

Actual requirements regarding the intellectual capital at an European and international level. The assessment of quality management systems in organizations providing instruction services

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Article first published in
"Annal of the University of
Oradea", Economic Science,
V. 1, n.5, pp.782-787.
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ABSTRACT. The European Union Council had and still has in view the profound changes taking place in society: globalization represents for Europe a competitors intensification in all the economical sectors, while the developing and the diversification of the information technologies can lead to a radical change of the whole learning and educational system, opening the perspectives for learning possibilities and accumulating knowledge during all one's life.

The topic actuality of this article consist in the fact that, due to the globalization and the international competition intensification, the request for workers with a low qualification level decreases; the new jobs presuppose high performances, flexibility, stress on qualities such as: high level of performance, creativity, openness to change, initiative. People will be obliged to possess much more knowledge, competences and they will have to work in multi spheres teams. Of course not all the people can become conceptual analysts, but an adaptation to the new system, to the new economy is required.

At present, more and more people work in domains in which information is created. In the future this percentage will grow. The use on a large scale of machines and installations will determine that even workers from the basic domains to be better and better prepared. In the countries OECD the unemployment rate is higher for the persons with a second education, unlike the persons with a higher education, the manpower being in this way forced to become more qualified. On the other hand, as more and more work is taking place at an intellectual level, the detaining and manipulating of information becomes an essential quality for each employee. This article has as a main objective the

highlighting of actual requirements regarding the quality assurance in instruction services at an European and international level. Thus, the permanent learning strategies from the European Union are presented, which aim at realizing a European space of knowledge. The concept of permanent learning is being analyzed as a new vision in the instruction domain, which is centered on the individual. An important aspect is the developing of basic personal competences and the validation of these through flexible qualification structures. Due to the complexity of the processes and the context in which they are functioning, the instruction organizations should orient themselves to the models TQM, even though the standard ISO 9001 offers advantages at implementation, connected especially with the processes management, the document control and registrations. The proposed model being a TQM model adapted to the instructional domain and integrated with ISO 9001, can be easily utilized by these organizations.

KEYWORDS: *Intellectual capital, Management, Performance, Quality, TQM*

1. Introduction

The central problem of knowledge, as a defining element of the new society, does not reside in its existence, but in the new content of knowledge, in its role in the entire society and economy, as well as in the ways of stimulating its formation.

Along time, two types of learning have existed: for maintaining and for change. In a traditional manner, societies and individuals adopted the type of learning of continual maintaining. This learning is interrupted by short periods of innovation, triggered often by the shock of exterior events. As a matter of fact, learning for maintaining consists from acquisition of rules, methods and fixed regulations, in order to cope with known and unknown situations. The maintaining of some given situations is very important, on a short term it is simply exceptional due to its normality.

On a long term, and especially in a time of changing and searching, in order to survive it becomes essential the type of learning which could facilitate change. It is about that type of learning which can generate revival, restructuring, problem reformulating. Recently,

this type of learning has been called innovating.

Thus, a new mode of developing is imposed, which integrates the human dimension from another perspective- that of the complexity and diversity, in which an important role is detained by education (Ciobanu, 2003, p. 13).

The European Union Council had and still has in view the profound changes which take place in society: globalization represents for Europe a competition intensification in all the economical sectors, while the development and the diversification of the information technologies can lead to a radical change of the entire system of learning and education, opening the perspectives on possibilities of learning and accumulating knowledge during one's life.

The Council has established as a fundamental strategic objective that, the European Union to become the most competitive economy based on knowledge. It was considered that the most important problem of the majority of the member states is unemployment. Eliminating unemployment can be made if consistent reforms in the domain of job occupation will be realized, the existent obstacles will be eliminated, and if necessary resources will be utilized. The elimination of unemployment was defined as an other priority of the European Union. Another established objective on the summit agenda in Lisbon (the Lisbon agenda) was the improvement in employing the manpower and work quality. At the summit new recommendations have been made and the priorities have been stressed (learning during the entire life, acquiring abilities, mobility), reflected already in the Directing Rules regarding Occupation, by means of the new horizontal objectives.

2. Theoretical framework

For long time education has been perceived as a system in which young persons enter in order to make a formation for themselves and they came back into society after a decade or two of theoretical accumulation of information, necessary for the productive work. No matter how much we pretend to humanize the educational process by attributing to it a lot of affective, moral or aesthetic dimensions, the reality is that changes are difficult to manage, because learning remains a system with an input and an output, being efficient as long as statistics, costs, infrastructure and utilized

personnel indicate this thing (Matei, 2002, p. 2).

Education is essential for each economy, on one hand because through education, relations between people and society are diversified, the individual having the capacity to contribute as a member of the society with something which should balance the things he gets as a consequence of living together with other individuals. On the other hand, the actual economy necessitates a well-prepared manpower, in a time of globalization and technological revolutions, which necessitate the development of competences, of creativity, solid knowledge, an increase of responsibility. In a world like ours, subject to continual changes, stagnation with regard to learning is an inadequate behaviour or even dangerous for the contemporary individual (Angelescu, 2003, p. 21). The economical performances of a country depend more and more on the access to the new technologies, on their adoption and on the new requirements being imposed to the manpower from a point of view of the professional training.

2.1. The European common framework of promoting training in the intellectual capital

Until now, the European Union has acted steadily for the development of the national policies and the identification of domains of inter states cooperation, with the aim of: facilitating and adapting to changes, supporting the integration of adults in the work market and promoting the equality of chances between men and women. The opinions common to the social partners have also constituted a point of reference at the level of the European Union, contributing to the developing of modes of approaching the professional training.

Some key aspects have been approved by all the member states of the European Union. We can enumerate some of these:

- Assimilation of a vast quantity of knowledge and professional training with a view to employment are not contradictory elements. The importance of general knowledge for the capitalization of professional competences is more and more recognized.
- Connection points between education, professional training and economical sector are being established. The provocation at which learning institutions and economic

agents are subjected to is that of accepting the institutions as partners in the process of professional training. The role of an economic agent doesn't imply only recruiting the qualified individuals or the providing of extra professional training. The institution is now viewed as an important generator of knowledge and technologies. The process of professional training, especially in transverse domains, is accompanied by a very large partnership, involving local authorities, associations of consumers and specialized organisms.

- The equal rights to education and professional training are viewed in the context of ensuring equal chances, including the positive discrimination in the favor of the disadvantaged ones.
- The informational society reveals new requirements from educational systems and professional training, by means of new methods regarding teaching and learning, facilitating continually the developing of contacts and connections between teachers and institutions at a European level.

Many of the problems regarding the developing of learning on the entire course of life affect the content and the organization of the professional training. The European framework of the professional training policy at European level must take into consideration the fact that that answer to the usual problems can differ from one country to the other, depending on its historical, social, cultural and economical characteristics. It can't be stated that there is only a European solution for all the aspects connected to the training. The recommendations of the European Commission for the next period refer to the implementation of strategies for permanent learning.

The same approach oriented to the development of human resources is detailed in the cohesion Policy, as a support of the economical boom and job occupation, for the period 2007-2013.

2.2. The European model of quality assurance in organizations providing training services

The European framework of quality assurance for education and professional training (CQAF) proposes a European model of quality assurance management based on the principles TQM, the standard ISO 9001:2000 and the excellence model EFQM. We can identify

convergence points between EFQM principles and the ones which are the foundation of standards ISO 9000. There have also already been made steps in the direction of formalizing the activities related to the implementation TQM. Because of the recent elaboration of the European model in the professional training domain (CQAF), until now it hasn't been studied and experimented on this model implementation. We propose next in the research methodology a parallel implementation method of the standard ISO 9001:2000 with the model CQAF adapted for the organizations which provide training services.

3. Methodology

3.1. The Design of the Research

A research based on a questionnaire was made for the attaining of the research objectives regarding the implementation of quality management systems in organizations which provide training services.

The questionnaire contains 13 questions which allow us to obtain data referring to:

- Company identification (name, field of activity, number of employees) (questions 1-6)
- Types of training programs offered (questions 7-8)
- Implementation and certification the quality management system (types of standards and quality management models implemented, accreditation of organism which made the certification) (questions 9-10)
- Accreditation of training programs (questions 11)
- Preoccupations concerning assurance of quality training services (questions 12-13)

Taking into consideration the differences which appear in the implementation process of quality management systems, between the organizations from the training area, according to their size, we propose that the data analysis is made according to the number of employees, for the following 5 categories: 1-5 employees, 6-20 employees, 21-49 employees, 50-249 employees and over 250 employees.

For achieving our purpose, a number of 385 questionnaires were distributed to training organizations either accredited or having the quality management system certified according to the international standard ISO 9001. A number of 197 questionnaires were returned.

4. Results

The questionnaire which stood at the basis of the research included the following questions with several types of answer: "The standard of reference/model of the quality management system implemented in the organization", with the following variants of answer: SR EN ISO 9001:2001, EFQM, Romanian Award for Quality Juran, CAF (TQM in public institutions) CQAF (EFQM for providers of education and professional training), others. It results that, between 6,6% and 11,1% have not yet implemented any system of quality management. It can be noted the high degree (over 73,7%) of organizations providing training services which have implemented the quality management system according to ISO 9001. The fact that between 7,3% and 14% of the questioned organizations have already implemented EFQM and CQAF models represent an optimist indicator concerning the success of the proposition of implementing both the ISO 9001 and the CQAF model for the organizations from the training field. In these organizations, implementing ISO 9001 standard can improve management activities, measuring and controlling processes.

Quality assurance should be implemented in the same manner as daily teaching and studying activities. Implementation covers a wide range of activities. The implementation stage has 2 basic quality criterions: instructors' and other staff categories management and processes management.

In the case of the first criterion, it is evaluated the manner how plans concerning the staff are developed, focusing on the recruiting system, performances assessment, career development, reward system and the manner how staff's potential is valued for the organization's objectives.

The emphasis is on monitoring and continuous development of skills and knowledge of trainers, instructors. Also, encouraging staff to formulate suggestions and further implement them, providing appropriate working conditions and achieving an efficient internal communication represent requirements which are taken into

account when assessing the performance of this criterion.

Small organizations up to 20 people appreciate that they “broadly” fulfill requirements of this criterion. It may be noted that medium and large organizations consider that the criterion is satisfied “fully”.

For the second criterion, “processes” is directly related to quality management system described by international standards ISO 9000. Thus, for organizations that have implemented a quality management system such requirements should be fulfilled. However, although 74.1% of organizations with up to 5 employees are certified ISO 9001 and 73.7% of organizations with 6-20 employees are certified, the value of criterion fulfillment is inversely proportional. The same situation occurs for large organizations, of which 85.7% are certified compared to 79.6% for medium-sized organizations, and the value of meeting the criterion is lower for large organizations.

5. Conclusions

The purposed methodology has been applied within a research concerning the evaluation of conformity with the TQM model criterion of the studied organizations. The research was made on 5 different categories of organizations classified according to the staff number.

In this research, an application of the methodology considered the representation of the maturity levels of surveyed organizations. We established the conditions for determining the maturity levels of the organization, through the correlation between TQM proposed model criteria, goals, generic and basic practices, represented through the questionnaire responses.

Analysis was made by type of organization, highlighting the quality criteria that define the location of each maturity level.

Medium and large organizations, with over 50 employees have general performance indicator values that rank them first in terms of compliance with the proposed TQM model criteria.

All URLs checked
June 2013

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Appendix A

Dear participant,

By answering the following questionnaire we would like to find out your opinion on the evaluation of quality management systems within organizations which offer training services.

Therefore, your contribution is considered very important for the successful completion of this study. Your answers will be treated with strict confidentiality.

Thank you in advance for your time and effort.

Kind Regards,

Survey questions

1. Name of the organization
2. Address
3. Field of activity
4. Juridical form of your society
 - Self employed person

- SRL
- SA
- Public Institution
- Others

5. How long has your company registered?

- < 5 years
- 5-20 years
- > 10 years

6. Number of employees

- 1-5
- 6-20
- 21-49
- 50-249
- >250 from which:
_____ Management _____ Trainers/Teachers _____ Technical
_____ Administrative

7. Types of professional training programs offered

- Qualification
- Requalification
- Beginners
- Perfecting/Intermediate
- Advanced

8. Area where your company offers the most training courses

- IT
- Business/Management/Entrepreneurship
- Work protection/Health and work security
- Administration/secretariat
- Communications
- Engineering
- Drivers
- Health/Medical assistance
- Agriculture/horticulture
- Commerce/Sales
- Marketing
- Security/Defence
- Sport/Fitness/Recreation

- Arts
- Quality/Management
- Environment
- Others

9. Reference standard/model of the quality management system implemented within your organization

- No
- SR EN ISO '9001:2001
- EFQM
- Romanian Award for Quality Juran
- CAF (TQM in public administration)
- CAQF (EFQM for training organizations VET educative and professional training)
- BSC (Business score card)
- Others

10. The quality management system is certified by an accredited organism

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

11. Is your organization authorized by CNFPA as a provider of professional training to adults

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

12. For how long has there been preoccupations concerning the quality assurance within your company?

- < 3 years
- 3-5 years
- 6-10 years
- > 10 years
- I don't know

13. Activities concerning quality of the training services provided by your company are developed

- Systematically

- In certain situations
- Are not organized
- I don't know

Sintesi

La società europea vive oggi profonde trasformazioni, dovute sia alla globalizzazione sia allo sviluppo e alla diversificazione delle tecnologie, che stanno rivoluzionando anche i sistemi di apprendimento e l'universo dell'educazione in senso lato.

La globalizzazione e la crescente competitività internazionale determinano un calo vistoso nella richiesta di lavoratori poco qualificati. I nuovi lavori, infatti, presuppongono alte prestazioni, flessibilità e creatività, spirito di iniziativa e apertura al cambiamento. In futuro, le persone dovranno possedere conoscenze e competenze molto più numerose e dovranno lavorare in gruppi multisettoriali. Anche se tutti non potranno diventare analisti concettuali, certamente dovranno diventare qualcosa di simile, perché per tutti sarà necessario adeguarsi al nuovo sistema e alla nuova economia.

Attualmente un numero sempre maggiore di persone lavora in ambiti in cui si produce informazione. E questa percentuale crescerà ancora.

Nei Paesi OECD il tasso di disoccupazione fra gli individui con una istruzione secondaria risulta assai più elevato rispetto a quanti hanno un'istruzione superiore.

Via via che il lavoro diviene sempre più intellettuale, da un lato la forza lavoro diventa sempre più qualificata, dall'altro il possesso e la manipolazione dell'informazione diventano essenziali per ogni impiegato.

Nell'ambito della ricerca condotta presso le università di Arad e di Constanta in Romania, si evidenziano preliminarmente i requisiti effettivi e aggiornati dei servizi di istruzione e formazione a livello europeo e internazionale: si analizza in tal modo, partendo dalle strategie comunitarie, il concetto di apprendimento lungo tutto l'arco della vita, come una nuova visione educativa centrata sull'individuo, la quale si fonda non soltanto sullo sviluppo di competenze personali di base ma pure sulla loro validazione attraverso strutture di qualificazione flessibili.

Proprio a causa della complessità dei processi e del contesto in cui operano le organizzazioni di istruzione e formazione, si mette quindi a punto una metodologia che propone l'utilizzo di un modello di Total Quality Management (TQM), opportunamente adattato al campo dell'educazione e integrato con lo standard ISO 9001, in grado di assicurare, dal canto suo, la gestione e il controllo efficaci dei processi e dei documenti.