
ROLE OF HUMAN RESOURCES IN CREATING CUSTOMER CULTURE OF QUALITY

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Abstract

Romanian society marked by unpredictable and effervescent political and economic environment, demands the existence of pillars of social stability. In this respect, an objective requirement is the study, analysis and implementation of quality in the society, particularly so in its entirety, as a fundamental principle of social and economic development. Starting from the premise that modern society means existence and promotes a culture of quality of products and quality services; our study aims to highlight the role of management and human resources in the process. The main objective is the determination of the two categories role and the necessity of adopting effective quality policy. The study is based on a qualitative research method by applying a semi-structured questionnaire select groups of managers, employees and customers, supplemented by focus group discussions based on a matrix of interview. The results follow the perception of each category studied the role that they have all in implementing quality, positions which stands in relation to others and those who must assume. Seen as a whole its functions, human resource is the fundamental influence of corporate management systems. Quality products, services and human resources are emerging as a strategic, competitive success of an organization, with reverberations throughout society.

Keywords: quality culture, human resources, strategies, holistic management

JEL Classification: M12, M31, M38, L20, I26

Introduction

A strong organization is an organization which practices the quality management. It must be targeted both the rational aspects used in the quality management application, and the cultural aspects, as resulting of this managerial style's application. The involved human resources in this organization have a vision over the quality culture, are conducted by values, behavior rules and espouse quality roles for the growth of the organization's efficiency.

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The motivation of accomplishing this study resides in discovering the role that human resources from an organization have in the qualities' policies directed towards the client, the organization and the growth of life's quality through the viability and performance of the offered services/ products.

By this study we proposed to bring in human resources' management attention and also of the top management, the role of the human resource in developing a new client's quality culture, with the purpose of growing the satisfaction grade both at the organization's level and of the beneficiary, with consequences in growing the organization's efficiency and profit. The results of this study provide us the possibility of sketching an optimal route of the organization by inserting a quality culture in all hierarchical levels.

1. The organization and the concept of quality culture

The pillars of the quality management are the principles from the quality culture's base. The foundation of any organizational culture is formed of values, beliefs, capacities, visions, objectives, all together forming organizational principles (Ulf, 2009). Applying these principles to the involved human resources, the management can shape behavior rules for employees, and can influence future behaviors or relations of the human resources with the competitive or customary environment. The main and immediate objective is the growth of the organization's performance, in the same trend of the quality growth, but with particular aspects inserted according to the human resource, management, competitive environment, markets, client's quality culture, considering the quality culture a part of the quality consolidation process (Harvey and Stensaker, 2008). These desiderates are added and implicit integrated in human resource mature, flexible, qualified management which has a clear vision over all the involved factors. Promoting the aspects regarding the quality in all its components, as well as on all the hierarchical levels creates a culture of the quality that passes beyond the internal norms of the organizations and which reflects itself in the making of a client's quality culture and of the other involved factors in the relations with the organization (Paraschivescu, 2007).

In literature are presented different definitions of the quality control. The most of the approaches converge over the idea that the quality control represents a sum or an ensemble of actions taken in an organization, the final purpose being represented by the appreciation of the obtained quality grade (Ionescu Luca, 2007).

The quality encyclopedia (2005) defines the quality management system like this: "A quality management system (QMS) is an ensemble of the managerial processes between which are the interferences of the associated documents and of the organization's structural elements, ensemble whose purpose is the organization's orientation and control in the matter of quality". The dictionary *Business Dictionary.com* includes the next definition: "Collective policy, plans, practices and support infrastructure through which an organization follows to reduce and eventually eliminate the nonconformity with the specifications, standards and with the expectations of the clients in the most effective way and with even more efficient costs". The development and insertion of the management system of the quality includes the establishment of the *policy regarding the quality, quality objectives, planning, control, assurance and of the quality improvement*, says the same source.

Defining the quality as an appreciation of the obtained satisfaction (Becket and Brookes, 2008), its control might be defined as the sum of the undertaken actions with the final purpose to determine the obtained satisfaction. Thus, the quality control gives a real note

to the measure in which an organization in its ensemble can be considered a quality one, offering satisfaction to all the involved actors.

Depending on the position the quality represents: for managers – setting roles and achieving objectives; for employees – possibilities of extra benefits; for customer – the manner that the products responds to his needs. It is necessary that the managers develop their own point of view on quality and the organizational behavior that sometimes has no connection with the detained opinions by the employees (Sinclair and Collins, 1994). As a particularity, a quality public system is the one in which all the activities are according to the legal laws (Grigorescu, 2008).

The existence and grow of an organization is based and on the monitoring and measuring of the obtained quality grade, also on the quality control appliance. Therefore, is needed a reference system for appreciating the satisfaction level, an ensemble of performance indicators. These must be defined starting from analyzing the factors that determinate the existence and development of the organization. They can analyze on three levels – the respect level and appliance of the legal rules and of the internal dispositions, the offered satisfaction to the client and all other parts' satisfaction.

2. The organization and the human resource

The information can be easily accessed and the consumer's mobility is very high. Therefore, the diversity of the offers, the high power of buying, the growth of the educational grade, associated with the unitary legislative regulations to community level are solid premises of the quality culture grow, with accent on the human resource.

The governance principles of the improving efforts of the capability to obtain quality and performance in an organization (Hoyle, 2009): (1) a strategic approach, on long term and not short term projects; (2) promotion a professionalism of a mature, flexible, performing management, with continuous developing/ learning components; (3) orientation toward the client, innovation of the offered services and development of its quality culture; (4) creation of a strong, competitive, respected brand image

These principles are assumed by the management, inserted at the organization's level, developed by the human resource involved at all the levels and it must consider the evolution trends in the quality domain. From these, a significant impact in assuring the quality is the integration of the client in the obtaining quality process, as a determined factor in creating the value that is destined, as well as the promotion of a holistic vision, which is integrating over the quality concept as a defining dimension, of essence of the value concept (Grigorescu and Bob, 2010).

3. The research methodology

Our study wants to highlight the role of the human resource in creating the quality culture of the client, as strategic element of the business in the context of affairs globalization. In this context, the study supports on a semi structured questionnaire to some groups of managers, employees and clients. As it is a pilot research and wanting to have group discussions with the subjects, there have been used and the focus technique to the groups where participated all the three categories that we studied. The interviews and the focus groups were organized in Bucharest, Târgoviște and Constanța, three county capitals from the south east of the country, therefore the results can represent a generalization base, at least at this area's level or even for the entire country, with reserves regarding the cultural

particularities of each area. It was taken into account a number of 10 managers from every location, two employees and 4 consumers (30 managers, 60 employees and 120 consumers). The sample that answered the solicitation was formed from a number of 27 human resources managers and top managers, 53 employees and 98 consumers. It has been chosen the research method for a fast dissemination and to collect the data with more security and ease.

The hypothesis of the research had been established as follows:

- H1 – There is a pragmatic vision over the client’s integration in the quality obtaining process, by creating a value that it is meant for him;
- H2 – The human resource from all the organization’s levels is directed towards the grow of the services/ products’ quality and the creation of a client’s quality culture;
- H3 – The organization has an efficient development as a result of the quality policy’s implementation;
- H4 – An improvement of the citizen’s life quality is obvious through promoting the quality cult and of some quality products on the market.

The structured interview’s matrix had three piling – the three perspectives – management, employee and buyer – for each category were thought 5 questions/ affirmations. All the subjects had been consulted regarding all the 15 elements of the study matrix, presented in table no 1.

Table no.1: The study matrix’s piling

The managers	The employees	The clients
M1. Do you realize the quality importance as a strategic element of your business?	E1. Do you instructed in the quality spirit (the quality cult and the use of the methods and instruments needed in the quality management)?	C1. Do you consider the Romanian consumer an educated one in the quality spirit?
M2. Which are the main ways through which is realized this desideratum?	E2. Do you know the standards in the quality domain that are specific to the area?	C2. Which are the established criteria of a product’s/ service’s quality?
M3. The promotion of the standards in the quality domain and the support for their implementation	E3. Does your organization facilitates the access to information in quality domain for the employees	C3. What should an organization do to promote the quality of its services/ products?
M4. Supporting the certification efforts (of the product or system) of your organization according with the national or international standards	E4. Which is the role you attribute to the quality and how do you consider as managerial vision over this issue?	C4. Do you consider the mass media role as being decisive in labeling a product as being a quality one?
M5. The collaboration with national and international organisms in the quality domain	E5. Do you know ability institutions regarding the services’/ products’ quality?	C5. Do you consider as benefic the national information, promotion and education campaigns regarding the quality concept?

Source: Authors creation

The matrix's elements viewed more aspects, as the management's awareness of importance for the quality and quality control in the organization's strategic development, the continuous qualification of the employees on all hierarchical levels in the spirit of international standards' education, the promotion and implementation of the standards in this domain, the harmonization of the Romanian legislation and of the internal rules with the community standards.

The responses analysis lead to creating an overall image over the way in which the human resource from an organization influences the quality culture of the client and, also, leads to development of the organization and society.

The group focus research executed with managers, employees and buyers from the three county capitals has been chosen as the main research method thanks to the good interaction between the subjects and the moderator, and to the direct way in which the message is sent and therewith thanks to the possibility of being discussed by the whole group particular aspects of the organization from which they came. The number of the participants is the one recommended for a focus group research and it took place in a familiar place for the moderator. The average age was of 47 years, as groups were relatively homogeneous from this point of view. From the total of 178 participants, 52.80% were men and 47.20% women, all with superior studies.

The data collection had two components: the individual interview and the group discussions. The interviews were administrated by the interview operator from the research team. The groups contained all the categories from a location and the discussions were coordinated by a moderator. The group meetings' duration was schedule to last 90 minutes. Everybody's participation was extremely active, and the proposed subjects got the general interest fact that extended the group discussions up to 180 minutes. We want to remark that there were many particular cases for each institution/ organization, brought in by the involved manager and which generated opened and constructed discussions for all the participants. We notice the involved subjects' satisfaction in this study, thanks to the enlargement of the concepts over quality, of the integrated vision, sharing the experience to the ones that implemented with success the quality control and discovery of some strong or weak points in this process.

The interviews with the employees and consumers finished previous the interviews with the managers and meeting in the focus group, the moderators being able to discuss with the managers and aspects brought by the other two categories.

4. The research results and the detached opinions

Following the management process inside the institutions/ organizations, all the hypothesis of the research confirm, at least at principles levels or desiderata. The practice, however, knows a delay and sometimes wished deviations determined by the firms' will to response the costumers' solicitation oriented towards the price.

H1 – There are strategies that have as purpose the knowing of the offered services and products' quality growing, the grow of the human resource, the involvement of this in growing the satisfaction at clients' level and life's improvement, in general. As complementary aspects, a few needs showed at general level. These don't connect with the managerial act itself, but with the concurrent zone, the quality culture of the organizations and with the interaction with this, sometimes inevitable – interaction private environment – public institution, with the public politics that are directed by the client, and also with the

stability and involvement of the public, social, politic, economic environment in these organizations' life (Chițescu and Lixandru, 2015).

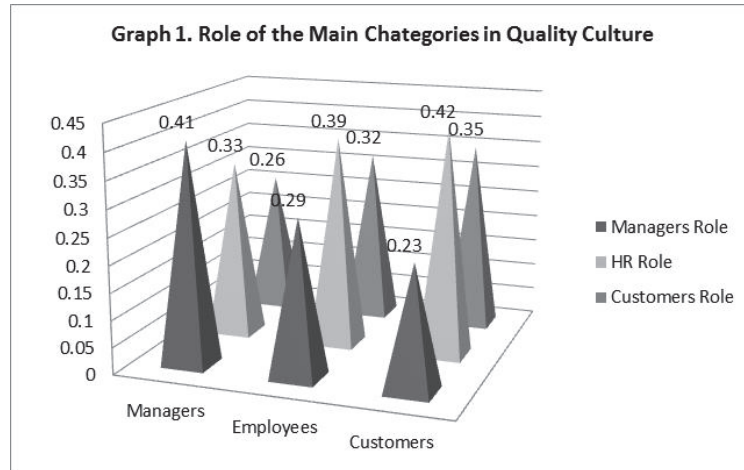
H2 – A medium term objective, revealed by all the interviewed categories, was the collaboration between the business environment and the private one in quality projects, as well as the adapting/ instruction of the working force starting from the high school/ university preparation in the quality culture, culture that should be felt in the individual's behavior as an employee or as a beneficiary of some services/ products. It was circulated the idea of inserting in the curriculum aria of the secondary education of some materials specific to the quality culture, as a measure of educating the future clients in the quality spirit.

H1+H2 – The analyze of the answers received through the two research methods allowed us to hierarchical the analyzed factors' opinions to the managers' role, to the human resource from the organization, as well as to the clients' and social area's role. The vision over this role is different according to the role that each has in this process. So, making a ranking of the opinions, it can be observed that the managers consider that the most important role in growing the quality of an organization and creating a culture associated to the clients is held by the managers, by integrating some policy, strategies and having in the center the human resource from the organization, situated on the second position, with a percent closed to the managers'. The clients are considered as being the least important in this trinomial, the motivation consisting in the efforts' awareness, that are made at managerial level and at human resource growth level, in relation to the registered results in the relation with the clients.

The employees consider that the most important role is held by them, being a bidirectional filter from manager to beneficiary and opposite. They consider that their role exceeds the management's role, as they are the interface with the beneficiary, and the results of the quality culture grow among the clients is an objective effort from their part, as complementary of some managerial policy. After all, they consider that the human resource can mark a quality organization, no matter of the managerial decision quality. They are the ones that "put in practice" the decisions, but also send the feedback to these decisions.

H4 – Some conclusions of the focus group discussions that lead to an improvement of the life's quality with the help of quality growth of all the involved factors at the organization level are directed to facilitating the information an early, continuous and sustained education access of all the involved actors – management, employees and beneficiary.

The clients are the ones that have direct contact with the employees, considering that the employees' role is primary for growing the quality of the offered products. They appreciate, in majority, the employees' efforts to grow the quality and they see in them the main actor in the organization's development.

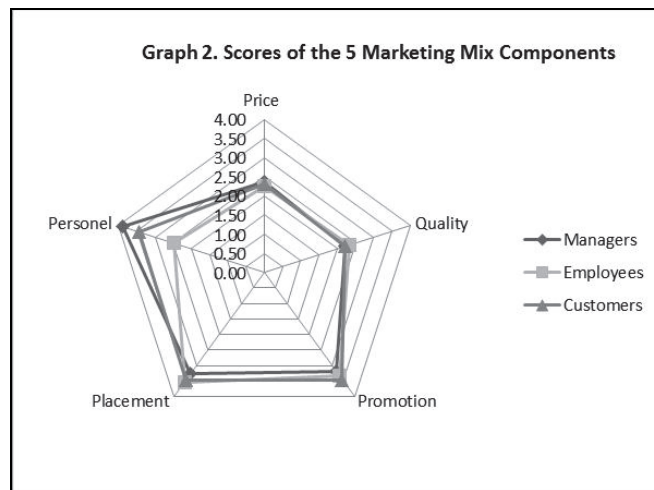


Source: present research results

This is the reason for which the management occupied the secondary position in the chart offered by the clients, considering its role as significant, but not decisive. The client's role is not clearly shown from the clients' point of view.

Easily, it was checked in the group meetings which of the three categories are considered as main factor in promoting the quality culture. A quantitative synthesis of the opinions is presented in graph 1.

Bringing in discussion alongside the two studied elements quality and human resource (staff) the subjects made multiple references regarding the price and advertise. Fact which determined us to collect quantitative information about the 5 components of the marketing mix, the ones that with which the firms build their market approach: product/ quality, price, promotion, placement and staff. In graph 2 are presented the average scores obtained by each element from each category.



Source: present research results

It can be observed that the price (2.37; 2.25; 2.31), quality (2.22; 2.32; 2.21), promotion (3.19; 3.34; 3.46) and placement (3.26; 3.53; 3.47) scores are very alike and the scores for the staff are different. Therefore, the employees are placed on a more important position, they role being in opposition with the managers, while the consumers are placed between them.

Another suggestive image of the quality and staff position can be obtained and by checking the place each of these components is placed in the three categories' option.

It is notable that the price and quality are on the first and second place, the managers and consumers sharing the same opinion, while the employees think different. The Promotion and Placement are on the third-fourth, respectively fourth-fifth places, the priority position being given by the managers in both cases. Regarding the staff, the employees and clients are on the same position, while the managers place the staff on the last place.

Awareness, instruction, motivation, information, education, evaluation, monitoring – are a few of the aspects which a strong organization must take in consideration in sketching, creating and inserting the quality principles.

Conclusions

A quality management needs a cultural change inside the organization, a rethinking of the organizational structure, a repositioning of the fundamental values, of the interaction way between the human resource from the organization or with the beneficiary. So, the human resource is the fundamental element of influencing the corporative management systems. A quality organization is the one that has success to heart, mind and energy.

There are a lot of factors that influence the way to success of an organization that consolidates the image and position on market. It is difficult to rank these factors, but the human resource, as our study reveals, is the center of the quality philosophy. The involvement of the employees on all the hierarchic levels is the key point in inserting the projects, strategies, programs, technic and practices regarding the quality, to target both the human resource from the organization, its clients, and the relations with the economic, business environment. That is why it must be placed in the center of the management preoccupation, and it must be amplified the maintaining and development efforts of the human resource quality, as main pillion of the organization's and society's development.

At the study level's limits it was observed that sharing the country (the analyzed counties) in different cultural and economic areas highly influence the creation of the quality culture – the difference between Bucharest and the other areas.

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