THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN THE MILITARY. A STEP FORWARD FOR DEFENSE RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

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„Democracy cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely. The real safeguard of democracy, therefore, is education." [1][ ]
Franklin D. Roosevelt

So far the implementation of total quality management as a means to improve the quality of the defense services the armed forces provide its stakeholders has proven a success in other military establishments. Hence, the current article aims at overviewing the basic principles underlying the TQM philosophy and the likely hindrances the latter's implementation may be confronted with should such an approach be taken in the Romanian military.

Key words: *TQM, defense resources management, leadership, organizational culture.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, it is obvious that all sectors of daily live are affected by the prolonged financial crisis. Hence, the gross domestic product (GDP) will probably continue to shrink all budgets, the defense ones included. Given this assumption, the armed forces will not only have to face the problem of lack of money, but work towards identifying new solutions of fulfilling their security and defense goals by maintaining if not upgrading quality standards. The solution advanced by this article is that military decision makers set their sights on a new system approach focused on personnel management and supported by the will to maximize good results. For that, adopting and implementing the civilian Total Quality Management (TQM) approach may be a way to eliminate/subdue cumbersome bureaucracy, make jobs appealing to workers by involving and convincing them about their importance for gaining institutional results and for organization development.

In this respect, I would like to ponder over my own experience as an employee of the defense system. Thus, when I chose the military career, it was Confucius' saying that guided me: "*Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life*". [2] I still love my job and I really believe that a solution to overcome new obstacles is to first identify an approach best suited for the situation and then counterattack with the best methods developed. Therefore, in this article I will argue

in favor of implementing TQM within the defense establishment as a solution to resort to when attempting to optimize the military system as a result of the constraints posed by the current financial cut downs and inherent personnel related issues: brain drain, demotivation, etc.

2. TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT DEFINED

Total Quality Management (TQM), is not only a management philosophy, but also a set of company practices that aim at involving the human and material resources of an organization in the most effective way to achieve the objectives of the organization [3].

In a TQM framework, all members of an organization participate in improving processes, products, services and the culture in which they work [4].

The ISO 8402:1994 defines Total Quality Management as a management approach centered on quality, based on the participation of an organization's people and aiming at long-term success. **Figure 1** shows the three prerequisite management elements that are part of the TQM model [5]: *teamwork, a good quality management system customer focused, and a Statistical Process Control (SPC).*

Fig.1. The Total Quality Management model [5].

For the **TQM** philosophy to be implemented in the armed forces, a long-term focus on improving the processes, which are already in place, is needed. To achieve that,

honing the ability to find out the needed improvements and the ways to implement them into standard procedures is mandatory. Then, ensuring that the improvements are usable, meet all applicable standards, and are made available to everyone involved in the process should be the next step.

The benefits of TQM in the military are that, *improved quality ultimately results in decreased costs and increased productivity*. Thus, a qualitative focus is to move towards few or no equipment failures or limitations, and thus contribute to improving the efficiency of future operations. As a result, mistakes are reduced and that contributes to a more efficient use of scarce resources and, hence, to monetary savings.

Figure 2 shows the TQM process approach, focused on quality chains which are linked at the very end to the customers' (*internal & external*) requests and expectations. Therefore, "*Customer orientation*" means focus on customers, in order to meet the needs and expectations of those upon whom the organization depends most. That is the driving force of the TQM philosophy. To be able to achieve customer orientation in an organization, the creation of a *quality culture* is needed and that must be orientated towards defining and supporting the TQM philosophy [6].

To transfer the TQM philosophy employed in civilian organizations into the defense establishments, the "*Customer*" term must be first and foremost clearly understood. For that, the meaning associated to the term both inside and outside an organization must and can be overlaid. Hence, while for civilian organizations their *internal customers* are their employees, within the armed forces the former are represented

by civil and military personnel, as well as by their families. *External customers* include those who provide or receive goods, services, or support from the organization. In addition, for the armed forces, their external customers are the civilians, the citizens to whom they have to prove trustworthy and provide overall protection against classical and asymmetric forms of aggression directed at or threatening them. Other assumed external customers for the armed forces are strategic and based on agreed treaties with alliance or coalition partners. Finally, yet importantly, we have to introduce in the same category all NGOs, host nations, health and care organizations, and such like, around the globe interacting with the military establishment.

Fig.2. The link between inputs and outputs as factors influencing the TQM processes.

3. TQM IMPLEMENTATION AND OUTCOMES

In order to analyze whether the implementation of TQM in the military organization is feasible or not, the basic elements of total quality management [7] must be overviewed in relation with the framework of the military organization. The conclusions that can be drawn cannot hold universal value, but they may be a starting point for debating over future courses of action. Therefore, the table below offers a comparative outlook on how the main elements pertaining to TQM are reflected in the two types of organizations under discussion in this article, with details and clarifications provided for the military establishment.

Table no. 1.
The basic elements of TQM

Civilian organization	*Military organization*
Policy, planning, & administration	Policy, planning, and administration
Product design and design change control	- Establish an official template for all papers (work products), valuable in all armed forces' branches, and only one authority in charge of/ordering upgrades; - Establish similar expected outputs for similar processes or similar actions, as well as the best process steps for achieving them based on their characteristics.
Control of purchased material	Increase the inputs (*data or information*), the briefness and clarity of orders or tasks issued, in order to avoid the "GIGO" (*garbage in garbage out)* effect.
Production quality control	Deep analysis for every kind of work outputs and overall effects obtained. Transformation of identified lessons to lessons learned, and continuous implementation of these into the military regulations, in order to gain new best results and decrements of errors or dysfunctions.
User contact and field performance	Maintain a live and continuous contact of the area of responsibility to all its interrelated aspects, and take quick decision and action to assure reaction readiness and proper balance of force.
Corrective action	Planning process review; Operations or actions, evaluation.
employee selection	Employee selection
Training and motivation.	Training and motivation.
Use of statistical process control as an invaluable TQM tool	

Regarding all of the above, the primary outcomes gained by implementing TQM are direct benefits, such as:
• Increased pride of workmanship among individual workers;
• Increased readiness;
• Improved sustainability caused by extended time between equipment failures;
• Greater mission survivability;
• Better justification for budgets because of more efficient operations;
• Streamlined maintenance and production processes;
• Continuous improvement of each process in the organization;
• Qualitative output obtained by combining quantitative methods and human resource management techniques.

In addition, worth reminding are the three characteristics necessary for TQM to succeed within all kinds of organizations identified and presented in Joseph Jablonski's book *Implementing TQM* [8]:

Participative management: *The intimate involvement of all members of a company in the management process, equivalent to managers setting policies and making key decisions only with the input and guidance of the subordinates that will have to implement and adhere to the directives. This technique improves upper management's control of operations, and is an important motivator for workers who begin to feel like they have control and ownership of the process in which they participate.*

Continuous process improvement. *This concept necessitates a long-term approach by managers and the willingness to invest in the present for benefits that manifest themselves in the future. It is a way by which workers and management develop an appreciation for, and confidence in, TQM over a period.*

The utilization of teamwork. *A multidisciplinary team approach helps workers to share knowledge, identify problems and opportunities, derive*

a comprehensive understanding of their role in the overall process, and align their work goals with those of the organization.

Moreover, Jablonski's approach to implementing total quality management is one of many that have been applied to achieve TQM, but it contains the key elements commonly associated with a common total quality management system [9].

Table no. 2.

Jablonsky's view on TQM implementation

Preparation	- during preparation, management decides whether or not to pursue a TQM program; - they undergo initial training, identify needs for outside consultants, develop a specific vision and goals, draft a corporate policy, commit the necessary resources, and communicate the goals throughout the organization
Planning	- a detailed plan of implementation is drafted (including budget and schedule). - the infrastructure that will support the program is established; - the resources necessary to begin the plan are earmarked and secured.
Assessment	- emphasizes a thorough self-assessment with input from customers / clients—of the qualities and characteristics of individuals in the company, as well as of the company as a whole.
Implementation	- the organization can already begin to determine its return on its investment in TQM. It is during this phase that support personnel, managers and the work force are trained; - training entails raising workers' awareness of exactly what TQM involves and how it can help them and the company; it also explains each worker's role in the program and explains what is expected of all the workers.
Diversification	- managers utilize their TQM experiences and successes to bring groups outside the organization (suppliers, distributors, and other companies have impact on the business' overall health) into the quality process; - diversification of activities includes training, rewarding, supporting, and partnering with groups that are embraced by the organization's TQM initiatives

4. BRAKES ON TQM IMPLEMENTATION IN THE MILITARY

Over time the main goals of every armed force have been to deter or to fight back a potential enemy, in order to protect the national territory or the area of responsibility (AOR) from aggression.

One representative cultural element of the armed forces is their ethics, based on well-known professional values such as: integrity, loyalty, and selfless service, strengthened by commitment, competence, candor, and courage. Those cultural elements are directing the behavioral aspects of armed forces' personnel not only in the military, but also in the civilian environment, or in their private life. In addition to its ethical principles and values, the armed forces' culture has developed and has been sustained through traditions, ceremonies, daily work rituals, leadership styles, and crises responses methods. Therefore, to implement the TQM principles into the military organization is to do a cultural change and that must start at the level of senior leadership. That aspect is the first hindrance face by the TQM implementation initiative.

Another brake on TQM implementation in the military is the fear of some commanders to lose control over the demands of the external environment. That rises from their will to rather control than empower or delegate certain responsibilities to subordinates, as a result of their fear to assume that risk. Therefore, in the absence of employee empowerment and commanders' risk taking attitude no innovation or continuous process improvement is possible. Implementing TQM is taking the opportunity to switch from daily routine to effective long term planning activities, from relative amounts of work to qualitative outputs gained in reasonable work time, and from the good results an organizational component yields in isolation to the satisfaction gained from well-done and system integrated teamwork. All this will furnish a new outcome, reflected by employees' increased trust in the capabilities of the military system, the feeling that everyone is an important part of it and that there is a communal struggle and togetherness that assure institutional thriving.

In support of TQM implementation, managers have to also identify how they are to elaborate:

– a good set of evaluation procedures,

– a faithful promotion and recognition system, based on analytical, transparent, methods and procedures aimed at undertaking the right measurement of human resources' quality and capabilities, which thus avoids the dangers of demotivation and early retirement;

– a good planning process, in order to avoid the priority of the "quick fix" (*a kind of senior leadership's reaction to crises*) over the long-term solution or improvement of process.

The implementation of a TQM system in the military aims at avoiding the time wasted and the confusions generated by the differences between what is executed and what is statutory in armed forces' doctrine, rules and regulations. It will also contribute to avoiding the possible gaps between what a leader says and what he does. The success

of TQM consists in reinforcing the TQM philosophy every day, both in peacetime or crisis situations. The implementation of TQM forces the managers to make up their minds and directs them towards finding the measures to face the challenges imposed by the nowadays rapidly shrinking armed forces, as well as by the uncertain domestic and world political, financial and economic situation and its future evolution. To put the TQM philosophy into practice in the military and to reap its outcomes is to eliminate a major cultural barrier, namely the existing level of bureaucracy. In this respect, the areas that are most prone to the negative effects of bureaucracy are services provision, research and development (R&D), the acquisition planning development, the budgeting part of the PPBES. In addition, the overabundance of regulations, guidance, rules, policies, and procedures that more often than not are stand alone, without any correlation among them, is another indicator of bureaucracy.

Another barrier to TQM implementation is raised by the hierarchical nature of the armed forces that sometimes triggers blind obedience and the tendency to offer awards and recognition in order to rather reward all this and not quality oriented accomplishments. Therefore, the TQM philosophy cannot be implemented in the armed forces without a long-term focus on improving the processes, which are already in place. The focus on short-term results and fixes which is the result of inherited cultural approaches actually prevents leaders from taking risks and developing an innovative attitude. More than that, the action oriented attitude,

(*just do something, but do not make a mistake*), a numerical goals focused culture *(no one cares how you accomplish your goals or what the long-term ramifications are for the organization)*, the "clean up" of deficiencies, and the "cleaning up" findings on inspections, may cover the gaps, but at an end will drain the system, making it too weak to have a good and quick reaction to prospective threats and vulnerabilities.

Another brake on taking a qualitative rather that quantitative approach to the management process in the military is many old guard officers' reluctance to have their opinions challenged or to be forced to agree with others' different opinions on a given matter. In this respect, disagreement is often perceived as a form of disrespect and therefore, the signal transmitted is that showing candor is not a virtue. As a result, when confronted with situations requiring constructive criticisms and opinions, subordinates have already learned that taking a step back and avoiding direct involvement pays off for their future. Consequently, by resorting to TQM principles, such cases could be eliminated since the model's philosophy emphasizes the importance of personal opinion, the expression of candor and commitment, and mutual involvement in problem solving.

The implementation of the TQM philosophy in the armed forces will help the military managers in charge of administering allocated resources to identify skilled personnel to be involved in a working framework where by efficient team struggle they will be able to develop programs within the armed forces, and maybe close them despite of some external causes such as lack of resources.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Implementing the TQM model into the armed forces means first and foremost a change of organization culture. For that, in order to remove barriers, to change will and beliefs, what is needed is not just some directives or guidelines, but good intentions and a lot of energy. Moreover, it will require a great deal of commitment and risk taking on behalf of the armed forces' senior leadership. The major aspects, underlying the acceptance of the TQM philosophy are a number of prerequisite changes to be done at the outset [10]:

–   changing senior leadership behavior, in order to match the new culture;

–   changing systems such as evaluation and assignment policies;

–   undertaking an internal audit on procedural mechanisms, such as armed forces' regulations, rules, and doctrines;

–   changing the attitude and behavior of the military and civilian personnel working in the military;

–   describing the new vision and ensuring people are able to understand it and foresee the future;

–   rewriting, or writing a consolidated armed forces leadership and management doctrine in order to incorporate and integrate in it the elements of TQM philosophy;

–   changing the performance evaluation system for officers, enlisted personnel, and civilians, taking into account the TQM focus on personnel commitment and involvement in assisting leadership development;

–   modifying criteria used in granting awards;

–   reevaluating the dependence on performance data, implementing and using the statistical measurement techniques provided by TQM tools and mechanisms.

If senior leadership becomes focused on embedding, and reinforcing cultural changes in the armed forces, they can remove the cultural barriers, already identified as blocking factors for TQM implementation.

In my opinion, long term planning is the key for a good management of defense resources. When crises are forcing managers to fulfill their institutions' goals, facing some human resources and financial limitations, the implementation of TQM philosophy should help them. It is a heavy work to be done at the beginning, but if the organization becomes stronger in time, the outputs are qualitative. Hence, if the products' quality will satisfy the stakeholders, the outcomes generated will make the organization stronger and will give its employees satisfaction, pride and trust. In the end, the human resources of an organization are the stepping stone and the primary contributor to the quality of the outputs and outcomes and to the success of the organization. If the outputs are not good enough, the managers should reevaluate the problems generating the lack of performance and/or scarce quality by resorting to the tools and mechanisms provided by the TQM model.

In conclusion, the aim of this paper was to overview an idea that already took shape in other armed forces and has proven successful so far. It was not the goal or scope

of this effort to refer to TQM as a universal solution for the military organization's welfare. However, pondering over it and weighing the benefits in light of the information provided is ultimately justifiable considering the volatile and uncertain world the military has to tackle nowadays. As a result, the following question that will hopefully be picked up by specialized researchers in the filed remains open: *"Is the implementation of TQM principles in the Romanian armed forces a valuable and feasible solution"?*.

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