

QUALITY AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: A VIEW TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AND EXCELLENCE IN PORTUGUESE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS, THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE STUDENTS INTEGRATED IN MOBILITY PROGRAMMES

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Abstract

The Total Quality Management (TQM) is increasingly a need for organizations. The growing social concerns have led organizations to think evolutionarily in quality, especially those wishing to make an approach towards excellence. TQM can be used as a determinant of the development of a corporate culture ethically sensitive. Models such as the European Quality Award and European Foundation for Quality Management incorporate an element of social responsibility and management practices compatible with the defender of the ideals of Corporate Social Responsibility (Ghobadian and Woo, 1996 and Martin-Castilla, 2002, cited by Ghobadian *et al.*, 2007). Institutions of higher education are among the group of institutions that demand excellence. The quality and social responsibility are factors that begin to be part of their strategies. Students from Higher Education Institutions (HEI) integrated in mobility programs, increasingly important stakeholders for these institutions, will have their own perspective on these matters which is important on the evaluation of HEI.

Keywords: Continuous Improvement, HEI, Quality, Social Responsibility

INTRODUCTION

The work of the quality gurus, including Crosby, Deming, Ishikawa and Duran, suggests a strong link between the movement of the ideals of quality and ethical concepts and theory based on virtue, fairness, rights and freedom conceptualization of ethics (Ghobadian and Speller, 1994, cited by Ghobadian *et al.*, 2007). In this sense, TQM can be used to boost the development of an ethically sensitive corporate culture (Ahmed and Machold, 2004, cited by Ghobadian *et al.*, 2007).

The growing social and ethical concerns have led organizations to think evolutionarily in quality, especially those wishing to make an approach towards excellence. But those concerns are not incorporated in current models of excellence (Nakano, 1999, Kok *et al.*, 2001).

The aim of this work is to provide a set of tools to collect data in order to assess qualitative and quantitative variables of Quality and Social Responsibility in HEI from the perspective of national and foreign students integrated in mobility programs and to contribute to the debate of ideas on the effects of Quality and Social Responsibility in the life of these particular students. This work also seeks to present a proposal for an integrated model that links the two concepts. The model can help HEI, through its use in defining its strategy in order to become more competitive and sustainable in a global world, which increasingly requires quality and social responsibility to all.

OBJECTIVE

This work aims to contribute to the development of simultaneous measurement of social responsibility and quality with a view to continuous improvement and excellence in HEI.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE THEME

The concept of quality is part of the new paradigm of modern societies. The cultural evolution of a people can be demonstrated through the evolution of that concept.

The model of TQM focuses on customer satisfaction, participatory management and results orientation. The methodologies and theories of TQM are often associated with better financial performance, "advances" in attitudes, motivation among the government executives' and to achieve the reinvention and results-oriented objectives (Milakovich, 2004).

As a model, TQM provides a set of methods and practices that are applicable at all levels and areas of management. This allows the organization to get feedback and evaluation on an integrated way throughout the business cycle of the organization (Lopes and Capricho, 2007).

Social responsibility is a relatively new concept of management (Ghobadian *et al.*, 2007). Business ethics and social responsibility are themes that have been given considerable attention in organizations and academic publications (Carroll, 1999). Friedman was one of the authors who first started the discussion about social responsibility, saying it should let the business people do what they must do and that is, let them take care of their business (Kok *et al.*, 2001). For Friedman (1962) social responsibility is to use the resources and carry out activities to increase profits, provided within the rules established (Atakan and Eker, 2007). This view has been criticized by authors such as Shaw and Barry (Kok *et al.*, 2001). For these authors, a business must take into consideration the long-term social costs of their activities and profits. The existence of any corporation is based in order to benefit society (Shaw and Barry, 1992). Mintzberg (1983) assumes that managers will take some social responsibility in making decisions, since they are themselves part of the society.

Social Responsibility is the recognition that business activities have an impact on society and that is considered in management decision making (Pride *et al.*, 2008). According to Steeples (1994, cited by Ghobadian *et al.*, 2007) there is a strong correlation between ethics and quality apparently in the company's shares and on the actions of its employees. TQM spread certain values, behaviors and work methods relying on its core integrity, commitment, honesty, openness, respect, participation, membership and meeting the needs of different stakeholders.

DISCUSSION

There is a great similarity between TQM and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Vinten (1998, cited by Ghobadian *et al.*, 2007) states that the TQM concept crosses the ethical and legitimate instrumental dimension of CSR. Wicks and Freeman (1998, cited by Ghobadian *et al.*, 2007) share this sentiment and argue that TQM is driven by a set of interrelated concepts that simultaneously present management practices and moral values. In his view, TQM encompasses concepts and practices that reveal the effort in working for the benefit of all concerned. Moir (2001, cited by Ghobadian *et al.*, 2007) argues that both TQM and CSR share similar ethical anchors.

Ghobadian *et al.* (2007) argue that despite apparent differences in the definitions of TQM and CSR, throughout history and in the further development of the concept of TQM, there is considerable overlap between the values that underpin both terms. The novelty of CSR and low levels of diffusion means that there is less experience with the implementation of aspects of the processes of social responsibility. Moreover, some of these elements are common elements to the map of TQM, and therefore they can be implemented as part of the processes of TQM.

The Total Quality Management and Social Responsibility have a common philosophical root and the values that they claim show a significant overlap (Ghobadian *et al.*, 2007). The elements of TQM and CSR actually overlap significantly, but there are differences. According to these authors, CSR will not happen just because the organization has implemented TQM. For that to happen, it is necessary to address the issue explicitly. However, it is necessary to extend the elements of TQM to explicitly include a number of elements of CSR. Both TQM and CSR ultimately result from the organization to act properly. TQM can be used as a vehicle to accelerate the diffusion of CSR.

CONCLUSIONS

The definition of TQM as the concept of quality varies with the author and the area where the subject is being studied. TQM can be considered as a business management philosophy that recognizes that customers' needs and objectives of the organization are inseparable. There are key elements that enable the organization to strive to become a TQM organization.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) can be considered a relatively new management concept. Today, social responsibility is increasing the challenge for the acquisition and development of appropriate competencies and skills. The evolution of the concept allowed to define a first stage, based on social responsibility to let people take care of business (Friedman, 1962), to then be approached from a perspective that supports the premise that the managers would take some social responsibility on decision-making, considering that they themselves are part of the company (Mintzberg, 1983). The existence of any corporation is based in order to benefit society (Shaw and Barry, 1992).

Definitions of CSR vary (Ghobadian *et al.*, 2007) ending in its definition of the importance of economic performance, recognizing that firms serve a wide range of stakeholders, stressing the importance of the need to balance factors such as economic performance, satisfaction expectations of stakeholders and responsibility towards society. There are values such as participation, honor, justice, among others, underlying the concept of social responsibility.

It is possible to evaluate social responsibility. The social audits are tools that help to endorse the company's social consciousness, these can be considered a revision to ensure that the organization gives due attention to social responsibility towards those who are directly and indirectly affected by its size and that simultaneously equilibrium is reached in the business planning between these aspects and more traditional business objectives.

The relationship between quality, environment, health and safety and social responsibility is increasingly a concern of everyone. Also the interest in the nature of the relationship between TQM and CSR it's ancient (Ghobadian *et al.*, 2007). TQM and CSR result from the organization to act properly. TQM can be used as an accelerator for the diffusion of CSR. It is important that coexistence of both integrated in the organization.

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