanding of what it takes to achieve high quality is consistent.

Delivering quality is also not primarily about providing organizations with more resources or debating different modes of operation. Yet, unfortunately, political debate is far too focused on these aspects. This results in proposals and solutions that lack support from what we know, through research and expertise, actually drives positive quality development.

The purpose of this text is to briefly answer some of the most critical recurring questions about quality. I hope that this will lead to reflection and thought, and hopefully help politics move beyond ideological fights and instead tackle quality challenges from a knowledge-based perspective.

I am convinced that today's challenges do not have to be as difficult to solve as they may seem – if we do the right things in the right way. A crucial part of the solution is therefore to work more professionally with systematic and knowledge-based quality and improvement practices. This is likely a prerequisite for future sustainable development and quality of life for humanity.

Lars Sörqvist

Researcher and thought leader in Quality Management

1. What is quality?

THE WORD QUALITY IS FREQUENTLY USED, both in everyday life and in public discourse. As individuals, we often associate quality with the goods and services that directly affect us. In political debates, we hear daily references to the quality of public services, such as education, healthcare, and elder care.

Most people have some idea of what quality is and means. However, this idea is often far more limited than the actual scope of the concept.

By definition, quality is *a product's or service's ability to meet needs and expectations*. In other words, quality is about the value and benefit something creates for those it is intended for. This means that quality is ultimately about the very reason an organization exists.

Since quality is assessed based on needs and expectations, it is ultimately a subjective experience. What one person considers high quality may not be the same for another, because needs and expectations can differ. Therefore, one should be cautious about treating quality as an absolute concept.

To better understand what quality means in a specific context, it is crucial to identify the characteristics that matter most to those for whom the product or service is intended. By focusing on these, quality becomes easier to understand, measure, and improve.

In the field of quality management, the term customer is used. This has nothing to do with buying or selling but is a collective term for all individuals and/or organizations that a product or service creates value for. In healthcare, for example, customers may include patients, relatives, patients' employers, and referring physicians.

From an organizational perspective, there are both internal customers, who are part of the organization's processes, and external customers. Most important of all are the end customers, the people the organization ultimately exists to serve. However, to achieve an effective and well-functioning organization, it is also essential to ensure that the correct quality is delivered at every stage of the entire value chain.

“Quality is about meeting the needs and expectations of those the organization exists to serve.”

To achieve good quality, a deep understanding of customers' needs is required. This can be difficult, as customers themselves may not always be fully aware of their

own needs. Some needs are clearly expressed and easily discussed. Others are implicit – so obvious to the customer that they are often left unmentioned. There are also subconscious needs that the customer is not aware of and that must be identified to achieve the best possible quality.

Expectations play a significant role in perceived quality. If incorrect expectations are set, whether due to overpromising or unclear communication, the perceived quality may be low, even if the delivered product is objectively good. This is particularly relevant in politics. Overambitious campaign promises, for instance, may actually lower citizens' perceived quality of public services. It is therefore essential to create accurate and relevant expectations.

Ultimately, politicians have a significant responsibility to define requirements and determine what quality levels citizens should receive in various areas. Of course, it is impossible to meet every single need and expectation. The allocation of resources is determined by political ideologies and decisions.



2. Can quality be measured?

IN THE DEBATE, it has sometimes been claimed that quality in public services is abstract and cannot be measured. This incorrect assertion has unfortunately become something of a political myth. Successful quality work is built on facts. This is strongly emphasized by all quality models and is fully supported by research in the field of quality.

To control, manage, and improve quality, it is necessary to define and make the underlying quality parameters measurable. In public services, this is also a matter of legal certainty. If quality is not measured, it also becomes impossible to ensure equitable treatment of citizens.

In the business world, there is never any doubt about the ability to measure quality. Quality metrics and quality goals are commonly used in corporate environments. The same should apply to public services. A school can measure quality just as well as an educational company. A social services office can measure quality just as well as private service providers.

However, measuring quality can be difficult and therefore requires solid expertise. Ultimately, quality is about the ability to meet needs and expectations. To enable measurability, these needs and expectations must first be identified, analyzed, and understood. By breaking down the needs into specific parameters, an essential step toward measurability is taken. Measuring overall school quality is challenging, but focusing on key areas such as knowledge development, pedagogy, interaction, and safety makes it easier.

“If you cannot measure quality, you cannot control, manage, or improve it.”

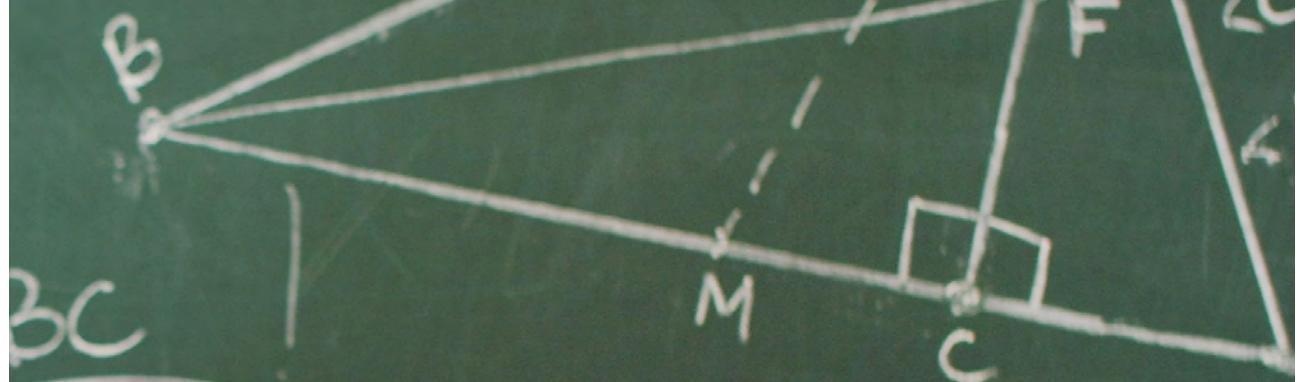
For some quality parameters, it is obvious how they can be measured. For others, measurability needs to be invented. But to dismiss things as unmeasurable simply because one does not know how to measure them is a mistake that can jeopardize an organization's ability to deliver quality. What is difficult to measure must be given focus and explored to find effective quality metrics. This is an area where more research resources should be invested.

Too often, organizations encounter quality metrics that fail to accurately measure what matters most from the citizen's perspective. In many cases, this is because something easy to measure was chosen, rather than something important. Measuring the wrong things is dangerous. The result can be a misdirection where the organization becomes good at the wrong things while missing what is most important.

Measurement is also closely tied to leadership and culture. Good metrics must be broken down, well understood by employees, actionable, and linked to a systematic improvement process. It is essential that both employees and managers understand and trust the organization's measurement system, and that the defined metrics become an integral part of the work being performed.

The debate sometimes becomes polarized, with some claiming a contradiction between trust-based leadership and measurement. This is incorrect. Successful quality work is about both.

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3. Is good quality expensive?

A COMMON BELIEF is that quality is something expensive and costly. As consumers, we often feel compelled to choose between products that are inexpensive but of low quality and those that are expensive but of high quality. However, experience tells us that this way of thinking can be flawed. How many people have not made “cheap” purchases that turned out to be very costly when the items didn’t work, constantly needed repairs, or had to be discarded prematurely?

In the field of quality management, the concept of cost of poor quality is well established. These are all the costs that arise when a service or product fails to meet the required quality. Numerous studies have shown that these costs are generally very high, both in private companies and in municipalities, regions, and government organizations. The overall conclusion is clear: poor quality is very costly.

When analyzing an organization’s processes, one often finds that a relatively small portion of the consumed resources contributes directly to value creation. Large amounts of resources are therefore wasted due to imperfect processes. In the quality management, this is referred to as waste. But by focusing more on doing the

right things the right way, greater value can be created at a lower cost.

It is not possible to fully determine the total cost of poor quality within an organization. The direct costs of poor quality are often measurable, but there are usu-

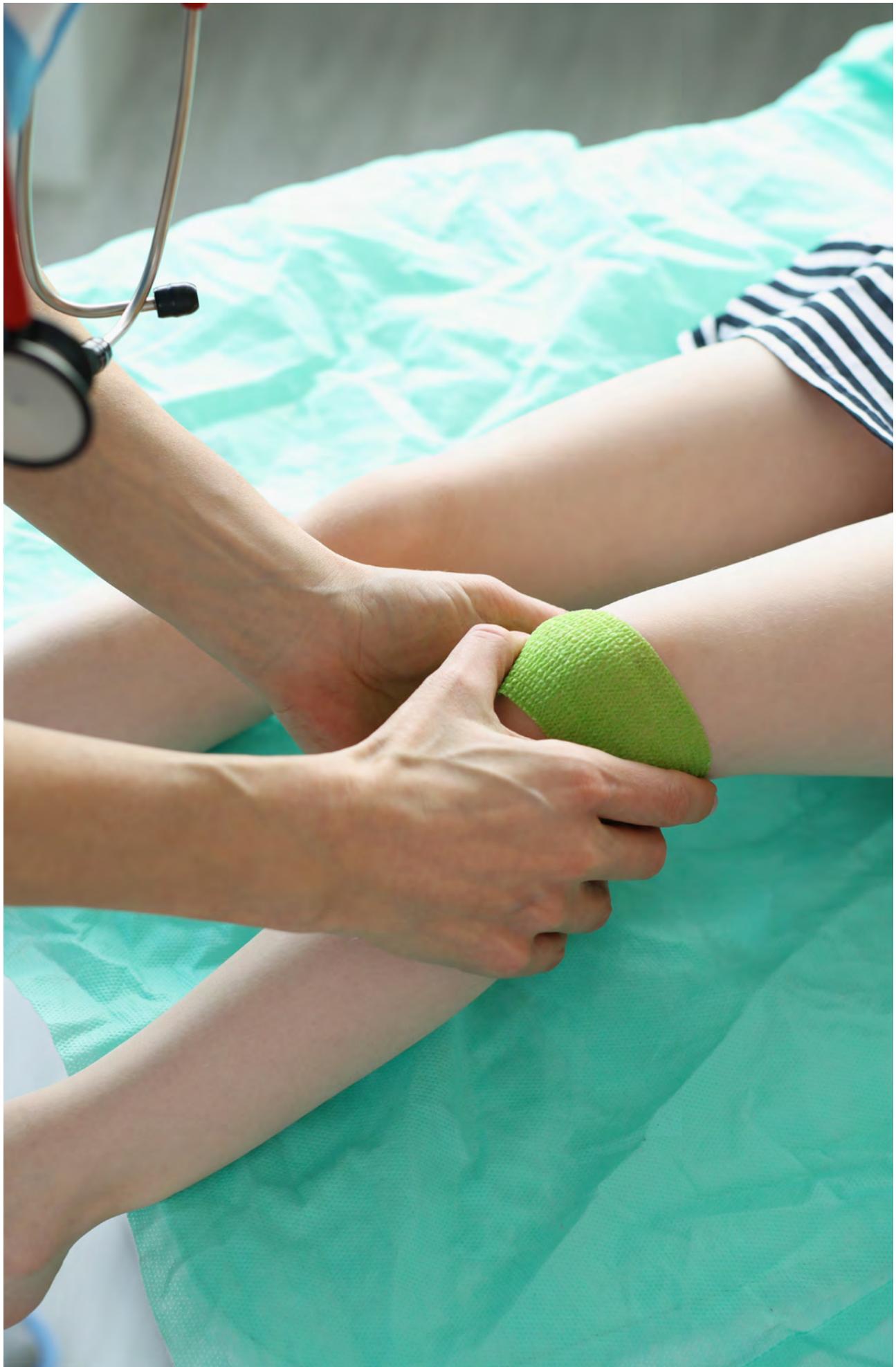
ally significant indirect costs that are more complex. The direct costs of poor quality in schools, such as students failing in their education, can likely be assessed fairly well.

However, the long-term socio-economic consequences of the problem are far more challenging to estimate.

Yet, even when considering only the measurable costs of poor quality, the collective experience clearly shows that poor quality is significantly more expensive than developing good quality.

Poor quality causes significant costs to our society, and we can hardly afford to ignore the opportunities that quality development presents. Given the significant quality-related challenges currently facing healthcare, education, elderly care, and other public services, society should invest significantly more in effective quality development. It is a very wise investment in the country and our future.

*“It is not quality that is costly.
It is poor quality that is truly expensive.”*



4. Does quality improve when an organization is given more resources?

THE POLITICAL SPHERE is permeated with promises to improve quality in various areas of providing societal value. Different political parties focus on different key issues, but the path to quality almost always seems to revolve around promising more resources. More teachers are expected to create a better school system, more doctors and nurses are expected to improve healthcare, more police officers are expected to reduce crime, and so on.

According to political debate, the ability to deliver quality appears to primarily depend on the availability of resources. However, based on quality-related research and the collective experience of quality professionals, there is no evidence to support this claim. On the contrary, there is evidence suggesting that quality may even deteriorate if resources are invested in a dysfunctional organization, especially one plagued by poor leadership.

Of course, resources are required to deliver quality. But before assuming that a lack of resources causes quality problems, it is essential to ensure that the organization in question has effective and value-creating processes, as well as competent and capable leadership. Without these, an increase in resources will act merely as "artificial respiration," further postponing the necessary

improvements. Such an approach also results in massive waste of public funds.

For example, when comparing the quality of different schools, hospitals, or care facilities with similar conditions, it becomes clear that the level of resources is not the determining factor for quality. The differences in quality can be significant even when resource levels are the same. There are even cases where organizations with fewer resources deliver higher quality.

International comparisons also show that countries with significantly lower tax revenues per capita can sometimes provide their citizens with the same, or in some cases even higher, quality of services as those in other countries with higher taxes.

It is of utmost importance to dispel the political myth that more resources automatically lead to better quality. As long as this view persists, achieving real improvements in quality will remain difficult. Instead of focusing on general increases in funding, we need targeted resources specifically dedicated to increasing knowledge about systematic quality work and to conducting effective quality development in our organizations.

"Allocating more resources to an organization with quality problems usually only leads to even bigger problems."



5. Can an organization be efficient and still deliver good quality?

IT IS SOMETIMES CLAIMED that quality and efficiency are opposites. This is likely because the word *efficiency*, just like *quality*, is often misunderstood. In English, the terms *effectiveness* and *efficiency* provide clarity.

Effectiveness concerns whether an organization and its processes are *doing the right things*. This reflects the ability to meet the needs and expectations of the organization's customers. Quality and effectiveness are deeply intertwined. An organization can never be considered effective if it is not doing the right things.

Efficiency, on the other hand, concerns whether things are *done right*, avoiding errors and defects. In many cases, efficiency is easier to grasp and measure, since it can be determined by the degree to which set requirements and goals are achieved.

Successful quality work leads to both external and internal efficiency, that is, *doing the right things in the right way*. Unfortunately, research has shown that quality efforts in many organizations tend to focus mostly on efficiency. This means that the focus on citizens or cus-

tomers is lacking, which risks that quality initiatives will not result in the intended improvements in quality outcomes.

Another way to illustrate the relationship between quality and efficiency is through the concepts of *resource efficiency* and *flow efficiency*. Resource efficiency refers to the traditional view of efficiency - that is, how much output is achieved in relation to the input used. Flow efficiency, by contrast, refers to the efficiency of what happens within a process.

For example, when studying the efficiency of a health-care chain, resource efficiency can be measured by the number of patients handled per available doctor and nurse. Flow efficiency, on the other hand, concerns the patient's journey through the same healthcare process and focuses on potential queues and waiting times.

A well-functioning organization has both good resource and flow efficiency. However, when a conflict arises between the two dimensions, the organization's value creation, i.e., flow efficiency, should be given the highest priority.

“An organization cannot be effective if it lacks the ability to meet needs and deliver quality.”



6. How does an organization work with quality?

QUALITY MANAGEMENT has two main functions: to ensure and to improve quality.

Quality assurance ensures that a minimum quality level is consistently delivered and that errors, deviations, and deficiencies are minimized or eliminated. In public organizations, quality assurance also plays a crucial role in ensuring a safe society and equity.

Quality development aims to continuously improve the organization's ability to meet needs and expectations in the best possible way with the least possible use of resources. The goal is to deliver ever-better quality at an ever-lower cost, so that citizens receive the highest possible value for their tax money.

So, how is quality ensured? Quality assurance is based on standardizing quality-critical processes and work methods to ensure that the best practices are consistently applied. However, it is crucial to find the right level of detail in this work. Over-documentation can be just as risky as under-documentation, as it often leads to bureaucracy, complexity, and wasted resources. It is also crucial to conduct regular internal audits, inspections, and controls, and to address any deviations in a professional and timely manner. Successful quality assurance places high demands on culture, leadership, accountability, and trust.

What does it take to improve quality? Successful quality development requires that the organization has a

strong ability to work systematically with improvements. A well-developed improvement capability is vital in today's fast-changing world. This capability encompasses fact-based problem-solving, value-creating process development, and the application of innovative methods. Absolutely essential to succeeding in improvement work is ensuring that the organization has solid knowledge of quality improvement.

"In a world of increasingly rapid change, a well-developed improvement capability is required to achieve and sustain quality."

It is essential to organize improvement work and make it a natural part of daily operations. An employee's task, regardless of their role, should be to both perform their job effectively and continually improve it.

The bigger challenges within an organization are often cross-functional and involve more than one unit. Therefore, cross-functional improvement initiatives must also be organized. Typical for organizations that have achieved quality success is that they have established a clear infrastructure for improvements, with defined roles, clear responsibilities, and dedicated time. This applies not only to individual organizations but also to the processes of society, which often cut across national, regional, and municipal boundaries.

Successful improvement work also places high demands on the organization's leaders. Most critical of all is that the top management of the organization directs the improvement efforts toward what matters most for the organization and the people it exists to serve.



7. What is critical to achieve good quality?

THE KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT IS REQUIRED to achieve success with quality is both well established and consistent. For a long time, numerous researchers and quality professionals have been committed to better understanding the key factors that enable an organization to deliver high-quality products and services.

Today, there are different quality models. Many countries and regions have established national excellence models, such as the EFQM model in Europe, the Baldrige model in the United States, the Deming model in Japan, and the SIQ model in Sweden. From a global perspective, ISO 9000 presents quality management principles as a foundation for successful quality work.

All those different quality models essentially express the same principles. Naturally, slightly different terminology is used, but upon closer examination, a strong alignment is found regarding what drives quality. If studying literature and research, very similar principles are being discovered. These factors can be summarized in the following key areas:

1. Leadership. At the core of effective quality work is committed and competent leadership. Organizations that have succeeded in terms of quality have leaders who personally lead and create the best conditions for quality efforts.

2. Employee engagement and quality culture. The importance of employee involvement and accountability in quality work is evident. It is essential that employees have the right competence and are engaged in a purposeful quality effort. Successful organizations are characterized by a strong quality culture.

3. Citizen (Customer) Focus. The focus is on the people the organization exists to serve and how to create high value for them. The voice of the citizen, or customer, is present in all work. Their needs are systematically identified, and their satisfaction is closely monitored.

4. Process Orientation. Collaboration occurs across organizational boundaries, with a focus on value creation, efficiency, and continuous improvement. This applies not only within the organization itself but also in the entire value chain, including external customers and suppliers.

5. Continuous Improvement. A well-developed ability to improve exists at all levels of the organization. The improvement work is systematic and based on solid knowledge of improvement methodology. Significant resources are dedicated to continuous improvement.

In addition to these factors, organizations that are quality leaders are also characterized by continuity, long-term commitment, and perseverance in their quality initiatives.

“There has long been clear and consistent knowledge about what drives effective quality development.”



8. What role does leadership play in the ability to deliver good quality?

THE LEADER'S ROLE is not only to set goals and monitor results, but also to work together with employees to find and continuously improve work methods that lead to success. It is not enough to simply focus on goals and outcomes, even though a clear direction is essential. Results are primarily achieved by focusing on developing the work itself in ways that lead to the desired outcomes.

Today's quality models, as well as research in the field of quality and the collective experience of quality professionals worldwide, emphasize the importance of engaged and present leadership. The success of an organization in terms of quality depends significantly on the actions of its executive leadership.

The primary purpose of leadership is to ensure that the organization delivers value and benefits to those it exists to serve in a cost-effective way. At the same time, we live in a world characterized by accelerating change, which places high demands on a leader's ability to understand value creation and systematic improvement work. This is the foundation of effective leadership.

The role of leadership in successful quality work can be summarized as follows:

- Ensuring a strong citizen or customer focus.
- Directing the organization's quality and improvement efforts toward what is most critical for success.
- Creating the best possible conditions for quality work.

- Stimulating strong work performance and continuous improvement through hands-on, supportive leadership in daily operations.
- Monitoring and recognizing the efforts and contributions being made.

Today, there is much talk about the importance of trust. Without trust at all levels, neither an individual organization nor society can function. However, it is essential to consider what trust-based self-leadership actually means. In some circles, it is misinterpreted as an absence of leadership and follow-up, which is completely incorrect.

"To achieve high quality, a present and competent leadership is required that helps employees find and continuously improve the work methods that lead to the desired results."

Trust is built through proximity, dialogue, and accountability at all levels. Setting goals, making key aspects measurable, and following up become even more important. What is absolutely critical is the leader's active presence as a coach and mentor, focused on supporting and motivating employees in the development of optimal work methods.

It is also essential to understand that leadership requires both knowledge and ability. Perhaps the next person in line is not always the right one to promote. Appointing leaders should not be about rewarding individuals for long service. Instead, the focus must be on identifying leadership talent and providing training and development to help them become skilled leaders and managers. It is also essential to follow up on how leaders are performing in their roles, particularly their ability to lead with a focus on quality and value creation.



9. Is knowledge required to succeed with quality?

THERE IS GENERALLY a lack of understanding about the knowledge required for an organization to succeed in its pursuit of delivering high quality. To succeed with quality, both professional expertise and knowledge about quality management are needed.

Professional knowledge is, of course, essential for performing one's job with quality. For example, a teacher needs solid knowledge of the subjects they teach, pedagogical skills, and an understanding of how to prepare, plan, and follow up on lessons. This is knowledge that begins in profession-specific education and continues to develop through lifelong learning.

However, professional knowledge alone is not sufficient for an organization to deliver, maintain, and improve quality. What is also needed is quality knowledge, which includes the philosophies, approaches, methods, and tools that form the foundation of quality management. Quality management is a broad and well-established field of knowledge, developed through practical experience and research over the past 100 years. Today, education in quality management is of-

fered at most universities and colleges, as well as by training organizations. Most companies today have a quality manager and a quality department of well-educated quality professionals.

Despite this, the level of understanding is often surprisingly low in many public organizations regarding knowledge about quality and improvement, especially among politicians who make many of the most critical decisions. In many cases, quality work is treated as if it were simply a matter of common sense. Quality roles are

often assigned without providing those in the roles with the necessary training. Often, the resources allocated to direct quality related activities are also far too limited.

The result is that the potential good results are not realized. In the worst cases, quality initiatives may even come to be seen as unserious or obstructive. A lack of quality knowledge also leads to avoidable mistakes, which could have been prevented simply by taking advantage of the existing quality body of knowledge and experience.

“Professional expertise alone is not enough to develop and sustain high quality in a complex organization. Solid knowledge in quality management is also required.”



10. Does digitalization lead to increased quality and efficiency?

TODAY, MUCH OF THE FOCUS is on digitalization. The application of new technologies is rapidly creating new ways to run organizations, meet needs, increase efficiency, and boost productivity. Our society is undergoing a dramatic technological shift. Artificial intelligence, cognitive computer systems, Internet of Things (IoT), higher data transfer speeds (5G), new sensor technologies, and more are expected to shape a new society, new ways of living, and new ways of producing goods and services.

When used wisely, technology can significantly contribute to quality development and efficiency. However, the key is that technology must be introduced in the right way, with the intention to create value from a customer and user perspective.

Unfortunately, that is often not how digitalization is implemented across society today, which can lead to very negative consequences. Poor digitalization can quickly result in significant costs and waste, as well as frustration among users, citizens, and customers. Who hasn't cursed over IT systems that don't work as they should, or that are very complicated to use?

To ensure successful technological development, it is crucial that it becomes part of the organization's overall development. Technology is not a goal in itself, but rather a way to develop and improve. What's critical is to start from the value and benefit that the new technology should deliver for those the organization exists

to serve. For this to happen, technical knowledge must be integrated with knowledge of quality and improvement.

Before an organization is ready to implement a new technology, the relevant processes and work methods must be well-designed and effective. The right things must be done the right way. Digitalizing or automating a poorly functioning process can, in the worst case, lead to making mistakes faster and on a larger scale. Digitalization and new technology must be quality-assured from the beginning.

It is also important that new technology is capable of being continuously improved. In an age of accelerating technological development, the lifetime of technical solutions has become increasingly short. Too often, this has resulted in very costly tech investments quickly becoming obsolete. To avoid such significant costs, new technology must be designed to be continuously developed and improved.

Another highly important intersection between digitalization and quality management concerns data and information quality. For advanced IT systems to function properly and deliver the right value, the information they process must be accurate and relevant. As digitalization progresses, ensuring high-quality information becomes an increasingly critical issue. Especially when systems are based on artificial intelligence that take over decision-making from human beings.



11. How are quality development and sustainable development connected?

SUSTAINABILITY IS ABOUT achieving development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. According to the UN's definition, such development is based on the three dimensions of sustainability: ecological, social, and economic. These can be broken down into the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which in turn are divided into 169 targets. Sustainability is, therefore, both a critical and highly complex issue.

A central aspect of sustainability is the effective and efficient use of resources in organizational processes, thereby minimizing unnecessary waste. The field of quality management essentially strives for the same goal and offers well-established methods and tools to drive significant improvements. Quality and sustainability go hand in hand - ecologically, socially, and economically.

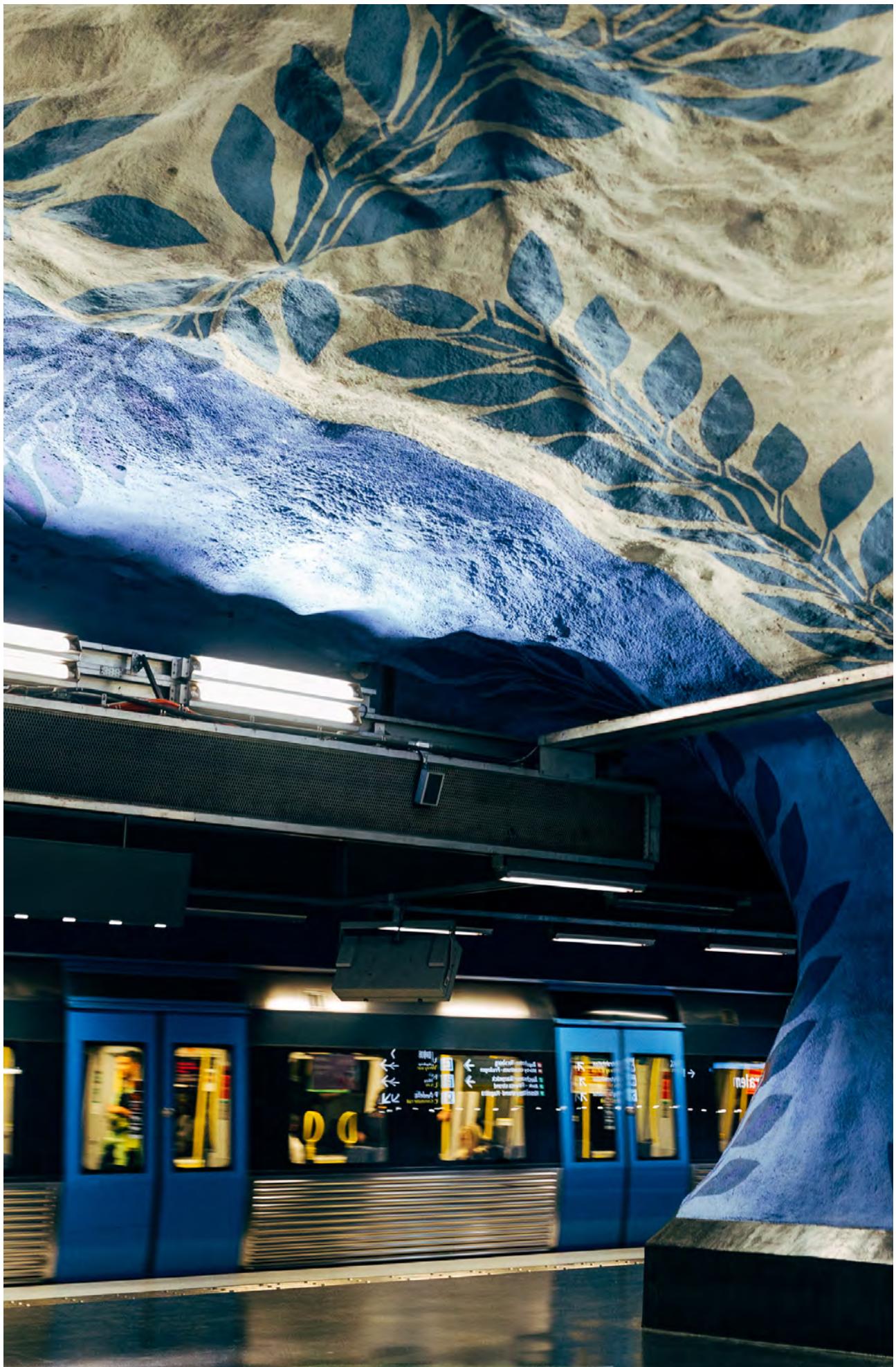
For a long time, a large number of researchers have monitored global progress in the sustainability-critical areas identified by the UN. In some areas, positive developments have been achieved, but in many others, significant challenges remain. In politics, sustainability efforts are often ideologically driven or based on opinion, which risks leading to symbolic actions with uncertain impact on real sustainability outcomes.

To genuinely achieve a more sustainable development, we need a more fact-based and knowledge-driven approach to sustainability. At the heart of such an approach is the ability to solve problems and improve processes, which exist in many organizations. The knowledge of how to develop effectiveness and efficiency through systematic improvement work has long been established within the quality field, and that knowledge should be utilized in sustainability efforts.

“To achieve sustainable development, more value-creating use of resources through systematic quality and improvement work is required.”

There is tremendous potential for sustainability through quality and continuous improvement. Research shows that only a small portion of the resources consumed contribute to creating meaningful value. By focusing on quality development – ensuring that the right things are done in the right way – we can save vast amounts of resources or use them in ways that generate far more value for people.

The International Academy for Quality (IAQ) has, over time, gained experience and collected data from several hundred participating projects in the IAQ Quality Sustainability Award regarding the link between quality and sustainability. Today, our researcher can prove that the philosophies, methods, and tools of quality management are critical and powerful drivers of sustainable development.



12. What can I, as a politician, do to create the right conditions for good quality?

POLITICIANS PLAY A VERY IMPORTANT ROLE in the future quality development of your country. As a political leader, you also serve as a role model for both citizens and the employees and managers working in government organizations. What you say and do has a significant impact on the success of quality development in our society.

All quality models and research clearly indicate that the commitment and involvement of top leadership are absolutely critical for quality. As a politician, you are part of that leadership, regardless of whether the organization is a municipality, a region, a government agency, or any other public operation. Therefore, it is crucial that politicians develop their personal knowledge in quality management and systematic improvement work.

This would contribute, among other things, to a more fact-based debate on quality issues, such as the provision of societal value. Of course, there are many ideological topics on which opinions diverge and that require debate. However, how to create effective quality development, how to make your country a world-leading quality nation, and how to ensure that citizens receive maximum value for the taxes they pay are, to a large extent, not ideological issues. There is research, knowledge, and methodologies available that can provide a clear path forward.

As a politician, you can focus on enabling effective

quality work in the areas that fall under your responsibility. This involves learning more about what to request, support, and demand as a political leader, which, in turn, requires your own knowledge of the field of quality management.

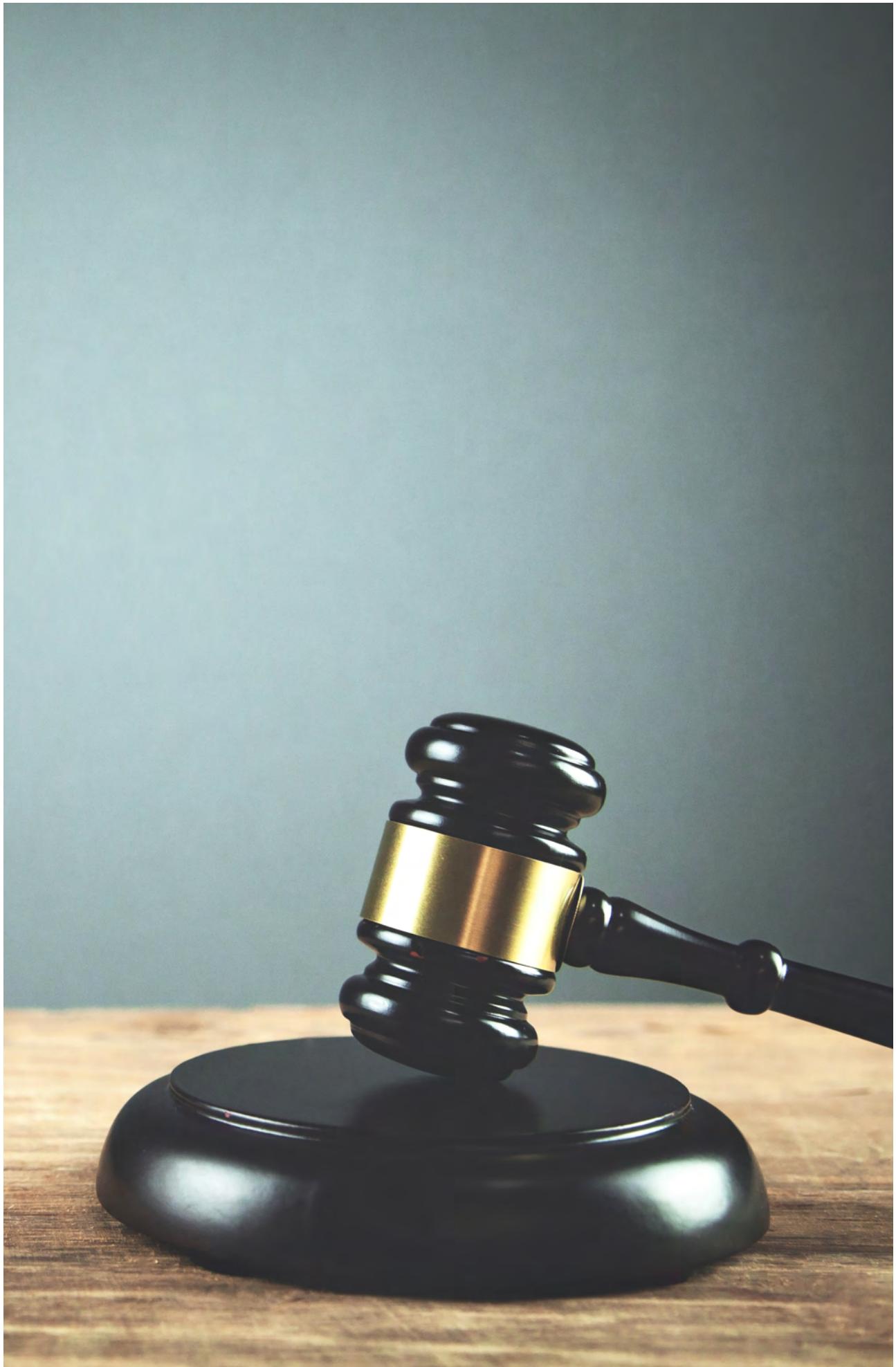
It is the role of politics to take the lead and guide the journey towards quality. A very important part of quality concerns resources. One of the most common and dangerous misconceptions is that better quality will arise automatically simply by allocating more resources to an operation. Focusing solely on more funding risks allowing organizations with poor processes, cul-

ture, and leadership to continue along the same flawed path. In contrast, dedicated resources explicitly aimed at professional quality development would likely have a much greater effect.

Successful quality and improvement work requires time, competence, and, to some extent, financial resources. However, if managed correctly, these are investments that pay off many times over, both in terms of greater value to citizens and reduced costs.

To contribute to successful quality development at the national, regional, and local level, a knowledge-based commitment to quality is required. There is strong support available from quality professionals, quality researchers, and national quality organizations. This ultimately concerns our shared future.

“As a politician, you are a leader who plays a decisive role and carries great responsibility for the quality that essential public services will deliver.”





Sandholm Associates AB, Tegnérsgatan 40, SE-113 59 Stockholm, Sweden
sandholmassociates.com sandholm@sandholm.se 46 8 755 59 90