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## Analysis of the functions and place of quality management systems in the context of an organization's development – a survey of the Polish Quality Award contest

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### Abstract

In the work the proposals of quality management systems in organizations are determined, according to the opinion of quality management representatives. The analysis of these systems' functions is presented among the organizations that took part in the Polish Quality Award contest. The remarks concerning the process of system creation, maintenance and development were subject to analysis. Special attention was paid to the problems occurring at particular stages. Considerations were made on the basis of a survey conducted on a group of representatives from the enterprises submitted to the Polish Quality Award contest. The results were supplemented with the authors' ideas and experiences.

### Introduction

In the era of market economy, companies operating in the single European market decide to introduce different types of solutions in order to obtain a stable market and economic position as well as a competitive advantage. The activities of the entities operating in such an environment are mainly focused on the current analysis of the trends in the market, choosing the means to realize goals and objectives and at the same time ordering all the activities within the organization. An organization's adaptive actions can constitute a personalized form of reaction or anticipation. One cannot ignore the fact that together with the changes in the market situation, an evolution of the methods and concepts of corporate management appears and, thereby, all systems that have been implemented, including the systems of quality management. And that is the reason why there is a direct integration of the essence of Total Quality Management (TQM) with the requirements of the normative management systems which constitute an effect of their interac-

tion, resulting from the development of the initiatives focused on quality (Szczepańska, 2013). TQM is a very specific theory as well as a quality strategy, designed to bring the utmost quality. It is a method of management of human resources, time and all processes taking place in the company, in order to satisfy the customer at every stage of the realization of the task (Sharma, Gupta & Singh, 2014).

The purpose of this work is to determine the position of the quality management system in organizations which are candidates for the Polish Quality Award including observations of the system during its construction, as well as during its operations.

### TQM in the organization

Normative quality management focuses mainly on operational management excluding some areas of the company (e.g. financial management, marketing) but including in its scope: quality policy, quality objectives, quality planning, quality control, quality assurance and quality improvement in the

organization. Therefore, normative quality management should be considered in contractual categories which results from the scope specified in ISO 9000. The scope of TQM is much broader than the standard normative management because:

- It covers all strategic management;
- It covers all aspects of the company's operations including its characteristics.

The differences in the approaches to the concept of quality management result from the area in the company which is covered by TQM. TQM also directs the company to obtain, as well as maintain, the quality management system certificate and it monitors continuous improvement of quality management. The possibility of unification of these trends occurs only if the organization adopts an assumption that TQM constitutes the foundation of the quality management system (Szczepańska, 2013).

Therefore, TQM is a concept which is a result of a long-term evolution of an approach to quality which is still subject to development. It is a universal, and at the same time flexible, concept. Its main advantages are:

- Focus on the external client;
- Use of quality as a method to realize strategic objectives of the company;
- Appreciation of the role of the employees;
- Importance of "soft" elements – commitment, culture, communication;
- Promotion of system solutions;
- Popularization of team work (Ligarski, 2010; Shekoufeh & Siavash, 2013).

It is clear, therefore, that TQM in organizations is built and implemented in an individual way. According to the literature, the first steps are the most important in the realization of this objective,

i.e. building a solid foundation as shown in Figure 1.

Building TQM in the organization can take place in many different ways, but an essential element is always commitment and an awareness of all employees, as well as an awareness of the role that they perform in the system. Therefore, the basic and at the same time the most essential component of TQM is a system approach which integrates all elements into one single system, and at the same time allows supervision of this system (Ligarski, 2010).

### TQM and the Polish Quality Award

One of the stages on the way to achieving TQM are quality awards, including the Polish Quality Award which aims to promote quality management through quality, that is a factor of strategic importance for the organization in the modern environment, while simultaneously increasing the level of competitiveness within the international market (Recha, 2014a). The organizers of the Polish Quality Award developed a Management Excellence Model on the basis of the Excellence Model of the European Foundation For Quality Management (the EFQM Excellence Model). This consistency allows organizations to compare themselves with other organizations, as well as allowing an analysis according to the adopted excellence concepts (Recha, 2014b). These include:

- Sustainable results – orientation on results – it is the ability to satisfy the interests of the customers and suppliers, employees, owners, society, or those interested in the activities of the organization.
- Value for the customer – customer focus – activities which are taken in order to predict and satisfy customer needs, quest for innovation.



Figure 1. Steps in implementation of TQM (Ligarski, 2010)

- Leadership (vision, inspiration, integrity) – vision, inspiration and indivisibility of objectives – leaders in organizations define clear, consistent and understandable objectives and lead to their realization.
- Management through processes – management through facts – an ability to maintain permanent results arises from proper identification of processes, selection of their mutual dependence, strategic location and the ways to improve them. All these actions must be taken on the basis of an analysis of the facts, taking into account expectations and needs of stakeholders.
- Achieving success thanks to the employees – concern for development and commitment of employees – concern for creating value and organizational culture as well as implementation of the actions which are aimed at increasing the potential of the employees and stimulating them towards deliverance of initiatives.
- Fostering creativity and innovation – engaging the stakeholders of organization – concern for the development of knowledge, actions taken to innovate with the use of creative customers, both internal and external ones.
- Building partnerships – actions towards an increase and improvement of added value – are the results of development and maintenance of proper relationships with partners of the organization based on the integration of activities.
- Responsibility for continued success in the future – corporate social responsibility – building a solid economic position while maintaining the rules of ethics and highest values (Recha, 2014b).

The Polish Quality Award indicates self-assessment is a tool, which is crucial for organizational units and constitutes one of the main tools of a quality management system audit (Recha, 2014b).

### Results of the conducted research

An attempt to determine the position of the quality management system in organizations, an analysis of its features, as well as observations regarding the existing system were based on the results of pilot studies. A survey was used in this study and its results were supplemented with information obtained in direct interviews. The respondents were members of one of the groups participating in the training on the preparation of self-assessment for the Polish Quality Award contest. The surveyed companies were representatives of the manufacturing industry and their size varied from 50 to 501 employees which gives an overall picture and allows problems to be detected (regardless of the

size of the organization) related to building, functioning, position, as well as the adopted role, of the quality management system. Importantly, the group was subject to studies in accordance with the criteria of the Polish Quality Award on the basis of TQM philosophy.

The results obtained in this study were divided into three areas: an area connected with developing a quality management system, the area associated with implementation of a quality management system and the area connected with its functioning. This division was made in order to analyze the abovementioned issue, depending on the place in the system.

### Actions taken in order to build a quality management system

The decision to build and implement a management system is a well-thought-out decision and it results from the identification of both market needs and a company's own needs. In consequence, a proper path of activities must be chosen. In the group of surveyed organizations, an impetus to build the system mainly resulted from external needs such as: image, credibility and an increase in the competitiveness of the company. An internal factor was primarily the desire to systematize processes, as well as the formal assignment of the processes. At this stage of the realization of the objectives, it is necessary to analyze strategic management processes, investment in training and development, analysis of the scope of participation of employees in the activities, as well as costs (Shekoufeh & Siavash, 2013). Thus, the mere decision to implement a quality management system determines the scope of responsibility of the system, as well as giving it a high rank in the organization.

The next step in the implementation of the system is the decision to use an external consultant. It is a very important issue from the point of view of the top management deciding whether human resources have sufficient qualifications or not. Among the respondents, only one organization did not use the services of an external company. The selection of consultants was connected with the verification of their achievements as well as the opinion of other companies. When choosing an external consultant the budget that the company had for that purpose was also an important factor. Improper selection of the advisor can result in problems with the functioning of the system. Therefore, it is essential for the organization to verify the knowledge of the consultancy, as well as the competences of the consultant (Ligarski, 2014).

In surveyed organizations, representatives for quality (in companies which use external consultants) assess their participation as positive. Thus, it can be concluded that the selection of the consultant was thoroughly planned and analyzed.

The process of building a quality management system in enterprises was also connected with solving the problems. The respondents pointed out the difficulties with developing documentation and the resistance of workers, among other problems. Taking into consideration the interviews, these are typical problems which most organizations face at the stage of developing the system. They result mainly from the uncertainty and reluctance of workers towards change, as well as problems with identification and naming of the processes in the organization or indication and determination of the direct relationship between them. An interesting issue at the stage of developing the system is the difficulty in harmonizing the requirements of ISO 9001 with the standards applied in the organization (it refers to the organizations with foreign capital from outside the European Union). Therefore, adaptation processes will have to lead to a consensus between the requirements mentioned above.

#### **Actions taken in order to implement a quality management system**

As it has already been mentioned in this article, one company did not use the services of an external consultant. It was determined in a direct interview that this decision was based on the fact that it is a daughter company with foreign capital, which has staff qualified within TQM, and, in consequence, has many years of experience in the indicated area. The external advisor or a delegated representative takes an active part in the process of implementation of the quality management system in the organization which is a key element of the certification of the system. Selection of the certification body is another key element affecting the success of the whole project. The respondents indicated the following determinants of the choice of certification body:

- Name and prestige of organization;
- Opinions of other organizations.

Paying attention to the factors which motivated top management to make a decision on the choice of the certification body, it is important to notice that such a decision was preceded by a detailed analysis of the companies operating on the Polish market. In Poland, there are tens of certification bodies which realize their tasks at different levels. Credibility for customers and stakeholders of the certification is the most important criterion which is

taken into consideration when making decisions. Thus, organizations devote much attention to the choice of the certifiers (Ligarski, 2013). Such careful selection of a suitable certification body also attaches significance to the management system in the surveyed companies.

#### **Functioning of the quality management system and actions taken in order to improve it**

When considering the position of the quality management system in the organization, it is essential to mention both internal as well as external benefits which companies can obtain as a result of its implementation. These include:

- Increase in customer credibility;
- Prestige of the organization on the market;
- Facilitation of business relationships – opportunity to acquire new customers;
- Standardization of activities in the organization;
- Reorganization and repetitiveness of activities;
- Enabling evaluation and improvement of organization.

Among other benefits, the whole group of respondents indicated the standardization of activities in the organization as well as increased customer credibility and prestige of the organization in the market. Therefore, it can be concluded that activities directly connected with the customer determine the tasks of the quality management system and these are the areas mostly affected by the system.

In addition to the benefits which are provided by a properly implemented and functioning quality management system, it also serves the following functions in the organizations:

- Control – connected with product and process control;
- Informative – connected with collection and processing of information;
- Decisive – related to making decisions;
- Motivational – connected with motivating workers.

The answers obtained from the group of respondents fully coincide with the data that we can find in the literature. A quality management system includes all elements of the organization directly affecting their activities and, thus, it performs an overriding role in the process of the management of the organization.

In order to provide continuous control of the system as well as to improve it, organizations use:

- Internal audit;
- Management review;
- Self-assessment;
- Strategic scorecard;

- Monitoring of processes;
- Measurement of customer satisfaction;
- Measurement of the realization of quality objectives;
- Measurement of employee satisfaction.

In order to determine a level of realization of the expected results and activities, and, thus, the effectiveness of the quality management system, it is indispensable to use proper tools. Some of them are generated by the system itself while others are a result of the development of the systems. Proper use of tools to gather information and analysis of the obtained results create a true picture of the effectiveness of the organization of the system. Surveyed organizations use a wide range of tools for this analysis which is important for the actions taken in order to improve the system.

Undoubtedly, it is crucial that representatives perceive the quality management system in the correct way, which means as a system covering all activities of the organization in all organizational units. Such understanding of the issue guarantees the accuracy of understanding of this issue and, thus, guarantees proper control of the system.

## Conclusions

Willingness to participate in the market in the era of market economy forces organizations to take up activities towards an increase in competitiveness, to focus on customers, as well as the elimination of unnecessary costs. Whereas the applicable market standards mean that the organizations which still wish to participate in it and which aim to achieve economic balance, face the need to adapt both the level of production and customer service to current standards set by leading companies. Therefore, external and internal environment constitute a factor triggering a search for a new product and organizational solutions. Changes including the whole market also resulted in the evolution of quality management systems. A normative quality management system based on ISO 9000 is no longer sufficient for businesses and often becomes only the beginning of the way to TQM. TQM encompasses the whole organization taking into account its characteristics. When building TQM it is extremely important to provide full commitment of employees and their awareness of the role that they fulfill in both the building, as well as the functioning, of the whole system. Companies which use TQM can compare their achievements with the use of different methods. One of them is participation in the Polish Quality Award. This is where, with the use of the self-assessment tool, an exact

and detailed verification of the achieved level as well as functioning of TQM takes place.

As the results of the study show, the decision to implement a quality management system is well-thought-out, preceded by verification of both the environment and the needs of customers. Companies demonstrate knowledge of their abilities and if necessary they use the help of an external consultant when developing and implementing the system. Importantly, representatives of the surveyed group are able to identify the problems which appeared at the stage of building the system. Resistance of the employees, which was frequently mentioned, indicates that the importance of excellence is still not sufficiently propagated in Polish companies. Respondents pointed to a number of benefits resulting from implementation of the system and its roles (control, informative, decisive and motivational) which play an overriding role in the management of the company. Surveyed organizations are aware of the significance of TQM which is a reason why, in order to control and improve it, they use a wide range of tools for data collection and evaluation.

As it has been proved in this work, organizations which take part in the Polish Quality Award contest have the necessary knowledge on quality management systems, they understand and appreciate the roles which the system performs in their organization, and they also strive to maintain as well as improve the system.

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