Soft Factor In the Implementation of Quality Management Program in Majlis Agama Islam Selangor (MAIS)

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Abstract

Many studies on the implementation of quality management programs were carried out by previous researchers. However, the study on the soft or human factors in the implementation of quality management programs is still poorly explored. Therefore, this article aims to analyze soft factors in the implementation of quality management programs at Selangor Islamic Religious Council or Majlis Agama Islam Selangor (MAIS). This study uses a qualitative method involving MAIS as a case study. Semi-structured interviews were used as a data collection method and supported by relevant documents collected from MAIS. A total of fifteen informants comprising top management and MAIS officers were interviewed to obtain in-depth information on the subjects studied. The findings reveal that there are six soft factors emerged in the implementation of quality management programs at MAIS namely leadership, training and development, teamwork, customer focus, Syara and rewards. This study demonstrates that soft factors has helped facilitate the implementation of quality management programs in MAIS. The results of this study can be used as guidance by managers in public or corporate organizations in their efforts to implement quality management programs effectively.

Keywords: Soft factor; implementation; quality management; majlis agama islam selangor; qualitative

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Quality management has been the main agenda for organizations in achieving the aim, vision and mission (Syed Azauddin, 2005). The implementation of total quality management in an organization is needed to be able to compete at the international level. (Mohamad Sani and Munirah Began, 11). Recently, awareness on the quality management has expanded and has been a common practice among many organizations. It has been proven when organizations worldwide as in Britain, United States, France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland and Sweden have strategically practice using total quality management to attract customers and achieving source of income (Oakland, 2009).

According to Sun et al. (2004), quality management is a working culture in organizations. Culture and passion in total quality management is shown through frequent improvement, by product and service offered using innovative scientific methodology. This statement was supported by Oakland (2004), which according to him total quality management is not only to increase product and service quality, but also the culture that can bring changes to produce an excellent organization. Apart from that, total quality management is a culture transformation that is equipped with latest factors of behavior and values, system and procedure, operational practice and organizational structure (Oakland, 2004).
The main aim of total quality management is to provide satisfaction to the customers. It can be done by producing output that can fulfill their needs and meet their expectation. Furthermore, every product or service output produced by organizations must be ensured to be free from defect or error. Defect or error can affect customer satisfaction. Therefore, an organization should ensure that output that is being produced should be right and accurate from the early stage as required by the customers (Rosliana, 2006).

Quality management system also gives many benefits to organizations. Among the benefits are facilitating work and job procedures, improving practice based on values, promoting friendly environment, improving organizational image and making organization as reference (Hassan Al-Banna, 2015). Study conducted by Hasliza et al. (2016), shows that there are three benefits in implementation of quality management which is achieving customer’s charter target, making an excellent organization and having systematic work management.

Foundation of total quality management practice can be divided into two main aspects which are soft and hard factor. Both factors are applied in supporting the efficiency in technical aspect that are always stressed on in the implementation of total quality management (Flyn et al., 1995). According to Lewis (2006a), soft factors in quality management is more focusing on the behavioral aspect and usually related to human aspects (human resources). These include training and education, loyalty, leadership, cooperation, customer satisfaction, human empowerment, relation with suppliers and professional bodies, communication, performance award and positive behaviors. On the other hand, hard factors have relationship with instruments and system as in benchmarking, quality system, innovation, performance evaluation, process control and product design or service.

Soft factor is always related to the management concept and quality principle like in leadership for empowering work culture in an organization (Vouzas & Psychogios, 2007; Thiagarajan et al., 2001). According to Thiagarajan et al., (2001), the element in soft factors in total quality management is actually related to the long term issues that have to be focused in accordingly. With that, soft factor have to be given serious consideration in the total quality management program to increase the efficiency in its implementation. Literature shows that there are few studies that mentioned briefly on the soft factors in total quality management. These studies found that there were several elements that can be related to soft factors in the implementation of total quality management. Among them are leadership (Kutlu & Kadaifci, 2014 and Nektarios, 2015), customer focus (Mosadeghrad, 2015 and Azimatun et al., 2012), teamwork (Melao & Gamboa, 2012), reward (Hassan Al-Banna et al., 2015) and, training and development (Mohamed Arif & Shahrazil, 2016).

Literature shows that soft factor is a critical aspect and studies focusing on its roles in quality management program should be implemented. Only the implementation of effective program can produce real benefits to an organization. By analysing and studying on the soft factor will give clear understanding to researchers, top management and quality management practitioners to understand how and why employees shows different reaction on quality programs. For example, by offering training, gratitude and rewards, employees will be more motivated which will in turn give support and cooperation in total quality management. On the other hand, lack of training and reward will cause employees to avoid quality program. Another important aspect is understanding the function of soft factor that can facilitate management to manage employees that shows discontent and against towards the implementation of total quality management in their organizations (Siti Arni et al., 2016).

Literature shows that studies on soft factors in total quality management implementation are still lacking especially in the context of Malaysia. Only Lau and Idris (2001) and Madi et al. (2008) have conducted empirical research on the soft factors. Meanwhile, other researchers have briefly discussed on the soft factors such as Yang (2006), Hoang et al. (2006), Sila and Ebrahimpour (2005) and Hafeez et al. (2006).

Above discussion shows that empirical studies on soft factor in quality program implementation are still small. Discussion also shows the negligence on soft factor can raise other issues in the implementation of quality program such as lack of support from the employees. Therefore, there is a need to conduct study on soft factor in the implementation of total quality management. This study objective is to investigate the soft factors in the implementation of total quality management in Selangor Islamic Religious Council or Majlis Agama Islam Selangor (MAIS). This study will contribute to the body of knowledge in the context of soft factors in total quality management in the management of religious body in Malaysia.

2.0 BACKGROUND OF SELANGOR ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS BOARD (MAIS)

MAIS is an entity incorporated according to section 5(1) enactment of Selangor state religious affair 2003. In its early inception, MAIS acted as advisor to His Highness the Sultan as allocated in section 37 administration enactment of the Islamic Law 1952 (enactment no.3, 1952). However, in the year 2003, the function of MAIS was repealed and replaced with section 6, administration enactment of Islam religion (Selangor state) 2003, where MAIS act as the main authority in state of Selangor after the Sultan.

MAIS has put the community agenda as the vision and mission to elevate the development the muslim society especially in Selangor, in line with the status achievement of the state of Selangor as a developed state in the year 2005. In materializing the big mission, the responsibilities of MAIS is perfected by thirteen proactive, planned and integrated sectors. As a state religious entity, MAIS has played a big role in ensuring the social and economic harmony of the community in Selangor. MAIS has provided few services in ensuring the economic well-being of the Selangor Muslim community. Among the initiatives is bairumal service that covers the aspect of waqaf, property wealth, hibah and rental services.

MAIS is also a body that has a role in fulfilling the social responsibilities to Muslim in Selangor. Among the social responsibility program conducted by MAIS is helping the mualaf within the vicinity of Selangor by providing shelter home to mualaf, giving monetary and education assistance and making surveillance on their welfare. MAIS has provided a total of RM 21.2 million for the education assistance and RM 4.2 million for training development program to mualaf (MAIS, 2015).
3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Soft Factor in Quality Management

Aspect of soft factors are closely related to human behaviors as in organization culture, leadership and top management commitment, human resources, customer and company shareholders (Ho et al., 2001; Prajogo and McDermott, 2005). In other words, the foundation of soft factors is based on human management, for example the roles of top management on employee’s career development in an organizations (Rahman, 2001; Rahman 2004). Several academics has identified that soft factors have positive influence on the increment of quality and performance of organizations (Lau and Idris, 2001; Madi et al., 2008; Rahman and Bullock, 2005; Mora et al. 2013; Psmas et al., 2014; David & Bishnu, 2009; Lewis et al., 2006a; Lewis et al., 2006b).

Soft factor is essential to any organizations because it help employees to understand the work culture in organizations. Besides that, soft factors like teamwork, education and training, top management commitment, continuous improvement, employee’s involvement and customer’s satisfaction bring positive impact on organization development, productivity, quality, competitiveness and ability development (Lau and Idris, 2001). Apart from that, quality award such as Malcolm Baldridge award, European quality award and Deming prize had also identified soft factors such as leadership, training and communication, teamwork and learning as main practices in the improvement of efficient quality program (Madi et al., 2008).

Study done by Madi et al. (2008) on electrical and electronic companies in Malaysia, shows that employee involvement was the most dominant soft factors in influencing the quality management and increment of quality in the companies. Psmas et al. (2014) also found that soft factors and hard factors applied in food industry have brought benefits in quality management, internally and externally. The study has shown that soft factors have a direct effect on the improvement of quality, staff benefits and customer satisfaction. Meanwhile, study conducted by Siti Arni et al. (2013) shows that soft factors have significant influence in the implementation of quality management system in Melaka Zakat Centre.

There is an indirect significant effect between soft and hard factors. It has been proven by Corredor and Coni (2010) where it was found that implementation of soft factors in technical aspect in organizations can give positive effects. Among the effects are increasing sales, profit in marketing and also having positive effect on firm business and stock exchange values. Furthermore, study by David and Bishnu (2009) on the quality management implemented by small and medium enterprises in Australia has found that overall performance of quality management in small enterprises were better. This is due to the availability of soft factor in quality management. Soft factors such as employees training, skills improvement, employees and customers involvements has become the main factors in maintaining customer satisfaction and companies’ competitiveness.

3.2 Element of Soft Factor in Quality Management

3.2.1 Top Management Leadership

Top management should play the roles and responsibilities in creating one culture, flow of thought, feelings and positive work method in an organization so that it can give a proper and clear understanding on quality management towards employees (Mumtaz et al., 2010). Zahrah et al., (2009) on the other hand viewed that to succeed in the challenging environment; the leaders should focus on the important issues regarding quality and competitive cost. Accordingly, leaders should give commitment on the organization excellence and always open minded towards criticism, failures and suggestions. Apart from that, leaders should shows commitment in informing employees on the importance of quality management and its functions, by setting up policies and quality objectives.

Study by Kutlu and Kadasıcı (2014) found that leadership is one of the important factors in succeeding quality program implementation. While Mosadegh had (2015) found that leadership is the main factor that contributes to the success of health institutions in Iran. Total quality management has shown to be fruitful when there is commitment and management involvement in organizations. Total quality management program can improve the product quality and increase the service effectiveness, which in turn will increase customer satisfaction when the management are involve totally in the organization. Leadership support on quality management activities will produce a conducive environment, competitiveness and continuous improvement (Nicholas et al., 2014). This can be proved from the study conducted by Nektarios (2015), where top management involvements has given a huge impact on the quality development in organization at various sector and also able to increase financial and profit performance. Top management issues in quality management have been studied by previous researchers, but the issue is seen from a success factor perspective. Past studies do not examine top management leadership from a soft factor perspective.

3.2.2 Syura

Syura is an Arabic word which exactly means consultation. To understand the exact meaning of Syura, it is essential to know about Shara, Yusharu and Mushawarah which means to show thing (Mohd Johdi, 2014). Besides that, Jabr (2009) explain that Shawara its means consult, Yusharu means he consult him or discuss with somebody to find out his opinion. While the Mushawarah means, a good counsel or consultations. Furthermore, Caterina Aieta (2014) said, Syura is the consultative principle present in Islam since the time of the prophet, authenticated by the Quran and Sunnah. Even if not systematically organized, originally the concept of Syura ranked high in the activities of the first for caliphs of the Rashideen caliphate and represented a key element in the decision making.

Sayed Othman al-Habashi (1998) and Abdullah (2002) suggested that Syura is not only a consultation, but a place where members can give opinions based on one expertise and also deciding on the best decision. Among the method in implementing Syura is by holding discussion and meeting. Therefore, the basic principle of Syura that must be available in an organization is that everyone making the decision must be in one voice by giving the opportunity for everyone to give ideas before the final decision is taken (Muhammad Mustakim et al. 2015).

The Muslim community that practice Syura or meetings done collaboratively should be based on al-Quran and the prophetic way of life in any activities and set their fate to Allah SWT so that the goals can be achieved. Apart from taking al-Quran and as-Sunnah as the