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# ENDÜSTRİYEL BAŞARININ ANAHTARI: JAPONYA VE TOPLAM KALİTE YÖNETİMİ

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## ÖZET

Toplam Kalite Yönetimi, bir kuruluşun tüm süreçlerini kapsayarak kalite standartlarını yükseltmeyi amaçlayan bir yönetim yaklaşımıdır. Temel ilkeleri arasında müşteri odaklılık, toplam katılım, sürekli iyileştirme ve insan kaynakları yönetimi yer almaktadır. Bu yönetim, müşteri memnuniyeti, verimlilik, rekabet avantajı, çalışan motivasyonu gibi birçok avantaj sağlar. Toplam Kalite Yönetiminin uygulama süreci; liderlik ve ilgi, eğitim ve farkındalık, süreç değerlendirme, çalışanların katılımı ve performans ölçümünü içerir. Toplam Kalite Yönetimi, kuruluşların sürdürülebilir rekabet avantajı elde etmelerine yardımcı olur ve bu nedenle işletmeler için kritik bir stratejik unsurdur.

Toplam Kalite Yönetimi dünya çapında genel olarak kabul edilen ve sürekli gelişen bir yönetim tarzıdır ancak bunu ilk uygulayan ülkelerden biri de Japonya olmuştur. Toplam Kalite Yönetimi Japonya'da büyük ilerleme kaydetmiş ve bu ülkenin endüstriyel başarısının temel unsurlarından biri haline gelmiştir.

Bu makalede öncelikle işletmelerde uygulanan Toplam Kalite Yönetimi kavramı üzerinde durulacak, bu yönetim tarzının uygulanması ayrıntılı olarak anlatılacak, kuruluşlara sağladığı önemli avantajlar ve işletmeye etkileri vurgulanmaya çalışılacaktır. Ayrıca Japonya'nın neden Toplam Kalite Yönetimi ilkesini benimsediği ve bu yönetim yaklaşımının Japonya'ya sağladığı avantajlar incelenecektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Toplam Kalite Yönetimi, Kalite, Endüstriyel Başarı, Japonya.

## THE KEY TO INDUSTRIAL SUCCESS: JAPAN AND TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT

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### ABSTRACT

Total Quality Management is a management approach that aims to increase quality standards by covering all processes of an organization. Its basic principles include customer focus, total engagement, continuous improvement, and human resource management. This management provides many advantages such as customer satisfaction, efficiency, competitive advantage, and employee motivation. The implementation process of Total Quality Management includes leadership and interest, training and awareness, process evaluation, employee engagement, and performance measurement. Total Quality Management helps organizations achieve a sustainable competitive advantage and is therefore a critical strategic element for businesses.

Total Quality Management is a management style generally accepted worldwide and constantly evolving, but Japan was one of the first countries to implement it. Total Quality Management has made great progress in Japan and has become one of the key elements of this country's industrial success.

In this article, firstly, the concept of Total Quality Management applied in enterprises will be emphasized, the application of this management style will be explained in detail, and it will be tried to emphasize the important advantages it provides to organizations and its effects on business processes. In addition, why Japan has adopted the principle of Total Quality Management and the advantages of this management approach to Japan will be examined.

**Key Words:** Total Quality Management, Quality, Industrial Success, Japan.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Total Quality Management; It is a management model that aims to satisfy the customer in the long run, to succeed, to gain advantages for itself, its employees, and society, and is focused on quality and based on the participation of all employees (Akın, Çetin and Erol, 1998: 3). Total Quality Management (TQM) is a comprehensive quality management philosophy that includes all processes, departments, and employees of an organization. This approach does not only see quality as the control of a product or service but aims to make quality a culture at every level and process of the organization. TQM rigorously evaluates business processes and activities, sets standards, and continuously strives to ensure compliance with these standards (Aleo, 1992: 10).

The basic principle of Total Quality Management is customer focus. TQM aims for excellence in products and services to ensure customer satisfaction. In addition, the principle of continuous improvement provides a framework for the organization to continuously review and improve its processes and performance. Encouraging employee participation at all levels of these processes supports Total Quality Management to become a culture. The adoption of Total Quality Management should be supported by leaders. Leaders must spread this philosophy throughout the organization, mentoring their employees and demonstrating their commitment to quality. Employees should be able to continuously improve themselves by taking advantage of training and development opportunities. So it means more than just a quality control system for the success of an organization. This is a comprehensive approach that aims to ensure the sustainable success of the organization and customer satisfaction by making quality a culture (Ashmore, 1992: 58).

In the first part of the study, Total Quality Management (TQM) and the principles of this management are discussed. Then, the implementation steps of TQM are explained. In the third and fourth chapters, it is explained that Japan is an important role model in TQM, which is the key to industrial success, and the TQM practices of Japanese companies are mentioned. As a result, these practices are exemplary. These strategies of TQM and Japanese companies have enabled organizations to achieve sustainable success and competitive advantage. These management models have become a recipe for success for many industries, creating a culture that focuses on quality, embraces continuous improvement, and prioritizes customer satisfaction. By adopting these approaches, many organizations these days are raising their quality standards and trying to gain a sustainable competitive advantage.

## 2. TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND BASIC PRINCIPLES

The main purpose of Total Quality Management (TQM) is to ensure integrity by embracing all elements that affect not only product or service quality but also business processes, employee performance, and customer satisfaction. This management philosophy proposes that organizations integrate quality not only as a control process but also with the principles of continuous improvement and customer orientation (Barnett, 1991: 12-13).

The basic principles of TQM are the principles that shape the overall management approach of an organization and lead to the creation of a quality-oriented culture. These principles aim to increase customer satisfaction, efficiency, and competitive advantage by integrating quality into all processes of the organization, not just as a control process. The basic principles of Total Quality Management are listed as follows (Black and Porter, 1996):

- Total Quality Management adopts the principle of customer orientation at the highest level. This principle is based on customer satisfaction so that organizations can survive and gain a competitive advantage. Customer centricity includes the ability to not only meet customer expectations, but also understand, anticipate, and respond quickly to customer needs. It requires organizations to design, manufacture, and deliver their products and services according to customer requirements. Customer expectations should be constantly monitored, feedback should be taken into account, and continuous improvement efforts should be focused in light of this information. This principle also includes measuring and tracking customer satisfaction. Customer feedback, complaints, and requests help organizations evaluate the quality of products and services. Based on this feedback, organizations can continuously develop strategies to improve customer satisfaction and ensure customer loyalty (Easton, 1993).
- Continuous improvement, which is one of the basic principles of Total Quality Management (TQM), is a principle that aims to make an organization's business processes and product quality more effective and efficient by constantly reviewing them. This principle aims for organizations to focus on a dynamic development process instead of a static structure. Continuous improvement includes the "Plan-Do-Check" method, which is a cyclical process. First, organizations analyze the current situation and create a plan to achieve the set goals (Plan). Then, he implements this plan (Do) and checks the results obtained (Check). Based on the data obtained at this stage, deficiencies in the process and potential for improvement are identified. Finally, it implements these improvements. This ensures that this process is continuously improved (Imai at all., 1992).

- Employee participation, which is one of the basic principles of Total Quality Management (TQM), is a comprehensive approach that aims to actively involve all employees of the organization in quality processes and to benefit from their knowledge and experience. The principle of employee engagement aims to create a "culture of quality" within the organization. This ensures that not only senior managers but also all employees understand their commitment and responsibility to quality. According to TQM, quality is not just the responsibility of a particular department or specialist, but the primary goal of the entire organization. Employee engagement involves evaluating ideas, suggestions, and feedback from employees at different levels. This process enables employees to share their knowledge, identify errors in processes, and contribute to continuous improvement efforts. Since employees have expertise and experience in their fields, this participation affects the overall performance of the organization. In addition, the training and development of employees is also part of this principle. Employees learn how to contribute by quality standards and processes. This fosters continuous improvement at both the individual and institutional levels. The principle of employee engagement increases motivation, encourages teamwork, and allows employees to develop greater commitment to their work. The active participation of employees in the processes is an essential element in the successful implementation of TQM (Benton, 1991).
- The "systematic approach", which is one of the basic principles of Total Quality Management (TQM), emphasizes that quality management should take a holistic view of all processes of the organization. This principle aims to ensure that organizations achieve the quality targets they set by creating a traceable and regular system. The systematic approach aims to integrate processes within the organization with each other, increase coordination, and maximize efficiency. Thus, organizations can evaluate the performance of their processes, identify problems faster, and take corrective measures. The systematic approach usually involves the necessity of adopting and implementing a specific quality management system. For example, a specific framework, such as the ISO 9001 standard, guides organizations in organizing their processes in a specific order and ensuring that they comply with certain standards. These standards guide organizations in ensuring that a certain systematic structure is established and continuously improved (Imai at all, 1992).

Adopting a systematic approach enables organizations to manage their processes more effectively and achieve their goals more consistently. In addition, this principle contributes to



employees doing their jobs more efficiently by creating order and discipline within the organization. As a result, the systematic approach provides a measurable and traceable framework that enables the organization to achieve its quality goals (Benton, 1991).

### 3. IMPLEMENTATION STEPS OF TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT

The implementation steps of Total Quality Management (TQM) include a specific sequence and strategy for an organization to create a quality-oriented culture and adopt continuous improvement. These steps guide the successful implementation of TQM. It is possible to list the implementation steps of TQM as follows (Chang and Lin, 1991: 120):

- A leadership role is critical for the successful implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM). Leaders are responsible for ensuring that the organization achieves its quality goals, supporting a culture of quality, and leading continuous improvement. This step explains in detail the role of senior managers, focusing on the leadership principle that forms the basis of Total Quality Management. Leaders should play a leading role in the implementation of Total Quality Management and spread the culture of quality to all levels of the organization. First, leaders' commitments to quality should be unambiguous. This shows that quality is a core value of the organization and there is a strong commitment of leadership to support this value. This commitment of leaders gives confidence to employees, customers, and other stakeholders (Powell, 1995).
- In implementing Total Quality Management (TQM), continuous training and development of employees is of great importance. This step aims to continuously update and improve the knowledge and skills of employees for the successful establishment and maintenance of TQM. Training and development enable employees to understand and apply TQM principles and contribute to the organization's quality goals. These training and development programs are critical to adapting to the changing needs of the organization, developing the careers of employees, and creating a culture that aligns with quality standards. Continuous training and development of employees is a key strategy for the organization to maintain its competitive advantage.
- Customer feedback is critical for organizations in the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM). Customer feedback is a valuable source of information that allows customers to share their experiences, expectations, and satisfaction levels with products and services. This step focuses on how customer feedback is collected, analyzed, and

integrated into the organization's continuous improvement efforts. Customer feedback can be collected through a variety of channels, including customer surveys, complaint lines, social media platforms, and customer interviews. Collecting, classifying, and analyzing feedback is critical for the organization to strengthen its customer-centricity and support continuous improvement processes (Berry, Zeithaml, & Parasuraman, 1985).

#### 4. THE CASE OF JAPAN IN TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT

The origins of Total Quality Management (TQM) in Japan began when the country faced the challenges of the post-war period in the mid-1950s. During this period, Japan experienced a significant transformation to accelerate the economic development and restructuring processes. Trying to cope with the devastating effects of the war, Japan sought strategies to support economic development by focusing on quality and efficiency issues in this difficult process. At this point, the influence of American quality experts W. Edwards Deming and Joseph M. Juran was decisive. Deming and Juran introduced important principles and methodologies in quality management to post-war Japan. W. Edwards Deming offered Japanese companies a new perspective on quality with his principles such as continuous improvement and reduction of unintentional variations. These principles aimed to sustainably improve quality through continuous improvement of business processes and increasing efficiency (Eldred, 1991).

By adopting the teachings of Deming and Juran, Japanese leaders have integrated the principles of quality management into their business culture. This process, is aimed to emphasize continuous improvement with the principle of "Kaizen", to encourage the participation of employees to increase efficiency in business processes, and to make quality a culture rather than just a control mechanism. By adopting a quality-oriented approach, Japanese companies have gained a competitive advantage in the global market over time. The origins of Total Quality Management (TQM) represent an important milestone in Japan's journey from economic collapse to success. These origins still form the basis of Japanese business culture and understanding of quality today (Easton, 1993: 33).

## 5. TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT PRACTICES OF JAPANESE COMPANIES

It is obvious that the key to industrial success is Japan and Total Quality Management. From this point of view, the Total Quality Management practices of Japanese companies are based on the "Kaizen Philosophy", "Just in Time" and "5S Method".

### 5.1 Kaizen (Continuous Improvement)

Kaizen is a word of Japanese origin that comes from the combination of the words "change" (kai) and "improvement" (zen). Kaizen is a concept that refers to continuous improvement and refers to a philosophy in Japanese culture that encourages small and continuous improvements, especially in business processes (Zhang, 2000). Settling for the ordinary is the main enemy of Kaizen (Stephens, 1997).

Japanese companies have achieved great success with small changes in their business processes by adopting the Kaizen principle. This philosophy aims to constantly review the current situation, correct errors, and discover more effective methods. At the heart of Kaizen is the ability of employees to identify and solve problems they encounter during their daily work. This philosophy of continuous improvement has led to a culture that encourages employee engagement in Japanese companies. Employees have been involved in continuous improvement with an understanding of responsibility and contribution expected not only from senior management but also from personnel at all levels. This has allowed a wide range of ideas and suggestions to emerge to increase efficiency and quality in business processes. The basic principles of Kaizen; suggest continuous review, standardization, training, and continuous improvement culture, as well as Kaizen teams and cooperation (Tillery, Rutledge & Inman, 1993).

#### 5.1.1 On-Time Production (JUST-IN-TIME):

Just-In-Time (JIT) Manufacturing is a strategy adopted by Japanese companies in their production processes. This strategy aims to reduce inventory costs in production, optimize processes, and respond quickly and effectively to customer demands. Japanese companies have gained significant advantages thanks to the JIT system. JIT Manufacturing is based on the basic principles detailed below: (Easton, 1993)

**\*Minimum Stock Levels:** The JIT targets minimum stock levels. Instead of the high inventory costs common in traditional production systems, JIT only has enough inventory to

meet instant demand. This reduces warehouse costs and allows capital to be used more effectively.

**\*Supply Chain Integration:** JIT tightly integrates the supply chain and manufacturing processes. Constant communication and cooperation with suppliers make material sourcing faster and more accurate. This helps to reduce disruptions and waiting times in production processes.

**\*Flexible Manufacturing:** JIT emphasizes flexible manufacturing capabilities. Production processes are organized in such a way that they can quickly adapt to customer demands. This increases the ability to respond quickly to changes in market demands and adapt to specific orders.

**\*Quality Control:** JIT integrates quality control into processes. Focusing on quality control at each stage ensures that defects are detected and corrected at an early stage. This reduces recall costs and increases customer satisfaction.

**\*Order-Based Manufacturing:** JIT emphasizes production based on customer demands. Production is carried out as customer orders are received and needs are determined. This avoids waste from overproduction and ensures that inventory is optimized.

JIT Manufacturing has given Japanese companies the advantage of responding faster to customer demands and increasing efficiency in processes. This system has supported a sustainable production approach by reducing the amount of waste, while at the same time increasing customer satisfaction and competitive advantage. JIT is widely applied today as an important optimization strategy for many industries and manufacturing processes (Berry, Zeithaml, & Parasuraman, 1985).

### 5.1.2 5S Method:

Japanese companies have effectively regulated their working environments by adopting the 5S Method to increase their productivity and minimize errors. The first step of this method starts with "Sorting". Company employees sort the materials used in the workplace according to their needs and optimize their work area by eliminating unnecessary equipment. The ensuing "Organize" step involves placing the equipment and materials needed to make the work areas more efficient in the appropriate places. During the "clean-up" phase, both safety and workflow are improved by ensuring that the work environment is kept tidy and clean. The "standardization" step ensures that the established order is maintained continuously. Business

processes are standardized by establishing standard procedures and instructions, thus avoiding inconsistencies and errors. Finally, the "Discipline" step requires a sustained effort to ensure that employees adhere to these standards. Through training and inspections, disciplinary rules are established and maintained, ensuring the effective continuation of the 5S method (Tillery, Rutledge & Inman, 1993). In this way, Japanese companies create orderly, clean, safe, and effective work environments, increasing employee satisfaction and optimizing their productivity.

## 6. RESULT

Total Quality Management (TQM) and the specific strategies that Japanese companies incorporate into this management model play an important role in today's business world. Total Quality Management is a quality management philosophy that covers all levels and processes of an organization. This model aims to increase customer satisfaction, efficiency, and competitive advantage by making quality a part of the organizational culture rather than just a control process.

Especially from the mid-1950s, Japanese companies began to adopt Total Quality Management to cope with the challenges of the post-war period and to cope with global competition. Under the influence of leading quality experts, notably W. Edwards Deming and Joseph M. Juran, Japanese leaders integrated these principles into their business cultures. This integration process has enabled the basic principles of Total Quality Management such as continuous improvement, employee participation, and systematic-based approach to be applied in the Japanese business world.

The basic principles of Total Quality Management are customer focus, continuous improvement, employee participation, leadership role, and systematic approach. These principles guide organizations to raise quality standards, increase customer satisfaction, and achieve sustainable success.

The global effects of Japanese companies' adoption of Total Quality Management are especially evident with strategies such as Kaizen (Continuous Improvement) and JIT Manufacturing (Just-In-Time). Kaizen represents a philosophy that encourages small and continuous improvements in business processes by emphasizing continuous improvement. This leads to a culture that encourages employee engagement and makes staff at all levels accountable for quality improvement.

JIT Manufacturing, on the other hand, provides a significant advantage in reducing inventory costs, responding quickly to customer demands, and increasing efficiency in production processes. This strategy includes principles such as minimum stock levels, supply chain integration, flexible manufacturing, and order-based manufacturing.

As a result, TQM strategies implemented by Japanese companies have enabled organizations to achieve sustainable success and competitive advantage and have been the key to industrial success. These management models have become a recipe for success for many industries, creating a culture that focuses on quality, embraces continuous improvement, and prioritizes customer satisfaction. By adopting these approaches, many organizations these days are raising their quality standards and trying to gain a sustainable competitive advantage.

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