

“Practice-Related Problems and Solutions on the Field of Improving Worker Satisfaction”

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Practice-Related Problems and Solutions on the Field of Improving Worker Satisfaction

Andrea Bencsik*, Zsuzsanna Nagy**

Abstract

The economic life has been investigating for decades the question of by what kind of activity, by the control of which factors can an enterprise be successful. As a consequence of the economic development and the informational boom, the hard factors, the purchasable and money-dependent systems and resources are accessible for everyone, therefore they have ceased to compose competitive advantages i.e. discriminative success factors. Consequently, the attention have turned towards the soft, human factors. Now we know that for the success the harmonious co-operation of both sides is needed. It was exactly for the practical adaptation of this approach why the European Foundation for Quality Management called the EFQM self-assessment model into being as the basis of quality awards. It unites in one model the factors of the successful business operation and helps the organizational self-improvement by its self-assessment method. The operation of the method, however, is frequently impeded by problems which are caused by exactly the difficult handling of the previously mentioned soft factors in practice. For the sake of successful operation, a solution for these problems must be found. During our research we conducted a primary investigation, having regard to the Hungarian peculiarities, among those Hungarian-owned companies which competed for the National Quality Award. In the course of the investigation we examined their organizational processes according to the factors of the EFQM, although mainly concentrating on the working methods and mechanisms, not on results. Comparing the individual case studies we have obtained the conclusion that, among the soft factors, job satisfaction at the Hungarian-owned companies does not follow the EFQM's viewpoint on self-improvement. Therefore, after a brief theoretical review of the EFQM model and one of its elements, job satisfaction, and through an example which is relevant from the view of the handling of satisfaction, we present the satisfaction-improvement method which we developed by observing the results of the primary investigation.

Key words: Employee motivation, job satisfaction, work commitment, EFQM, satisfaction improving process, workers' attitudes

JEL classification is: J28.

The “point of origin” – the EFQM¹

The starting point of the primary investigation is the inspection of the EFQM-based operation, especially considering the Hungarian-owned productive companies. These companies start with a handicap in the field of learning and adapting modern management methods, compared to their foreign competitors due to their worse financial situation and lack of improvement-encouraging organizational structure. For this it is necessary to become familiar with the EFQM model and to clarify how it works.

The basic idea of the EFQM model is that the management reaches worker satisfaction and positive social effects by employing well-established business policy and strategy through the management of the workers, resources and processes, so it leads to outstanding economic results².

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¹ European Foundation for Quality Management.

² www.om.hu/j42636.html

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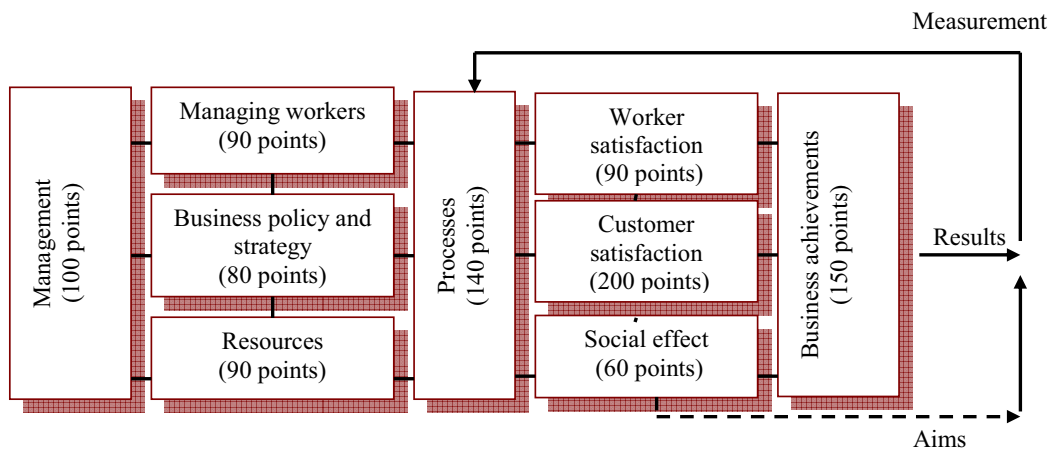


Fig. 1. The constitution of the EFQM model (Kalapács J., 2001)

The organization performs self-assessment in accordance with the model, during which it confronts its actual state: evaluates the applied methods, the degree of worker involvement, the attention paid to the customers, the fulfilment of the plans and aims by the control of the processes. The applied methods and their frequent examination and refinement bring the results which are assessed and analyzed with the help of trends and comparisons, concerning the opinions of the directly involved parties – the external customers and the internal customers, the employees – i.e. how the operation of the organization affects the society and the environment, what kind of business achievements (financial and non-financial) is it able to display. Based on the results, the organization becomes able to assess the fulfilment of the previous aims, to compare the results with those of another organization, to determine the places where intervention is necessary. The EFQM operates as a controlling circle by performing self-assessment regularly – annually or bi-annually – and by continuously developing the organization and the individuals working for it.

The “excellence model” unambiguously displays that business success and efficiency largely depend on the satisfaction of the internally and externally involved parties. This can be processed more easily in the case of the externally involved parties, because the positivity or negativity of their evaluation appears directly and immediately in their decisions. The opinion of the internally involved parties, i.e. the colleagues represents a more complex problem because – concerning their subordinated and long-term relation to the organization – their evaluation does not manifest immediately and directly, and not even in its complete depth after all.

The problem area of the worker satisfaction

The primary investigation based on the case studies signalled that the field most difficult to manage and handle is the circle of the soft factors, more specifically the internal satisfaction (satisfaction with one’s job). Henceforth it is recommendable to think through and clarify what the job satisfaction in fact means and how it ‘works’.

The bibliography suggests roughly two approaches considering the phenomenon of the satisfaction of people in the employee status.

One part of the approaches identifies satisfaction with the positive value of the phenomenon. Locke represents this approach and defines job satisfaction in a general sense as a “*pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job as achieving or facilitating the achievement of one’s job value*” (Locke, 1969). It appears unambiguously from his wording that he interprets satisfaction as an exclusively positive value or state, rather than a variable which can take divers values.

The separation of satisfaction and dissatisfaction also appears in Herzberg's two-factor theory (Herzberg, 1966) which is considered as a milestone among satisfaction-analyses. According to this theory, various "factors" are responsible for the evolvement of dissatisfaction within an individual (the lack of which factors results in dissatisfaction, although their presence only brings the disappearance of dissatisfaction rather than the evolvement of satisfaction) and for the evolvement of the motivating state of satisfaction. However, his theory has not been proved by practical researches.

The cathartic approach of Csíkszentmihályi also represents a positive point of view similar to Locke's. Csíkszentmihályi (Csíkszentmihályi, 1997) adapts his own concept of "flow-experience" into the world of work to explain work satisfaction. In his unique interpretation only the individual who finds the "flow" – i.e. the source for perfect experiences – and fully develops his/her talents and abilities can become satisfied with his/her work. According to my opinion, the dangerous part of this interpretation is that it finalizes the concept of satisfaction and it leaves out the importance of the individual's own judgement of value, unlike Locke, who emphasised on it. The level at which people feel themselves satisfied varies from individual to individual. It is not necessarily the satisfaction of the "highest need" what can lead to the feeling of contentment.

As opposed to these, the second approach handles work satisfaction as a process-like variable which can take numerous values. This approach is represented by e.g. Papp and Perczel, who identify satisfaction with the mental representation of factors that are corollary to the characteristics of the sphere of activities and which affect the attitude towards the actual sphere of activities by the way of mental mirroring. Another representative is Vroom, who interprets work satisfaction as the employees response to their employment roles (Vroom, 1964; Klein, 2001).

A unique interpretation for work satisfaction as a variable is given by the "school" which handles satisfaction as an attribute. The emotion-theories serve as a basis for this approach. It is represented by the conception of Sachter and Singer (1962), (see also Landy, 1989), which state that certain events in the environment induce arousal in the individual, and that individual will try to find the key-stimuli that can help to explain the causes of the arousal. Regarding our subject of discussion, this means – opposing to Herzberg's theory – that there is no underlying difference between the stimuli which induce satisfaction and the stimuli that cause dissatisfaction. The resulting emotional state depends on the interpretation (attribution) of the stimulus and of the response.

The interpretation of work satisfaction as a variable is associated with the attitude-concept and interpreted as an attitude by researchers who approach the question from the direction of psychology. By accepting this approach and by grounding it on the general operational mechanism of the attitude (Triandis, 1971; Bakacsi, Bokor, 1998; Gyökér, 1999; Klein, 2001), it becomes more understandable how the individual's relation to his/her work defines that individual's behaviour.

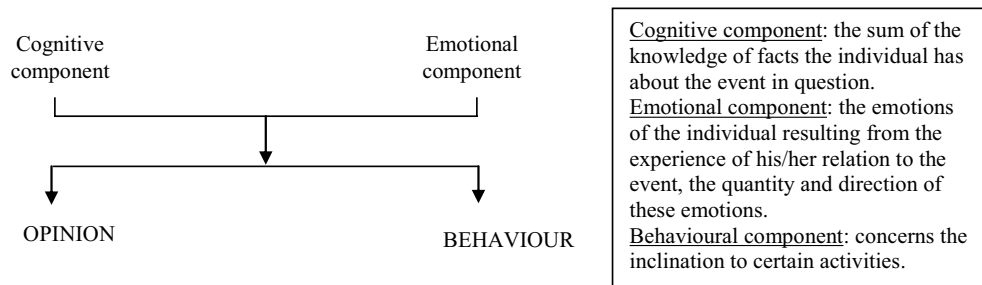


Fig. 2. The operational mechanism of the attitude (Triandis, 1971)

According to the conception of the researchers who represent this approach, job satisfaction is a general attitude of workers which evolves according to the individuals' relation to their salaries, work conditions, the direction of their work, their advancement, their social relationships.

By assessing and evaluating the approaches to satisfaction from different aspects, for the amelioration of the attitude and for the increase of efficiency of the individuals concerning economic and management purposes, and through that for the efficiency increase of the organisation, we consider that – from the point of view of its effect on success – to identify the concept of the individual's satisfaction exclusively with a (as it would be suggested by its name) positive state of being is not expedient, because a state of contentment does not impel for further efforts. Therefore it is necessary to differentiate the concept of the attitude-like relation to work and to the work organization from the concept of satisfaction as a positive state. Satisfaction is a markedly positive emotional state which evolves by the individual evaluation of the stimuli that are created by and during the act of working, although its presence is only temporary. As a result, the motivation for repeatedly reaching one's own satisfaction level lives within the average working individual. These evaluations of satisfaction and dissatisfaction add up inside the individual during the multiple repetitions and form a general approach towards working, which attitude in turn will affect the individual's behaviour.

To sum up the whole: to increase their overall performance, i.e. their successfulness, the organizations should attempt to gain a positive attitude in their employees; on micro level towards their own work, on macro level towards the work organization, by creating a work situation (all the factors related to the work) which enables and impels the repeated accomplishment of the state of satisfaction.

Practical problems – the results of the Best Workplace Survey¹ and a domestic case study

The conception that is seemingly apt in theory, however, encounters problems when implemented in practice, due to the change in the organizational attitude and the attitude of the employees, their incidental negativity, or the influence of the economic and the social environment. The Hewitt Inside és Figyelő performs surveys on worker satisfaction and commitment with the observation and recording of exactly these same factors, inside the framework of its annually organised Best Workplace Survey. The survey, by its frequent execution, ensures the possibility to identify the trends in the worker satisfaction and devotion. During our research we keep observing the results of the survey to record the changes in the general worker satisfaction level and we apply them as basis to display a domestic look-around.

In 2004, the survey stated and then in 2005 and 2006 it proved that the feeling of **workplace insecurity** which started in 2003 due to economic changes, can be felt in the long run as well (the employees who gave account of their insecurity in 2003, did not gain back their confidence in their company later on either). Generally, the effects of the economy-related consolidation (the detention of payraises; the emphasis of efficiency considerations and staff reductions due to the more stressed competitive situation) negatively affect the employee in the short term, which results in a **more pessimistic approach of the workers**. During the years of 2004, 2005, and 2006, the already predicted process of “the rising of the self-awareness of the employees” seemed to continue. The native workers' commitment to their actual workplace weakened because the individuals become more and more aware of their values and they have definite demands. Due to the sharpening competition, more and more workers – especially the young who have already a few years' experience, still unexhausted potential for progress and greater work capacity – decide more easily to step out onto the workforce market in case their actual employer does not fulfil their demands (Hewitt – Figyelő Legjobb Munkahely Felmérés 2004, 2005, 2006²).

Concerning employee motivation and commitment, the survey 2004 revealed that the highest dissatisfaction can be experienced on the field of the compensation and the evaluation of performance

¹ Legjobb Munkahely Felmérés.

² Best Workplace Survey: www.hewitt.inside.hu, www.legjobb munkahely.hu

http://www.legjobb munkahely.hu/HVG_Hewitt_Legjobb%20Munkahely_Felmeres_2006_sajtokozlemeny.pdf

(salaries, advancement), and on the field of performance **feedback**: according to the workers' opinions, the salaries do not adequately reflect their performance, their contribution to the achievements, the performance management does not operate effectively, i.e. they can not sense the relation between their daily work tasks, their own aims, and between the organizational efficiency and aims; they do not receive help for determining the direction of their own development. This was identified as the main problem by the surveys of 2005 and 2006 as well. Concerning the judgement of advancement possibilities, the employees are discontent with the practice of appointments, they find their advancement possibilities to be narrow and they do not hold their company able to keep their best workers with adequate talent management.

To sum up the above written, the workers of the average domestic companies still do not feel that the top management would consider their interests or handle the questions concerning the employees with adequate care, although in the last five years of the survey (2000-2005) it consequentially appeared that the **commitment and attitude of the top management** is one of the most important determiners of the workers' attitude, since it is exactly the high value of this factor what differentiates the Best Workplaces from the average ones, that is, it can render an enterprise – even in a human sense – successful (Hewitt – Figyelő Legjobb Munkahely Felmérés 2004, 2005, 2006⁴).

The already mentioned causes of the domestic workers' dissatisfaction reoccur in the following case study, which displays in its progress and in the form of the continuity of relations the change of satisfaction and dissatisfaction related the work and to the work organization that results from the incorrect application of the EFQM model.

The above introduced mechanisms of satisfaction shifts return in the case of the primarily examined Hungarian-owned productive companies which apply EFQM self-assessment. We display the occurring problems with the help of a relevant example from among the case studies, which example aptly illustrates the characteristic satisfaction-managing mechanisms of the examined sphere. We also introduce the satisfaction-improving process which strengthens the EFQM-view based on our primary experience.

The domestic case study

The enterprise which served as location for the case study is in Hungarian possession, its spheres of activities are industrial manufacturing, provision and commerce. Its main activity is CM (contract manufacturing) i.e. it concentrates on the fulfilment of co-operative production contracts. This type of manufacturing only involves the assemblage of ready-made component parts in a pre-defined way. Regarding its economic situation, the enterprise did not succeed to consolidate during the many ownership changes. This situation slightly changed with its affiliation to the current owning enterprise group. Generally speaking, the firm – similarly to the other enterprises in the area – is not in an advantageous financial situation, which is mostly due to the migration of those firms that employ lease-work manufacturers and now are seeking cheaper workforce and tax-free zones more eastwards. As this firm operates through lease-work, with the migration of the employer the employment ceases and the possibilities become limited from a financial point of view as well. This has a grave effect on matters concerning the workers (e.g. salaries, fringe benefits, work conditions, workplace insecurity).

Most of the technologies that the firm applies constitute of manufacturing by using CNC machinery and modern production lines, where the task of the employee concentrates on adjusting and feeding (insertion and removal of the workpiece), examining and supervising the machinery, and performing other light, manual jobs. This type of activity may easily lead to monotony because of the frequently repeated work steps within a given time unit and it may result in degradation of the quality of performance, or with a high probability, to the evolvement of dissatisfaction.

The firm applies both continuous and periodical manufacturing methods, therefore they employ three-shift and uninterrupted (3+1 shifts) work order as well. This latter one is not popular among the workers, it bears discontentment during the workforce-rearrangements mostly.

The market demand for the – mostly durable – articles manufactured by the firm highly fluctuates through the year: in summer there are much less customers than in autumn or in winter, and the sellings reach their peak at the time of the holidays. With the fluctuation of the production demands, the workforce needs change as well. The firm solved the problem with a systematic workforce-rearrangement: they created a “stable” and a “flexible” list of staff, where the flexible workforce group partly consists of employees with fixed-date contract, and partly of unequal work order and of borrowed labour force. This way the firm became able to cope with the incidental work demand peaks. It is primarily the similar flexible applications of workforce and the migrations during probation which causes the high value of fluctuation (50%) at the firm and bears great disappointment, because the employees with fixed-date contract live in an almost constant existential insecurity.

On the field of the employees’ opinion, the firm uses the devices that are the most widespread in the domestic practice: there is personal meeting between the employees and the management due to the principle of “the open gates”, there is a system of “ideas boxes” and the employee questionnaires. Among these, the questionnaire operates the most effectively, due to its anonymous nature. Most of the workers of the enterprise have a kind of fear from the personal opining: they are afraid to give their opinions sincerely because they think they might lose their jobs or generally, they fear the reactions of the management. Although the principle of “the open gates” does exist, it does not work with satisfactory intensity (few managers are visited this way, and only rarely). This suggests that the workers’ **trust in the management and in the development that yields changes beneficial to the workers as well is not sufficient**, the corporational culture is not really of a supportive nature. The system of the ideas boxes is starting to work better and better since every idea is awarded and the prizes are in fact given to the awarded. If the workers see in their environment that there are not only promises but fulfilments as well, their trust and participation in the system will grow, their satisfaction and self-confidence will improve. The alleviation of the dissatisfaction that is caused by the insufficient salaries can be attached to the rewarding of the ideas if valuable and useful prizes or gratuities are awarded. A more organized form of generating ideas is to invite tenders for solving problems of the organization and to give awards to the better applicants in a public forum (e.g. on an organized family holiday).

In other words, the company asks the opinion of its employees about the operation of the firm once in a year in a systematic, organized way, as one of the tools of opining. They use the results of this survey for the making of the application for the National Quality Award. This type of survey (and the examination of all factors necessary for the application) was performed for the first time at the firm, and was initiated by the quality assurance manager. The questionnaire was chosen as the tool for the survey of the satisfaction level. The firm itself composed and performed the survey, using related literature or other practical examples, and the help of other companies who frequently examine their workers’ satisfaction level and improve their motivation. The management drafted a uniform questionnaire for the blue-collar and the white-collar workers and for the leaders alike, because the firm held important the comparability of the different opinions of the different layers of workers concerning the same fields of problem. The danger of this kind of solution is that the different layers are not equally informed about the same problem areas therefore some opinions about that area are less important but some other opinions should be investigated more deeply. A differentiated, layer-specific questionnaire yields more punctual and more detailed data about the problems. The firm chose to measure satisfaction with a 5-grade Likert scale. Its disadvantage in comparison to the 6-grade scale is that the questioned person has the possibility to give the absolute neutral answer 3. However, the 6-grade scale forces a choice in the middle, between answers 3 and 4, which yields a more refined picture about the satisfaction. Beside measuring the satisfaction, the questionnaire also assesses the importance of the given factor and its satisfaction-influencing effect, similarly to Locke’s theory (Locke, 1968). In this poll the satisfaction with a given field at this company is determined by the average of the answers for the 5-grade scale. They do not determine dispersion for the average, nor do they apply statistical analysis.

The first questionnaire in the history of operation of the firm was the Morale survey questionnaire, which 20% of the average number of staff completed voluntarily. Each item of the questionnaire could be answered with an evaluation number from 1 to 5. The results suggested that the workers were the most dissatisfied with the performance assessment (average: 2.5; they do not understand the system of it) and with the salaries (2.75). They were most satisfied with the fields of human resource training (3.6). The survey was followed by the planning and performing of actions that aim to improve motivation, although the effects of these largely remained undetected by the workers. As the questionnaire contained too many and too complicated questions, it was subjected for recomposition. The amended version asked shorter, but not less complicated questions about the same problem areas, and these questions were still hard to understand for the blue-collar workers of the company. The satisfaction values of the amended version proved to be higher than that of the first version, however, the problem areas remained the same: judgement of salaries (3.14) and performance assessment (2.86). The best operational did not change either: human resource training (4.27). After that, the firm started more drastic changes in the structure of the questionnaire and the reformative actions (the then increment of minimum salaries also helped solving the problem of the salaries). They expanded the surveyed areas and simplified the questions. They organized educational meetings for the workers before asking them to complete the new questionnaire, where the workers were told about the aims (the National Quality Award) and the causes of the survey, and about the use and the fate of the given opinions. This information proved to be important because it asserted in the workers the faith that their opinions will be considered and it also asserted the sense of credibility of the questionnaire. This way the workers related to the survey more positively and more useful results could be obtained. This survey included the whole number of staff. The composition of the questions and the cited problem areas were adjusted to the fields of interest and to the abilities of the – mostly blue-collar – workers of the firm. During the processing of the questionnaire the management disregarded those sheets that were incompletely filled or where the worker gave self-contradictory answers. The average results became higher but the order of the problem areas still remained the same. The survey was followed by reformative action once again, although the firm did not examine their efficiency directly. During the following years, the satisfaction level has been examined by using the last version of the questionnaire, with only slight modifications from time to time.

This case study corresponded to the results of the Best Workplace survey concerning the fields of worker dissatisfaction, and furthermore, it exemplifies excellently how much the attitude and behaviour of the responsible management influence the opinion and work of the “lower” layers and therefore how much it affects the efficiency of the firm. It sheds light on the frequently occurring problem that the organizations and production firms, affected by the compulsion for the maintenance of the continuous production and for the rapid reaction to the daily problems, consciously or unconsciously they are only concerned with the workers’ satisfaction until the obtainment of the needed results. Accordingly, most of the times they do not wholly complete the satisfaction-improvement process due to the lack of money, time and energy, in spite of the suggestion of the EFQM model they follow. The excuse is always that “they have more important things to do”. Sometimes – as it appears – not even the top management knows exactly how the question of worker satisfaction can be handled effectively, they are not aware of the usefulness, of the methods and the procedure of neither the survey nor the development, they are not committed towards the improvement of the satisfaction level.

The enumerated problems and unveiled connections display exactly that there is need for a system concerning the survey and improvement of worker satisfaction which describes the way of the kind of steps that are to be taken to advance from the self-assessment phase through feedback, towards the implementation of the self-improving approach of the EFQM model, for the improvement of the satisfaction level and for the deepening of the relations.

Suggestion for the facilitation of the positive relation to working, in accordance with the approach of the EFQM model

Satisfaction and motivation are basic human phenomena, therefore their adjustment and control count as a ductile area, their management requires extraordinary circumspection. The use of the word "management" here is deliberate, since as an action of handling, it is exactly this way, by cyclical processes that the continuous development of the fields is assured. In accordance with the previously demonstrated self-improving approach of the EFQM model, the creation of a recursive process chain is necessary for the examination of the satisfaction level as well – in opposition to the examples taken from the practice, where cyclicalness is only nominal and the processes are in fact run in a repeatedly linear way. This way, with the use of a recursive process chain the dissatisfaction can be ameliorated and the motivation can be uniformly improved by a constantly feedbacking, spirally elevating process for all organizational units, independently from e.g. the financial possibilities of the organizations.

Based on the case studies of the primary investigation, the solutions and the anomalies taken from the practice and on the suggestions of the related literature, the recommended cyclical process constitutes the following elements:

(1) The establishment of the prerequisites of the analysis

The considerable proportion of the work organizations begins to concern the improvement of worker satisfaction by approaching it from the angle of quality management due to, and application for a quality award which is based on one of the EFQM models. The corporations, however, are likely to handle this in a slightly autotelic way: they are only concerned with the worker satisfaction until they obtain the results which are necessary for the application. This way it is exactly the constant development impelled by the model which is left unconsidered. For the elimination of this, a profound preparation is necessary.

To begin the examination, a company decision is to be made before anything else. Furthermore, the aim of the survey must be determined: what are expectations, what is the desirable result, what do they want to achieve. The concept of satisfaction must also be clarified, as well as the characteristics of a satisfied worker.

In parallel to this, the complete agreement and support of the firm management must be obtained concerning the improvement of the attitude of the workers. The extensive information and the clarification of the ambiguous points are of strategic importance. For the persuasion, the actual data attesting the effects of satisfaction and positive attitude on success may offer some help. These data may originate e.g. from companies that have become experts on this field of activity.

For the beginning of the examination, naturally, the organizational possibilities and the framework have to be created: the person who will be responsible for the development of the positive relation has to be appointed (human resource manager), the apparatus (HR organization) that will help the responsible person to perform the operative tasks has to be established, and the examination or questioning method that is most suitable for the firm has to be selected as well.

Generally, two methods are employed for examining the satisfaction level: the questionnaire and the interview. From these two the questionnaire is more frequent, but the developments towards the direction of interviews and depth interviews, and also towards the conjoint use of the two methods have already started as well. The present prevalence of the questionnaire originates from its possibility to inquire masses with relatively small effort and under relatively short time. The disadvantage of this is that such survey serves only to identify the areas of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, rather than to unveil the causes. As opposed to questionnaires, the interview enables a more fundamental research – it immediately reveals the reasons behind the dissatisfaction as well – although it requires more time and expenses.

(2) Adaptation of the analytic method

The selection of the analytic method is followed by the development of the actual analytic procedure, which can not dismiss the preliminary observation: the examination of existing and well-established systems of other companies, for the sake of gathering experience. For the elaboration

of the survey and the preparation of the interview or questionnaire it is necessary to know the basic principles of public opinion poll methodology. In the case of the satisfaction-analysis a large-sample questionnaire poll gives a general picture of the worker satisfaction (a satisfaction level connected to a specific point in time), which can be further refined by small-sample polls e.g. interviewing representatives from individual employee groups. During the preparation of the questionnaire it is recommendable to follow the route of the three main stages (König, 1969; Kromrey, 2002; Atteslander, 2003; Horváth, 2004): first, it is necessary to compose the analytical question, secondly, the determination of the measurement procedures during the operationalization, by which procedures the analytical question can be supported or discarded, and thirdly, the obtainment of the data i.e. the design and implementation of the actual questioning. In the case of satisfaction-analysis as well, it is also recommendable to employ teamwork for the design of the questionnaire and the interview and for the composition of the questions (i.e. for the second stage), the members of which team should be from among the circles of the human management, quality management, production management and from the higher management. It is necessary to follow the basic rules of methodology both in the case of the questionnaire and the interview polls as well, and also necessary for the leader of the questioning (the Human Manager) to thoroughly study the literature on research methodology (see Horváth György: A kérdőíves módszer¹). Furthermore, it is important in the case of both methods to carefully chose the questions and question types (the aim is to elicit the answers the company is curious to know) and to properly establish the order of the questions. During the composition, the different abilities of the different layers of workers at the company (blue-collar, white-collar, management) and their different level of information about the inquired fields also has to be considered. Therefore it is more expedient to adjust to the different layers the content, style, language and perhaps the tool of the analysis, rather than to develop an inquiry which is uniform to all layers of the organization.

The continuous information of the workers during the whole procedure is of key importance: why is the firm curious about their opinion, where will the information be used, what is the aim of the company, at what point is the process at the moment. Attention has to be paid and every question of the employees has to be answered because it is the only way to gain them for the survey (the adequate management of the changes), and because it will positively influence the effectiveness of the analysis.

(3) The measurement of the satisfaction level

This is the process of the actual inquiry: the questionnaires are distributed and completed, the interviews done, the results summarised. In the initial phase of the analysis – during the time of distrust of the workers – and in the case of using questionnaires it is more expedient to perform the information gathering with the preservation of the anonymity of the answerer, because this way more opinions that reflect the true feelings of the workers can be expected.

(4) Reformative actions

The next step is the evaluation and analysis of the results, which is KIF the task of the company management. As a result of this – with the principle of the accentuation of the essential few – the problems which cause dissatisfaction can be identified.

By following the theory of Herzberg, at first it is recommended to aspire after the diminution of dissatisfaction at the firm and to start improving positive attitude and motivation only later, planning for the middle and the long term. However, attention must be paid for the effects on the different layers of workers: where the employees work under control and receive only a minimal freedom in their professional activities, where the professional/workplace motivation only slightly applies, therefore the primary aim is the abolishment of the dissatisfaction. Whereas in the case where the freedom of activities and the independence of decisions belong to the professional ne-

¹ “The Questionnaire Method” by György Horváth.

cessities and the performance depends on them, the professional motivation of the colleagues is especially important, therefore these must be improved (Schuler, Frintup, 2002).

After determining the aims, we develop the possible alternatives using the team methods – naturally, considering the implementational characteristics of these. The alternatives are evaluated from the point of view of the possibility of their actual implementation, then we decide on the necessary interventions. The concerned parties have to be informed continuously about the results and the planned interventions, for the sake of the successful implementation and acceptance of the changes. It is followed by the execution of the planned reformative actions, as a consequence of which some kind of change in the field of the workers’ attitude may be expected (5). From this point on, our task is to direct the process by concerning the adequateness of the output: the aim is the improvement of the attitude, for which we have to decide whether the current state is suitable for our expectations or not. If it is suitable, then by adjusting the device of the analysis to the changed level of satisfaction (e.g. by changing the questions, inquiring about different areas) the measurement and the reformative actions may begin again (8). However, if the change in the attitude does not suit our expectations, then we may justly assume that we executed one of the steps incorrectly, thus the quality of all our previous steps has to be examined (6). The most typical error the organizations commit is that they do not perform reformative actions or they do not communicate these properly to the colleagues, although these two are the most essential elements: it is impossible to improve the attitude of workers and the judgement of an organization by using speeches without action, and also, an emotional state of an individual can not be changed with neglecting the person.

By chaining these steps, we may draw the flow-chart of the aforementioned self-improving cyclical process:

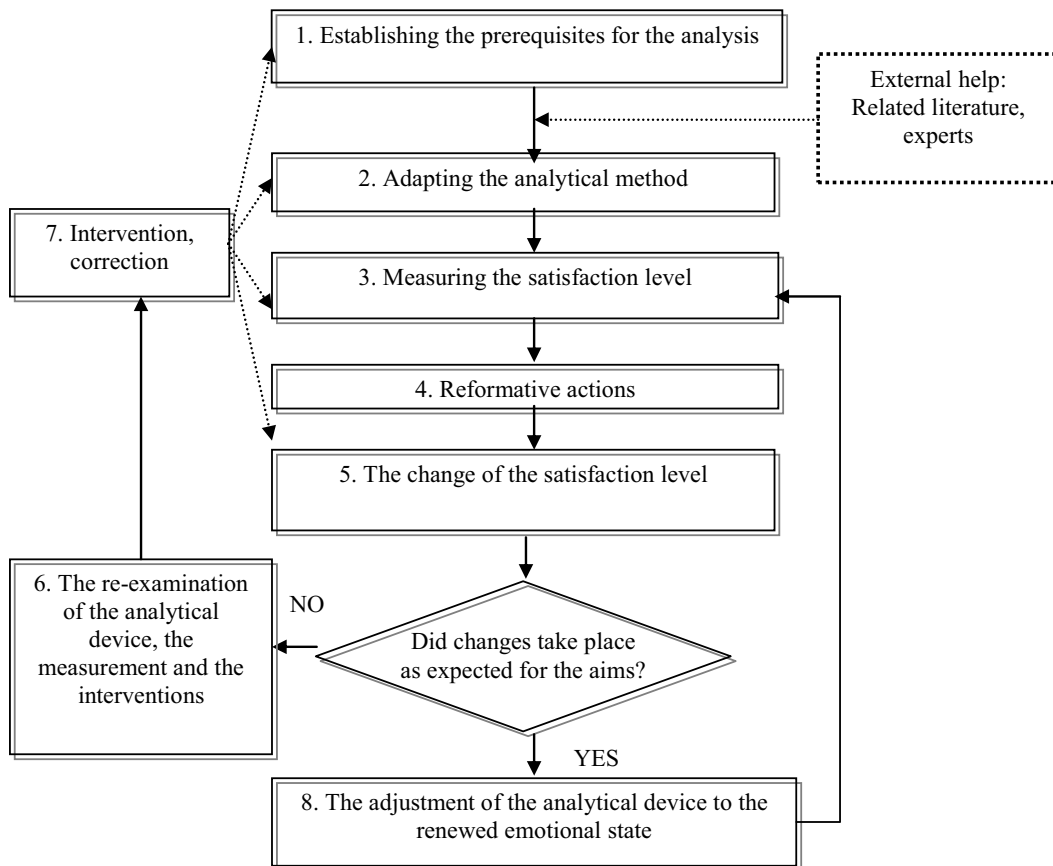


Fig.3. Self-improving process for the analysis and improvement of the workers’ attitude

According to our views – as opposed to the examples taken from practice – by the regular execution of this cyclical process, the effective improvement of the positivity of the workers' attitude and the self-improving implementation of the EFQM model will become possible, contributing to the increment of the organizational performance and to the success of the company. This improvement process (which was designed by observing the experience from the primary investigation) will be put to the test during the secondary examinations in the sphere of the examined corporational sphere (Hungarian-owned productive companies, aiming for an EFQM-view).

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