Algerian National Culture and TQM

A. Yahia-Berrouiguet

Abdelkrim Yahia-Berrouiguet
Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences
University of Tlemcen, Algeria

Abstract
The literature on total quality management confirmed that the national culture has an effect on total quality management implementation. The aim of this study is to compare the Algerian national culture and the TQM culture. The results indicated that not all the national culture dimensions are appropriate for TQM implementation in the Algerian context: the collectivism dimension is appropriate, the power distance and uncertainty avoidance dimensions are not appropriate.
Keywords: Total Quality Management, National Culture, Hofstede model, Algeria

Introduction

TQM is a managerial system widely implemented in the world, and also a cultural phenomenon. Many firms failed the introduction of TQM, because their managers focus on the technical or managerial aspects of this system and neglected the most important aspect, which is the cultural one

TQM implementation is a challenge, because it requires change in the manner that people within firm think and act (Sousa-Poza et al, 2001). The organizational culture change is affected by the national culture of the country, so the TQM introduction can be easy if the

national culture is appropriate and it can be a hard task if the national culture of the country is inappropriate.

Despite the number of publications on TQM, little studies has been carried out on national culture. There is a great need for research providing information about TQM culture and national culture.
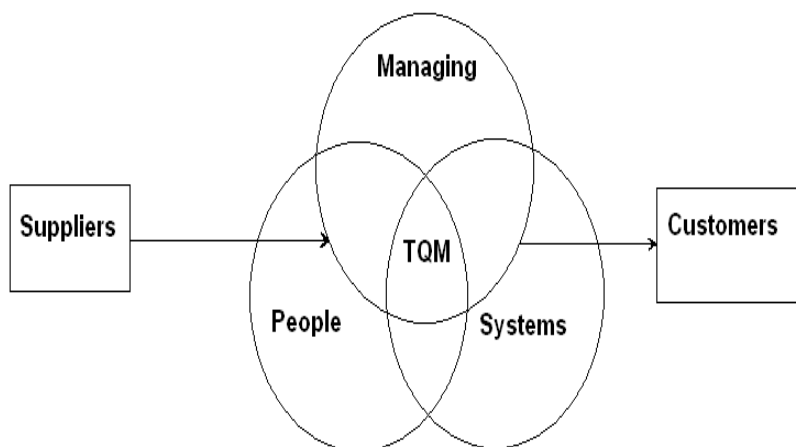
The national culture issue is not explored in the Algerian context. This study aims to compare the Algerian national culture and the TQM culture.

Total quality management

"Total quality management is the culture of an organization committed to customer satisfaction through continuous improvement. This culture varies both from one country to another and between different industries, but has certain essential principles which can be implemented to secure greater market share, increased profits and reduced cost". (Kanji and Yui, 1997).

Total quality management is about integrating the technical system with the social system in order to build a quality culture through the adoption of managerial processes which provide a focus on customers and employees needs (Figure no.1).

Figure no. 1: TQM components

Source: Pike and Barnes (1996). *TQM in action a practical approach to continuous performance improvement*, Chapmam & Hall

Lau and Anderson (1998) extracted the common elements of TQM (Table no.1)

Table no. 1: Major elements of TQM

Total	*Quality*	*Management*
- Require employee participation. - Everyone must develop a sense of quality ownership. - Involve every level and function of the company. - Apply systems thinking.	- Customer (internal and external) driven. - Emphasis on continuous improvement. - Technical issues: training for skills and knowledge. - Human issues: encourage innovation.	- Require commitment from top management. - Establish purposes and values for the company. - Leadership is critical. - Make appropriate change in organization culture.

Source: Lau and Anderson (1998), A three dimensional perspective of total quality management. *The International Journal of Quality & Reliability Management* 15(1): p. 85-98.

National culture

Hofstede (1991) defines national culture as the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes members of one society from another. Hofstede (1980) identified four factors in which culture of countries differ (Table no. 2) .The four factors are:

- Power distance.
- Collectivism-individualism.
- Masculinity-feminity.
- Uncertainty avoidance.

Table no. 2: National culture dimensions

Small power distance	*Large power distance*
- Hierarchy in organizations constitutes an inequality of roles, established for convenience. - Decentralization is popular. - Subordinates expect to be consulted. - The ideal boss is a resourceful democrat.	- Hierarchy in organizations reflects an existential inequality between higher-ups and lower-downs. - Centralization is popular. - Subordinates expect to be told what to do. - The ideal boss is a benevolent autocrat or good father.
Collectivist	*Individualist*
- Relationship between employer and employee is perceived in moral terms, like a family link. - Management is management of groups. - Relationship prevails over task.	- Relationship between employer and employee is a contract supposed to be based on mutual advantage. - Management is management of individuals. - Task prevails over relationship.
Feminine	*Masculine*
- Managers use intuition and strive for consensus. - Focus on equality, solidarity and quality of work life. - Resolution of conflicts by negotiations and compromises.	- Managers expected to be decisive and assertive. - Focus on equity, competition among colleagues and performance. - Resolution of conflicts by fighting them out.
Weak uncertainty avoidance	*Strong uncertainty avoidance*
- There should not be more rules than strictly necessary. - Tolerance of deviant ideas and behaviour. - Motivation by achievement.	- Emotional need for rules, even if these will never work. - Suppression of deviant ideas and behaviour. - Motivation by security.

Source: Largosen, S. (2002), Quality management in Europe: a cultural perspective. *The TQM Magazine* 14(5): p. 275-283.

The organizational culture change is affected by the national culture of the country, therefore the TQM introduction can be easy if the national culture is appropriate and it can be a hard task if the national culture of the country is inappropriate (Figure no. 2).

Figure no. 2: National culture and TQM

The national cultural dimensions that are appropriate for the TQM culture are low power distance, high collectivism and low uncertainty avoidance (Chin and Pun, 2002; Kumar and Sankaran, 2007; Largosen, 2002; Tata and Prasad, 1998; Saha and Hardie, 2005; Yen *et al*., 2002).

Algerian national culture

Through a study of survey data about the national culture of people in over 70 countries around the world, Hofstede (1980, 1991) produced culture charts that characterize people in different countries.

The Algerian national culture chart is not available in Hofstede works. The unique study on Algeria is the study of Mercure *et al* (1997). Results of this study indicated that the culture dimensions scores are:
- Power distance 5.36/10
- Collectivism 7.12/10
- Uncertainty avoidance 8.6/10

The Algerian national cultural dimensions are medium power distance, high collectivism and high uncertainty avoidance.

As concluded above, there are three cultural requirements for successful TQM implementation: TQM prefers low power distance, high collectivism and low uncertainty avoidance (Table no. 3). Therefore, the Algerian national culture dimensions are not all appropriate for TQM implementation in the Algerian context: the collectivism dimension is appropriate, the power distance and uncertainty avoidance dimensions are not appropriate.

Table no. 3: National culture and TQM culture

National culture dimension	TQM culture	Algerian culture
Power distance	Low	Medium
Collectivism	High	High
Uncertainty avoidance	Low	High

TQM implementation does not require a redesign of the country's national culture, rather it requires adherence to its principles and techniques (Juran, 1993). TQM has been applied successfully in culturally diverse national settings and the history of these applications suggest that over time, TQM takes on some of the host country's values, rather than attempting to change them (Ngowi, 2000). Dobbins (1995) suggested that companies must adapt the TQM process to the host country culture. In the Algerian cultural context, TQM implementation in organizations is not impossible, but it's difficult to install, because it requires a large amount of change.

Conclusion

This study compared Algerian national culture and TQM culture. The results indicated that not all the national culture dimensions are appropriate for TQM implementation in the Algerian context: the collectivism dimension is appropriate, the power distance and uncertainty avoidance dimensions are not appropriate.

In the Algerian cultural context, TQM implementation in organizations is not impossible, but it's difficult to install, because it requires a large amount of change.

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