PERCEPTION OF CLERICAL EMPLOYEES TOWARDS
TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN A GOVERNMENT
CORPORATION IN KUCHING, SARAWAK

LIM KEATKY

FAKULTI SAINS KOGNITIF DAN PEMBANGUNAN MANUSIA
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PERCEPTION OF CLERICAL EMPLOYEES TOWARDS TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN A GOVERNMENT CORPORATION IN KUCHING, SARAWAK

by

LIM KEATKY

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Diterima untuk diperiksa oleh

[Signature]

Prof. Madya Dr. Peter Songan

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Abstrak

PERSEPSI PEKERJA PERKERANIAN TERHADAP PENGURUSAN KUALITI MENYELURUH DI SEBUAH PERBADANAN KERAJAAN DI KUCHING, SARAWAK

Lim Keatky

Kekurangan kajian dalam bidang pengurusan kualiti berbanding dengan bidang ilmu yang lain adalah amat ketara. Kajian ini yang dijalankan disalah sebuah perbadanan kerajaan bernujud untuk mengetahui persepsi pekerja terhadap Pengurusan Kualiti Menyeluruh (PKM) dan faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi persepsi tersebut.

Secara spesifik kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui ciri-ciri demografi terpilih pekerja, tahap persepsi pekerja terhadap PKM dan tahap penglibatan pekerja dalam aktiviti PKM. Analisis korelasi telah dijalankan untuk mengenalpasti hubungan antara pengetahuan tentang prinsip asas PKM, tahap penglibatan dalam aktiviti PKM dan beberapa unsur dalam budaya organisasi dengan persepsi terhadap PKM. Sebanyak 84 set borang scalselidik telah diagihkan dan hanya 54 diikutbalikan. Statistik deskriptif seperti min, purata dan Korelasi Pearson telah digunakan untuk tujuan analisis.
Kajian ini mendapat responden mempunyai persepsi yang positif terhadap PKM dan penglibatan yang tinggi dalam aktiviti PKM. Tempoh perkhidmatan, pengetahuan tentang prinsip asas PKM, penglibatan dalam aktiviti PKM dan unsur budaya organisasi seperti cara kepimpinan, kemesraan dalam organisasi dan sokongan padu, ganjaran dan pengiktirafan mempunyai hubungan yang positif dengan persepsi terhadap PKM. Walau bagaimanapun tahap pendidikan formal didapati tidak mempunyai hubungan dengan persepsi terhadap PKM.

Adalah dicadangkan pengurusan organisasi ini meneruskan usaha mereka memberi latihan dan pendidikan dalam bidang PKM kepada para pekerja kerana dapan kajian mendapat bahawa usaha ini adalah efektif. Pihak atasan juga perlu memberi sokongan yang bercerakan terhadap budaya organisasi yang sedia ada kerana telah terbukti bahawa budaya ini sesuai untuk perlaksanaan PKM.

Oleh kerana dapan kajian ini hanya menjawab persoalan di tempat kajian, adalah dicadangkan pengkaji-pengkaji seterusnya membuat kajian perbandingan di antara perbadanan kerajaan yang lain untuk menentukan perbezaan persepsi pekerja terhadap PKM dan faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhinya.
Abstract

PERCEPTION OF CLERICAL EMPLOYEES TOWARDS TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN A GOVERNMENT CORPORATION IN KUCHING, SARAWAK

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The lack of research in the field of quality management as compared to other fields of knowledge is obvious. This study which was conducted in a government corporation attempts to gain an insight into how employees perceive Total Quality Management (TQM) and factors that influence their perception towards TQM.

Specifically this study aims to determine some selected demographic characteristics of the employees, their level of perception towards TQM and their level of involvement in TQM activities. Furthermore correlation analysis is performed to determine the possible relationship between knowledge on the basic principles of TQM, involvement in TQM activities and certain elements of organisational culture with perception towards TQM. A total of 84 respondents were handed with questionnaires but only 54 managed to return the completed questionnaire. Descriptive statistics such as mean, percentage, frequency and Pearson Product Moment Correlation are used for the analysis of data.
The main findings of this study revealed that majority of the respondents perceived TQM positively and have high involvement in TQM activities. Years of service, knowledge on the basic principles of TQM, involvement in TQM activities and elements of organisational culture such as leadership style, warmth, support, reward and recognition have positive relationship with perception towards TQM. However, years of formal education was found to have no relationship with perception towards TQM.

It is recommended that the management of this organisation continue its effort to train and educate employees in understanding TQM as their effort have been proven in this study to be effective. The current organisational culture should also be supported by top management of this organisation as it has shown to be conducive for TQM.

It is also suggested that future researchers do a comparison study on other government corporation to determine the difference in employees' perception towards TQM and the factors that influence the perception.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The practice of Total Quality Management (TQM) as a strategy for improvement is being embraced by more organisations around the world and Malaysian organisations are no exception. Quality is fast becoming a competitive mandate in the business environment today. It has spread from its industrial origins to health care organisations, public bureaucracies, non-profit organisations and educational institutions. It has become increasingly prominent in the popular press, in the portfolios of trainers and consultants and more recently in the scholarly literature. The premise of TQM is quite clear: quality improvement can be achieved if an organisation develops a management philosophy of continuous improvement and provides the necessary supporting organisational practices (Juran, 1993).

Through persistence and hard work, coupled with patience, many organisations have successfully implemented TQM with outstanding results. Sarawak Economic Development Corporation (SEDC), Intel Malaysia, Harris Advanced Technology Malaysia and Malaysia Airlines are some of the more well-known TQM achievers in Malaysia. Yet, their quality practices took time and patience to implement as well as discipline to mature and maintain.

Quality experts such as Deming, Juran and Crosby preached that organisations must approach quality improvement from a long term perspective and they also
warned that quality can be hampered by a host of organisational problems (Longenecker and Scamazon, 1996).

The initial TQM start up phrase requires identifying employees’ attitude towards quality, breaking bad habits and implementing key TQM practices. Some organisations fail to practice TQM or implement such practices successfully due to employees inability to break old habits and are resistant to changes (Longenecker and Scamazon, 1996).

There are instances of organisations that have successfully implemented TQM but through the passage of time or changes in key personnel, the TQM system breaks down (Harrington, 1987). Employees start to lose focus on the quality improvement process and changes in perception towards quality start to take effect.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

TQM was implemented in this organisation in the early 90’s and is currently in the maturity phase. The main reason of implementing TQM is to promote continuous improvement organisation wide. This organisation has won two prestigious quality awards in 1992 and 1994. This serves as the testimonial of the successful implementation of TQM in this organisation. However this organisation have not been honoured any major quality awards since 1994. Employees tend to be complacent and lose focus on the TQM system when their organisation have successfully implemented TQM and changes in perception towards quality start to take effect (Harrington, 1987). Therefore, it is timely to conduct a study in this
organisation with the purpose of determining how employees perceive TQM currently. Identifying the perception itself will not serve a big purpose as the factors that affect the perception is also an important factor to identify.

1.3 Research Objectives

The objective of this study consist of the general objective and the specific objective.

1.3.1 General Objective

The main purpose of this research is to identify employees’ perception towards TQM and factors that affect their perception.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

Specifically the objectives of this study are to:

1. identify selected demographic characteristics of respondents;
2. identify employees’ perception towards TQM;
3. determine the relationship between selected employees’ demographic characteristics such as education level and years of service and their perception towards TQM;
4. determine the relationship between employees’ knowledge on the basic TQM principles and their perception towards TQM;
5. determine the relationship between employees’ involvement in TQM activities and their perception towards TQM; and
6. determine the relationship between elements of organisational culture like leadership style, warmth and support in the organisation and reward, and recognition in the organisation and perception towards TQM.

1.4 Conceptual Framework

Based on the research objectives and the knowledge obtained through literature review, a conceptual framework for this research is as shown in Figure 1. The model shows employees’ perception towards Total Quality Management as the dependent variable and knowledge on the basic TQM principle, the level of employee involvement in Quality activities and organisation culture as the independent variables.

**Independent Variable**

- Knowledge On The Basic TQM Principles

- Level Of Involvement In Quality Activities

- Organisational Culture variables
  1. Leadership style
  2. Warmth and support
  3. Reward and recognition

**Dependent Variable**

Employees’ Perception Towards Total Quality Management

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework of this Study.
1.5 Hypotheses

1. There is no relationship between level of education of employees and their perception towards TQM.
2. There is no relationship between employees’ years of service and their perception towards TQM.
3. There is no relationship between employees’ knowledge on the basic TQM principles and their perception towards TQM.
4. There is no relationship between employees’ involvement in TQM activities and their perception towards TQM.
5. There is no relationship between the organisations’ leadership style and employees’ perception towards TQM.
6. There is no relationship between warmth and support in the organisation and employees’ perception towards TQM.
7. There is no relationship between reward and recognition in the organisation and employees’ perception towards TQM.

1.6 Significance of Study

This study will contribute to knowledge about employees’ perception towards quality in this organisation in particular and other organisations in general. Firstly, the findings from this study will be beneficial to the management of this organisation as they will know how employees’ perceive TQM. Employees’ perspective of quality should be similar to that of the management or else it could hamper efforts towards a quality management organisation.
Secondly, information on employees' perception towards TQM is vital for developing a suitable training program on quality for employees. Equipped with such information, management of this organisation can design training programs on TQM that are geared towards tackling deficiencies in employees' perception towards quality.

Lastly, this study is an addition to the literature on quality management. Numerous research have been conducted to examined the quality improvement process, the concept of quality and how it relates to the external and internal customers, the start up phase of the improvement process and the hiccups encountered since few research have used data collection to explain the distinctive perception of employees on quality.

1.7 Definition of Terms

The dependent variable in this study is perception towards TQM while knowledge on the basic TQM principle, the level of employee involvement in TQM activities and the organisational culture are the independent variables.

1.7.1 Employees' Perception Towards TQM

Employees' perception of TQM can be understood as employees impression based on his/her understanding of the management's action of creating and maintaining an organisation wide involvement in total satisfaction of all customers.
Employees' perception on TQM can be determined by scores on questions regarding their perception towards TQM.

1.7.2 Knowledge on the Basic TQM Principals

Knowledge on the basic principles of TQM is defined as the understanding of the basic TQM principles and it is determined by respondents' scores on questions regarding their level of knowledge on the basic TQM principles.

1.7.3 Level of Involvement in TQM Activities

Level of involvement is defined as intensity of participation in TQM activities and this is determined by respondents' scores on questions regarding their level of involvement in TQM activities.

1.7.4 Leadership Style

Leadership style is defined as the manner or way in which leaders lead subordinates in an organisation. This is determined by respondents respond to questions pertaining to leadership style.

1.7.5 Warmth and Support

Warmth and support refer to friendliness, encouragement, help and other positive behaviours that is portrayed by members in the organisation. This is determined by respondents respond to questions on warmth and support.
1.7.6 **Reward and Recognition**

Reward is defined as anything that is received in return for doing something good or right or working hard. Recognition is defined as an appreciation given for good performance or achievement. Reward and recognition is determined by respondents respond on questions regarding reward and recognition.

1.8 **Limitation of the Study**

Some of the limitations of this study are as follows:

1. The success of the study depends entirely on the cooperation of the respondents in giving full honesty of themselves.

2. Elements of organisational culture is focused only on leadership style, warmth and support in the organisation and reward and recognition given in the organisation.

3. This study only covers the clerical employees of this organisation.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter presents the review of related literature. Among the aspects covered in this chapter are the concept of TQM; organisational culture and TQM; training and TQM; involvement and TQM; and perception and TQM.

2.1 Concept of TQM

Numerous articles have been written on the area of quality in management. Inspite of plethora of articles on this subject, the definition of TQM remains very vague. According to Revenaugh (1994), “there is growing weight of evidence that TQM means all things to all people” (p.39). An insight into the definition of TQM is best approached by reflecting on the definition of quality. A number of descriptions of “quality” have been suggested by management gurus and writers, for example:

Fitness for use - Juran (1993)

Conformance to requirements - Crosby (1979)

Quality should be aimed at the need of customers, present and future - Deming (1982).

Customer satisfaction - Ishikawa (1985)
From these definitions, quality can therefore be understood as simply meeting the customer satisfaction. While TQM can be better understood by defining the terms that make up the phrase total quality management.

"Total" is meant by organisation wide involvement in continuous improvement. "Quality" is total satisfaction of customers, be they internal or external and "Management" is organisational leadership in creating and maintaining a TQM environment (Patel, 1993). Hence, TQM can be defined as the action of organisational leadership in continuously creating and maintaining an organisation wide involvement in total satisfaction of customers, be they internal and external (Oakland, 1993). Westbrook (1993) however defines TQM as an interrelationship between the organisation's culture; it's relationship with its customers, both external and internal; the use of organisational teams and cross functional teams; an emphasis on problem solving teams as just mentioned; and the use of measurement to evaluate systems and practices and to indicate the effectiveness of improvement efforts.

According to Schmidt and Finnigan (1993), there are five basic concepts for understanding TQM:

1. Organisations are made up of a complex system of customers and suppliers, with every individual executive, manager, and worker functioning as both a supplier and a customer.

2. Quality - meeting the customer's requirements - is the priority goal and is presumed to be the key to organisational survival and growth.
3. Continuous improvement is the guiding principle. This goes for the product or service produced and for the competence of employees on the job; TQM organisations are learning organisations and depend on their people becoming increasingly competent and creative.

4. Teams and groups are primary vehicles for planning and problem solving.

5. Developing relationships of openness and trust among members of the organisation at all levels is the key condition for success.

Oakland (1993) gave a further explanation that elaborates the first basic concept. It states that in all organisations there are a series of quality chains of customer and suppliers. It may be broken at any point by one person or one piece of equipment not meeting the requirements of the customer, internal or external. The concept of internal and external customers/suppliers forms the core of total quality.

Aspelin and Sunir (1994) forwarded their idea which explains the second basic concept put forth by Schmidt and Finnigan (1993). They believe that customer is the reason for a firm’s existence. Therefore, employees are reminded that customers should be provided with the same quality of service they would like to receive themselves.

On the third TQM concept delivered by Schmidt and Finnigan (1993), Aspelin Sunir (1994) commented that if an individual want his or her business to remain profitable and to grow, then give the customer the absolute best product or service he or she is capable of delivering. In short deliver to the customer the best value.