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TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND CREATIVITY: AN EVALUATION WITH THE EXTENT OF THE FUNCTION OF HUMAN RESOURCES (A COMMENT)

Oya Aytemiz Seymen* Tamer Bolat**

ABSTRACT

Together with total quality management, efforts for creativity have been seen not only under the responsibility of certain people or departments but turn to be a structure that covers all the staff working for the business. Of course, within the business resources, these efforts do not mean much if they are not contributed by components like training, performance evaluation, career planning and fair awarding that give importance to human and its development. They won’t be reasonable if they lack of function of human resources, the objective of which is to maximise the motivation and contribution to the business. For this reason, to achieve the same objective to increase total performance and customer satisfaction- it is of great significance for the function of both total quality management and human resources to create a system to benefit from manpower most effectively and to get it creative, happy and satisfactory.

In this study it is examined how to benefit from the HR function to improve creativity at individual and organisational level in companies practising TQM.

Keywords: Total Quality Management, Creativity, Human Resources Management, Education and Training, Performance, Motivation

ÖZET

Toplam Kalite Yönetimi (TKY) ile birlikte, yaratıcılığa ilişkin çabalar işletme içerisindeki belirli kişi ve departmanların - Ar-Ge, Pazarlama, Satış Geliştirme gibi- sorumluluğundan alınmakta, tüm işletme çalışanlarını kapsayan bir yapıya kavuşturulmaktadır. Elbette ki, bu çabaar işletme içerisinde "insan”i ön planda alan ve onu geliştirmek için planlı ve sistemli bir alt yapı oluşturan İnsan Kaynakları İşlevi (IKI) olmalıdır, tek başına anlam taşımayacaktır.

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Bu nedenle işletmelerde TKY süreci ile İnsan Kaynakları İşlevinin aynı hedefe yönelik ve birbiriyile uyumlu bir şekilde yürütülmesi yaratıcılığın güçlendirilmesi açısından son derece önemlidir.

Bu çalışmada, TKY uygulayan işletmelerde gerek bireysel, gerekse bütünsel bazda yaratıcılığın geliştirilebilmesi için İnsan Kaynakları İşlevinden nasıl faydalanılabileceği incelenmektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Toplam Kalite Yönetimi, Yaratıcılık, İnsan Kaynakları Yönetimi, Eğitim Ve Yetiştirme

INTRODUCTION

It has been an inevitable necessity nowadays for employees of businesses to improve prior ideas against changing customer request and events happening quickly, unexpectedly in different ways. Looking through this point of view, the term "creativity" gains more importance for businesses every other day.

Together with Total Quality Management (TQM), efforts for creativity have been seen not only under the responsibility of certain people or departments - research and development, marketing, sales development, etc.- but turn to be a structure that covers all the staff working for the business. Of course, within the business resources, these efforts do not mean much if they are not contributed by components like training, performance appraisal, career planning and fair awarding that give importance to human and its development and if they lack of function of Human Resources (HR), the objective of which is to maximise the motivation and contribution to the business. For this reason, to achieve the same objective- to increase total performance and customer satisfaction- it is of great significance for the function of both TQM and HR to create a system to benefit from human resources most effectively and to enable and maintain creative, happy and satisfactory work environment.

In this study it is examined how to benefit from the HR function to improve creativity at individual and organizational level in companies practising TQM.

A- Conceptual Dimension of Creativity And Its Importance In TQM

In general, "What is creativity?, How can it be described?" The description of "creativity in companies" can be made with the information and ideas below: "Creativity is to provide old needs and respond to new ones." (Akal, 1994)

From another point of view, creativity is "to effect the present course of the job by developing a new product and finding a new way to approach a process." (Amaible, 1998)
Total Quality Management And Creativity

For businesses, creativity is the abilities of employees to create new and original ideas and to bring into light what they created for the maximum satisfaction of customers that is compulsory in approaches of quality-oriented management. In a more detailed definition, the eminent psychologist Torrance defines creativity as: a process of being sensitive to problems, deficiencies, gaps in knowledge, missing elements, disharmonies, and so on; identifying the difficulty; searching for solutions, making guesses, or formulating hypotheses about the deficiencies; testing and retesting them; and finally communicating the results (Jalan and Kleiner, 1995, p.20).

Shortly, “creativity is capacity to create new and more values to human and physical sources.”

From a different point of view, creativity can be defined (Garavan and Deegan, 1995, p.19):

- To view creativity as a resource to be managed, not an accidental phenomenon;
- To stop thinking in terms of “creative” and “non-creative” people, and see everybody as a potential creative source;
- To make the creative resource visible;
- To direct the creativity at the needs of the business;
- To create and maintain a culture which fosters creativity

It may also be useful to maintain creativity and innovation. These two concepts can sometimes be confused or substituted by one another. A more useful approach is to view creativity as the process of generating ideas whilst seeing innovation as the shifting, refining and most critically the implementation of those ideas. Creativity is about divergent thinking. Innovation is about convergent thinking. Put simply, creativity is about the generation of ideas, and innovation is about putting them into action (Gurteen, 1998, p.6).

It may be useful to glance at the classification below, about development to bring up clearly the importance of the term creativity (Kavracoglu, 1997). This classification shows the level of the companies about change and creativity. There are companies:

- Which do not or even are not aware of it;
- Which are not able to construct a cause-and-effect relationship in spite of external and internal changes;
- Which are trying to accompany change after they are conscious of it;
- Which are predicting the change and taking precautions in accordance;
- Which are leading change with their initiative and creative powers.
It can be easily predicted that the companies in the fourth and fifth groups are the ones that have achieved a successful performance and have had competitive powers just before 2000s.

The main requirements for companies which can use their creative potential at the highest level can be listed as follows: (Marşap, 1996)

1- Maintaining the idea that the basic target is to present better quality goods and services to customers should be maintained.

2- At every level of the company, it should be accepted that there might be other ways, methods and alternatives to achieve this target.

3- Emphasis on the improvement of mental capabilities necessary for creativity should be considered and adopted by all employees and accepted as a philosophy in the company.

4- A process of creativity should be organised and supported by senior management as it is.

It is TQM, is a modern approach for management, which is one of the most important tools to be applied by companies and to perform these main requirements. It is already known that most of the companies bearing the aforementioned requirements are those, which apply TQM. The efforts made to increase creativity are at a great extent appropriate for the basic principles of TQM. Thus:

1- “Customer Orientation” is the most important principle in companies applying TQM and because of this principle; basic target in the company is to produce better goods and services.

2- In accordance with “Continuous Improvement” of TQM, no matter how the standards determined in companies will have positive results, one should not be satisfied but will be continuously in the effort to improve better standards. Doing so, the sufficiency of every other standard will be interrogated and revised with the understanding that there may be new ways, methods and alternatives.

3- Within the outline of TQM, the principles of “Continuous Improvement”, “Leadership”, “Training Employees”, “Participation” and “Workshop” are materials to improve mental capacity that is necessary for creativity.

4- “Quality Circles”, a proposal system and one of the most important components carried out in TQM is a good example to organise the process of creativity.
Total Quality Management And Creativity

As it is specified above, TQM itself bears the materials to strengthen creativity in companies. The proactive approach that is present at the essence of TQM can be explained not only to leave invalid theories and to be parallel to improvements but also to lead them (Kavrákoğlu, 1997). For this, it is necessary to bring up the potential of creativity, which is mainly owned by every individual of each level.

This potential should also be used. At this point “Human Resources” (HR) function is an important opportunity for administrators of companies.

B- HR Function and Creativity in TQM

The materials concerning to take up and strengthen creativity with TQM will not be concluded in the desired way unless HR function is supported effectively.

Thus, those who lack of training and improvement, who are not paid enough, who are not employed in accordance with their qualifications, who are aware that the are not appreciated, and who do not work peacefully and satisfactorily (Özkara, 1995), cannot be said to use their creative powers. This can only be realised by HR function that has been carried out effectively. What is meant by the term function is that “function is a structure that encourages leadership in a company, in harmony with main targets and strategies of company, coherent in itself, and it has a mechanism supporting change and innovation and flexible working relationship, developing dependence and motivation and propping this structure with a system of appreciating and appraisal.”(Büyükuslu, 1998)

On the other hand, the management of a company many consider creativity in two ways:

1- To take up and develop creative abilities present and potential at employees individually
2- To constitute a “Culture of Creativity” at every level of company

Most of the activities in HR function in companies where TQM is used are effective at both of the aims of creativity specified above. The relation between activities and creativity can be explained as follows:

Recruitment Activities

Recruitment activities in the frame of TQM help find out and develop –the first aim of creativity- the creative talents present and potential at employees.

The process to find an employee and employ him starts firstly with a process of preparation where the policy of HR in companies and, depending on the job analysis made, qualifications of the job and features of workers needed for the job are determined.
Job Analysis is the first and the most important step to achieve right goals with right people in the right place in organisations for implementations and evaluation toward human resources.

After job analysis has been completed, the ability and features necessary for success can be identified with the help of the data in job analysis. During the identification, the abilities that affect the success but could not be observed directly, besides the observed ones (Sinangil, 1996).

So another criterion may be included in the features needed for the job like “to produce new ideas” while job analysis is carried out. Similarly, new criteria like “reasoning”, “analytic thinking”, “using initiatives”, “thinking in many ways” and “the ability to adapt” (Aşkun, 1982) can be taken into consideration to determine what is needed to do the job.

The criteria mentioned above are also the signs to what extents the employees will or will not adopt the principle “constant improvement” of TQM.

In the direction to what is need for a job when employees are found and employed, the potential of manpower with creative talents will have been acquired.

Training Activities

The process of stimulating creativity and innovation is fundamentally based on building the intellectual capital within the organization, that will yield the competencies and capabilities for improved performance. In this respect, the notion of a learning organization and the core activities of training: needs identification, setting objectives, designing and delivering content, getting feedback and evaluating, when taken together mean that training itself has a central role (Roffe, 1999, p.235).

The training in TQM is a planned and continual chain of activities carried out to establish a quality consciousness in human resources forming internal and external environment of the organisation, to improve information, skills and behaviours of the people and to maintain TQM understanding (Kalkan, 1999).

Japanese expert of quality, Kaoru Ishikawa’s definition “Quality Management starts and ends with training” (Ishikawa, 1995) emphasises the importance of education and training the best. From the highest to the lowest, at every level of a company, education and training help both objectives of creativity on a great scale.
Total Quality Management And Creativity

The TQM training provided to members of management helps them understand the quality system, understands and takes part in it (Bolat, 1999). The items below will contribute to both objectives of creativity for managers of high, middle and low levels (Bell, 1994; Oakland, 1994):

- Adapting a philosophy like “constant change” in the company;
- Basic information related to TQM;
- Quality system and techniques for quality control;
- Components of effective quality management (such as, leadership consciousness of duty and responsibility and strategic management);
- Basic information about quality circles.

In training programs for employees, technical areas like “statistical illustration, collecting data, defining and analysing problems and correcting them” besides “change” and “basic concepts of TQM” gain importance. All the employees should be trained on the relation between the duty of quality (Öztürk, 1993) and their roles to perform TQM effectively. As is seen it is the basic objective to say that, in training programs of TQM, “change” is compulsory and it should be continuous and furthermore it is not in the initiative of a person or group but can only be possible with conscious and enthusiastic participation of all employees. In addition, by teaching basic concepts about quality circles, statistical thinking, and all other-necessary techniques and methods, it is shown how this change will be realised. If they are informed well, the employees will be aware that the change can only be performed through creativity.

Activities To Evaluate Employees’ Performance

*Performance Evaluation* is the systematic activities of performance depending on success and improvement potential the shows. The aim is to assess the success and future potential of the employee at work, to enable and maintain good communication and cooperation between managers and employees and to go to beneficial conclusions for organisations and employees (Özçelik, 1999).

A structure is formed in companies carrying out TQM where employees’ performance is measured with the dimension of TQM —such as quality, productivity and constant improvement-. We can make a list of what should be done to evaluate performance within this structure as:
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1- We must decide firstly on which features to evaluate in performance evaluation (PE). It is known that the features to be taken into consideration for PE are divided into three: “Personal Features”, “Behaviours at Work” and “Results Acquired”. The PE criteria for the first two features help us evaluate the employees with the dimension of creativity.

These are (Seymen, 1995):
- Ability to use initiatives: Self-decision to manage oneself, to solve problems and bring innovations.
- Ability of Planning: Predicting further problems, assessment of realistic objectives and taking necessary precautions.
- Ability of Leadership: Supporting employees’ efforts for creativity and taking part in these efforts.
- The features of employees to follow new improvements and innovations and to search their talents should be included in PE criteria.

On the other hand, in accordance with the “results acquired”, the third feature to be taken into account to study PE, it is possible to find out what extent the employees use their creativity in persons or groups. The criteria may be:
- Number of participants to quality circles in companies and their rate to total number of employees;
- Number of proposals produced by quality circles in PE;
- Number of participants to individual proposal system and their rate to total number of employees;
- Number of proposals made with individual proposal system;
- Percentage of application of proposals developed with both quality circles and individual proposal system and their rate to be success.

2- After deciding on which features to be measured and evaluated, it is time to select the method of PE to be used. The following objectives should be taken into consideration in selecting the method of PE in TQM (Aldemir, Ataol, Solakoğlu, 1993):
- Objectives for development
- Administrative objectives
- Objectives to be economical
- Objectives to protect from errors/mistake

The objectives for development are the one that is the most important for creativity. What is meant by this objective is, the need to take up whether employees use their creative talents present and potential providing a suitable feedback in the system chosen.
When PE efforts are investigated with the dimension of creativity in companies with TQM, the management can see which employees contribute to improve the job and which are more creative. Also in the light of the information acquired, supervising, directing, training and motivation of other employees can be found out (Seymen, 1995).

**Activities to Provide Motivation**

Motivating employees is the most important factor to affect the quality of work life. In case of lack of motivation, employees can show carelessness, lack of communication and, unwillingness towards teamwork and participation to work. It is observed that employees work more efficiently and improve their skills for creativity and their care for work when they are motivated (Tavmergen, 2000).

Activities to increase the quality of working life in TQM will cause employees to be better motivated and this also will contribute to strengthen and widespread creativity in the company.

The principle activities which are effective to increase motivation are:

1- Present organisational structure in businesses are to a great extent simplified with TQM, the number of levels is decreased, some jobs are combined with job analysis and “job enlargement” and “job enrichment” are performed. So it is aimed that the person performing a job is made to get close to the one deciding on what to do or even they turn to be the same person if possible (Koçel, 1995).

To decrease the number of levels means more participation of employees to the management. In such a structure, employees find the opportunity especially to join planning activities and to discuss them. If this causes some changes in the status quo and affects the productivity of manpower and levels of knowledge and ability, it bears more significance for creativity (Tolve, 1984).

In transition to TQM, reorganising the job in accordance with better abilities is to get the employees to be multifunctional. In this way the employees find the change to understand not only one part of the job but the whole. On the other hand if he diminishes some levels in a company, he demolishes authority in the company is also diminished. By means of diminishing authority, one can provide the participation of employees to decision-making and their need to “realise and prove themselves and their own success can be responded” (Bell, 1994).

Finally further participation of employees to the process of management can be reached by means of quality circles and individual proposal system and this helps them use their creative abilities.
2- Taking material and non-material incentive programs into effect
A system is established to award for contributions of employees in TQM to constantly progressive efforts in the frame of creativity. In this system, material and non-material prizes are given to employees individually and in groups. With appropriate reward system, employees will be encouraged and promoted to use their creative talents.

In this system, employees are motivated with non-material elements such as respect and appraisal more than non-material elements. They are encouraged to feel proud of their work. They are also encouraged for group and team work (Önder, 1998).

3- Providing constant training
Efforts for constant training will help to develop employees on the business. The employees will be equipped with more qualifications. So they will have to improve themselves. By means of these efforts they will identify and correct their problems.

4- Improving ergonomic conditions
Creating healthy and safe working conditions and atmosphere in TQM companies –ergonomic arrangement- contributes greatly to increase the motivation of employees. The efforts to get this objective can be listed as follows (Bektaş, 1996):

- Adjusting temperature (heating and cooling systems)
- Regulating the rate of humidity
- Air-conditioning
- Using compatible systems for lighting
- Giving importance to colour factor
- Decreasing noise level
- Taking precautions to prevent industrial accidents

All these efforts, which are realised to increase the motivation of manpower, will also cause employees to be more willing to use their creativity.

CONCLUSION
Different from traditional management approaches, TQM bears principles, methods and materials to accept creativity as a "business culture" and disseminate it through the organization it. Techniques like quality circles, statistical thinking, reward systems and constant improvement systems have priority to realise this objective.
However these techniques have a close relation with Human Resources function to create the desired effect on creativity. Activities performed for the function of Human Resources in TQM helps to bring up and develop creative talents in companies. In order to realise this objective, all the process from planning manpower to the evaluation of employees’ performance will be structured taking creativity into consideration.

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