

Quality Management and Literature: An Evaluative Reading of John Galsworthy's "Quality"

Deeb, Gehan M. Anwar

Assistant Professor of English literature, Department of English,
Faculty of Languages and Translation, October 6 University, Egypt
Gehan_anwar@yahoo.com

Abstract:

During the last three decades, the Western world has devoted much more efforts to the spread of the value of "quality" and its "management", at all levels and in all fields within a given community. Most enterprises not to say organizations seek the ISO 9000 family of quality management systems in order to meet customers' and other stakeholders' needs within statutory and regulatory requirements related to a product or service. A certification of such a set of standards helps ensure improvement or promotion, referred to nowadays as "excellence" (Dale et al: 4-7). However, this entails a wide campaign of advertising products/services to enhance the sales rate, hence increase profits, and boost gains. Other businesses, nonetheless, small as they may be, provide a quality product that meets the principles of quality management (customer satisfaction and efficiency), regardless of the costs incurred or the profits gained. Literature, being a process of creation par excellence, can map out a sketch of the previous two business strategies. It can be geared towards a good understanding of the work strategies, with a view to reflecting their successes or failures. Literature is not only writing technique, plot, theme and message, but it is also a combination of character development, situations structure, decision-making, choices and consequences. This research paper, therefore, aspires to break through untrodden areas of critical study, by blending the quality management principles with a literary genre, which has its own set of evaluative ethics. By this, I mean the art of short fiction, represented in this research by a short story, "Quality" (1912), authored by a notable Englishman-of-letters, John Galsworthy. The narrative aspects of day-to-day activities, characters and their repartees are here employed as a practical guide to quality management criteria of the ISO 9001 Model. This will include the design clause of a product, although the ISO Series had not then been issued and published. This will also take into account the Kaizen's philosophy of continuous improvement. By quality, it is worthy of note, Galsworthy does not only mean the product quality, represented by shoemaking, but also the soul quality of the shoemaker himself. Such a shoemaker's commitment to hone beautifully designed and fitted shoes, displayed as artworks, costs Mr. Gessler everything, including his own life.

I here also rely on my first lived experience in 1995 as an ISO standards translator and internal auditor, then as a quality assurance manager and reviewer in higher education today.

Key Words:

Literature and QMS, ISO 9001 Standard, continuous improvement, art, customer satisfaction, John Galsworthy's Short story "Quality".

I. Introduction:

Since good literature is 'a miniature of life', there is a strong affinity between it and the domain of business and enterprises. "Literature", according to Govindarajulu & Koperundevi, "works through the senses and represents and explores the way in which the world is viewed and experienced by **people**." (1) Business, likewise, is a human activity in which a mental effort is exercised to strike a kind of balance between loss and gain. In connection with this, two relevant and important books come to mind, having been recommended by John S. McCallum in the *Ivey Business Journal* (July/August 2001): John O. Whitney and Tina Packer's *Power Plays: Shakespeare's Lessons in Leadership and Management* (Simon and Schuster, 2002) and Harold Bloom's *How to Read and Why* (Scribner, 2000). McCallum strongly believes that although literature may seem to be "an unlikely source for an executive seeking to establish a sustainable competitive advantage," it still has a link with the process of "successfully running an enterprise," which

is not as far-fetched as it may first appear. Management is getting things done that are worth doing through **people**, and then seamlessly turning over the reins when the time is right, thus demonstrating decision-making, execution and succession planning. Ask executives why they are not getting the results they want and invariably the answers have something to do with people. The "people" may be superiors, colleagues, rank-and-file workers, customers, suppliers, shareholders, bankers, regulators, the media or even adversaries and competitors. But always, it is **people!** (1)

The different genres of literature, therefore, involve an intense emphasis on 'people', or, rather, the human element. They focus on character development, character behaviour and man's feelings in general. McCallum proceeds to argue that

the difference between good and bad literature is not so much writing technique, plot and theme, as it is character development, insight into human behaviour, the thoughtful assessment of situations and wise judgment about options, choices and consequences. ... Lack of information is not what gets most enterprises into trouble; it is misreading people and situations. (2)

Interacting with the experience of reading literature, business executives are expected to learn how to improve themselves as well as their knowledge of others, so as to be able to expand the management of their businesses, and hence promote their impact on and communication with people on a large scale. One

of the many definitions of literature is the idea that it is but a reflection of the consequences, or rather, the exacerbated problems of life that people may have, at some point, face, react to and handle in order to achieve some peace of mind, regardless of the various situations and circumstances that may besiege them.

John Galsworthy - *alias* John Sinjohn - (1867-1933) is an English novelist, short-story writer and playwright. He won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1932. A notable figure with a prolific literary status, Galsworthy's works are analogous to and corresponding with the experience of actual enterprises (personnel and activities). As a human rights and moral activist, he always sought to convey significant social messages through literature. The characteristic technical devices of such a short story of his as "Quality", first published in "The Inn of Tranquility: Studies and Essays" in 1912 (Nordquist: 1), hammer home the central preoccupation of his literary career, namely the suffering of the working class.

As is customary in a short story, Galsworthy's "Quality" has a few characters, who are, still, skillfully depicted in a realistic and naturalistic way. They represent the tip-top personnel in an enterprise. Reflecting the story-teller's point of view, the first-person narrator acts both as a part of its plot and as an ordinary customer. He has known the shoemaker "from the days of [his] extreme youth because he made [his] father's boots". That is why he discloses some pieces of information, indeed facts, about such a shoemaker, who always "made good boots", exploring, in the process, "the theme of commitment, determination, loyalty, honesty, dedication and loss" in his job (McManus: 1). The narrator cannot hide his admiration of Mr. Gessler's craftsmanship, whose boots are so durable and can last very long and are the best of their kind. "For it was not possible to go to him very often--his boots lasted terribly, having something beyond the temporary--some, as it were, essence of boot stitched into them." ("Quality": 49)

Mr. Gessler's character is further revealed through language, setting and interaction with other characters; i.e., his elder brother and the customer. Their dealings, actions and reactions, all contribute to an understanding of how he, as an artisan, has many attributes and is able to grow and change as the story progresses. Mr. Gessler's accent, to begin with, betrays his German descent, for he was originally an emigrant, who established himself as the best shoemaker in town, who uses the best leather available. Moreover, in a startling metaphor, he himself is cynically described as made of 'leather' and of its 'sardonic substance'. This is how the story reads:

Himself, he was a little as if made from leather, with his yellow crinkly face, and crinkly reddish hair and beard; and neat folds slanting down his cheeks to the corners of his mouth, and his guttural and one-toned voice; for leather is a sardonic substance, and stiff and slow of purpose. And that was the character of his face, save that his eyes, which were grey-blue, had in them the simple gravity of one secretly possessed by the Ideal. ("Quality": 48-9)

Through well-developed direct or indirect characterization, Galsworthy tells the reader exactly who the main characters are and how the two brothers respect each other. Their attachment to one another is greatly seen, if not felt. As business persons on a small scale, they employ a number of traditional workers and their shop attracts loyal customers. Mr. Gessler looks identical to his elder Gessler and both live with each other in a fashionable part of London, where they run their small shop/enterprise. They are traditional shoemakers, who face "the sad fate of extinction in an age of marketing where success is determined 'by advertisement, not by work.'" (Gyaanwaliduniya: 1) Despite of that, quality characterizes the Gessler Brothers' work. Their moral success emphasizes their human values, both in times of prosperity and demise.

II. Principles of Quality and ISO 9001 Standard:

Mary Spence (King's Hill Institute, Greenwich, UK, 2000) stated two principles of Quality assurance that define quality as honing to 'perfection' and quality as 'fitness for purpose' (56-9). The first is "the traditional, classic notion, that of quality which equates it with *excellence* and the provision of a service that is flawless." (qtd. in Peters: 56) The second principle, fitness for purpose, "requires that the product or service fulfills the customer's needs, requirements, or desires. These requirements need to be clearly articulated by the customer." (Ibid: 56) The product becomes suitable for its purpose when it simply achieves the two goals of quality management; i.e., customer satisfaction and efficiency. "If we can figure out what it is our customers, and deliver it the same every time, our customers will come back to us, tell others about us, and we will become more successful. We can think about quality in this way as reliability." Moreover, if we think about efficiency, "so mistakes are less likely to occur, rather than trying to catch them when they do. You cannot inspect 'quality in' at the end of the process but you can design it in from the start" (Peters 56).

ISO 9001, the international standard for Quality Management Systems (QMS), is "suitable for all sizes of organizations, operating in any economic or industrial sector" (Bendell: 11-12) as it takes account of the **design** clause of a product and **customers' needs**. It also embraces "demonstration of continuous

improvement and prevention of non-conformities." (Ibid: 11-12). As an approach to quality management, the last edition of ISO 9001:2015 Standard rotates around seven principles: customer focus; leadership; engagement of people; process approach; improvement; evidence-based decision making; relationship management. Its general requirements state that the interaction of effective processes of any organization should include "management activities, provision of resources, product realization and measurement" (ISO 9001, Clause: 5.4.2).¹

"Management Commitment" is one of the elements of 'Management Responsibility' requesting that top management "shall provide evidence of its commitment to the development and implementation of the quality management system and continually improving its effectiveness." (Clause: 5.1) Although small businesses often suffer due to lack of commitment and customer satisfaction, the Gessler's brothers, the managers in Galsworthy's short story, paid much more attention to both aspects: less cost and much commitment. Their approach to their business management does embrace the fundamentals of continuous improvement. They show how such elements can be readily adhered to, regardless of the worse conditions during an age, "when the quality of products had diminished because of mass production" and due to "the attitude of the people who had compromised fashion for quality" (Govindarajulu & Koperundevi: 2).

To be in charge of an enterprise as an executive manager/leader, one should focus on three leadership traits: Power, communication and persuasion. These are thoroughly covered by Whitney and Packer in *Power Plays: Shakespeare's Lessons in Leadership and Management*, 2002.

Part I covers power: Want to know "how to get it, how to keep it, what to do when you have it, and how you lose it—then Shakespeare is your man." Part II deals with communication and persuasion—"Leadership is theatre. To be in charge is to act the part. 'All the world's a stage.'" Part III integrates values, vision, mission and strategy in the great "search within." (McCallum: 4)

In Galsworthy's "Quality", the reader is introduced to many management activities and processes: the competence of personnel, problems and consequences, decision making, power and leadership, communication, customer complaints, quality vs. quantity, rigid competition exacerbated by lack of advertising. Commitment is the main theme that pervades all the narrative.

¹ ISO 9001, Clause No. is hereafter Clause No. in citations;
Galsworthy's short story "Quality" is "Quality".

The Gessler brothers' "responsibilities and authorities are defined and communicated" within their work. (Clause: 5.5.1) The elder brother is the one who does most of the tasks, whereas the younger brother, Mr. Gessler, is the Management Representative, whose authorities include provision of materials, design, measurement, verification and delivery. Mr. Gessler is a skillful CEO and a strategic leader, who is knowledgeable about the challenges, threats, and points of weakness and points of strengths. Internal Communication for the effectiveness of the quality work is established between the Gessler brothers themselves, and between them and the personnel or their customers. Though they are not able to overcome external challenges and conflicts, everyone knows his own role and thus acts accordingly.

The documentation of the quality management system includes "documented statements of a quality policy and quality objectives," and any documents "to ensure the effective planning, operation and control of its processes," according to the size of organization and type of activities. The Gessler Brothers seem to have a Quality Policy "appropriate to the purpose" of their business, including, apparently, mission, vision, human values and objectives.

Mission of their work is: We are committed to provide a quality of work, through the skills, professionalism and integrity of makers to reach excellence and art in shoemaking in the lowest prices.

Vision: We seek to make the quality of our product speak loudly through pursuing efficiency and achieving high customer satisfaction, admiration and appreciation.

Objectives and Human Values: We adopt quality, customer satisfaction, efficiency, hard work, commitment, honesty, integrity, and passion for our work.

III. Imaging the Soul Quality: Love for Boots Vs. Love for Money:

Galsworthy's short story comprises a double meaning for the word 'quality'. The Gessler Brothers attain and maintain the quality of their work (shoemaking) in an approximately mass-production society, while attaining the quality of their soul. They are committed to provide the resources and raw materials necessary for enhancing "customer satisfaction by meeting customer requirements." (Clause: 6.1) They have the suitable "**skills and experience**" (6.2.1), along with their own traditional methods and procedures needed to perform activities that add to their product quality. The death_of the Gessler Brothers may refer to the cessation of quality soul. This, however, may reveal a triumph over the money-oriented value. "Galsworthy depicts shoemakers attempting to stay true to their

crafts in the face of a world driven by money and immediate gratification -- not by quality and certainly not by true art or craftsmanship." (Nordquist: 1) Mr. Gessler prefers to die of starvation rather than to cheapen his product or to produce a non-confirming product.

For Mr. Gessler life is work and he is determined to do the best that he can for his customers. ...[He] is not driven by money. What drives Mr. Gessler is his strong desire to make the best boots possible. Their shoes had lasting quality yet they did not make good money. (McManus: 2)

The short story "Quality" is narrated from the perspective of a loyal customer. What did impress him when he was fourteen-years old is "the dignity of himself and brother. For to make boots—such boots as [Mr. Gessler] made—seemed to me then, and still seems to me, mysterious and wonderful." ("Quality": 48) This echoes the PDCA cycle (Plan - Do - Check and Act) that influenced the Japanese way of thinking on quality, improvement and zero defects as Kaizen (*Kai*: change; *Zen*: good), or the "good change", a term which was popularized by Masaaki Imai, in his book *Kaizen: The Key to Japan's Competitive Success*, 1986. (pp. xxix) Kaizen requires an active participation of everybody, at all levels in an organization: from the top management down to the low-skilled workers. Its philosophy suggests that everybody has an interest in improvement, not just at work but in all aspects of life. (Vekasco: 1) There are three main basics to discuss the concept of continuous improvement from the viewpoint of Kaizen: "Waste elimination, Standardization, Management of workplace." (Ibid: 2) By Waste elimination, Kaizen means to minimize the three enemies of lean represented in the three Japanese words: *Muda* (waste), *Mura* (variation) and *Muri* (excessiveness).

Galsworthy's short story starts with the description of the Brothers' traditional boot shop that does not have any sign "upon its face that he made for any of the Royal Family—merely his own German name of Gessler Brothers; and in the window a few pairs of boots." ("Quality": 48) They do not make more shoes than requested by the customers. Mr. Gessler competes with Big Firms, "for he made only what was ordered, reaching nothing down, and it seemed so inconceivable that what he made could ever have failed to fit. Had he bought them to put there? That, too, seemed inconceivable." ("Quality": 48) "He is also a man who watches helplessly the factory system scrapping away his business but does not take the initiative to adopt the modern method of advertising" (Govindarajulu & Koperundevi: 1).

Standardization is the second element of Kaizen that focuses on "adopting best-for-purpose practices leading to efficiency and harmony at work which in

turn facilitate the attainment of the above mentioned waste elimination and effectively reaching organization targets." (Vekasco 1) Mr. Gessler is a man of artisanship, who skillfully take measure, and 'work without rest and food to supply shoes on time' (Kaliya: 1). Mr. Gessler's shoes are of high quality as if they represent the soul of 'all foot-gear'.

He would never have tolerated in his house leather on which he had not worked himself. Besides, they were too beautiful--the pair of pumps, so inexpressibly slim, the patent leathers with cloth tops, making water come into one's mouth, the tall brown riding boots with marvelous sooty glow, as if, though new, they had been worn a hundred years. Those pairs could only have been made by one who saw before him the Soul of Boot--so truly were they prototypes incarnating the very spirit of all foot-gear. ("Quality": 48)

The third element of the Japanese method of Kaizen is "Management of workplace or good housekeeping" in which they

have developed a specialized method ... known as the 5S, each for the Japanese words: "seiri – seiton – seiso – seiketsu – shitsuke" which in English language roughly translate to: sort (remove unnecessary objects from work area so that they do not hinder the process), straighten (sort things out so they can be found easily), shine (clean work area and keep it in good aesthetics... (Vekasco: 2)

In ISO 9001, too, the "infrastructure needed to achieve conformity to product requirements" should be provided. (Clause: 6.3) Though small-scaled, the Gessler Brothers' shop/project is divided into two parts: the premises with upstairs room providing the workspace and the associated utilities needed for practising their craft, including their process equipment and supporting services (Ibid). They live and work in "two little shops let into one, in a small by-street--now no more, but then most fashionably placed in the West End." ("Quality": 48). Nevertheless, their work environment is conformed to their product requirements and achieves their quality objectives.

III.A. Institution like a Church and a Dreamlike Property

The first-person narrator (customer) compares Mr. Gessler's shop to a place of worship – a place where the shoemaker worships the shoes he makes. Going into his shop is something like going into a church, in which one feels the peace of mind and sits contemplating on a wooden chair. "One went in, not as into most shops, in the mood of: "Please serve me, and let me go!" but restfully, as one enters a church; and, sitting on the single wooden chair, waited--for there was

never anybody there." ("Quality": 49) Shopping at Gessler's' Brothers is different; the first thing to be done, according to the customer, is to wake Mr. Gessler up from his 'dreams of boots': he keeps looking at the leather as if he is in love with them.

A guttural sound, and the tip-tap of bast slippers beating the narrow wooden stairs, and he would stand before one without coat, a little bent, in leather apron, with sleeves turned back, blinking--as if awakened from some dream of boots, or like an owl surprised in daylight and annoyed at this interruption. ("Quality": 49)

IV. Art for Art's Sake: Design, Art and Ad:

The Gessler Brothers "plan and develop the processes needed for product realization" in accordance with "the requirements of the other processes" (Clause: 7.1) that should be "complete, unambiguous and not in conflict with each other." (Clause: 7.3) Design and development inputs of product are determined and "reviewed for adequacy". The narrative "Quality"

tells the readers how the Gessler brothers stick to the professional standard and pursue art and quality indomitably. The main characters in the story show the characteristics of aesthetes, tough men and tragic hero. Their pursuit demonstrates the forever yearn and eternal faith of human beings for beauty and truth. (Hui-juan: 1)

The Gessler brothers strongly believe that the quality of their boots reflects the quality of their soul. That's why they are wholeheartedly devoted to meet the leather requirements of their customers and their product design. The fitted outputs or pairs of shoes are "provided in a form that enables verification against the design and development input and shall be approved prior to release." (Clause: 7.3.3) Fulfilling its design artfully, the final product renders more beautiful than before, and is "conformed and adequate to specified purchase requirements" (Clause: 7.4), provided with information describing its characteristics (Clause: 7.5.1), monitored and measured; and its activities of release, delivery and post-delivery are conducted.

IV. A. Customer Focus, Timekeeping and Measurement Assessment:

Customer focus, measurement of time and preparation and administration of assessment are key evaluations for success, resulting in frequent and recurrent orders of purchase. Mr. Gessler instantly begins working in his 'masterpiece' as soon as he receives the orders from his customers. Here, the customer narrates one of his visits to Mr. Gessler's small shop to order a pair of golden Russian-

leather shoes. He approached the shop-owner saying: "How do you do, Mr. Gessler? Could you make me a pair of Russian leather boots?" Without uttering a word, the latter heads for into the inside of the shop, only to reappear soon

holding in his thin, veined hand a piece of gold-brown leather. With eyes fixed on it, he would remark: "What a beautiful piece!" When I, too, had admired it, he would speak again. "When do you want them?" And I would answer: "Oh! As soon as you conveniently can." And he would say: "Tomorrow fortnight?" Or if he was his elder brother: "I will ask my brother!" ("Quality": 49)

From this short repartee which takes place between the expert shoemaker and the customer, one can deduce that the order of the customer (the Golden Russian leather) is the quality plan, which Mr. Gessler instantly identifies and hence provides the requirements of the customer, who, in return, admires the leather quality, and consequently praises its beauty. The time element is also important for delivery as well as for all internal processes.

Once receiving a new order for a pair of shoes, Gessler is lost in the making process. He would ask the customer to come back the following day or so and would disappear for a while into his room upstairs. If Gessler had to make a new model of shoe, he would observe the model for long and would take precise measurement, by drawing and redrawing. He would not fail to scold the customer for having ruined a wonderful shoe due to carelessness. (John, Biju: 2)

Later in the story, the narrator (customer) travels abroad. Upon his next visit, after the passage of two years, to the shop in London, he is utterly shocked to learn from Mr. Gessler, the disaster-prone co-leader that his elder brother had died. Changes happen as the Gessler's tragedy becomes apparent with the death of his brother. He suddenly gets too old and suffers financial problems. He is, thus, forced to rent one of the two tenements of his shop to a big business. The shoe pairs are huddled together in a corner of the show window. On the shop's front wall, another name is painted. "He could not live over losing the old shop." ("Quality": 52) However, the narrator orders many pairs of boots. "I ordered several pairs. It was very long before they came—but they were better than ever. One simply could not wear them out." ("Quality": 53) In fact, the more time the order takes the better quality it attains. To the narrator's surprise, however, the ordered shoes are delivered a quality 'even better than ever'. The surviving Gessler kept producing boots for the same price yet with the same past quality.

After a year, the narrator visits the shop again in London only to notice that Mr. Gessler is in a dreadful condition: "I had left a man of sixty, I came back to one of seventy-five, pinched and worn and tremulous, who genuinely, this time, did not at first know me." ("Quality": 53) However, it is at this point in the story that the customer's focus is at its most obvious state:

"Do you want any boots?" he said. "I can make dem quickly; id is a slack dime."

I answered, "Please, please! I want boots all around—every kind!" ("Quality": 52-3)

Mr. Gessler is ready to handcraft frequent orders of boots in two weeks. That is why he walks up the stairs and starts working on the leather, even before the customer leaves the shop.

Mr. Gessler was very disciplined. He was quick but spent enormous time to make his boots. He made the boots with the authentic materials, giving maximum priority to the quality of the boots he made. He did not care about the price of materials. If the customers felt satisfied with the shoes that he made, he would be satisfied too. (John, Biju: 2)

Processes of measurement, analysis and improvement are implemented by the Gesslers to "demonstrate conformity of the product." (Clause: 8.1) This is to enhance Customer satisfaction and "perception as to whether the organization has met customer requirements." (Clause: 8.2.1)

Then, placing my foot on a piece of paper, he would two or three times tickle the outer edges with a pencil and pass his nervous fingers over my toes, feeling himself into the heart of my requirements. ("Quality": 50)

The output of this planning (drawing) is in a form suitable for the method of operations.

The Gessler brothers' advertising material, or their work of shoemaking, is, for them, an art not to be sold but to be maintained, "protected and safeguarded" (7.5.4) and, above all, displayed on windows. Out of curiosity, the narrator remembers a question he once naively and shyly asked Mr. Gessler "while stretching out to him [his] youthful foot" whether or not it is "awfully hard to do" such a craft. Mr. Gessler's answer, "given with a sudden smile from out of the sardonic redness of his beard", that Shoemaking is an art in German pronunciation: "Id is an Ardt!" (48) It is with this value and mission that the Gessler brothers maintain their tradition of the art of shoemaking till their death. Fused with this increasing interest in business is their growing preoccupation with art in order to achieve quality and create beauty. As the story progresses,

Mr. Gessler realizes that his commitment to work and his customer satisfaction are the virtuous traits that can last even after his death.

Continuous improvement is attained through the quality objectives in which the **customer focus** is a great achievement. ISO 9001 Model requires that the Top Management should ensure that customer requirements "are determined, understood and consistently met" (Clause: 5.1.2) with the aim of keeping customers satisfied. Mr. Gessler determines and reviews the product requirements "specified by the customer," or "necessary for specified or intended use," before his "commitment to supply a product to the customer". (Clause: 7.2.2) His meetings with the customer always end up by ordering more pairs of shoes and assigning a definite time for delivery.

I had given those boots up, when one evening they came. Opening the parcel, I set the four pairs out in a row. Then one by one I tried them on. There was no doubt about it. In shape and fit, in finish and quality of leather, they were the best he had ever made me. And in the mouth of one of the Town walking-boots I found his bill.

The amount was the same as usual, but it gave me quite a shock. He had never before sent it in till quarter day. I flew down-stairs, wrote a cheque, and posted it at once with my own hand. ("Quality": 53)

The shoemaker's bill and the cheque sent by the narrator to him are signed documents. Mr Gessler can "preserve the conformity of product during internal processing and delivery to the intended destination. This preservation shall include identification, handling, packaging, storage and protection" from damage (Clause: 7.5.5).

IV.B. After-sale Care and Customer Feedback (Complaint or Appreciation):

The Gessler Brothers "determine and implement effective **arrangements** for ... customer **feedback**, including customer **complaints**." (Clause: 7.2.3) They "validate any processes ... where **deficiencies** become apparent only after the product is in use or the service has been delivered." (Clause: 7.5.2) They take preventive or corrective actions without delay "to eliminate the causes of potential nonconformities in order to prevent their occurrence." (Clause: 8.5.3)

During another visit to the same shop, the narrator, who has become a regular customer, lodges a complaint to the shoe-making shopkeeper, telling Mr. Gessler that "the last pair of town walking-boots creaked." ("Quality": 50). In fact, he had to buy them from a fashionable franchise due to some emergency

and bad need. Without blowing up, Mr. Gessler asks him to bring the shoes back to him, "Zend dem back! I will look at dem." ("Quality": 50). He also comments that the customer may have soaked the boots in water. However, Mr. Gessler, acknowledging his fault, takes a corrective action by assuring that if he cannot repair the creaked and uncomfortable pair of boots, he will give the money back, as some boots are bad from birth: "Zome boods, are bad from birdt. If I can do noding wid dem, I dake dem off your bill." ("Quality": 50) "Listening to rare complaints, he does not get ruffled or flustered and calmly ask the narrator to bring the shoes for an examination. In case they can be fixed he would do it otherwise the narrator would be completely reimbursed." (Cambon: 1).

The relationship between Mr. Gessler's 'rare character' and his ability for handling any complaint, according to the "Trait Theory of Leadership", denotes that he is a man of honesty, integrity and is trustworthy (Juneja: 1). That is because his main concern is to satisfy his customer, in line with McManus' remark:

He is allowing the narrator to politely question his craftsmanship; something that many craftsmen would not allow. But Mr. Gessler is not like other craftsmen. Not only is he committed and dedicated to his work, but he is also prepared to fix things that may not be right putting the customer first. (1)

Interestingly enough, Mr. Gessler can "identify any problems and propose necessary actions." (Clause: 7.3.4). One day after submitting his complaint, the narrator goes into the Gessler Brothers to order many pairs that "lasted more terribly than ever" ("Quality": 51), wearing the pair of shoes, which he had to buy from a large business. Mr. Gessler immediately recognizes that he does not make them. "He is also a connoisseur in boot making, where just by looking at a boot, identifies them to be factory turned out and ill-fitting." (Govindarajulu & Koperundevi: 2). Using his proficiency and skills, he touches a particular spot on the customer's shoe where it is not comfortable and says that it hurts there.

Once (once only) I went absent-mindedly into his shop in a pair of boots bought in an emergency at some large firms. He took my order without showing me any leather, and I could feel his eyes penetrating the inferior integument of my foot. At last he said: "Dose are nod my boods."

The tone was not one of anger, nor of sorrow, not even of contempt, but there was in it something quiet that froze the blood. He put his hand down and pressed a finger on the place where the left boot, endeavouring to be fashionable, was not quite comfortable. ("Quality": 50-51)

This passage reflects several important points, reinforcing the idea that although Mr. Gessler, like many other shoemakers of the working class, is a victim of big firms and their advertisements, he attempts to take any measures, without the least delay, to eliminate any detected non-conformities and their causes as well (Clause: 8.5.1). Firstly, he repairs the boots purchased by the customer, knowing that the product was not his. Secondly, he somehow states the reasons behind the big firms' non-conforming production: "Dose big virms 'ave no self-respect." ("Quality": 51). As is clear, Galsworthy uses the epiphany technique here in order to stress the growth of Mr. Gessler's experience and emphasize his business awareness. Probably for the first time, he discusses "the conditions and hardships of his trade" to the customer saying, "Dey get id all," "dey get id by adverdisement, nod by work. Dey dake id away from us, who lofe our boods. Id gomes to this—bresently I haf no work. Every year id gets less you will see." ("Quality": 51) The German accent of a suffering, yet skillful craftsman, is abundantly clear. This passage "highlights the industries lack of concern for quality and also shows how the people were attracted to fashion and quick service rather than quality service." It also emphasizes "the fall of the cottage industries which were swiped clean by the factories turning out mass production" if they do not "take up the new way of business." (Govindarajulu: 2)

The Gessler Brothers produce the best quality merchandise without advertising their products, while the largest manufacturing companies seek to produce brands of low quality. "But without quality assurance, brands become an impossible proposition. A brand is not a brand if it does not possess a reliable trustworthy 'personality'", or regulatory body, ensuring that "the promise is delivered as promised... If we do not deliver on the promise, we do not have a trust relationship with our customers". (Peters: 57)

The narrator's description provides the reader with the quality manual, information about the Gessler's shop, the procedures they undertake, and the problems they face in competing with big firms. The Brothers must choose one of two difficult alternatives or choices: to give up their ideal to face the competition, or to stick to it, even though this means encountering any consequences. They stick to their latter choice "making boots as an art during a time in which the world around [them] is increasingly shaped by the buying and selling of commodities. Mr. Gessler refuses to give into modern business practices... [His] approach is **minimalist in nature**" (Martyweis: 1).

While 'passing the little street', the narrator thinks of going to greet Mr. Gessler, telling him "how splendidly the new boots fitted." ("Quality": 53). Unfortunately, he finds that the Gessler Brothers' name on the shop's plate is no longer there. "Still there, in the window, were the slim pumps, the patent

leathers with cloth tops, the sooty riding boots." ("Quality": 53-4). The narrative reaches its climactic point when the narrator is, shockingly, informed of Mr. Gessler's death. Upon such a realization, there is a dénouement, where the English young man in the shop tells the narrator the main cause of his death: "Slow starvation, the doctor called it! You see he went to work in such a way! Would keep the shop on; wouldn't have a soul touch his boots except himself" ("Quality": 54). Thereupon, the customers very seldom visit the Gessler's shop because their shoes last more than others do. His point of weakness is that he becomes so old and slow that when "he got an order, it took him such a long time to finish. People wouldn't wait. He lost everybody. And there he'd sit, goin' on and on—I will say that for him not a man in London made a better boot!" ("Quality": 54).

In such a story as "Quality", therefore, Galsworthy tries to depict a true-to-life picture of how small businesses, like that of the Gessler Brothers, faced the Industrial Revolution's competition of Big Firms, whose impressive advertising of inferior quality product was their goal. This is underlined in the following dialogues that take place between the English young man and the narrator. There, the reader can trace the competitive status of these small businesses, which have been swallowed up by large enterprises with regard to their points of weakness and strength in the market place.

"But look at the competition! He never advertised! Would 'ave the best leather, too, and do it all 'imself. Well, there it is. What could you expect with his ideas?"

"But starvation——!"

"That may be a bit flowery, as the sayin' is—but I know myself he was sittin' over his boots day and night, to the very last. You see I used to watch him. Never gave 'imself time to eat; never had a penny in the house. All went in rent and leather. How he lived so long I don't know. He regularly let his fire go out. He was a character. But he made good boots."

"Yes," I said, "he made good boots." ("Quality": 54-5)

The passage ends on a sad tone, with an actual and affirmative sentence, signaling the catastrophe of the whole story. It becomes crystal-clear by now that Mr. Gessler, as a small businessperson, aspiring to quality, has devoted himself and all his time only to his work. He had no time to eat, to drink or to amuse himself. He spent all his earnings on buying new material, new leather and new utensils for his shop. No wonder that both the young man and the customer share, by the end of the story, a deep recognition of the Gessler

Brothers'. Their performance was, unequivocally, based on quality, since they made but good-quality boots that would last as ever as their own good souls.

Thus, it is no surprising that Gessler's admirable triumph shines in his commitment to his work, that his participation in community service is not, merely, based on self-interest. For him, each pair of boots was "his way of contributing to society. He wanted his customer to be not only happy with his boots but to be able to be comfortable wearing them." (McManus: 2) "I will say that for him—not a man in London made a better boot." "Yes," I said, "he made good boots." This recognition is evidential of the customer's satisfaction and contentment, the basic and key element of Gessler's work mission. Mr. Gessler is "ultimately triumphant in that he is able to establish his own conditions for success. What matters most to him is that he produces quality boots". He is "less concerned with selling more boots and making a profit than he is making a work of art, and in this regard he succeeds on his own terms." (Martyweis: 2). His adherence to continuous improvement is not only confined to the quality of his work, but to the quality of his soul, as well.

V. Conclusion:

Bringing Galsworthy's short story, "Quality", under scrutiny, the above study has applied the main principles of quality assurance and management. These are customer satisfaction and efficiency, comprised to make the product of a fictional narrative honed all the time, and fit for purpose. In the process, some major clauses of the ISO 9001 Standard have been implemented on a shoemaking business, with a view to capturing its key requirements and illustrating the complexities that hinder their implementation. Regardless of this, the message conveyed at the very end of the story clarifies the overall perspective of the storyteller: product quality and soul quality are inseparable.

Here, one may contend that the given circumstances accompanying the turn of the 20th century may have been at the back of Galsworthy's mind upon the writing of his story. As a realist and social activist, he delineates the Industrial Revolution and the following mass-production that caused the traditional workers and artisans, who make good fitting products, to nosedive. Although small businesses often suffer, due to lack of commitment and customer satisfaction, the Gessler's brothers, the managers in the short story, paid much more interest to both aspects: less cost and much commitment. Their approach to their own business management does embrace the fundamentals of continuous improvement. Galsworthy propagates the idea of quality versus quantity, while offering deeper understanding and more respect for those true craftsmen, like the Gessler brothers. Such businesspersons, according to him, suffer from the

constraints they face in their trade: cost, time, unbearable conditions of living, and lack of new and shiny methods in selling and advertising. As regards the Gesslers, to ensure the best quality of a product is to make comfortable and long lasting boots--even through employing old-fashioned methods--allowing the verification that the needs of customers are satisfactorily met. Since their shoes are durable, beautifully designed, and lasting 'forever', they continually strive to maintain the quality of their work, believing that any backsliding in this regard would lead to their demise.

Although Mr. Gessler may have lost his customers, money, shop and life, he was not ready at any moment in his struggle with the big firms, to concede to the sacrifice of the quality of his work. His love for his craft and commitment made him a true artist who adhered to his own principles and dealt with his masterpieces from both artistic and moral perspectives. His creative skills have been honed for producing a product quality that meets the criteria and standard requirements of the footwear of top-notch leather. Ironically, however, he died for the sake of his goals. True, the ending of the story is quite sad; true there is a sense of loss and grief, but human values and the soul quality appear to be triumphant.

Works Cited:

- ASQ. "Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve, Control (DMAIC Approach). 2019, retrieved 11 December, 2019, from [<https://asq.org/quality-resources/dmaic>].
- Bendell, Tony. "The Implications of the changes to ISO 9000 for Organisational Excellence" *Measuring Business Excellence*, 2000, Vol.4, No 3, pp. 11-14.
- Cambon, Gerard. "Quality-John Galsworthy" November 14, 2019. Retrieved on December 30, 2019 from [<https://gerardcambon.net/quality-john-galsworthy-the-story-is-about-two-siblings/>]
- Dale, B. G., Zairi, M., Van der Wiele, A., & Williams, A.R.T. "Quality is Dead in Europe - Long Live Excellence - True or False?" *Measuring Business Excellence*, 2000, Vol.4, No 3, 4-10.
- Galsworthy, John. "Quality", *Studies and Essays*, Esprios Digital Publishing, Chelsea, England - Dec. 6, 2015, www.esprios.com. Pp.48-55.
- Govindarajulu, Sashi Kala & Koperundevi, E. "Using 'Epiphany' as a Strategy to Teach the Short Story "Quality" By John Galsworthy", *Journal of Business Management & Social Sciences Research (JBM&SSR)*, ISSN No: 2319-5614 Volume 3, No.3, March 2014, retrieved 6 August, 2019, from [www.borjournals.com.]
- Gyaanwaliduniya. "Quality - John Galworthy", July 28, 2019, retrieved 6 July 2019, from [<https://www.padhayikiduniya.com/2019/07/quality-john-galworthy.html>]
- Hewitt, F. and Clayton, M., "The Implications of the changes to ISO 9000 for Organizational Excellence" *Measuring Business Excellence*, 2000, Vol.4, No 3, pp. 11-14.
- Hui-juan, Yang. "Meaning and Value of Life Reflected in Quality by John Galsworthy", 2012, (Foreign Languages School, Zhengzhou University, Zhumadian 463000, China). Retrieved 11 September, 2018, from [www.cnki.com.cn.]
- Imai, Masaaki. *Kaizen: The Key to Japan's Competitive Success*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1986.
- ISO website. *ISO 9001 Quality management systems — Requirements*. 5th ed. September, 2015, retrieved 22 July 2018, from [<https://www.iso.org/standard/62085.html>]
- John, Biju. "Quality – John Galsworthy". August 31, 2017, retrieved 10 September 2019, from [<https://www.kiddingtown.com/quality-john-galsworthy-summary-questions-and-answers-explanation-notes-ncert-cbse-igcse-pdf-analysis-character-sketches/>]
- Kaliya, Ajit. Blogspot, February 05, 2018, retrieved 21 December 2018, from [<http://kaliyaajit.blogspot.com/2018/02/quality-john-galsworthy.html>]

- Martyweis. "Quality' by John Galsworthy is indeed the story of Mr. Gessler's triumph over crushing adversities," *eNotes*, 13 Nov. 2017, Retrieved on 21 December ,2018, from [https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/quality-by-john-galsworthy-indeed-story-mr-990457].
- McCallum, John S. "Management and Literature: Two Books that Show the Way", the *Ivey Business Journal*, July / August 2001, retrieved 15 August 2019, from [https://iveybusinessjournal.com/publication/management-and-literature-two-books-that-show-the-way/]
- McManus, Dermot. "Quality by John Galsworthy," *The Sitting Bee: Short Story Reviews*, 1 March, 2018. Retrieved on February 3, 2019, from [http://sittingbee.com/quality-john-galsworthy/]
- Nordquist, Richard. "Quality, an Essay by John Galsworthy, Portrait of a Shoemaker As an Artist." *ThoughtCo*, Updated September 26, 2017, retrieved June 27, 2018, from [thoughtco.com/quality-by-john-galsworthy-1690111].
- Peters, John. "Educational Accreditation through ISO 9000" *Measuring Business Excellence*, 2000, Vol.4, No 3, pp. 56-59.
- Spence, Mary (King's Hill Institute, Greenwich, UK, 2000) *Measuring Business Excellence*, 2000, Vol.4, No 3, pp. 56-59.
- Juneja, Prachi. "Trait Theory of Leadership." *Management Study Guide*. MSG Experts, n.d. Retrieved July 5, 2019 from [https://www.managementstudyguide.com/lmx-theory.htm].
- Texas Education Agency (TEA). "Development of Characters Through Literary Devices." Retrieved on 2 February, 2019, from [https://www.texasgateway.org/resource/development-characters-through-literary-devices-english-i-reading].
- Vekasco, Katherine Q. "Kaizen: Basic Concepts and key practices." Retrieved on 30 December 2018, from [http://www.slideshare.net/taliyahemanth/ fundamentals-qualitycontrolandimprovement]
- Thessaloniki. "KAIZEN Definition & Principles in Brief", 2006. Retrieved on September 6, 2019, from [http://www.michailolidis.gr/pdf/KAIZEN08.pdf].