

CONTINUOUS QUALITY SURVEILLANCE SCHEME TO MINIMIZE THE COST OF POOR QUALITY IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF HYDROELECTRIC POWERPLANTS

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SHORT ABSTRACT

During the construction of hydroelectric plants, poor quality can have a hugely negative impact on construction time, on plant performance and on safety.

INSPECTEAM Hydro propose a method of keeping under control the manufacturing of the most critical components, such as pressure parts, rotors and valves, with a view to minimizing the Cost of Poor Quality (COPQ). This method is known as the Continuous Quality Surveillance Scheme (CQSS). It can be effective when used in a systematic manner, as it occurs in some industrial sectors (mainly nuclear and oil and gas). It requires the formalization of some main elements: the Pre-Inspection Meeting (PIM) at the start of construction, the Inspection and Test Plan (ITP), with specific witness points for all critical manufacturing phases and the use of Notification for Inspection (NOI), to formalize the intervention points.

We will show examples to clarify how discovering poor quality at a late stage can add an exponential increase to the costs, with dreadful consequences for the client and the development of the whole plant. On the contrary, by using the proposed method of work, there is a chance to discover poor quality as soon as it appears, thus allowing for immediate solution.

1 INTRODUCTION

Hydroelectric power plants need strict requirements with regards to the safety and productivity of the plant. Non-quality revealed during the construction, commissioning and operation of the plant may lead to huge costs with regards to safety (loss of human life), as well as productivity (in a few days loss-of-production costs may overcome the single component cost). The sooner manufacturing defects (dimensional, non-conforming raw material, NDT detectable defects) are found, the less overall quality and delivery time will be affected.

Introducing a follow-up method specifically intended to minimize the Cost of Poor Quality during manufacturing can considerably reduce safety risks and failure costs, keeping general extra costs down. Such methodology, not unknown in the hydroelectric industry, requires a systematic approach in order to achieve the highest effectiveness, as occurs in other industrial sectors (in particular nuclear and oil and gas), and the formalization of fundamental elements. These are: (1) the continuity of interventions carried out by the appointed inspector (typically leaning on independent inspection agencies), (2) the Pre-Inspection Meeting (PIM) at preliminary stages of manufacturing, (3) the Inspection and Test Plan (ITP), detailed with specific witness points for each critical production step,



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(4) the formalization of interventions by means of Notification for Inspection (NOI), (5) the expediting activities to verify the effective progress of works, detecting and avoiding bottlenecks.

2 NON-QUALITY RELATED COSTS IN MANUFACTURING

The definition of quality is the “lack of defects” in a product. However, such a definition appears to be more suited to defining the “defectiveness” of a product, rather than its quality. Certainly, defectiveness is not a suitable comparison parameter unless it is associated to other relevant parameters, such as cost. As an example, should we choose between two products, the first defect-free and the second full of defects, for the same price? Obviously we would prefer the first one. However, if the cost of the first product were considerably higher than the second, perhaps some would choose the second despite its defects.

2.1 Quality of a product/service

The official definition of quality reported in standard ISO 8402:1986 is “the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bears its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs”.

Therefore quality is not an attribute of the product or service itself, but refers to the use of such product or service, as per 2004 M. Juran definition:

“Quality is fitness for use”.

UNI EN ISO 9000 standard (2000 edition) had the merit of turning the focus from the product or service to the set of corporate processes concurring to its realization. In fact, the realization of good products or services can only result from well managed and well controlled processes.

Quality is a general concept but applicable to all human realities. The variable is the system utilized by both customer and supplier to evaluate it.

Hence the need for specifying which are the subjects and elements involved in the determination of the quality of a product or a service and its related processes.

For products/services:

- Who determines the requirements? Usually the buyer or the user (being often the same subject).
- Who provides the product or the service? Company, agency, public or private organization.
- The product must ensure a well-defined quality. That is, design and manufacturing must comply with well-defined specifications and standards, to avoid defects.
- Measurable factors are the main instrument for the customer to evaluate the supplier’s compliance with requirements.

For related processes:

- Corporate processes must be measurable by means of suitable indicators of quality and key performances.
- Periodic surveillance of such indicators is a fundamental instrument for management to evaluate the quality of a process and its possibility for improvement.
- Since internal processes interact with other external processes (customer, sub-suppliers), the project must define such interface.



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For products, services, projects and processes:

- Quality means capability to reach defined objectives (efficacy), optimizing the use of time, human and economic resources (efficiency);
- The documents resuming the characteristics of the product/service are: contracts, specifications, regulations, standards, quality plans. In every document approval criteria must be specified.

2.2 Cost of poor Quality (COPQ)

As well as any other parameter, the quality of a product, process or service must be correctly measured. This could be difficult, since it is based on the perfect knowledge of the technical characteristics required and the efficacy of their transmission through the productive flow. Quality measurement consists in evaluating how far a product is from the ideal one. To do this, it is necessary to consider the characteristics requested by the customer and then implement a method to measure them.

As important is the capability to define and measure how much poor quality can affect both the customer and the supplier.

Poor quality related costs are often hard to evaluate and mainly hidden and difficult to identify. This is clearly shown in Figure 1.

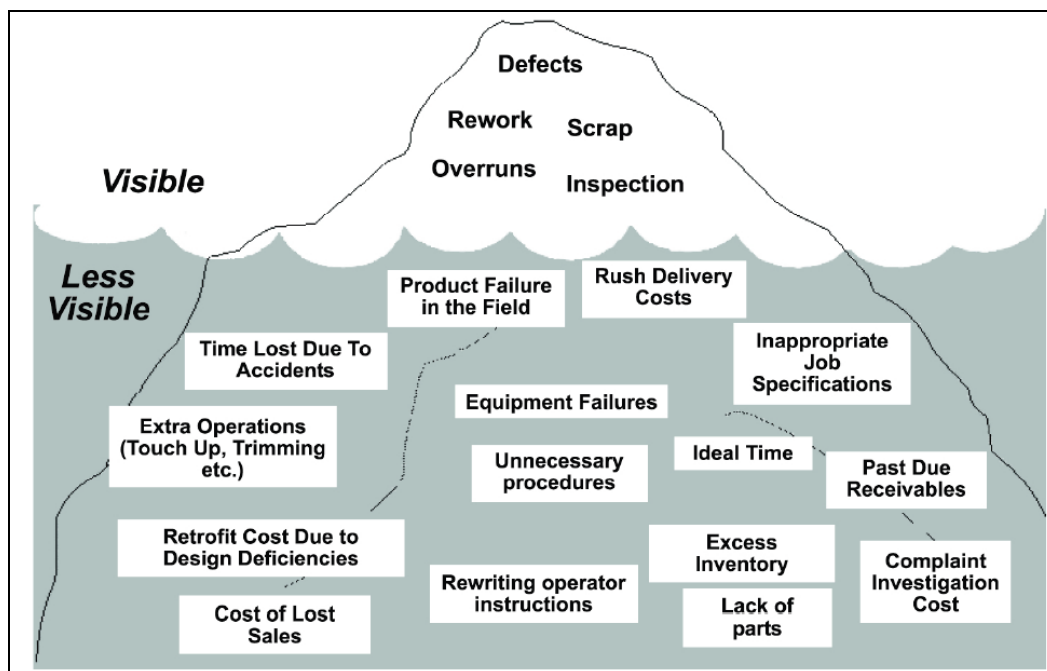


Figure 1. Costs Of Poor-Quality (COPQ) effectively represented by the Iceberg model



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Literature reports normally the following categories of Non-Quality Costs (Harrington, 1987):

- Internal failure costs (associated to defects found before delivering the product or service to the client).
- External inefficiency costs (associated to defects found after delivering the product or service to the client).
- Costs for evaluation (costs borne to determine the conformity to the quality requirements).
- Costs for prevention (costs borne for analysis activities and to reduce the risk to produce defects).



Figure 2. Example of defects on a Pelton runner and white metal bearing segments detected during a Liquid Penetrant examination

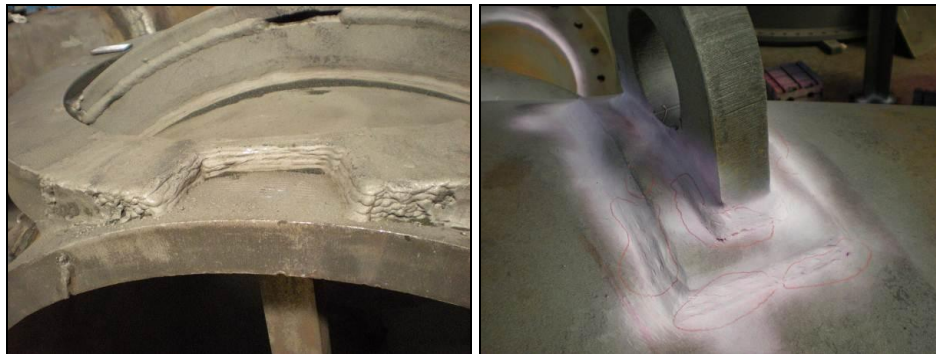


Figure 3. Example of welding defects

INSPECTEAM Hydro experience in the realization of hydroelectric plant components leads us to identify the following specific costs for non-quality:

- Costs borne out of delivery delays.
- Costs borne out of manufacturing errors and modifications required on components to allow assembling with defective parts.
- Costs borne out of re-engineering and re-design for suppliers and customers, following the



detection of non-quality in a late stage of construction.

- Costs in terms of risks to safety

3 CONTINUOUS QUALITY SURVEILLANCE SCHEME (CQSS)

Next INSPECTEAM Hydro want to describe how to keep under control costs for non-quality by means of continuous surveillance of the construction process.

For this purpose it is convenient to deepen the interaction between products and manufacturing processes. An effective description of this interaction is shown in Deming's cycle (PDCA - Plan, Do, Check, Act), suggesting to keep under strict control:

- Capture of client's needs and expectations on the quality.
- Translation of agreed level of quality into characteristics controllable by the supplier.
- Design of the product.
- Manufacturing process.
- Marketing and sales process.
- After sales and customer care process.
- Process of analysis and improvement of performance.

In this perspective every process must be monitored to improve its performance. The whole set of processes must also be coordinated and controlled especially at input/output interfaces.

Every characteristic must be defined and kept under control as soon as possible along its path to the customer. It is clear, therefore, that before starting the production, it is necessary to elaborate a strategy to define and organize the objectives, based on the expectation of the final user. These must be the starting point for every product or service: Customer requirements, the intended use for the product but also implicit desires which can remain unsaid.

A fundamental point is the shift from the results obtained to technologic solutions. Capitalizing its own know-how, the supplier must include customer requirements into its own process or in the different processes involved. This stage requires in general technical specifications, procedures and instructions to comply with these requirements.

For this reason, it is important that a thorough surveillance of the manufacturing process is applied during the whole path. An error at an early stage is very hard to fix afterwards and could be potentially disastrous, once the mechanical and electrical equipment are delivered to the powerplant.



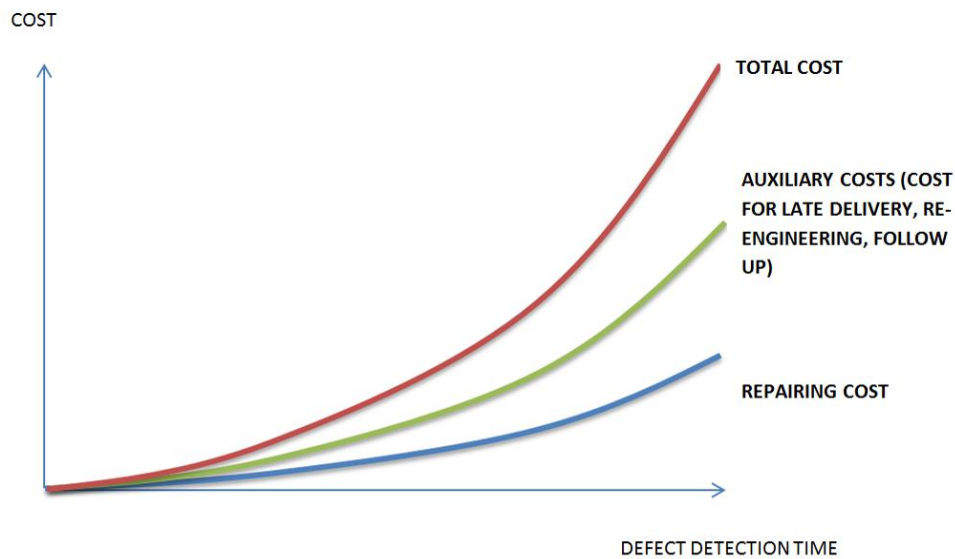


Figure 4. Cost / Defect detection time Function

In the Continuous Quality Surveillance Scheme (CQSS), the critical processes must be monitored from the beginning and for the whole duration.

Such activity entails high technical skills. Surveillance of the control of conformity of incoming material utilized, through to the final inspection.

This makes possible the detection of defects that otherwise would remain hidden until the operation of the plant.

INSPECTEAM hydro also notice that manufacturing defects are often due to a supplier's lack of specific experience, to side-effects of the efforts to deliver on time, to misunderstanding of technical requirements, an excessive workload, or general human errors that could be avoided with proper surveillance.

In particular the CQSS relies on the following instruments:

- (1) Continuity of the appointed inspector intervention (typically leaning on Independent Inspection Agencies).
- (2) Pre-inspection meeting (PIM) at the preliminary stage of construction.
- (3) Inspection and Test Plan (ITP), detailed with specific witness points for each critical production step.
- (4) Formalization of interventions by means of Notification of Inspection (NOI).
- (5) Expediting activities to verify the effective progress of works, detecting and avoiding bottlenecks.



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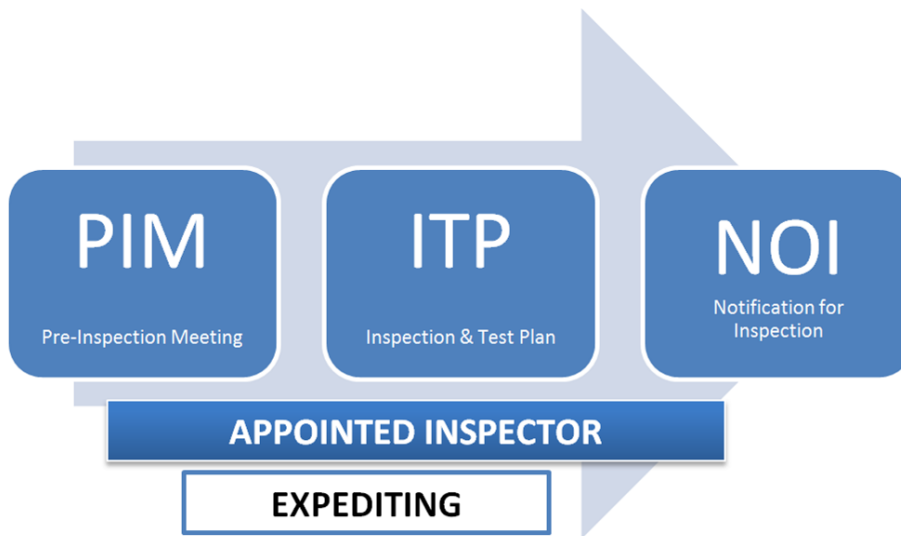


Figura 5. Logic Schema of INSPECEAM Hydro defined CQSS system.

3.1 Continuity of the appointed inspector intervention

A reference point is fundamental for the surveillance of the manufacturing process. This means allowing a single person (the appointed inspector), with the required skills, abilities and knowledge, to be in charge of the whole project from the inspection's point of view.

3.2 Pre-Inspection Meeting (PIM)

Experience leads us to consider the PIM as the point of clarification of all the technical and quality aspects for all the subjects involved in the project (client, contractor, supplier and inspection agency).

3.3 Inspection & Test Plan (ITP)

The Inspection and Test Plan (ITP) is a document for quality control defining all the inspections and tests required during the construction process. For each point of inspection, the level of control required for each subject involved must be indicated (client, contractor, supplier and sub-suppliers, inspection agency).



Where a Pre-Inspection Meeting is planned the following topics should be discussed/presented during the meeting:

1. Scope of work & schedule
2. Presentation by the supplier regarding historical quality performance and risk assessment
3. Organization, roles and responsibilities of the key personnel & communication plan
4. Documents submission requirements
5. Subcontracting strategy and surveillance plan at vendors
6. Inspection and test plan
 7. Submission of deviation and query request
8. Non-conformance & corrective actions
9. Inspection co-ordination & notification
10. Material release process, certification & reporting
11. Manufacturing records book requirements
12. Visit to the manufacturing plant

Figure 6. Guidelines for the realization of a PIM

This allows the formalization of surveillance during the whole manufacturing process, until completion and delivery.

The frequency of the intervention points assisted by the appointed inspector (witness points) is determined by the client depending on the importance of the component.

3.4 Notification of Inspection (NOI)

Referring to the points of inspection reported on the ITP, the vendor is responsible for notifying the scheduled inspection dates to all the subjects involved. The vendor must issue upon notice a Notification of Inspection (NOI) indicating the kind of control, applicable ITP line, date and duration forecasted for the activity and in general all the information required to carry out inspection activities in compliance with the ITP.

3.5 Expediting Activities

In parallel with inspection activities, if required, periodic visits are carried out at a supplier's premises. These are to find (and help solve) potential problems that could affect construction and cause delivery delays. Problems could include: missing approved documentation, excessive workloads and inefficient technical communication between those involved in the project.



4 SAFETY IN THE PLANT

In huge facilities, such as hydroelectric plants, unfortunately it is not possible to prevent that Cost of Poor Quality may acquire dramatic implications, even with risks to human life. For this reason, safety should play a central rule, from the design to the construction of a new plant.

Some of the main catastrophes to have happened in the history of hydroelectric power are reported in Table 1. With a need to keeping such accidents in the past, there are newer technologies and better strategies for management.

Plant	Location	Description	Year
Herdecke	Germany	132 MW power generation loss, due to overtopping after failure of Mohne dam due to bombing in WWII	1943
Sui-ho, Fusen, Kyosen and Choshin Dams	Korea	due to enemy bombing, attacked during the Korean War resulting in the loss of approximately 90% of North Korea's generation capacity	1952
Schoellkopf Hydropower Station	USA	Destruction of the plant as it fell from the gorge wall and collapsed into the river, caused by water seeping into the back wall of the power station. One worker was killed and damage was estimated at \$100 million USD.	1956



Banqiao Dam	China	26,000 dead from direct flooding, 145,000 dead from subsequent famine and epidemics, 11 million homeless. Caused loss of generation, dam failed by overtopping	1975
Bieudron Hydroelectric Power Station	Switzerland	1269 MW loss, penstock rupture, three fatalities, flooding and loss of generating capacity	2000
Itaipu Dam	Brazil	18 GW power generation loss due to storm damage of transmission lines,	2009
Sayano–Shushenskaya Hydropower Station	Russia	2009 Sayano-Shushenskaya hydro accident, 6 GW power generation loss, 75 fatalities, due to turbine failure	2009

Table 1. Some of the main catastrophes to have happened in hydroelectric plants

4.1 Sayano-Shushenskaya power plant accident, Russia

A catastrophic accident happened in August 2009 at Sayanogorsk, Russia, affecting the turbines hall and transformers of the Sayano-Shushenskaya hydroelectric power plant. The facility had ten Francis turbines of 640 MW each producing 24 TWh/year.

A large quantity of water coming from the Yenisei River knocked down the turbines hall, provoking the explosion of at least one transformer. All the turbines were badly damaged and three of them were totally destroyed.

In total, 75 people were killed during this disastrous incident!

The official report of the accident, issued by Russian competent authorities, was initially



published on their website in October 2009, but was then immediately removed.

The report identified the cause of the accident to be a bolt failure in the cover of one turbine, due to vibrations. It was found that at the moment of the accident at least six nuts were missing. A further 49 bolts retrieved after the accident were tested and fatigue cracks were detected on 41 of them.

This indicates a bad selection of bolt material, the use of non-conforming material, or again inadequate maintenance and surveillance programs.



Figure 7. Sayano-Shushenskaya plant, before the accident



Figure 8. The accident at Sayano-Shushenskaya plant, 2009

This kind of accident must be a warning, suggesting the introduction of effective surveillance methods for design, construction and maintenance of hydroelectric plants.

With regards to construction, a systematic CQSS approach can highlight possible errors that would otherwise remain hidden in the materials and components until their assembly on the plant.

5 CONCLUSIONS

A CQSS (Continuous Quality Surveillance Scheme) approach makes it possible to reduce Cost of



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Poor Quality, showing potential problems as soon as they appear and allowing for immediate solutions. Discovering non-quality at a late stage of construction of the single components may bring an exponential increase in costs, with delays and dramatic consequences for the customer. It can also increase the cost for the whole hydropower or water resources project. In some cases, it can cause issues of considerable safety risks. In extreme circumstances, it can lead to the loss of human life!



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After his graduation as Doctor Engineer, Mr. Gianluca Mazza has been working from 1995 until 2006 as project manager and then Director of Fravit Srl, company specializing in manufacturing of Pelton and Francis runners and refurbishment of hydropower turbines. He then founded Inspecteam Srl, and is now acting as General Manager of Inspecteam Srl in Italy and as Operation Director of Inspecteam Hydro Ltd. in the UK. The company performs the surveillance of equipment suppliers on behalf of clients by offering mechanical and electrical inspection and expediting services across Europe and Internationally.

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