

Quality and Social Responsibility

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Abstract

Quality and social responsibility (SR) are perceived as different activities , both working to sustain economic development in a competitive environment. The satisfaction for customer and employees represent the main goal for both of them. Known at the beginning as corporate social responsibility (CSR), the concept is actually accepted more than SR, after the appearance of ISO 26000 international standard. The aim of this paper is to highlight that quality and social responsibility are in a strong relationship and how quality management can be a foundation and engine for developing SR within organizations.

Key words: quality, social, responsibility, development

J.E.L. classification: L15, L23, M20, O13, O44.

1. Introduction

The social responsibility of the company is " a fairly broad concept and has become a specialists has attributed to social responsibility of the company many approaches".

For example, the European Commission defined the social responsibility of companies as being "a concept by which companies integrate social and environmental concerns into their business activities and interactions with other stakeholders on a voluntary basis." ([www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/.../com\(2001\)366_en.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/.../com(2001)366_en.pdf))

The concept of " social responsibility" of the company appeared in the specialty literature since the early 50's and has developed over time. If initially "social responsibility" (SR) focused at the company 's expectations from the business environment and the company' s ethical obligations towards this one, in the 1970s, "the direction of scientific research shifted to capacity companies to respond to the requirements of the environment in which they operate and later, in 1980-1990, stakeholder theory made an important contribution to the corporate social responsibility (CSR) speech". Then, in 2000, Kotler made the transition from long-term welfare consumer to the welfare of society. (Stancu and all, 2007)

If so far companies have developed accountability programs social organizations have been multinational companies (CSR), that come with a strong organizational culture, more and more small companies adopted a responsible attitude (SR).

Looking at the different definitions of social responsibility of the company, one can observe a common element, namely that this activity is voluntary, over the legislative duties imposed by each country. As during time competition increased within the business environment, companies became more aware of the social and economic potential that SR activities have in the process of image consolidation and reputation. In this respect, quality and social responsibility are in a strong relationship. The growing social concerns have led organizations to think evolutionarily in quality. SR and quality share an interest in several common issues a have a strong link in core values and

concepts. Comparatively, SR is a young field, while quality is a three times older concept. Today, both are part of the business and widely understood.

2. The social responsibility in the present

At the beginning, corporate social responsibility (CSR) produced a significant change in the business management behavior. The old classical approach of companies emphasized their economic performance. The current socio-economic and ecological approach emphasizes the importance that must be attached to the quality of life, the preservation of natural resources, the interests of the community and society. It is important to understand that social responsibility offers opportunities without imposing rules or obligations.

Thus, "the goal of corporate social responsibility is to define, understand and improve the balance between entrepreneurship and ethical practices". Managers must profitably drive business activities, but they must be responsible for the impact of these activities. (Toma et al, 2006)

In fact, is "a concept that offers to the companies the opportunity to treat the environmental and social problems as a part of them business, being a sustainable development manner, which enable companies to respond in a positive way to the present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs .The approach turn the environmental protection that was considered a costs and vulnerabilities source for the companies, into a new competitiveness growth opportunity". (Sima and all, 2007)

Regarding the international framework created to include" the concept of social responsibility in the life of companies, Social Accountability International (SAI) issued the SA8000:2008 (Social Accountability 8000), with the fundamental goal of improving working conditions around the world". This intention has directed organizations to "improve and demonstrate Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in terms of core human rights at work". In June 2014 SAI published the fourth edition of the SA8000 - SA8000 International Standard: 2014 Social Responsibility 8000. According to this this standard, any organization can demonstrate commitment to socially responsible business practices by implementing and certifying a social responsibility management system. (<http://www.srac.ro/ro/responsabilitate-sociala-sa8000>)

The ISO 26000 Social Responsibility Standard was developed, after 10 years of study and a broad international , innovative process by a working group of about 500 experts. It opened the gate for a new category of standards, based on the participative and consensual approach, in order to draw up "recommendations" in the form of "Guidelines" and not the requirement of compliance with a certain management system, such as the "certifications" proposed by other standards. (<http://www.societal.ro/ro/comunitate/articole/standardul-de-responsabilitate-sociala-iso-26000-433.html>)

In the international standard ISO 26000, SR is shown as a complex approach that at the same way like quality, must be integrated into the business management of each company.

(http://corporateresponsibilityassociation.org/files/MP_WP_ISO26000_Final_020811_0.pdf)

The mentioned standard offers an explanation concerning the socially responsible organization and the reason to adopt this way of doing business. In this respect, quality professionals can help in implementing a corporate strategy looking for both social aspects and benefits.

There are several advantages of applying a social responsibility attitude promoted by the standard, among which being : better decision; improved risk management; public trust; reputation; competitiveness; good stakeholder relationships; improved innovation; employee safety and loyalty; improved employee recruitment & retention ; increased efficiency of resource utilization; reliability of transactions; reduced corruption, etc.

(http://corporateresponsibilityassociation.org/files/MP_WP_ISO26000_Final_020811_0.pdf)

ISO 26000 stipulate 7 principles to be applied in the organizational activities, as follows: accountability; transparency; ethical behavior; respect for stakeholder interests; respect for the rule of law; respect for international norms of behavior and respect for human rights. (<http://www.societal.ro/ro/comunitate/articole/standardul-de-responsabilitate-sociala-iso-26000-433.html>)

Even SR is not a new concept , it represents a relatively recent acquisition of the Romanian economic environment. Practices of motivating responsibility entered at the beginning within the

Romanian corporate environment as an import of values and principles in the European context, but now local companies began to perform SR procedures and implement them in the local organizational culture. One of the main problems that Romanian firms raise is the link between SR actions, involving some costs and the level of profitability.

(Obad and all, 2011)

Following the interpretation of the studies on "the involvement of Romanian companies in social responsibility activities, it can be noticed that the field of corporate social responsibility in Romania is yet an area without maturity, with few well-defined results and objectives". (centras.tree.ro/assets/upload/File/Raport%20RSC.doc)

3. Quality and social responsibility-the relationship

Quality , in a close association with social responsibility, is a concept widely applied, targeting both products and / or services and also the environment, life in general.(Toma and all, 2006)

The consumer, the stakeholders and their satisfaction are the main preoccupation for both total quality and CSR. Even industry used quality tools for a long time in order to ensure lean operations, reduce waste, and improve efficiency, they have not been yet really recognized in the social responsibility space. (https://www.bsr.org/reports/BSR_ASQ_CSR_and_Quality.final.pdf)

This is the reason that ISO 26000 encourages voluntary commitment to SR and provide definition, guidance, and methods of evaluating SR activities. In this context, it is expected that ISO 26000 will attract those interested in other ISO standard series , such as ISO 9000.For example, in USA, the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, the highest level for organizational performance excellence, at the present moment incorporates "societal responsibilities" for assessing strategic challenges, governance, and leadership.

(https://www.bsr.org/reports/BSR_ASQ_CSR_and_Quality.final.pdf)

The common elements between CSR and quality can be observed in the majority of core values (visible costs, empowerment, reactivity, internal alignment) and issues (waste reduction, worker empowerment, safety, accountability, transparency, etc.)

In addition there are several areas where SR could sustain quality, as :

- reducing "quality problems" due to the relationship of stakeholders and alignment;
- the link to perceived and designed hypostasis of quality.

ASQ CEO Paul Borawski stipulated that : "Quality is the methodology to advance the application of social responsibility." (Sitnikov and all, 2015)

"After the acceptance and the widespread application of the ISO 9000 quality series, the standards authority issued standards for other areas including the standard for CSR (ISO 26000) , the latest set of standards introduced by ISO". (<http://www.corporatecitizen.at>.)

The Total Quality Management (TQM) and SR share philosophical root and values that they promote. There are models (e.g. the European Quality Award and European Foundation for Quality Management) that incorporate elements of SR and TQM. Otherwise, both quality and social responsibility are involved in the firm`s strategies. (Noguero and all, 2011)

The standards concerning the social responsibility issues are not very easy to be considered as advantage in comparison to quality and environment standards. It is not easy to translate the benefits of SR in money because the returns of the definite costs associated with SR initiatives are difficult to be delimited.

The quality management is at present more and more close to Social Responsibility, the models of quality management based on the principles of quality becoming the key for an effective implementation of CSR/SR in organizations.

Consequently, it become necessary to investigate the extent to which quality management provide frameworks and guidelines in order to implement SR , with impact also in the management of the organization. (Sitnikov and all, 2015)

4. Conclusions

The relationship between quality, environment, health and safety and social responsibility is increasingly a concern of everyone. 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.

Quality remains a key issue in today's business, being in close association with corporate social responsibility.

In this environmental context, companies that provide good quality products and services and at the same time are involved in CSR activities have a competitive advantage. CSR touch numerous approaches concerning profits, business performance and activities based on the quality of management, having deep roots in sustainable development, protection of the environment, social justness and economic growth.

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