

THE IMPORTANCE OF IDENTIFYING HUMAN RESOURCE'S POTENTIAL AND EVALUATING ITS PERFORMANCES WHEN IMPLEMENTING TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Case study on the performance evaluation system of the teaching staff in "Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu

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Abstract: *Quality is a concept that has various meanings, but we can agree that at the basis of achieving quality from all the points of view, is the quality of the human resources. Implementing a quality management system provides the source of obtaining an organization's performance. Any modern organization must know how to use all the tools necessary to identify and evaluate human resources performance.*

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1. Introduction

Human resources are the organization. People are the vital resource of an organization; they are the ones that ensure the survival, development and competitive advantage in the current competitive environment. The complex characteristics of human resource dynamics and their different approaches led to the separation of human resource management from the overall management of the company, becoming an independent discipline that

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requires a holistic, interdisciplinary approach of the staff within an organization.

Addressed as a system, the organization has several defining features, and the first one is that of being a complex system as it encompasses human, material, financial and informational resources. Also, the organization is a socio-economic system; employees generate value, so their performance is very important for the organization's effectiveness.

Technological developments in recent years allow "workers to perform interconnected work through computer infrastructure", creating a community that Holsapple and Whinston define as knowledge-based organization. Peter Drucker considers the knowledge-based company as the organizational model of the XXIst century and draws its main characteristics: composition dominated by professionals, small number of intermediate levels of hierarchical leadership and coordination ensured by means of non-authoritative style (standards, procedures, rules of cooperation and so on).

Knowledge becomes increasingly valuable as it represents the content of the buying process, sales and production, as identified by Thomas Stewart who observed the impressive amounts allocated by companies for research and development and information in general. Value is created mainly by employees. The ideas, knowledge and information possessed by them are the main assets of a company. Examples in this regard are companies like Microsoft and General Motors whose book value is estimated at less than 25% of their impressive market values.

Unlike information, knowledge that is in the possession of human capital generates the added value that makes the value of intangible assets significantly exceed the one of tangible assets.

The acknowledgement of the importance of a proper human resource management is imperative for any organization that aspires progress. The new type of human resource management, characteristic of knowledge-based organizations has several features that differ from traditional human resource management (Todoruț, A., Niculescu, G. & Chirtoc, I.):

- intense differentiation approach, as specialists in human resources management have to individually consider each human resource involved in the organization, its characteristics, motivations and expectations;

- direct involvement of the human resource specialist in the design of the career of every employee;
- manifestation of intense creativity in all human resource management processes in order to be able to develop appropriate solutions to the many new elements which are involved in the effective and efficient “use” of human resources;
- designing and conducting human resource activities that are consistent with the constantly changing environment.

In modern organizations, the concept of quality refers to the achievement of all management objectives, and the success of this management system depends on the involvement of top management and on the continuous training and education of the staff. This is the reason why it is particularly important for any company to lay down a quality policy in regard to human resources management.

2. Total quality in human resources management

Total quality management (TQM) represents for an organization a policy through which it tends to permanently mobilize all of its members in order to improve the quality of the products and services it produces, and the quality of the operations and objectives of the organization, in relation to its environment (Oprean, C. & Țîțu, M., 2008).

According to Attila Oess, TQM must be approached as a two component system, consisting of a technical and a social subsystem, each detailed in the table below:

SOCIAL SUBSYSTEM	TEHNICAL SUBSYSTEM
❖ People create quality: human resources are the focus of all processes in the organization;	➤ TQM principles;
❖ Participative management leadership;	➤ Quality policy;
❖ Continuous improvement;	➤ Problem solving techniques;
❖ The employee becomes a participant in the process;	➤ Responsibilities defined and documented;
❖ Team work and personal accountability for results;	➤ Quality System according to international standards;
❖ Open work environment, partnerships based on trust.	➤ Communication and training; integration of partners in the organization's quality system.

Figure no. 1. TQM approach

Inter-relationships are established between the two subsystems and the human factor plays a central role. Total quality management cannot be implemented without the involvement of informed human resources which influence management systems at all levels. Human resources issues are the central philosophy of quality because their quality is often the modern organization's competitive advantage. The American Society for Quality Control (ASQC) defines human resource quality as "a systemic and systematic approach of human resources for achieving organizational excellence."

Due to recent social and economic changes, the HR function becomes a strategic partner in terms of the role it has in an organization. Human resources activities are important for the smooth running of the whole organization, which is why the planning and understanding of each element of this mechanism is vital.

The relationship of inter-dependence between the quality of the human resource management and total quality is shown below:



Figure no. 2. The relationship between the quality of the HRM and TQ, after Niculescu and Burlaud

The HR function has a double purpose: to ensure and coordinate human resources and to integrate social objectives into general objectives through correlation of the human needs with the economic ones. One of the

most interesting structures of personnel management activities is provided by Lakhdar Sekiou. He separates all the activities into three categories, as shown below:

Main activities	Mobilizing activities	Activities that ensure well-being
❖ Workforce planning	☉ Leadership, motivation	✓ Fairness management
❖ Job analysis	☉ Communication	✓ Stress management
❖ Job evaluation	☉ Work culture	✓ Time management
❖ Compensation management	☉ Team work	✓ Discipline
❖ Career management	☉ Health and Safety Management	
❖ Social benefits		
❖ Recruitment		
❖ Selection		
❖ Performance evaluation		
❖ Training		

Figure no. 3. Activities of personnel management, after Lakhdar Sekiou

3. Performance evaluation system of the academic personnel in "Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu

As seen in the structure of the personnel management activities, performance evaluation is one of the main aspects of HRM. Performance evaluation is a core activity, conducted to determine the degree to which an organization's employees carry out their duties and their responsibilities, both in terms of what they do, and also the way of carrying out the objectives.

Efficient performance evaluation requires detachment from the habit of assessing based on criteria such as age, seniority and automatism. In successful organizations, performance is evaluated based on the fulfillment of specific objectives, set in advance. Each organization must establish their own forms of assessment, tailored exactly to the company's profile. An organization that has implemented a quality management system will use strict procedures made to regulate and monitor the whole process. This is the case of "Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu.

The creation of the European Higher Education Area meant the start of globalization of higher education and this means that every Romanian

university must gradually develop their own quality management system (QMS). Quality assurance in higher education is a priority issue on the agenda of cooperation between Member States of the European Union so European universities need to adjust the structure and content of the educational offer and the standards, criteria and procedures for evaluating their performance.

"Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu (ULBS) is a state institution of higher education that offers bachelor, master, doctoral and postdoctoral studies in all fields of human knowledge, compassed in nine faculties. ULBS is among the best universities in the country according to the 2011 rankings conducted by experts from the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS), the National Research Council and specialists within an international association, the European University Association.

"Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu took the first step towards complying with the EU requirements in 2005, by adopting and implementing the quality management system. The given quality management system satisfies the standards and methodologies of ARACIS and matches the features and objectives of the institution. Quality management has played a central role in the institutional development of ULBS and this role should not be underestimated or, worse, confused just with appropriate credentials. Implementation of quality management systems in universities involves the following activities:

- Establishing and prioritizing actions for the implementation of the objectives;
- Management's commitment to quality assurance system;
- Establishing quality structures and responsibilities at all levels;
- Developing a set of internal rules and procedures clear and easy to apply and control;
- Establishing an effective system of evaluation for teachers, taking into account the qualitative aspects of their performance, and determining the most appropriate ways to motivate them in applying quality assurance system;
- Ensuring communication at all hierarchical levels;
- Internal quality audits as a tool for quality management;
- Develop the quality assurance manual.

Quality performance at the institutional level of ULBS is the effect of the deployment of specific modern concepts, strategic management and quality management.

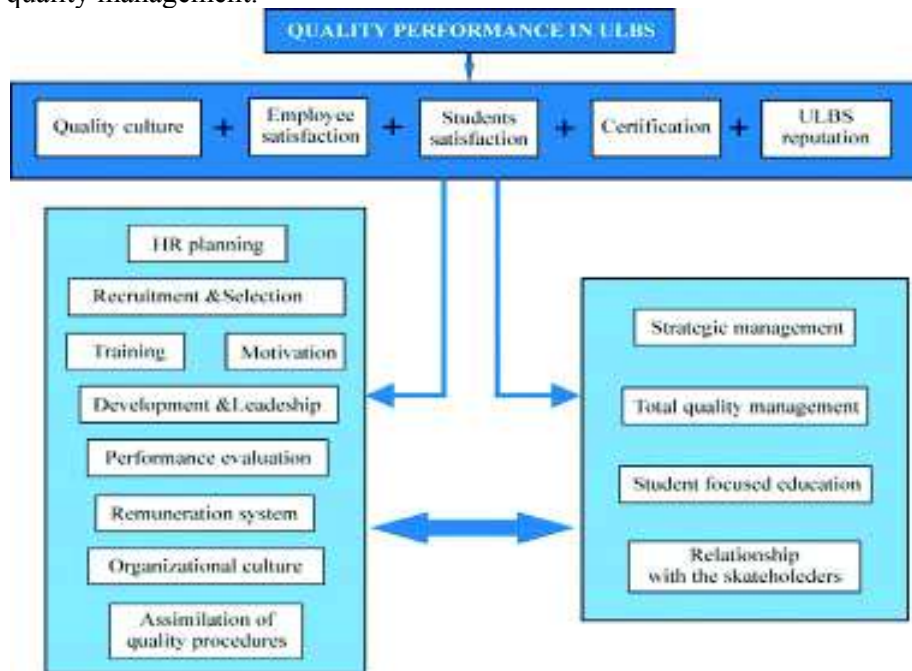


Figure no. 4. Quality performance in ULBS

Successful implementation of these concepts is subject to understanding and assimilating their principles by all the staff of the educational institution. This can be stimulated by developing an organizational culture strongly influenced by the quality policy, well-organized processes in the human resources department and of course, by a more efficient communication. All these factors lead to the creation of a high level of satisfaction of the employed human resources which is reflected also in student satisfaction and of all the stakeholders. The fruits of these efforts are reviewed by the authorized organizations in order to certify the educational process. Certification is a business card for the university, in this case, giving a very good recommendation.

For controlling and improving the university's processes, the quality management system should be a documented system. In ULBS, QMS

documentation includes the quality manual, operating procedures, work instructions, records and other supporting documents. University community members are required to participate in all activities promoting quality culture, in line with the mission and values of the high education institution („Lucian Blaga” University of Sibiu Charter, 2006-2012). To this end, the university outlined the following structures:

University level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Quality Assurance Department ☞ Commission for evaluation and quality assurance
Faculty level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Subcommittee on evaluation and quality assurance

The fulfillment of one of the basic characteristics of the total quality system, continuous improvement, depends on developing a quality monitoring system based on assessment procedures. The evaluation of the university's teaching staff has an important role, being a central landmark in terms of its performance. Currently, the evaluation takes place annually and it is composed of three parts: management's assessment, peer review and evaluation made by the students. In order to ensure the smooth running of the process, the Quality Assurance Department developed operational procedures for each assessment. The composition of these procedures provides a clear picture of the goal on each stage of the evaluation process, the responsibilities of those involved in the process and the purpose of it.

The operational procedures are documents of the quality system and their preparation must therefore follow the principles of quality. In order to be relevant, operational procedures that describe in detail the evaluation process should be based on well-established criteria and performance indicators. Developing criteria for performance evaluation must be done carefully because the relevance of each performance indicator must be set so that in the end they give a fair assessment. The evaluation criteria used by universities should be divided into five major categories, according to the five main dimensions of the work of a teacher:

- ☞ Development of educational materials;
- ☞ Research activity;
- ☞ National and international recognition;
- ☞ Work with students;
- ☞ Activities in the educational institution.

The five main categories of criteria must be disseminated in specific performance indicators, easily quantifiable, reflecting:

- the achievements of a professor in a certain period of time;
- strengths and weaknesses of the academic endeavor;
- contribution to achieving university's objectives;
- orientation towards performance;
- excellence in teaching and research.

Based on performance criteria, a professor in a certain department accumulates a total number of points, corresponding to his national and international performance. This distinction is necessary in order to appreciate the efforts of academics who specialize, publish or hold lectures outside our country. Selecting criteria and then assigning points is a very difficult task and there is no generally valid "recipe". Assessment by management has a greater degree of reliability when performance indicators are adjusted depending on the nature of each faculty from each university.

The evaluation process is complex and sometimes difficult to accept by some employees, when associated with an excessive control which can put pressure (not always constructive) on the evaluated staff. For this reason, an important role is played by the organizational culture. If a company has a quality based culture, people understand better the process and even get to appreciate it because they perceive it as a source of recognition of their performance. From this perspective, the evaluation has a significant role in terms of staff motivation, both from a financial perspective (variable pay based on the evaluation) and also from a psychological perspective, as people need feedback from management in order to feel useful.

Staff evaluation results should not be a gross assessment, they should reflect the skills and involvement of every employee. It is also essential the performance evaluation system to be fair and perceived as such by all employees. This situation can be achieved through transparency of the entire evaluation system and a uniform communication which facilitates the understanding of the assessment criteria. These criteria must be described in detail precisely because the evaluation provides support information for decisions like rewards, promotion and training.

4. Conclusions

Human resources are the only within an organization that are able to increase their value over time, unlike all other resources of the company, which get physically and morally worn out. For this reason, a full

understanding of the role and characteristics of human resources within the organization is vital to the theories and especially for the practices in the field of human resources management.

In any organization, the human resource is the most important component, but when talking about people involved in providing educational services, this aspect is vital. The teaching profession is considered one of the most noble. The professors are those who have the mission to form young generations and thus have a substantial involvement in shaping the future of society. Considering this, raising the professional level of a university's personnel should be an important goal of its management. Therefore, the evaluation of the academic staff should be a rigorous one, expressed through specific quality documentation. In nowadays society, the companies most likely to survive are those that know how to translate the fundamentals of total quality management into reality.

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