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INTRODUCTION

The ever increasing customer requirements towards the quality of products and services and the pursuit of improved organizational efficiency are the two main challenges for modern managers (Sułkowski, M., Wolniak, R. 2016; Wojtaszak, M., and Biały, W. 2015; Zasadzień M., 2020). In this context, the key issue is the establishment and the effective implementation of the so-called quality policy (Chen et al., 2016, Molenda 2009, 2015) Quality policy is a term defined in ISO 9000 (ISO9001:2015). In practice, it should be a pillar for establishing an organization that is quality-oriented, the basis for developing and implementation of quality strategy and for creating quality culture in the organization (Skrzypek E.,2013).

The article describes selected results of research carried out in the years 2015-2019 among 166 industrial enterprises carrying out their activity in Poland. The objective of the research was the complex assessment of the actually implemented quality policy in the enterprises. In the survey sheet, 35 aspects (behaviors) characteristic for the organization carrying out TQM approach, meaning organizations being strongly oriented towards quality (Sharma P., Jain N., Pruthi K.2013; Hysa B., 2004; Silva G., Gomes P., Lages L., Pereira Z., 2014; Calvo-Mora A., Pico'n A., Ruiz C., Cauzo L. 2014). The respondents, employees, representatives of the middle management indicated to what extent the behaviors described in the sheet are characteristic for their organization. The questionnaire was anonymous. The article contains research results in the scope of five selected aspects of quality policy in terms of social and cultural area.

The basic research problem the solution for which was presented in this article, are the following questions:

- What is the actually implemented quality policy in the social and cultural area in the studied industrial enterprises? For that purpose, it was studied to what extent:
 - The HR policy is about the constant development of employee's qualifications?

- The employees are rewarded for their work and engagement in attaining the right quality of products?
- The employees are supported by management in the implementation of their obligations?
- The employees can improve their qualifications?
- The employees are motivated to carry out their duties?
- There are differences in the implemented quality policy in the groups of enterprises classified depending on their size, management system and the so-called level of independence in management?

THE ESSENCE OF THE QUALITY POLICY AND ITS ROLE IN SHAPING THE QUALITY CULTURE

The Quality Policy is most often equated with a formal document where the high management proclaims the engagement of the enterprise in the quality issue. The document describes the approach the organization has towards the quality of products and the manner of achieving this quality. The term “policy” means a course of action adopted by a decision-making body of a formalized social group (organization), the aim of which is implementation of set goals with the use of specific measures. The Quality Policy should be treated as a way of thinking of the senior management, and – as a result – as a manner of management and action of the organization in terms of quality. Therefore, the Quality Policy strongly influences many aspects of organization functioning, and – in consequence – shapes the organizational culture (Miller J., Wroblewski M., Villafuerte J. 2014). The hierarchy of policy influence on other areas of organization management is presented in Fig. 1.

Quality Policy should be the basis upon which the quality strategy is built. It should also influence the process structure of the enterprise and the formal and informal internal regulations. These elements often form the quality management system (Ligarski, M. 2020; Mourougan S., Sethuraman K., 2017; Midor K., 2013). It should be treated as a concept of the Quality Policy implementation manner. The implemented quality management system should be a basis for an actual manner of quality management in an organization. The managerial approaches, especially the criteria for decision making, should be consistent with the proclaimed Quality Policy. The described approaches of the management determine the way how the management thinks, behaves and what are its practices, as a result of which the employees approach the quality, especially the customer requirements, in line with the actual expectations of the managers. In this context, the quality policy, without a doubt, creates the organizational culture. To put it simply, it is a whole system of values, behaviors, artifacts that support the organizational development and that are shared by organizational community. It can thus be stated that when maintaining the hierarchy (Fig. 1) of influence, the Quality Policy, as a declaration, should shape the organizational culture.



Fig. 1 Hierarchy of quality policy influence on other areas of the organization

Source: own work

Policy strongly directed towards quality and its thorough implementation, especially resulting from the managerial approach, gives the possibility to establish a strong quality culture.

It is worth emphasizing that there is neither good nor bad quality policy. We can only talk about appropriate or inappropriate one and about consequently or inconsequently implemented one.

The Quality Policy, despite its name, can be more or less oriented towards quality and implementation of TQM philosophy. If market situation and the enterprise strategy do not require it, there is no need to direct the organization towards quality. Therefore, it is important for the managers to establish quality policy adjusted to the organization needs (Molenda, 2019).

THE RELIABILITY OF THE STUDY CONCERNING QUALITY POLICY

Within the meaning of the quality policy and its influence on the organization, it is difficult to reliably assess the quality policy of an enterprise. It is mainly due to the fact that the declarations made by the managers often are not reflected in the actual organizational practices. In majority of cases, a divergence between the actual approach in the organization towards the quality and the one declared by the high management can be observed. The study and assessment of the actual quality policy implemented in the organization is a difficult and complex process. It is difficult to reliably measure the actual manner of quality management, the managerial practices and the actual criteria for decision-making. It is also difficult to reliably assess the actual manner of organization

functioning, employee practices, observance of procedures or their actual approach to customer requirements. However, it is quite easy to assess the state of technical resources influencing the quality, for example technology or control and measuring equipment, by way of observation. Thus, the assessment of quality policy will have a very limited scope. Similar disadvantages can be observed in the approach to the assessment of quality policy on the basis of reports and indicators. The best way for a comprehensive study of the quality policy, that still has some disadvantages, and yet is quite reliable and economical, is the anonymous survey questionnaire.

THE RESULTS OF RESEARCH IN THE SCOPE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF QUALITY POLICY IN SOCIAL AND CULTURAL AREA

The research results presented in this article are based on survey questionnaire carried out among supervision employees and middle management. The research was carried out in the years 2015-2019 among 166 industrial entrepreneurs functioning in Poland. In the survey sheet, 35 aspects (behaviors) characteristic for the organization strongly oriented towards quality and TQM philosophy were described. The respondents answered to what extent the behavior described in the survey is characteristic for their organization. The described aspects were assessed by the respondents on a scale from 1 to 5. The adopted scale reflects the level of similarity of the state described in the survey to the situation in a given organization.

In this study, the results of research concerning 5 aspects of quality policy that present the actual focus on quality of the studied enterprises in the social and cultural area were presented. They include:

- #A1 - the extent to which the HR policy is about the constant development of employee's qualifications
- #A2 - the extent to which the employees are rewarded for their work and engagement in attaining the right quality of products
- #A3 - the extent to which the employees are supported by management in the implementation of their obligations
- #A4 - the extent to which the employees can improve their qualifications
- #A5 - the extent to which the employees are motivated to carry out their duties

The research results of the aspects of quality policy listed above in the form of arithmetical means obtained by way of the answers given in all 166 enterprises can be found in Figure 2.

In the group of the studied enterprises, the average values of ratings for all 5 studied aspects amount to 3.14 (on a scale 1-5). Among the studied enterprises, the quality policy aspect that received the highest rating was the support the employees receive from the management during the implementation of their obligations #A3 (average 3.83). Slightly lower rated aspect was the extent to which the employees can improve their qualifications #A4 (average 3.23).

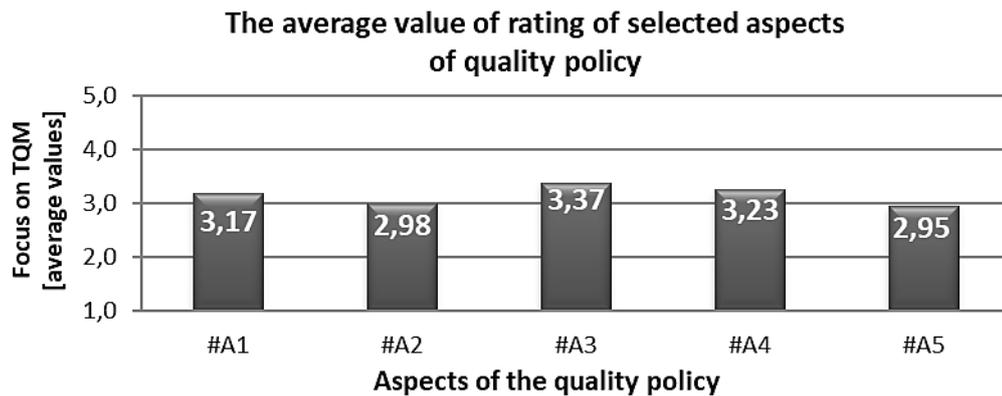


Fig. 2 Assessment of the selected quality policy aspects in the social and cultural area
Source: Own study

The aspect that received the lowest rating was the extent to which the employees were motivated to carry out their duties #A5 (2.95).

COMPARISON OF QUALITY POLICY DEPENDING ON THE SIZE OF THE ENTERPRISE

The comparison of the values of average ratings of the analyzed aspects in groups of enterprises of various levels of employment is presented in Figure 3. In the course of the research, small enterprises were classified as those employing up to 50 people. The employment in large enterprises exceeded 250 people. It is worth emphasizing that in the studied group of representatives there were 26 small, 40 medium and 100 large enterprises.

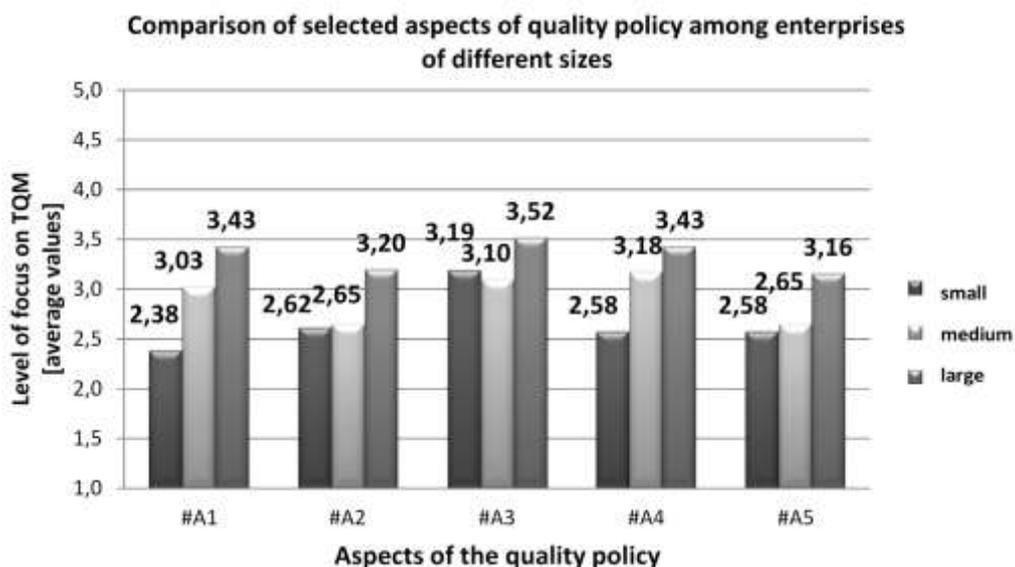


Fig. 3 Comparison of quality policy aspects in enterprises of different sizes
Source: own work

The research results allow to formulate an initial conclusion that on the basis of average values of ratings the quality policy implemented by large enterprises is more focused on quality in the social and cultural area than it is the case in other

groups. In each aspect, the differences in average values can be observed. Aspects #A2, #A3, #A5 in small and medium enterprises received similar rating.

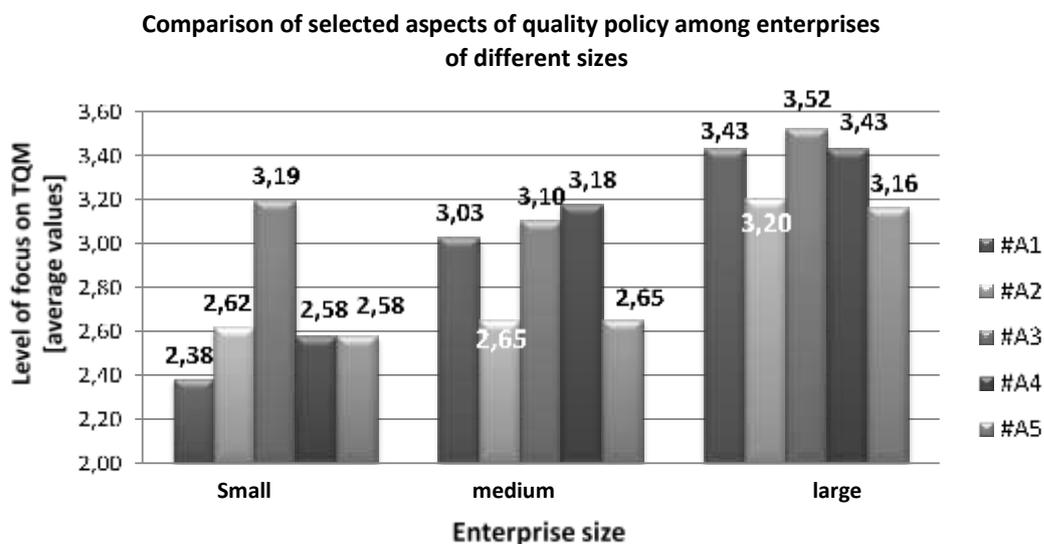


Fig. 4 Comparison of quality policy in enterprises of different sizes

Source: own work

The grouping of the studied enterprises according to their size all the more presents the difference when it comes to quality focus. The average ratings for the 5 aspects are as follows: in small enterprises – 2.67, medium – 2.92 and large – 3.35. It is worth noting the aspect #A3, the value of which a positively stands out among small enterprises. It can be assumed that in small companies the direct contact with the management fosters the support the employees receive from the management when it comes to carrying out their duties (#A3). Unfortunately, this aspect was slightly lower in medium enterprises and in large organizations it received a higher rating. An explanation of this result in small enterprises can be that if the policy concerning the other aspects is not strongly quality-oriented then the support of management is especially valuable for the employee.

In medium enterprises, the low results for aspects #A2 and #A5 are worth noting. The employees of these enterprises gave a relatively low rating for the extent to which they are rewarded for their work and engagement in attaining the right quality of products. They also gave the lowest rating to the level of motivation to do one's work.

Large enterprises gave better ratings than other groups in every aspect.

COMPARISON OF QUALITY POLICY DEPENDING ON THE TYPE OF IMPLEMENTED MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Figure 5 presents the assessment of focus on quality in enterprises that were grouped into those who have at least one certified management system (of quality, environment or security) and into those that do not have any system implemented. In the group of 166 studied enterprises, there were 138 that have

a certified management system. Other enterprises did not have any of these systems.

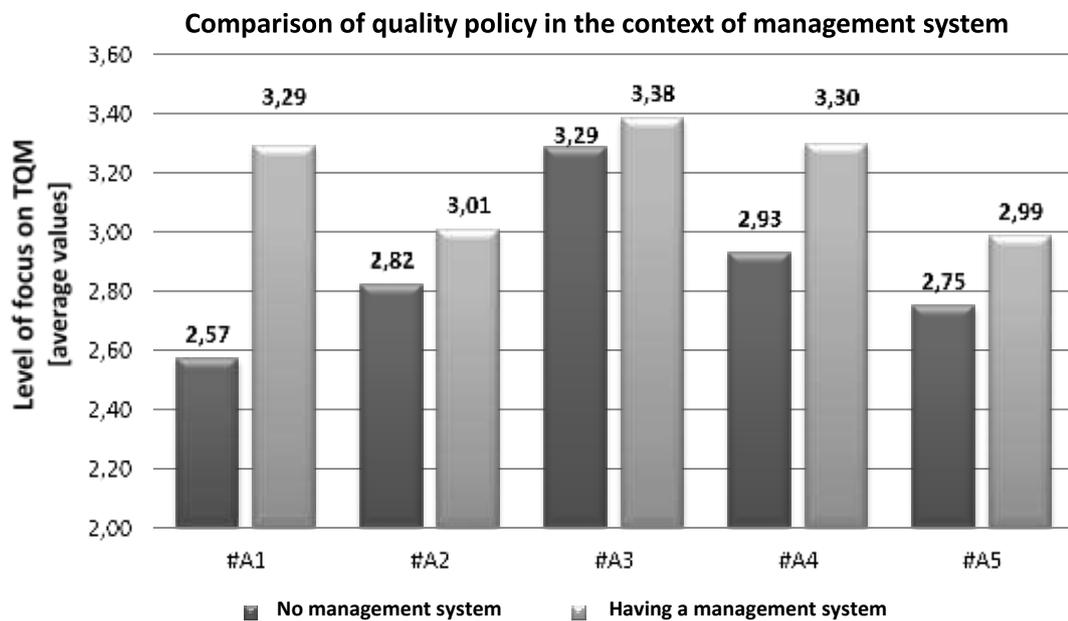


Fig. 5 Comparison of quality policy in groups of enterprises having a management system

Source: own work

For obvious reasons, having a certified management system forces the enterprises to implement the requirements of the norms concerning the HR policy. It concerns, in particular, the requirements in terms of qualifications and trainings stipulated in each of these systems. It can be assumed that all the aspects of the quality policy will receive higher ratings in this group of enterprises. The research results confirm this assumption. In the group of enterprises with a management system, the average value of rating of all 5 aspects amounted to 3.19. In the other group it was 2.87. It is worth emphasizing, that apart from aspect #A1, no significant differences in the average ratings of other aspects were noticed.

COMPARISON OF QUALITY POLICY IN ENTERPRISES OF DIFFERENT LEVELS OF INDEPENDENCE

One of the determinants of quality policy is the independence of the senior management when it comes to policy establishment and implementation. It is no secret that the internal authorities apart from imposing quality standards quite often also supervise and enforce them. During the research, the independence of an enterprise when it comes to creating quality policy was identified. Respondents indicated the source of the procedures and standards concerning quality. The studied enterprises were classified into one of the following groups according to:

- Full independence – procedures and standards of quality are determined by the management of the enterprise

- National dependency – the procedures and standards of quality are determined by external national management
- Foreign dependency – the procedures and standards of quality are determined by external foreign management

The research results presented in Fig. 6 concern 164 enterprises for which the independence form was determined. In the studied group of enterprises, 68 claimed full independence, 19 stated national dependency and 77 declared their dependence in terms of quality on foreign management.

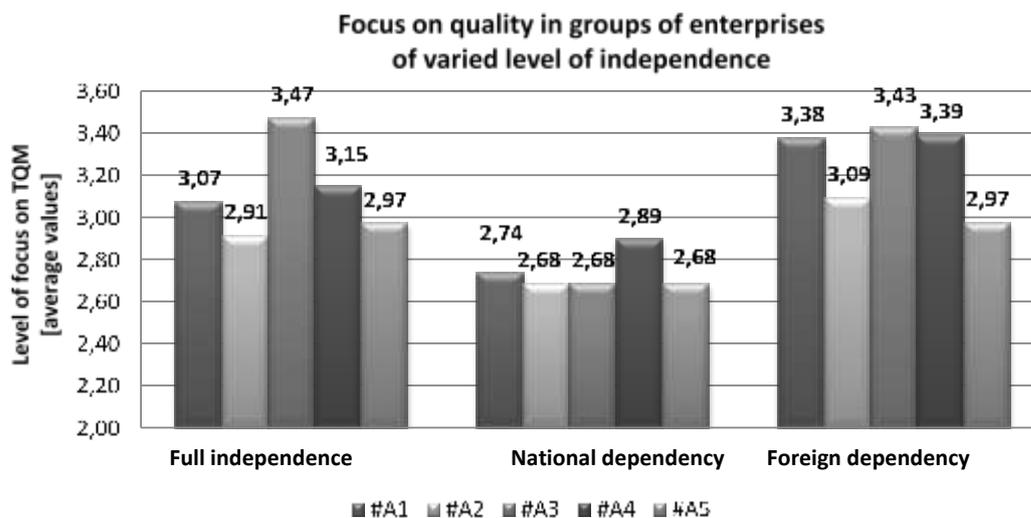


Fig. 6 Assessment of the aspects of quality policy among 3 groups of enterprises with various levels of independence

Source: own work

The research results prove that the enterprises that depend on foreign management are more focused on quality in the cultural and social area. This group of enterprises gave the highest average rating for almost all of the aspects.

The situation is different when it comes to national dependency. The enterprises from this group are characterized by lower level of focus on quality in all aspects. The results of the assessment of quality policy in aspect #A3 are interesting. It appears that the employees of the enterprises that are fully independent gave the best rating for the support they receive from the management when it comes to carrying out their duties.

CONCLUSIONS

The Quality Policy should be a basis for establishing quality goals, creating process structure and internal quality standards. It should also determine the actual manner of quality management, managerial practices and employee behavior. As a consequence, it should decide how the enterprise will be perceived on the market and about the final business success.

The research of the actual Quality Policy in the organizations is a challenge. It is not worth to assess the quality policy only on the basis of declaration given by

the highest management. Declarations often do not have a lot in common with the actual image of the organization. The anonymous survey questionnaire carried out among the middle and lower management allows – to a wide extent and also quite reliably – to assess the quality policy.

The results of the research prove that the focus on quality in the social and cultural area in the studied enterprises amounts to 3.14 on a scale from 1 to 5. Among the studied enterprises, the quality policy aspect that received the highest rating was the support the employees receive from the management during the implementation of their obligations (3.83). The aspect that received the lowest rating was the extent to which the employees were motivated to carry out their duties (2.95).

The enterprises that focused the most on quality in the social and cultural area are the large ones. In this group, the average value of ratings of all aspects is at the level of 3.35. In small enterprises it is 2.67 and in medium ones 2.92.

The research results allow to state that having a certified management system supports the quality focus. Yet, apart from the approach to the development of the employee qualifications, no significant differences in the other assessments of quality policy aspects were noticed.

The enterprises that depend on the foreign management are more quality-oriented in the cultural and social area than the fully independent ones and than those being managed from national headquarters. It is worth emphasizing that the employees of the enterprises that are fully independent gave the best rating for the support they receive from the management when it comes to carrying out their duties.

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Abstract: The objective of this article is to present the results of research concerning the assessment of the actually implemented Quality Policy in social and cultural area of selected industrial enterprises. In the first part of the article, the essence of the Quality Policy and its implicational meaning for the functioning of the enterprise in the scope of quality were described. What is more, the study also contains the problems associated with analyzing the quality policy. The main part of the article contains the results of research carried out in the years 2015-2019 among 166 industrial enterprises carrying out their activity in Poland. The objective of the research was the assessment of the actually implemented quality policy in the enterprises. The data was obtained on the basis of survey carried out among representatives of middle management in each enterprise. Statistical analysis of the results allowed to assess the quality policy in groups of enterprises depending on their size, management system and the so-called level of independence in management.

Keywords: quality, quality policy, quality cultur, quality management, quality management system, QMS, TQM