



RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE ROLE OF EMPLOYEES IN IMPLEMENTING TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT TOWARDS IMPROVING ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE: A CASE OF KENYA SEED COMPANY-KITALE

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 15th August, 2011
Received in revised form
14th October, 2011
Accepted 18th November, 2011
Published online 31th December, 2011

Key words:

Total quality management,
Quality circles,
International standards organizations,
Accepted quality levels,
Performance.

ABSTRACT

Controlling and managing the quality of products is a primary challenge to managers in all organizations despite their desire to achieve quality and thus why this study seeks to examine the role of employees in implementing Total Quality Management towards improving organization performance. Quality has been the dominant factor in the success of the world markets and that improved quality is a major weapon to restore organizations in the global market place. Relevant literature was reviewed, especially on the different of quality management implementation by employees. The study was based on the quality trilogy theory advanced by J. Juran (1951). The study was a census undertaken at Kenya Seed Company headquarters in Kitale. The target population included all permanent employees at Kenya Seed Company headquarters who were 239 in total. The study used questionnaires as the main method of data collection. The data was later analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. On the basis of the research findings Total Quality Management is a management approach for an organizations center on quality, based on the participation of all its members and aiming at long term success through customer satisfaction and benefits to all members of the organization and to society. It is expected that this study will benefit managers in providing customers with products and services that satisfy their needs and academicians in filling the knowledge gap and lay foundation for further research.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the role that employees played in the implementation of TQM towards improving organization performance.

Background to the study

Improving quality of products and services while holding prices down are the two management revolutions of 1940s. Profitability results when money remains from sales after the bills have been paid. Profitability depends on the firm's ability to produce high quality products and services efficiently. The pressure is on every producer to be more efficient and quality oriented. No matter how high the quality is, if the product is overpriced it cannot gain customers satisfaction, Ishikawa (1985). Therefore it is instructive that for a firm to remain in operation, both in the local and international market, quality should be competitive. Various scholars have advanced different meanings to the twin concepts of quality and performance. Juran (1961) has defined quality as the fitness to use. He also introduced the concept of performance, which means the ability to fill order quickly without errors. Customers often use performance characteristics as a factor

while making buying decisions. Customers' dissatisfaction with a product or service is based on defects or dissatisfaction. Deming (1986) observes that as much as the firm would wish to define the measurable qualities that the users will require in the future so that the product can be turned out to give satisfaction at the price that the users will be willing to pay. He further sated that as soon as one felt that he had attained this feat than the customer needs starts changing again, competitors have moved in as well as having a change in the materials which will make the prices of the finished goods vary. Previous results have found out that there is positive correlation between Total Quality Management and Organization Performance. TQM is a management approach for an organizations center on quality, based on the participation of all its members and aiming at long term success through customer satisfaction and benefits to all members of the organization and to society.

Armand Feigenbaum (1951) indicates that TQM comprises four process steps namely;

- Focus on continuous process improvement to make processes visible, repeatable and measurable
- The idea that things will work as they are supposed to (e.g. a pen will write)
- Examining the way the user applies product leads to improvement in the product itself

- The idea that things should have an aesthetic quality (e.g. a pen will write in a way that is pleasing to the writer).

The Department Of Defense of USA in its master plan of (1988) defined TQM as being a strategy for continuously improving performance at every level in all areas of responsibility. It combines fundamental management techniques, existing improvement efforts, and specialized tools under a disciplined structure focused on continuously improving all processes. Improved performance is directed at satisfying such broad goals as cost, quality, schedule and mission need and suitability. Increasing user satisfaction is the overriding objective. TQM requires that the company maintains its quality standard in all aspects of its business. This requires ensuring that things are done right the first time and that defect and wastes are eliminated from operations.

The American society for quality says that the term TQM was first used by the US Naval Air systems command to describe its Japanese styled management approach to quality. This is consistent with the story that the United States Navy Personnel Research and Development center began researching on the use of statistical process controls the work of Juran, Crosby and Ishikawa and the philosophy of W. Edwards Deming to make performance improvement in 1984. Bennett (1997) notes that TQM is the implementation of strategies and operational methods for integrating practical quality control techniques; with organizational cultures conducive to the continuous improvement of quality. It focuses on the quality system rather than individual parts, seeking to identify the causes of failure rather than the simple fact that failures have occurred. Causes of failures could involve cultural inadequacies, poor team work, bad leadership, psychological problems as well as technical operator and/or equipment inadequacy.

TQM therefore is a management process for an organization centered on quality based on the participation of all its members and aiming at long-term success through the customer satisfaction, and benefits all members of the organization and society. This study therefore seeks to examine the specific role that TQM play in successful organization performance. A case study of Kenya Seed Company will be undertaken as a result of its tenacity of other companies that conduct activities that are similar with it. It is my belief that through the findings of this study, other organizations will benefit.

Statement of the problem

The struggle of the 1990s has been seeking for competitive advantage through production of high quality goods and services at a price that customers are willing to pay. The struggle has led to the adoption of TQM as a process. However, some organizations have abandoned institutionalizing TQM as a result of not being able to see tangible evidence due to the basic reason that most employees in organizations are not able to conceptualize the concept of Total Quality Management. Consequently there is need for employees to know the constituents of TQM through playing an active role in its implementation at all levels. Controlling and managing the quality of products is a primary challenge to

managers in all organizations. The culture requires quality being done right first time, and defects and waste eradicated from operations. The research was set out to investigate and evaluate the role played by employees in implementing TQM towards improving organizational performance. Studies already done have tended to focus at the benefits accruing from the implementation of the TQM at the expense of what individual members of the organization played in ensuring its success. Therefore the research attempted to establish the role that employees played in implementing TQM as an essential process towards improving organization performance.

Research objectives

- To investigate into factors that contribute to the attainment of quality in the organization.
- To determine the different quality levels attained by the organization.

Significance of the study

Successful implementation of TQM can go along in ensuring that an organization reaps the benefits of change through avoiding the cost of non conformance and failure. TQM is a description of the culture, attitude and organization of a company that strives to provide customers with products and services that satisfy their needs. The culture requires quality in all aspects of the company's operations, with processes being done right the first time and defects and waste eradicated from operations. This study sought to establish policy frameworks, which have helped management in developing procedural guidelines. These ensured the success of the programmes through giving solutions to the variety of loopholes that were featuring in the existing TQM programmes.

Study area

The study was carried out in Kenya Seed Company Headquarters in Kitale town, Rift Valley Province, Trans Nzoia District. Trans Nzoia District is one of the 18 Districts in Rift Valley Province.

Theoretical framework

The study was based on the quality trilogy theory advanced by Joseph Juran (1951). This theory postulates that good quality management requires quality actions to be planned out, improved and controlled. The process achieves control at one level and of quality performance, and then plans are made to improve the performance on a project by project basis, using tools and techniques such as Pareto analysis. This activity eventually achieves breakthrough to an improved level, which is again controlled, to prevent any deterioration. Juran believed that quality is associated with customers' satisfaction and dissatisfaction and emphasized the necessity for ongoing quality improvement through a succession of small improvement projects carried out through out the organization. His ten steps to quality improvement are:-

- Build awareness of the need and the opportunity for improvement
- Set goals for improvement
- Organize to reach the goals
- Provide training

- Carry out projects to solve problems
- Report progress
- Give recognition
- Communicate results
- keep score of improvement
- maintain momentum

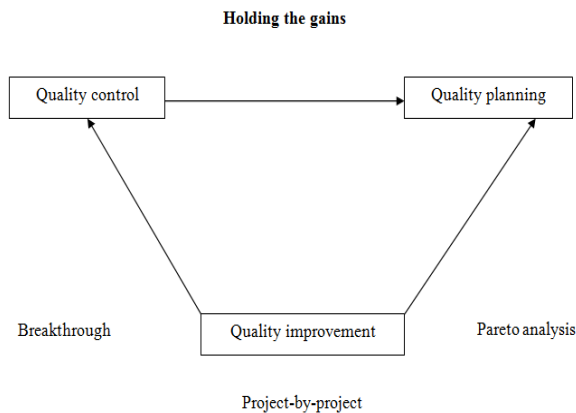


Diagram: Quality Trilogy (Oakland, 1990)

RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

The research adopted a census model. This design is suitable for collecting participants’ opinions about a given phenomenon. It is used to collect data on what people say about something by use of questionnaires (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999). The target population of the study comprised all the employees of Kenya Seed Company. The accessible population will be the employees at the headquarters – Kitale who were 239 in number. Data was collected by means of questionnaires developed by the researcher. The questionnaire had both close ended and open ended items. The researcher was guided by the research variables to formulate some opinion questions (items) related to Total Quality Management. The open ended items gave room to the participants to freely express their views regarding Total Quality Management significant role in the performance of an organization.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Factors contributing to quality management

The first objective of the study was to determine what factors contribute to quality management in organizations. To achieve this objective, respondents were asked to shortlist the factors. They gave five options: empowering of employees in decision making, delegation of duties of senior staff to their juniors, research on customer needs, channels of communication and leadership styles.

The table below indicates the factors that contribute to quality management in organizations. The frequency table 4.2 above indicates that delegation of duties by the senior staff to their juniors is most used in ensuring quality is attained in the organization (42.7%). Other factors that contribute to attaining and maintaining high quality levels is the practice of

empowering employees in decision making (25.1%) and carrying out market research on changing customer needs (32.2%). Communication channels and leadership styles also have an impact on quality management.

Table 1. Frequency of the factors contributing to quality management

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Empowering employees to decision making thro'</i>		
Interdepartmental meetings	60	25.1%
Delegation of duties	102	42.7%
Research on customer		
Changing needs	77	32.2%
Total	239	100%
<i>Channels of communication That facilitates quality</i>		
Top-down	63	26.3%
Bottom-top	90	37.7%
Diagonal	86	36%
Total	239	100%
<i>Leadership styles that Facilitates quality</i>		
Democratic	114	47.7%
Autocratic	69	28.9%
Laissez faire	56	23.4%
Total	239	100%

The communication channel that most contributes to attaining quality levels is bottom-top (37.7%) and diagonal (36%). The respondents also credited democratic leadership style to attainment of quality levels where the most effective was democratic (47.7%).

ORGANIZATION’S QUALITY LEVELS

The second objective of the study was to investigate the different quality levels attained by the organization. To achieve this objective, respondents were asked to fill in the blanks the quality levels they had attained. Three options were given: ISO, Kenya bureau of standards and their own quality assurance department had also honored their quality through the regular quality inspections.

Table 2. Frequency of Quality levels attained by the organization

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Quality assurance department		
Yes	141	59
No	98	41
Total	239	100
ISO		
Yes	239	100
No	0	0
Total	239	100
Kenya Bureau of Standards		
Yes	139	58.1
No	100	41.8
Total	239	100

The frequency table above indicates that ISO (International Organizational Standards) as a standard of quality was experienced by all the employees. This could owe to the fact that ISO is a certification given to the entire organization as a body and not to particular departments. The other quality levels were determined by the Kenya Bureau of standards

58.1% and the company's own quality assurance department (59%).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study sought to establish the relationship the factors contributing to quality and the attainment of quality levels at the organization and also the relationship between quality levels attained and organizational performance. This study achieved this by investigating the factors contributing to quality attainment, to determine the quality levels the organization has attained, to establish the challenges faced by the organization in the attainment of quality and to find out how quality management contributes to organizational performance. The first objective of the study was to investigate the factors contributing to quality attainment in organizations. Data analysis and interpretation of the questionnaire responses revealed the following major findings under this objective. That the factors contributing to attainment of quality include: delegation of duties of the senior staff to their juniors, research on the changing customer needs, bottom-top communication channels, diagonal communication channels and democratic leadership styles. This could owe to the contribution of interpersonal skills in achievement of quality in organizations. The second objective of this study was to determine the quality levels attained at the organization. Data analysis and interpretation of the questionnaire responses revealed the following major findings. Table 4.3 revealed that different quality monitoring bodies which set quality standards for the organization i.e. ISO, Kenya bureau of standards and their own quality assurance department's standards have been met. This could be because of the government's effort to ensure quality products and services are produced.

CONCLUSION

The study investigated on quality management's effects on organizational performance. It was intended to establish the relationship between empowerment, communication channels and leadership styles on attainment of quality levels and also the relationship between attainment of quality levels and organizational performance. This study specifically sought to investigate the factors that contribute to attainment of quality, to determine the quality levels attained by the organization, to establish the challenges facing the organization in the attainment of quality and to find out how quality attainment leads to organizational performance. In view of these findings, the study concludes that:

Empowerment of employees and leadership styles affect the organizations ability to attain quality levels. Through empowerment for example, employees are allowed to contribute in policy formulation regarding quality management and this makes them adhere to the policy. Leadership styles like democratic were said to have a positive effect on attainment of quality while autocratic leadership style was said to have a negative effect on attainment of quality. The study also concludes that the organization has been able to attain quality levels set by different bodies: ISO, Kenya bureau of standards and their own quality assurance department. This bodies dictates the standards to be achieved by organization's goods and services before being given to the

customers. It can also be concluded that attainment of quality levels has some challenges that it comes up with: high cost of training employees, high cost of purchasing quality inspection machinery and resistance of employees to quality related change. Although the attainment of quality levels has challenges, it also has some advantages since it promotes organizational performance. This organizational performance is seen through enabling organizations to produce seeds that adapt to the changing environmental conditions and also to determine the customer needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study argues that empowerment of employees and leadership styles have contribute to the attainment of quality levels, organization are required to attain quality levels set by the Kenya bureau of standards, ISO and their own quality assurance departments. The study has also shown the attainment of quality levels has a positive effect on organizational performance. It is against this background that that the recommendations below are made. Despite its challenges, the study below should be justified because it will help organizations improve their performance through quality management. Basing generalizations on the findings of the study, the researcher recommends that:

Recommendation 1

This study recommends that if an organization needs to attain the quality levels set, it should; empower its employees in decision making and also it should also practice democratic leadership style.

Recommendation 2

The study also recommends that the bodies that set quality levels in the organizations are: the organization's quality assurance department, Kenya bureau of standards and ISO.

Recommendations 3

In the process of attaining and managing quality, the study alerts that there are some challenges that come along with and those organizations should be ready to face them. They include; high costs of training of personnel, high cost of purchasing the machinery for quality inspection and resistance to quality related change by personnel.

Recommendation 4

Finally, the study recommends that the organizations should aim at attaining the quality levels set by the different bodies if they want to improve their overall performance.

Academicians will benefit from the findings of this study. They should critique the findings of this study and compare them to other empirical studies in order to gauge the level of employee participation in implementing total quality management towards improving organizational performance. They will be able to give further recommendations on other Total Quality management facts that were not adequately analyzed by this study.

The findings of the study provide useful comparisons of various facts of total quality management practices; a detailed analysis of the link between theory and practice is well documented. Companies in Kenya can get such insight on total quality management best practices by accessing the findings of this study. This will enable other companies in Kenya to appraise their own management practices.

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