The transfer of management knowledge to Africa:
TQM in West African agro-industrial firms

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"Knowledge is generated in different language systems, organizational cultures and work groups. If the context changes (e. g. culture), knowledge also changes"

Venzin (1998)

INTRODUCTION

It is a well known fact that in the western world the transfer of specific knowledge about American management got underway after 1948 with the American Marshall Plan (Locke 1996; Djelic 1998). Till the 1980s the American management approach pretended to have universal applicability. However, by that time it became confronted with three new economic realities: diminishing American influence in Europe; an inability to compete with Japanese imports, and an invasion of Japanese implants (Locke 1996, 166). Inspired by quality control issues which the American consultant E. W. Deming had introduced, Japanese firms were concentrating on continuous improvement and value for money. The 'conscious importation' of American concepts was deliberately adapted to Japanese needs and purposes and "absorbed into its own mores and customs" (Enomoto 1995, 240). The transformation that took place questioned the essence of American managerialism with its unique focus on costs and sales. The Toyota Motor Company became the learning organization par excellence while it realized the highest standards in quality, price and product variety in the shortest delivery times by allowing a free flow of information. The Japanese approach generated a particular management concept: Total Quality Management (TQM) which soon turned into an object of emulation (Turnbull 1986). "Japan arrived in Europe through an American conduit and what the Americans reported was selective and often misunderstood or even wrong" (Locke & Kaden 2004, 7) Japan's stagnation during the late 1990s, however, turned out to be an outcome of American and European success in adopting the quality revolution of the 1980s (Whittington & Mayer, 2000).

In post-colonial Africa this shift in dominance of management knowledge did not stay unnoticed and strengthened self–confidence amongst African businessmen, entrepreneurs, civil servants and managers. Japanese management knowledge became attractive while it was founded on a cultural setting which seemed close to African cultural and business realties. In South African it stimulated a process of reconsidering indigenous African management practices. The outcome was a management practice called Ubuntu, which was rooted in African cultural traditions (Mbigi 1997; Mangaliso 2001; Karsten & Illa 2004 and 2005; Heuvel 2008).

In West Africa TQM drew broad attention for particular reasons. Sub-Saharan African countries had to deal with Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP) which international funding institutions like the IMF and World Bank had imposed to create sustained economic growth and promote industrial business activities by privatizing state owned companies (Tidjani 1998). This setting stimulated the interest for Japanese management knowledge and the way it could be implemented.

This paper addresses the issue of the application of quality programs like TQM and HACCP in a post-colonial West African context. Has the Japanese approach been imitated in the sense that there was a conscious effort to reproduce particular behavior as a model? Could the process of dissemination in West Africa be seen as a kind of mimicry which implies an overall relation of identification? Or has a hybrid form of African management been developed?

While we were interested in the translation and implementation of TQM in a completely different post-colonial cultural and economic setting, we studied how the original concept was put into motion, how it has been decanonised and turned '*in actu'* (Bhabha 1994, 228). This paper focuses on the institutional and managerial determinants of the transfer of TQM. It analyzes in particular the inception of TQM in some African firms in the agro-industry in two countries: Burkina Faso and Senegal. Although both countries had a similar colonial background, we try -based on a comparative analysis- to reveal how some of the main large West African firms, which have -from an early date- been involved in quality policies, learned to translate TQM in different *hybrid* forms.

Knowledge transfer

It is usually believed that with the computer age knowledge workers have become a common feature. Many people nowadays are employed in sectors where they create, release, transfer, receive and utilize information. In order to exploit systematically the human knowledge in their organizations large American companies have been involved in the creation of a concept called *knowledge management* without adapting too much their managerial structures and working patterns. Wilson (2002, 31) became rather cynical about this form of knowledge management while it turned into a management fad" promulgated mainly by certain consultancy companies and the probability is that it will fade away like previous fads".

Before the information & communication technologies (ICT) came of age, however, Japanese firms had already created TQM based on worker participation in production planning so that knowledge could be commonly shared. Toyota in particular had developed an indigenous production system compatible with local conditions which fitted its self-testing and adapting approach. The extensive recording of experiences was vital for an enduring transfer of knowledge. It took the West quite some time before it admitted that "it was management, not the production workers, who needed to recognize that the creative potential of a large section of the workforce had been wasted for years" (Donkin 2001, 215). Notwithstanding, TQM attracted attention in a broad manner while it placed quality first, in order for organizations to reduce costs and improve productivity and democratized the use of knowledge within firms. TQM 'right-time-first' principle put ownership of quality in the hands of shop floor staff empowering them to take responsibility for producing quality goods by continuous problem-solving activities and the quality organization. Together with a growing interest in the shift from blue color to knowledge workers and the increasing role of knowledge within firms, management literature began to focus on the topic of the transfer of knowledge.

Generally stated, this focus on the transfer draws attention to the characteristics of knowledge (i.e. content) the means through which it is transferred (i.e. process) and when such transfers can be considered successful in terms of outcome. Within its discourse the focus on the impact of institutional variations which would inevitably affect such transfers, gained increasing attention.

Content

The initial stream of literature addressing the content became fascinated by the popularity of certain management concepts propagating particular techniques which can be easily transferred. Knowledge production was seen as comprised of knowledge producers, knowledge disseminators and end-users. Managers became interested in management concepts "which are established by the reputation of a particular country (e.g. Japan), Company (e.g. General Electric), manager (e.g. Jack Welch), consulting firm (e.g. McKinsey), educational institution (e.g. Stanford), or professor/consultant (e.g. Peter Drucker). That is the source of a particular concept" (Nohria & Eccles 1998, 289). These popular management concepts were casted in attractive labels like Management By Objectives (MBO) and implicitly suggest that the knowledge which will be transferred has a proven record of past usefulness and successfulness. Soon it was discovered that many of these techniques obtained some fashion characteristics. Abrahamson (1996, 257) introduced a model of the 'diffusion of an innovation' to analyze these fashions which received widespread attention from the community of scholars investigating the trends of management techniques (Benders & Van Veen, 2001; Giroux 2006; Parush 2008). Abrahamson (1996, 257) defines a management fashion as "a relatively transitory collective belief, disseminated by management fashion setters, who believe that a management technique leads to rational management progress". Management fashion setters are consulting firms, management gurus, the business mass-media publications and the business schools. They have an aptitude to continuously redefine both theirs and fashion followers' collective beliefs about these techniques. This creates ambiguity while the nature of the relationship between actions and results, or the precise reasons for success or failure to replicate the knowledge in a new setting cannot be determined (Reed & Defillippi, 1990). Literature stressed that even management fashions do not have homogenous and stable components like innovations. A specific management concept is subject to various interpretations (Scarborough and Swan, 2001). Some research drew the conclusion that "any concept must necessarily lend itself to various interpretations to stand a chance of broad dissemination" (Benders & Van Veen 2001, 38). During the diffusion of a management fashion a constant re-interpretation and modification takes place which maintains ambiguity. Yet, 'fashion making' is justified through rhetoric which persuades the fashion followers to believe that the latest technique is both rational and at the forefront of management progress. Rhetoric turns out to facilitate the dissemination of the technique into the fashion-following community of managers.

Next to the content, some authors addressed the process by focusing in particular on the institutional factors which facilitate the transfer of management knowledge. The core rationale of this approach was that pressures of isomorphism in organizational fields drive firms to adopt similar organizational forms (Meyer & Rowan 1977, Zucker 1991; Scott 1995). Dimaggio & Powell (1983) mapped unifying

institutional pressures as coercive, mimetic and normative forces. Researchers adopting the institutional approach were primarily interested in bandwagon activities i.e. diffusion processes whereby firms adopt an organizational innovation not because of their individual assessments of the innovation's efficiency but because of a bandwagon pressure caused by the sheer number of companies that have already embraced the innovation (Abrahamson & Rosenkopf 1993).
Jackson (2001) has described this approach as driven by an *externalist* orientation and by emotion. He underscores that this approach explains content analyses and institutionalization by utilizing the metaphors of the market and fashion which stress that the creation, dissemination and adoption of new management concepts and techniques which are developed in one part of the world (dominantly the western world) are 'consumed' in other parts. However, it stayed unclear when and how management concepts and techniques are interpreted and implemented differently in different organizational structures and activities.

Internalist orientation

The *internalist* orientation moved away from the fashion perspective and broadened the scope by looking at management knowledge in general and how it is being applied (outcome). It started more or less with Boisot (1995) and Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995) who drew a distinction between explicit and tacit forms of knowledge. Explicit refers to knowledge that is documented, structured (techniques, methods) and easily transferable. Codifiability and teachability became labels to underline the explicit characteristics of particular management knowledge. 'Tacit', at the other hand, refers to knowledge that resides in the human mind, manifests itself in behavior and perception and is hard to transfer. Tacit knowledge may form a barrier to knowledge transfer between people, because it is slow, costly, uncertain, un-codifiable and complex (Riusala & Suutari, 2000). Different definitions of *transfer* (Zander & Kogut 1995), *diffusion* (Martin & Beaumont 1998) and *flow* (Gupta & Govindarajan 1991) have been introduced to cover the complicated links between explicit and implicit knowledge when discussing the successful adoption of new techniques.

The Recipient

The fashion literature has treated fashion followers (managers and other employees) as gullible and passive receivers of management fashions, but it is more realistic to perceive them as having an interactive relationship with the fashion setters (Benders and Van Veen 2001; Giroux 2006). Szulanski (1996) has explored psychological factors which clarify how the recipient of particular management knowledge behaves and the internal organizational context within which the transfer takes place (cf. Minbaeva 2007). The recipient may lack the motivation to accept knowledge coming from the outside. This reluctance can result in foot dragging, passivity, feigned acceptance, hidden sabotage or outright rejection of implementing new management knowledge. Next to a lack of motivation, some recipients may lack an absorptive capacity to utilize outside sources of knowledge. Due to their in-ability to value, assimilate and apply knowledge the transfer then becomes ineffective. Effective knowledge transfer is realized when the knowledge is retained i.e. when the recipient demonstrates the ability through his 'retentive' capacity to institutionalize the utilization of new knowledge.

The topic of the context is mainly studied by focusing on the role of headquarters of a multinational and how they instruct subsidiaries to implement particular management knowledge. The success of the transfer of a technique will then be affected by the compatibility between the values implied by the new practice which is required and the values underlying the culture of an organizational unit. When the compatibility is low, there is a barrier preventing an effective knowledge transfer (Szulanski 1996; Riusala & Suutari 2000). An arduous (distant, difficult, problematic) relationship is one with low trust, low intimacy and low ease of communication. These kind of studies (Kostova 1999; Kostova & Roth 2002; Hewett et al. 2003) usually focus on the relational context within multinationals positioning it within the broader socio-cultural context within which multinationals operate to transfer and implement specific management techniques.

The transfer process revisited

In order to be successfully implemented, practices concerning quality issues have to be consistent with a specific institutional and organizational environment. Although it cannot be denied that TQM at a particular moment obtained features of a fashion, the quality issue maintained a genuine character. Quality practices have to be appropriate for the situation i.e. fit the institutional as much as the local organizational setting (Morgan & Kristensen 2006; Björkman et al. 2006). The prevailing literature addresses institutions as "shared, collective understandings or rules of conduct reflected in laws, rules, governance mechanisms, and capital markets, which help to define observed patterns of market exchange" (Hitt et al., 2004). Institutional arrangements influence the development of national economies as well as organizational structures and managerial acts.Usually a distinction is being drawn between three major types of 'pillars' that affect organizations:

- the *regulatory* pillar where a powerful constituency, such as the government, mandates behaviors and sets rules such as laws and treaties,
- the *cognitive* pillar where organizations in situations of uncertainty adopt patterns exhibited by organizations in their environment that are viewed as successful and constitute a reliable nature of reality, and
- the *normative* pillar, which emphasizes the cultures, values and norms that guide social behavior (Björkman & al. 2006; Hewett et al. 2003; Scott 2001).

The differences and similarities among the regulatory, cognitive and normative pillars are conducive for the way knowledge will be transferred. When the institutional distance is large, it will be difficult to transfer knowledge in a proper manner.

However, if we turn to the post-colonial African reality and study the transfer of TQM, there is more at stake than just an institutional distance which has to be overcome. In 1984 Ford Motor Company for example sent American consultants to train South African managers Japanese management techniques. The company was surprised that the impact was minimal (Christie 1996). Bhabha (1994) has stressed that the discourse on the transfer of knowledge itself is to be blamed for failures of transfer. This discourse in general justifies its approach by the conviction that the knowledge to be transferred improves the performance of firms. It takes the institutional embeddedness as a less relevant side-issue. If the transfer fails, it is blamed as an in-adequate mimicry by the recipient. The disseminated management knowledge is not being interrogated as partial and disruptive. And yet that is precisely the problem. It simply denies the ability of the ‘Other’ (not the ‘developed Westerner’) to be knowledgeable. It neglects the fact that some cultural differences cannot be covered ‘by the notion of the pluralistic existence of cultural diversity’. An ‘enactive’ or ‘enunciatory’ analysis of interactions between cultures is required (Bhabha 1994, 177) to assess that the nature of the knowledge transferred has primarily been Western and implicitly associated with the superiority of the developed ‘colonial’ world. Colonial superpowers have established their colonial position by *canonizing* in ‘their’ colonies texts and practices that reflected their own cultural superiority. This has forced colonial subjects to emulate a Western role model discarding traditions like village elders who are capable of settling local disputes peaceably in the shade of the baobab. And yet Africa has always been ruled by chiefs who governed by sociability and inter-communal relations (Mutabazi 2002).

In the African context, the discourse on the transfer still legitimizes such a worldview in which the developed world inhibits a distinct reality which must be imposed on the developing world. However, there are “conflicts between African and Western values which are evident in numerous aspects of managerial work. The African managerial style places greater emphasis on moral rather than on material incentives. Moral incentives are considered to be more meaningful and long-lasting. Indeed, wages are the property of the family not the individual; consequently, monetary incentives have little effect in performance, unless they are paid to the collectivity […]. Western management approaches presume the desirability of taking risks, and value work motivation. In most African countries, the quality of life, and the value attached to personal time exceed any desire to accumulate wealth. “Positive interpersonal relationships are valued above money” **(**Grzeda & Assogbavi (1999) in Jackson 2004, 116). Post-colonial management practices seemed to be more influenced by the logic of bureaucratic control mechanism than results oriented.

The Bhabhaian view -as Frenkel (2008) has recently labelled it- stresses that only if the disseminated knowledge is seen as partial and disruptive, the ‘Other’ can establish and maintain control. This perspective stresses that the transfer of knowledge is ‘an arena of conflictual hybridization’. Hybrid -meaning of two origins- refers to the emergence of organizational practices which are constituted by different contextual origins. During the process of the transfer of knowledge different cultures located in different institutional settings interact with each other and the knowledge transferred becomes a mixture of two or more cultures. This perspective stresses that the interaction between the management knowledge which is being conveyed and applied in a different setting creates a hybrid form. The actors in an African firm draw on a set of specific African cultural repertoires to implement the transferred management knowledge, which initially were not part of the concept per se. Their response to the transferred knowledge will become embodied and embedded in another set of hierarchical power and institutional relations.

In the case of the transfer of TQM to Africa the situation is even more complicated. While the shop floor experiences TQM as a challenge to re-institutionalize African traditions similar to Japanese ways of commonly sharing knowledge, African managers were reluctant to embrace the concept. They quite frequently had undergone western type training and will have to unlearn principles that are functional in one setting but not in the one they work in. They have to dis-embed themselves from a managerial style which has been imitated from canonized western ‘colonial’ practices before they can properly sustain the implementation of

TQM in the local environment. The Bhabhaian approach helps to understand the impact of the set of institutional repertoires, in particular the normative pillar, at managerial level. Quite some managers were reluctant to comply with the new practice of TQM due to the fact that they have been trained with a literature and practice which was ingrained with western management views dating from the 1970s-1980s.

Burkina Faso

The transfer of TQM to sub-Saharan Africa is a phenomenon of recent date (Wankhade & Dabade 2005). During the institutional and financial crisis of the 1980s West Africa was forced to adopt Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP). Most state companies were privatized and the state progressively disengaged from several sectors of the economy. The topic of management in Africa no longer was the prerogative of scholars and development partners, but became a daily nightmare for the business community (Blunt & Jones 1992). African businessmen and managers were challenged to develop their own management leadership to face new market challenges an international competition. The World Bank, the European Union and United Nations Organization for Industrial Development found it necessary to improve the quality of management. They encouraged putting in place quality management programs. Quite soon the government of Burkina Faso started the introduction of Quality Circles to improve the performance of state administrations and companies. This policy was considered as a move towards the creation of a new management style of Burkinabe companies, centered on the participation and commitment of their employees. Thanks to financial support from the World Bank and Japan, a project concerning Quality Circles started in 1989. The initial steps had a mimetic character. Several different national institutions like the Chamber of Commerce were involved in the foundation of the Burkinabe Quality Circles Association. Training seminars were animated by a Japanese engineer, Miyauchi, from the Union of Japanese Scientists and Engineers (JUSE), which were attended by some 150 Burkinabe managers from state administrations and companies. While the evaluation of five companies which had implemented Quality Circles was a success, the World Bank financed study trips to Japan and company visits in emergent Asian countries like the Philippines, Singapore and Malaysia. On July 9, 1991 the first national day for quality was commemorated. A ‘training the trainers’ program was put in place and the trainers were sent to Japan. The Burkinabe Quality Circle Association (BQCA) effectively institutionalized quality management thinking (i.e. the regulatory pillar). The installation of such a body was reason for the World Bank and the United Nations Organizations of Industrial Development to strongly recommend it to other countries of the area. However, in an evaluation of the ten year experiment of Quality Circles in Burkina Faso, Lim (1999) remarked a lack of involvement by company directors. BQCA became relabeled as the Burkina Association for Quality Management (BAQM) to emphasize the necessity to transform the role of Quality Circles into a promotion of TQM. By empowering teams the managers responsible for the direct coordination of shop floor staff had to change from a ‘police control’ type of role to a team leader role. Empowerment was seen as a way to make people understand their organization as a system based on functions and activities that work together to fulfill the purposes of the organization. The shift from centralization to decentralization, however, did eclipse the traditional organizational pyramid with long formal chains of command and complicated the prevailing channels of in the large companies we studied. Some commentators had already ventured that there might be reluctance amongst Burkinabe business leaders to fully embrace the broader approach due to the fact that they have been trained in the French tradition where the superior behaves autocratically and is expected to act mainly as a benevolent person (Jackson 2004).

Field studies

During a first field investigation over the period April 2003 - August 2004, semi-structured interviews have been organized with 30 company managers and directors of five of the main, large, companies involved formally or informally in the implementation of the TQM approach in three different cities (Ouagadougou, Bobo-Dioulasso, Banfora) in Burkina Faso.

Significant changes occurred within Burkinabe industrial companies on both the organization and performance levels, following the establishment of quality circles practices. Adopting this new approach has been seen as a way for companies to survive in the changing economy with increasing competition. The first change brought about by quality circle activities were the enrichment and enlargement of the organizational structure by creating the function of a quality responsible and acknowledgement of the quality management function at functional and staff level. Another contribution was the ability to identify and often solve crucial organizational problems in a new way. Quality circles created new approaches and improved the use of machines in the production system by no longer relying on expensive orders for spare parts from abroad but by repairing spare parts in their own machine shop. Waste was reduced and efficiency increased. These results have been the outcome of quality circle meetings which created a ‘community of practice’ and facilitated the discussion of specific issues by using evaluation sheets, brainstorming, graphs as well as a chart of merits and demerits.

During a second field investigation (November 2005- February 2006), three case studies (sugar plant, tire producer and textile firm) have been conducted in companies more active in the implementation of QC. About ten superintendents and employees who were involved in the implementation of Quality Circles have been interviewed. All companies had enriched their organizational structure with the installation of the function of a quality responsible and the acknowledgement of the quality management function. Quality circles had obtained particular labels as they were translated into local language like *diaoula* and *bambara*. Meetings of QC groups in different companies were attended to discuss the implementation of TQM. During weekly quality circle meetings it was observed how members would address and freely discuss the way a new method could be implemented and how in a dialogical way a choice was made to solve a problem which subsequently became standard practice. “The quality circle ability to both identify and solve some problems has allowed the sugar company to face the many difficulties that it has been witnessing during the last few years” (interview with a member of a quality circle in the sugar plant).

In two cases the full involvement of general management in the new approach could be detected. Different new techniques and methods became applied after consensual deliberations. The top manager coordinated more like a leader than a ruler, similar to the traditional role of the chief (cf. Ayittey 1991). “The quality circles (QC) have been a formidable training and have allowed an evolution in the mindset of the personnel. In the old days someone could say ‘this is not the field of my father’, indicating that he did not care. Today the same person says: ‘this is my field’, indicating that he cares to maintain its good quality. The notion of the survival of the firm is well integrated in the mentality of the employees” (HRM director of the tire firm in Bobo Dioulasso, 2007). A production manager of the sugar company in Banfora remarked that: “the identification and resolution of certain problems by the QCs have allowed the sugar company to face a number of difficulties over the last few years” (interview in 2006).

Despite the performance of the CQs, there was no system put in place to motivate QC members. There was an insufficient commitment of the hierarchy with QC activities. The scheduling of workshops to ensure quality circle members’ attending the weekly meetings on a regular basis was weak, which handicapped an appropriate functioning of QC in the Burkinabe companies.” Some members of a particular QC were involved in activities in another one without having the impression that management prohibited it. But neither was there any kind of reinforcement or stimulus to do these things” (interview with members of QC in the sugar and cotton factories, 2006). One member of a QC in the cotton factory remarked “that management did not recognize the contribution QCs made to the company. The enthusiasm for the QC activities seems to stop at the shop floor of the firm due to the lack of interest amongst the managers. There was no coffee made available to the members of QCs while they gathered. You do not see the managers who are responsible for the QC office until the BAQM come along for a company visit” (member of QC in the cotton factory, 2007).

In general, however, large Burkinabe firms have embraced TQM via QC as a result of a nation–wide, political willingness, which was stimulated by BAQM, to disseminate a new participatory management style. Quality circle activities brought remarkable shifts in the employees’ mentalities and behavior within the Burkinabe firms which have been studied. Although an increasing commitment of the employees within the firms -as a result of the quality circle practices- could be noticed, the lack of full involvement of general management remains the main obstacle to the full adoption of TQM. Some of the Burkinabe managers we interviewed still clung to a formally fixed power position which was based mainly on their individual leadership qualifications. It turned out that this attitude was based on the French management style (cf. Calori & Woot 1994). The lack of their personal involvement was justified by referring to the French way of structuring an organization bureaucratically. An African version of bureaucracy would focus primarily on the establishment of a community based on the responsibility and involvement of the chief (Ayittey 1991). The transfer of TQM to these Burkinabe firms generated a hybrid form to improve the performance of Burkinabe public and private organizations.

Senegal

In Sénégal our research focused on the fisheries as the main area where a new orientation on quality had obtained serious attention after the introduction of PAS. This private sector is mainly driven by export and very sensitive to quality requirements. While the fisheries are the primary source for foreign currency for Senegal a national committee launched in 1996 a decree « Décision 96/355/CE de la commission du 30 mai 1996 »[1] to promote the export of seafood to Europe. While the

[1] Journal Officiel n° L137 du 08/06/1996 P.0024-0030.

European Union has put in place in 2002 a directive to promote the quality of seafood being exported to its own markets it offered an active support to the Senegalese government to restructure the seafood sector and to implement quality control policies in the fisheries.
Before the active intervention of the European Union the fish industry in Senegal had lacked a structural framework and was composed of a myriad of small fishing companies and a few big ones which did not demonstrate a sense of competiveness amongst each other. Simen (2003) characterized the Senegalese fishing industry as:

- Lacking an efficient system of production
- Lacking production plans as well as clearly defined job descriptions
- Lacking a set of hygienic prescriptions and routines
- Dealing with recurring problems concerning the quality of exported fish
- Coping with frequent returned deliveries due to poor quality which led to increasing costs
- Not respecting delivery times nor maintaining consistent contact with clients
- Having an organizational structure which lacked quality superintendents
- Having a centralized and very hierarchical business structure.

With the active support of the French Development Agency (l'Agence Française de Développement: AFD) two projects (Fonds d'Aide à la Coopération: FAC) have been conducted to introduce and institutionalized a quality improvement program within the fisheries. The first project focused on the improvement of quality control of the products; the other project addressed the issue of the infrastructure of the production and distribution processes as well as the training of 'quality' supervisors. The second project required ten times more in finance compared to the first one and targeted for an improvement of the management of resources as well as technical and health training of the teams responsible for the maintenance and execution of the production process. A HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points) approach has been put in place. HACCP had originally been developed by the American company Pillsbury and NASA and is based on a zero defect policy. In the 1970s this approach has been introduced in the food sector to secure sanitary requirements in food processing. Soon this approach became related to the TQM as an identical policy. For Senegal this new approach required large investments of the companies to improve the building, health and sanitation as well modern equipment to process the fish.

Field research

The first exploratory research has been undertaken in 2004 by interviewing 12 directors and superintendents.In 2007 a second field study has been undertaken to understand the transitions which had been taking place in the Senegalese fisheries. Interviews were conducted with 16 directors, superintendents and employees of two foreign (Chinese and Spanish) and two local companies, which had been French at an earlier stage.All companies are located in Dakar. The research was meant to reveal which improvements had been realized after introducing TQM.
Quite some improvements could be noticed concerning the organizational structure, the work system, the maintenance of contacts with clients and company performance. In particular, the companies decided to:

- install a responsible manager for the application of TQM principles;

- provide a guide for all companies to guarantee best quality practice within the industry;
- recruit a person responsible for quality in the sector as well as a veterinarian
- put in place a laboratory for the sector and auto-control
- compose pluri-disciplinary teams to overlook quality issues
- implement a tracking system to correct mistakes in the production or delivering process.

Between the moments of the two investigations of 2004 and 2007 the sector had reorganized and heavily invested in the application of HACCP.The quality of the products had improved as well as labor conditions, health and sanitary circumstances. Production costs decreased and market shares for example in the European Union increased.

“The day-workers and the personnel today are aware of the reasons to improve the quality of the products. At a particular moment there were too many return deliveries stagnating the production process. While employees were involved in dealing with these issues, there was some anxiety about the continuation of their jobs. So the day-workers began to focus more on the quality requirements. They actually have been the first ones who responded to situations of non-compliance. Nowadays they frequently interrupt the production process to correct mistakes, that is, after I have been consulted. So, in general the problems with the employees have diminished seriously” (quality director of one the local fish factories, Dakar 2007).

The persons in the companies’ who have been interviewed underscored that, taking into consideration the micro biological analyses, the level of quality of the products is quite satisfying.An external assessment by the European Union in 2007 approved the increase of the overall quality. Although competition increased, production output stayed stable or increased for some of the firms since 2005.

In general the implementation of the HACCP system has contributed to the improvement of the quality of the fish products and the performance of the firms in the industry. This situation has improved the commercial ties with the European Union as well as with other international markets. However, the lack of interest amongst some of the Senegalese managers, due to the bias in the application of HACCP, hampered a real dynamic approach of TQM. The HRM manager of one of the local fish factories remarked that “the African tradition is to talk. However, you learn more while you talk directly with the employees instead of participating in management meetings. One-day I went spontaneously to the production floor to discuss with the day workers. There I learned that there was a conflict between them and superintendents of the production”. The lack of joined cooperation puts the continuation of the actual performance of these firms under pressure. HRM policies still have to be improved like activities in terms of permanent training and an active involvement of personnel in the overall production and canning activities (job-rotation and the right to autonomously decide line stoppages). Quality awareness, taking responsibilities and continuous improvement were not too difficult to be transferred, but still require more support from management. Compared to the case of Burkina Faso where the policy of QCs was mainly focusing on the management of employees, in Senegal the application of HACCP primarily focused on the control the quality of the products. In the Senegalese firms managers do not take much time to listen and talk with the employees. A participative management style might improve the applicability of TQM. As the quality assurance manager of one of the fish factories stated:"the interaction between the managers responsible for production and quality with the rest of the management is a complicated matter while these last ones do not feel themselves involved in production and therefore discard the quality topic"(interview in Dakar 2006).The hybrid form of TQM in Senegal has so far mainly been an outcome of an institutional and organizational 'customized' solution due to external pressures to deal with quality issues.

Results

If we compare the two hybrid forms of TQM in both countries the following conclusions can be drawn.

Whereas the interest for TQM in Burkina Faso was mainly driven by political considerations, the TQM policy in Senegal had been mainly driven by financial considerations and external pressure.

The approach of the Burkinabe management was different compared to the Senegalese one despite the fact that TQM had in both cases seen governmental intervention. Vertical transfer of TQM was at stake in Burkina Faso. Expatriates like Japanese engineers came over to consult about the internalization of TQM. Horizontal transfer mechanisms were applied by putting in place centers of excellence which hosted management training and development (through bench marks) and provided manuals to managers willing to implement the new concept. A recontextualization of TQM certainly took place.

Such an overall, commonly shared interest in TQM including HACCP was lacking in the Senegalese case, where purely economic reasons drove the implementation of quality control. In some of the Senegalese companies there even were serious conflicts between the managers responsible for production and quality and between those of production and accounting whereas in the Burkinabe situation there was a vivid dialogue about quality improvement.

Although during the weekly quality circle meetings where Burkinabe employees and superintendents collegially discussed issues in an attempt to find consensual solutions, the level of absence of directors was a serious complaint, the overall impression amongst the staff was that TQM improved working conditions. In the case of Senegal the hierarchic Senegalese superiors did not demonstrate much interest in the discussions which were taking place, nor did they provide much simulation or motivation, which in Africa are seen as very important cultural values. The fact that some of these fishing firms were subsidiaries of large non-African companies,with the parent companies trying to homogenize practices with the recipient units in Senegal, may limit an indigenous hybrid form of TQM. The tacit factors in TQM prevent an accurate imitation of source knowledge, but require particular capabilities and competencies of the local managers.

Conclusion

According to Masango's (2003) view "we are now faced with the challenge of nurturing and shaping new models of African leadership. Our heritage is important as we develop new concepts of African leadership. We need leaders who will help Africa to become innovative. The only way African leaders can be effective is by addressing the problems that are affecting their followers". Our research has indicated that part of the development of African firms requires a re-conceptualization of African management itself.

Bhabha (1994) has warned for a simplistic mimicry between western management thinking and post-colonial Africa. The situation is more complex as our research has intended to demonstrate. African managers have been trained and inhaled traditional western colonial as well as post-colonial management views, which quite often have prevented them to include in their own practices the African realities because they see them as traditional and irrelevant. The hybridization of African management practices -even if they deal with cosmopolitan concepts like quality and quality assurance- will be facilitated and its meaning better understood if the literature on the transfer of knowledge starts by respecting the 'Other' and by admitting that the knowledge which is being transferred is partial. Learning organizations in Africa dealing with TQM may be able to incorporate TQM as long as it fits their institutional and organizational background. Support by African management is essential but can only become effective if they are able to unlearn the old fashioned management thinking from the colonial west and develop -to use a metaphor- an 'Africaness' of their management practices by not only delegating authority and sharing information with subordinates as chiefs traditionally did, but also by allowing more dialoging to better understand the tacit factors in human interactions which focus on the sharing of particular management knowledge.Developing such an appropriate African management discourse in sub-Saharan countries is an attempt to reinscribe African realities as key to building responsive and responsible firms.

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