

EVALUATION OF THE UNIVERSAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM INFLUENCE ON THE PRODUCTION PROCESS OF SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES IN LEBANON

The state of affairs in the field of quality management in Lebanese small and medium-sized enterprises can not be defined as satisfactory. The products of national companies are less competitive on the world market namely in terms of quality. Taking this into account, the problem of developing and implementing a system of universal quality management becomes especially important. Issues related to the competitive status of enterprises in the context of globalization are particularly relevant and useful for the work of small and medium-sized enterprises in Lebanon today. One of the most important factors (or risks) of competition is quality (in a multifaceted meaning). A special feature of the universal quality management system is that such a system can successfully identify, anticipate and respond primarily to internal risks with respect to quality. The scope and likelihood of internal risks occurrence relative to quality directly depends on the functioning of the management system and the economic activities of the enterprise. External risks, such as quality risks, are caused by reasons which the enterprise has no direct influence on.

The purpose of the study was to identify the boundaries of the factors that determine the effectiveness of the universal quality management system in Lebanese SMEs. The interview was chosen as the form of the study, because it allowed to cover a wide range of economic entities and helped to establish the facts of management and quality control on the part of top management (managers of enterprises and their employees).

The study showed that SMEs provide opportunities for all age groups, despite the fact that it is mainly common among middle-aged males. Among the factors influencing the growth of SMEs are mass destruction of property, migration of the rural population and the search for activities that can bring direct and quick profits.

The research demonstrated that the majority of 41.6% of respondents were holders of higher education, followed by 20.8% with secondary special education and 20.8% with high-school education and lower. Only 8.8% had a master's degree and higher. Although all levels of academic qualifications appear to be cross-sectoral, this is mainly due to the availability of scholarships. The results confirm previous reports that SMEs create opportunities for investment, training, skills development and generate tax revenues for governments.

Regarding the organizational culture of the SMEs in Lebanon, the most typical feature identified is the extent to which senior management acts as a mentor to facilitate the work and coordination of the organization (with an average value of $3.30 \pm SD = 1.283$). This was followed by the degree to which the achievement of the goal is rewarded, and the extent to which the company focuses on production and determines success based on efficient operations and associated low costs (averaging $3.17 \pm SD = 1.300$ and $3.06 \pm SD = 1.384$ respectively).

This study explicates that two-way communication at all levels is the most important aspect of communication (with an average value of $2.52 \pm SD = 1.267$). It is well-known that organizations rely entirely on communication to exchange ideas, messages, signals and letters to ensure successful work. Other key communication strategies that have been used include quality schemes (with an average value of $2.50 \pm SD = 1.324$); and the extent to which members of the organization are trained in communication skills (with an average value of $2.48 \pm SD = 1.274$).

The research claims that the degree to which the multifunctional groups in the organization are prevalent is the most important (with an average of $3.56 \pm SD = 1.221$). Other key collaboration strategies include the degree of operation of several company quality control circles; and the extent to which the company implements proposals and actively involves all members in activities related to quality. These findings coincide with previous reports, which emphasize the overall improvement in the effectiveness of the organization, including active staff participation, communication development and capacity building, quality improvement and competitiveness. In terms of training and education, the degree to which the company supports training and employee training was most practical (with an average of $3.69 \pm SD = 1.253$); then goes the allocation of budgetary funds and resources for vocational training and training of workforce (with an average value of $3.38 \pm SD = 1.395$).

The results highlight that the degree to which the quality system for SMEs in Lebanon is continuously improved is the most developed (with an average value of $3.47 \pm SD = 1.365$). Such systems as ISO 9000 are used to ensure and monitor universal quality management of the company. All companies that seek to obtain competitive advantages in the world market must provide ISO certification, as it offers many advantages of quality management. However, TQM is no exception, as it is a strategic element that makes it easier for institutions to develop a new approach to quality; it motivates top management team to focus on achieving better performance and overall service delivery.