Restructuring the Employment Relationship in South-Eastern Europe?
Total Quality-Based Changes on Managers’ Careers and Job Security

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Abstract
Purpose: This paper addresses the generic research question of how promising management practices such as TQM initiatives, affect employee relations in South Eastern European (SEE) countries by focusing on managers’ professional lives. In particular, this study focuses on the effects of TQM programmes on Middle Managers’ (MMs’) career prospects and job security.

Methodology/Approach: A multi-modal research approach was applied based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. 1800 Middle Managers’ from seventy-three (73) service organizations in both the public and private sectors participated in the research (19 and 54 respectively).

Findings: The implementation of TQM programs was found to have a positive impact on MMs’ careers and job security. Nevertheless, it was related mostly to the ‘hard’, rather than the ‘soft’, side of TQM. The strong impact of TQM practices on MMs’ responses to various aspects related to their physical work, as compared to the small impact of the ‘soft’ side, implies a more pragmatic view of restructuring of the employment relations covenant due to the application of management models in SEE region.

Research Limitations/Implications: The business literature has presented limited measurement tools for the ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ aspects of TQM. This paper provides a new, more reliable, and valid measurement of both sides of TQM. More research is required in order to further verify the use of such a measurement tool.

Implications: Managers should be aware of a somewhat more linear path to career progression and job security through the use of ‘hard’ quality management practices while anticipating less importance to be given to concepts such as empowerment and employee involvement.

Originality/Value: This study expands our understanding of how industrial relations can be formed from the application of promising management practices. In particular, it argues that managers’ familiarity with the ‘hard’ side of TQM seems to both positively and negatively influence career development and job security, whilst being influenced by employment sector and educational background.

Key-words:
Employment Relationships, Career Prospects, Job Security, Organizational Change, TQM, Middle Managers, South East European Region, Service Industry.

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Introduction

A number of management models have dramatically changed Employment Relationships (ER) over the last 50 years or so. Two main areas of discussion that have been affected are employee career development and job security. In particular, Middle Managers (MMs), have more closely reviewed their future career prospects since a variety of organizational changes have significantly impacted their career development and job security. This has been caused, primarily, due to changes which are simultaneously beneficial to organizations but create confusion to industrial relations (Baruch, 2003). Moreover, the main knowledge that we have regarding the impact of management models on ER has emerged from organizations operating in western countries, which represent what have been termed Anglo-Saxon business systems (Sally, 1996; Dufey et al, 1997; Pauly and Reich, 1997; Whitley, 1999). These business systems operate under similar principles. In the Anglo-Saxon model “…inter-firm relationships tend to be more ad hoc and market-driven…” and there are “…highly formalized and elaborate internal financial control systems…[with a] predominant role [given] to the finance function” (Ferner and Quintanilla, 1998, p.715). Furthermore, there are flexible external labour markets and high rates of employment change (Whittaker, 1990).

Finally, the Anglo-Saxon systems emphasise generalist management career progression rather than the specialist one (Evans et al., 1989). Nevertheless, there is limited knowledge coming from non-Anglo-Saxon countries, which do not have the above features but are keen towards the adoption of promising management systems. A prime example includes those nations in South Eastern European (SEE).

In this respect, the present study addresses the extent to which managerial changes affect employment relationship in SEE. In particular, it emphasizes critical aspects of MMs’ work, like career prospects and job security that have been affected by the application of managerial changes like Total Quality Management (TQM). The paper is structured in two parts. The first part reviews the literature related to the relationship between TQM and career development in general and MMs’ career prospects and job security in particular. The second
part analyses and discusses the main findings and conclusions of the research conducted in four (4) SEE countries.

The Changing Nature of Middle Managers’ Career in a Changing Organization

Nowadays, the ability to manage knowledge resources is very important for a business to be able to change, adapt and grasp new opportunities in a fast changing environment (Binney, 2001). As one of the most essential working groups in organizations, MMs are responsible for accomplishing strategic change objectives and plans; however, their role has dramatically transformed because of organizational structural shifts from traditional to flatter ones with less scalar chain of authority differentiation. They seem to be taking on the position of Knowledge Dealers by linking organizational knowledge inside as well as outside the organizational environment, diffusing this knowledge to other structural layers, and implementing and facilitating the application of strategic decisions (Psychogios, et al., 2008a; Psychogios, et al., 2008b).

In addition, MMs have become more ‘generalist’ oriented with increased responsibilities for a variety of tasks including the work of their subordinates (Clarke, 1998; Psychogios, et al., 2008a). Consequently, they find themselves in many contradictory and paradoxical situations in their everyday activities facing continuous change and uncertainty. Organizations are considered less certain places for MMs because, as Clarke (1998) argues, “they [organizations] expect their workers to be both more autonomous and more of a team, their managers to be more delegating and more controlling” (p.192). Moreover, some authors (e.g., Gates, 2006; Stoker, 2006) argue that their role is essential in any type of organization (traditional or innovative), but it has changed from being more task-oriented to relationship and people oriented. Deepak (1999) argues that MMs have to focus on “knowledge creation, knowledge transfer, challenging the status quo, change facilitation, and values clarification” (p.10) in order to be successful. Furthermore, Huy (2001) supports the view that there are four ways in which MMs contribute to organizational change, thus contradicting the “middle manager myth”. An entrepreneurial manager, energetic and innovative, who is capable and
eager to apply his ideas with good interpersonal skills that help him influence the informal networks in favor of the changing environment has been purported; also, MMs tend to harmonize employees’ dispositions and emotional wants with the change and supervise and control the transition.

Furthermore, research on Emotional Intelligence (EI) has shown that it is a useful tool for management development and increasing the promotional readiness of MMs (Langley, 2000). The development of such “soft skills” is the basis for a future manager’s personality. From the research it has been found that senior managers tended to score higher in emotional awareness, innovation and commitment suggesting that they have more control over their feelings and are less likely to react emotionally. For MMs to be on a promotion list they require more effort in enhancing EI. Finally, because of the pressures faced by MMs and their uncomfortable position in the workplace represented as “a piece of meat sandwiched between two slice of bread” (Trent and Schraeder, 2003), self-efficacy is suggested as the very foundation which brings about the success of task accomplishment.

The above new features of MMs’ work in a changing organization seem to bring more problems to their personal career agenda. Numerous studies related to MMs show them as reluctant to organizational change because this could create negative implication in their immediate jobs and in their overall career progression (Young, 2000). Huy (2001) argues that MMs are seen as a group of mediocre, unimaginative, stiff, and sometimes saboteurs, when it comes to change. Also, Dopson and Neuman (1998) summarize the following modifications in companies where MMs seem to oppose changes: empowerment because they lose power in favor of their subordinates; TQM as a specific means as it encourages them to give up tasks like monitoring and auditing; and the introduction of new aspects in employee improvement eliminate MMs’ influence upon them.

Other studies have emphasized the argument that MMs’ positive or negative attitudes towards organizational change are strongly linked to their career development. For example, research conducted in 21 Australian organizations, revealed that MMs perceptions related to organizational change depended on the stage of their career (Davis and Fisher, 2002); career
seems to be linked with the psychological impact of organizational changes on MMs (Dopson and Neuman, 1998). As Gates (2006) underlines, security, job clarity and task load are major concerns for MMs. These facts are supported by a survey which suggests that MM turnover is twice as much as top executives in U.S. (Anon, 2006). Another important aspect related to task overload is the fact that they have responsibilities that they are not trained for (Anon, 2006). This suggests that companies do not pay much attention to their MMs and that their career is endangered. Moreover, leaner and flatter organizational structures have cut layers of management and resulted in downsizing. This has decreased the opportunities for promotion and vertical development mobility making lateral growth more probable through job enrichment (Tzabbar et al., 2003). This fact it is not clearly understood by managers in general and causes job dissatisfaction because they consider it a kind of motivation.

In conclusion, it could be argued that the changing organization does not seem to offer MMs authority ladder opportunities on the basis of technical competence and personal compatibility, but on the ability to change behaviours (e.g., be creative and do things differently). This new role of MMs is much debated and as a result many feel insecure about their jobs and future careers, especially when this is challenged by promising management paradigms such as TQM.

Middle Managers’ Career Advancement through TQM

The emergence of TQM in the contemporary business environment has been considered as a major management alteration in counteracting a series of organisational changes. There are several studies in the literature that view MMs as key players in total quality achievements, while others see a negative impact (Barlett, 1983; Dale and Barlow, 1984; Dale and Hayward, 1984; Ishikawa, 1985; Brennan, 1991; Hill, 1991 and 1995). In addition there are several studies that focus on the role of MMs in a total quality context and the effects that it has on their work autonomy; in particular MMs are very concerned with the effect that TQM might have on the nature of their work (Klein, 1984; Wilkinson, 1999) and their career. For instance, Wilkinson, *et al.* (1993) found that the effect of TQM on MMs was important in that
it made their jobs more demanding, emphasized team-work, people management skills and technical knowledge. Marchington et al., (1994) argue that MMs are skeptical about TQM in terms of loss authority or increased workload. They perceive themselves as losing control over their specialist knowledge and as having to work harder for limited return (Wilkinson, 1993). Furthermore, Wilkinson et al. (1992) suggest that TQM became a source of conflict between competing interest groups. According to Webb (1995) top managers, in their effort to make TQM successful, pressed MMs to change the nature of work. Also, the development of team leaders might have been perceived as a threat to their positional authority (Legge, 2000).

Other studies explore how managers consider the linkages of empowerment and autonomy with TQM rhetoric (Psychogios et al, 2009; Psychogios and Priporas, 2007; Kivimäki et al., 1997; Denham et al., 1997; McLaughlin and Kaluzny, 1990). A study by Holden and Roberts (2004) supports the view that the application of TQM, has had a negative impact on MMs’ autonomy in some countries like the UK, in comparison with others like Holland and Sweden.

The above literature demonstrates a broadly negative attitude of MMs towards TQM; nevertheless, there are studies that view MMs as receiving positive effects from TQM as well. For example, a study by Sommer and Merrit (1994) demonstrated a positive impact of TQM intervention on MMs’ work related issues. In addition, Hill (1995) argues that TQM has a positive effect on MMs insofar as it helps them to effectively do their work and increase their decision-making involvement. A more recent study, Davis and Fisher (2002), suggests that MMs are relatively comfortable not only with the autonomy that they enjoy due to the implementation of total quality programs, but also that they are keen to delegate some of their authority and responsibility to first-line employees. Additionally, Balding (2005) points out that the application of a TQM program in the Australian health-care organizations resulted in great MM involvement and, thus, an enhancement of their responsibility and freedom to act.

Beyond the above literature, there is also, a series of studies concentrating more directly on MMs’ career advancement in relation to TQM application. According to Soltani et al., (2004) the momentum of TQM lays directly upon long-termism which introduces temperance to human resource management sheering away personality development and
immediate career advancement. Moreover, during the past four decades, prominent scholars (e.g., Sholtes, 1997; Hemmings, 2002; Ghorpade et al.; 2005) have argued that the procedures of evaluating personal performance, which is directly associated with career advancement, comes into direct conflict with TQM programmes and paradigms. As Arthur (1996) points out TQM requires convergent approaches between diverse collections of organisational policies and practices.

Similar research evidence shows that performance appraisal systems should be congruent with culture and organizational principles (Murphy and Cleveland, 2001) involving an emphasis on team cohesion and current organisational structures. Employee satisfaction and individual recognition and development formulate a key mechanism in achieving organisational effectiveness, oscillating between short-term performance and a more developmental orientation. As a consequence, the integration of TQM assumptions into performance appraisal, in order to enhance the latter system, is both inevitable and necessary (Masterson and Taylor, 1996). Moreover, MMs seem to have an adverse reaction towards TQM since it eliminates some of their tasks (like monitoring and auditing), perhaps leading them to believe that they will be made redundant (Dopson and Neuman, 1998) and consequently negatively impacting their career prospects. The rationale behind this is that fewer tasks will automatically lead to them losing their jobs. Through TQM the demand for work among MMs can be significantly increased in terms of performing (Lam, 1996). This could have an equally positive or negative career impact as TQM gives them broader and wider organizational responsibilities. As Wright (2006) argues, through TQM application MMs become more involved and integral to the decision making process leading to more demanding jobs with higher responsibilities.

The overall conclusion from the above analysis is that TQM affects MMs in a significant way, thus leading to changing roles and different career development paths. This suggestion leads to numerous debates related to MM career prospects. For instance, MMs do not necessarily see TQM concepts as having a negative effect suggesting they might accept its ideas and practices and they might perceive them in more pragmatic terms. This view is
associated with the contingency view that the effects of TQM should be seen; however, limitations can be observed in the above studies.

Several authors have explored TQM as an *ad hoc* theoretical framework having the form of a quality improvement program while others have examined a specific aspect of the total quality idea (e.g., teamwork, empowerment). Less, however, has been said about how the whole TQM rhetoric, with a set of ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ aspects, influences the working life of managers and their career prospects and job security in particular. Moreover, the majority of studies that emphasized the impact of TQM on MMs’ work are essentially qualitative and very few quantitative studies have looked across organisational boundaries. Finally, the majority of studies have been conducted in western countries where total quality based changes have been well-established. Fewer studies have emphasized a non-western context (Tu *et al*., 2006). In response to these limitations, the present study provides quantitative evidence towards a wide range of MMs and organisations, operating in different sectors, without missing the stronger explanatory advantage of the qualitative approach.

**Methodology**

The key contribution of the present study is that it builds on the above work and identifies and presents a set of ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ aspects of TQM that affect MMs’ career prospects. Therefore, an initial task was to develop a reliable and valid measurement of both sides of TQM (i.e., soft and hard). The development of such measures has been analytically explained in recent work by Vouzas and Psychogios (2007). The methodology and sampling technique has also been analytically presented in the forthcoming work of Psychogios et al., (2009) and is briefly described herein. Table 1 provides the commonly used, representative, and basic ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ concepts and commonly in the majority of texts and academic journals.

*Take in Table 1*

This study adopted an exploratory research approach that is aimed at providing a wide range of data concerning the impact of TQM on ER in SEE. In particular, MMs from
Romania, Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece were investigated. Although, this study was not targeting on a comparative analysis between different counties, it could be considered as primary ground for further research regarding ER in SEE industries as well as other developing countries which have been slower, but keen, to implement promising management programmes.

Nearly 1800 questionnaires were distributed to MMs identified through the National Management Associations and the Economical / Commercial Chambers. A representative range of responses was based on both individual and organizational criteria. The former refers to MM: (1) age, (2) educational background, (3) the level of experience represented by years of work in the particular position, and (4) the functions that they represent (HR, operations, administration, accounting/auditing, etc). The latter refers to: (1) organizational size, (2) organizational life cycle, (3) the country that they operate and (4) organizational policies and procedures towards quality improvement efforts. 782 questionnaires were returned providing for a very healthy response rate of 43%. The questionnaires were returned from MMs working in seventy-three (73) service organizations in both sectors of employment (19 public agencies and 54 private services). The data analysis was based on a mixture of quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Initially, *Exploratory Factor Analysis* (EFA) was used in order to develop groups of items that best represent the complex concept of ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ TQM (Psychogios, 2005; Vouzas and Psychogios, 2007). The diagnostic measure used for testing reliability was *Cronbach’s Alpha*; values .60 are considered acceptable in exploratory research (Robinson et. al., 1991). As Table 2 illustrates, after the purification procedure, three main factors emerged for ‘soft’ TQM principles. The EFA confirmed that only one factor emerged for further exploration for the ‘hard’ side of TQM.

*Take in Table 2*

After the emergence of consolidated TQM measures, different *non-linear regression models* were been developed for MMs’ career development and job security. The models also included six control variables (e.g., age group, educational background, sector of
employment, organizational size and organizational age, country of operation) which aimed to determine and investigate their potential impact on management aspects in relation to TQM. Each multivariate model explored the statistical significance of the above six demographic variables as well as the significance of the perceived awareness of the ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ sides of TQM on MMs’ responses on career development and job security.

Beyond the quantitative approach a more qualitative one was adopted based on 23 semi-structured, randomly chosen, follow-up interviews with MMs who participated in part one of the research project. This stage aimed to investigate the hidden agenda of managers’ attitudes towards the adoption of TQM in relation to their career prospects. Each interviewee had the opportunity to express his/her opinion in any way he/she wished. This discussion contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of the subjects’ attitudes towards several issues. For the purpose of data analysis, open-ended answers were subjected to content analysis and close-ended questions were straightforwardly tabulated. More details regarding the specific qualitative approach can be found in Psychogios and Prisporas (2007).

Findings
The presentation and analysis of findings has been organized according to the research approach adopted. Firstly, the quantitative data are analyzed followed by the exploration of the qualitative ones.

TQM impact on Career Prospects and Job Security
The growing importance of quality within many organisations has often been seen as increasing pressures on employees in terms of job insecurity. Some authors have characterized MMs as the group suffering the most negative impact from QM initiatives. For example, quality improvement policies, as well as the need for a lean and flexible organization, have contributed to job losses and reduced promotion opportunities (Dopson, 1992). Therefore, the MMs of our sample were asked to indicate whether they agree that TQM programmes negatively affected their job security and their career development. Table
3 clearly demonstrates that the majority of our respondents do not see TQM negatively in relation to their career development. The negative effects of TQM appeared significant among a small proportion of MMs. Additional evidence has been found by Collinson et al. (1998), where UK employees reported very high (37%) or moderate (42%) job security in relation to TQM initiatives.

*Take in Table 3*

Also, private sector managers were more likely than public sector managers to indicate that TQM had a negative impact on their careers; however, this difference needs to be seen in the context of the fact that the notion of career is rather limited among those working in public services. In addition, Table 4 indicates a similar finding for public sector managers, since a considerable number reported that, either they do not know or disagree whether their professional development would be promoted by a greater emphasis on the TQM approach. In contrast, according to private sector managers’ views, TQM can improve their career prospects. This finding appears to support Hill’s (1995) view that the acceptance of TQM implementation by MMs is strongly linked with the promotion of career interests.

*Take in Table 4*

From the above descriptive statistical analysis we can conclude that many of the individual aspects of the nature of MMs work have been reported as shifting since the application of total quality programmes. It seems that there is a widespread sense of job security as far as they do not negatively view the implementation of TQM programmes for their personal career prospects. These results seem to support surveys mainly among UK organisations (Poole and Jenkins, 1996; Collinson et al., 1998; Worrall and Cooper, 1999), where many MMs reported similar changes in their sense of job security and career advancement. The picture, however, is altered somewhat when the sample is separated by employment sector. Whilst private sector managers have stated greater career prospects due to TQM programmes, at the same time it seems that career is not an issue among public managers; the latter do not see TQM as a career threat.
In relation to job security and career development there is a reasonable assumption that security and career promotion will encourage a favourable view of TQM. On the other hand, MMs’ career interests may receive the most negative effect from TQM. Thus, the relationship between TQM and MMs’ career prospects can be classified into two distinct perspectives. The first one sees TQM as a threat to managerial power and control over their specialist expertise and, thus, likely to make them feel less secure in their jobs (Wilkinson, 1993). The second view suggests that TQM can be an effective organisational paradigm as long as it is not seen by MMs as a threat to their careers, but in contrast a good opportunity for personal development and promotion (Hill, 1995). The sample of SEE MMs examined mainly disagrees with the potential negative impact of TQM on their jobs. Nevertheless, it is critical to investigate whether positive or negative views of career development and job security have been affected by their awareness and familiarity of TQM principles and practices (Table 5).

**Take in Table 5**

Table 5 demonstrates the results from the multivariate analysis of the collected data regarding job security that MMs feel following the implementation of quality improvement initiatives. As we can observe, there is a significantly negative effect of familiarity with the ‘hard’ aspects of TQM in MMs’ responses to TQM negative impact on job security. This means that the more familiar MMs are with TQM techniques, the less negative they see the relation between TQM and their personal job security. This picture differs, however, among public sector managers. On the other hand, the ‘soft’ elements of TQM have no particular impact regardless of employment sector. This suggests that ‘hard’ management practices are much more important in professional status terms.

This scenario is further supported by the multivariate models developed to explore the potential effect of MMs’ awareness of the two sides of TQM on their responses to career development. The majority of MMs positively view the implications of TQM for their career. This picture is confirmed, however, mainly among private sector managers and less among those that work in public services. Table 6 shows that these opinions are influenced by their
familiarity with the ‘hard’ TQM practices – the more familiar a MM is, the more likely they are to see positive career prospects. Once again, though, this picture holds only for managers working in the private sector. For their counterparts in public organisations more emphasis on TQM does not affect personal career development.

*Take in Table 6*

It is also important to refer to a couple of interesting points that suggest an effect of educational background and age on opinions about TQM’s negative impact on MMs’ job security as well as the positive impact on career development. It would be reasonable to suppose that the higher the education qualification, the higher the possibilities for people to adopt favourable views about TQM. Surprisingly this is happening only for those working in public services suggesting that educational skills contribute to widespread acceptance of managerial changes more in public organizations at the region. In the private service sector, there are issues other than educational level that may affect MMs’ willingness to accept changes, one of which is age. From both regression Tables (5 and 6), we can observe that age plays a significant role in MMs’ attitude towards TQM and career prospects. According to the results shown in Table 5, the younger managers are, the less likely they are to view their jobs as threatened by TQM implementation. In addition, as Table 6 shows, younger managers in the private sector strongly believe that their careers will be promoted through a greater emphasis on TQM. Thus, we can conclude that, at least for the private sector, age plays a critical role on how easily they will accept quality-based changes that may affect their employment relationships.

Beyond these points, the general conclusion from the quantitative analysis is that awareness and familiarity with the ‘hard’ side of TQM plays the most substantial role in private sector managers’ views about their career prospects. For public managers, though, the familiarity with TQM techniques does not affect their careers. As the qualitative data

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1 The negative sign on the coefficient score of independent variable: ‘age’ indicates that when age is decreasing, disagreement of the negative impact of TQM on MMs’ job security is increasing.
demonstrate below, ‘hard’ TQM methods are useful for organisational performance, but have little to do with MM job security and career development.

**MMs Career Prospects and Job Security in Qualitative Context**

The above quantitative results indicate that the ‘hard’ aspects of TQM seem to mainly change aspects of ER of MMs in SEE region; the more they are familiar with TQM techniques, the less likely they are to see their careers in a negative light. According to our qualitative results people who have the appropriate education and specialized knowledge perceive themselves as career ‘hunters’ since their expertise in ‘hard’ management practices can make them important factors for organisations:

> ...The implementation of total quality management practices will only be a threat for the job security of those that do not care and are lazy. In contrast, I believe that with TQM practices the managers’ action field is getting wider especially for those that would like to work harder in achieving quality results and consequently to have great potential for professional progress [Product Manager - Private Bank]

At this point, however, patterns differed according to the employment sector. While the ‘hard’ aspects of TQM appear to equally and positively affect the perceived job security and career development of private managers, public sector MMs’ responses to career prospects appear strongly influenced. The qualitative results suggest that there are different perceptions of the notion of career among public and private sector managers. The concept of career is very important for people working in private companies, whilst it less so for those in public services:

> ...I do not think that the concept of career exists in the Greek public administration as it is known elsewhere [probably he/she refers to private sector or other countries]. Thus, such innovations will not be taken as good career opportunities [Budget Control Administrator – Social Security Agency]

Nevertheless, some of the interviewees who work in public organisations were more skeptical about the adoption of ‘hard’ TQM practices. This attitude indicates that, although career is not considered an important issue in public services, there is always a feeling of threat that inhibits public managers accepting organisational changes. It seems that these changes do not threaten their job security but rather the nature of their work:
...It is true that some employees, especially those in our hierarchical position [the middle level], will feel much more insecure from new management methods. Usually, these methods bring changes related to knowledge of practices that they do not know [Administrator - Tax service]

Thus, a general conclusion emerging from the above analysis is that the orientation that MMs in SEE organizations bring to their individual career prospects in relation to TQM approach is a narrow one – ‘hard management techniques’ only – and not a wide challenge of searching for personal development. Moreover, despite managerial awareness of ‘soft’ TQM concepts and ideas, their level of understanding and knowledge towards these concepts is superficial. This result indicates that TQM has become a substantial issue on the managerial agenda. Nevertheless, SEE organisations have to undertake many steps towards the TQM approach before it may be deemed to be a core organising principle; however, this management method seems to have an initial impact on the way that they see aspects ER, like career and job security, as changing.

The above argument seems to be supported by similar evidence suggesting that TQM has impacted MMs, having affected their perceptions on several aspects of their day-to-day work, such as autonomy and work effort (Psychogios and Wilkinson, 2007; Psychogios et al., forthcoming 2009). This effect, however, has come mainly from their familiarity with ‘hard’ management practices rather than from their awareness of ‘soft’ concepts. This suggests that MMs hold a realistic view of TQM; according to this, although the ‘soft’ side of TQM is something ‘good’ and useful in their minds, it has little to do with organisational reality. The one that really matters is the ‘hard’ side. This seems to be the conclusion of this study as well. Also, according to our interviewees’ perceptions, top managers are committed to TQM since it can help reach targets and promote organisational effectiveness and competitiveness. Interviewees indicated that in, exchange for giving more autonomy and responsibility to MMs in order to promote their careers, top managers expect them to work harder, to achieve quality results and to follow the decisions made at the upper level. In other words, MMs need to take more care of their own career progression in a TQM setting.

Discussion
This study suggests that, although the TQM paradigm has not cut very deep into SEE organisations and managers, it has not yet become a driving force (Vouzas, 1997; Psychogios and Wilkinson, 2007). This seems to be the conclusion in a series of similar studies (Vouzas, 1997; Vouzas and Psychogios, 2007; Psychogios and Wilkinson, 2007; Psychogios and Priporas, 2007; Psychogios et al., 2009). Most MMs seem to accept it and tend to see it as part of particular policies attempting to modernize SEE management systems. MMs see TQM from a more realistic point of view insofar as they see only the ‘hard’ side of TQM as a major driver for their career progression, and less so its ‘soft’ concepts.

This study has shown patterns of relations between MMs’ awareness of the TQM approach and its impact on their career prospects and job security. In particular, those that are most aware and familiar with TQM techniques seem to agree that their career development has been promoted. This evidence suggests that there is not a ‘perfect’ picture delivered by the whole (including ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ aspects) TQM approach according to the promises of many quality gurus. On the other hand, we cannot adopt a pessimistic view - TQM established only new methods of control and intensification of the workforce (Knights, and McCabe, 1999) - which is represented by the critical school of thought (Delbridge et al., 1992; Sewell and Wilkinson, 1992) and argues that TQM and similar management practices have a negative impact on employees’ conduct of work and inhibit their career prospects.

In contrast, our evidence supports a more contingent and pragmatic view of the impact of TQM on managers (Hill, 1991 and 1995; Willkinson et al. 1992, 1993, 1997, 1998; McCabe et al., 1998; Wilkinson, 1999; Psychogios, 2005). More specifically, although most of our respondents see TQM programmes as a useful chance for autonomous performance and promotion, there are different views among people working in different sectors of employment as well as those with different educational background. Table 7 summarizes the findings of our multivariate models developed for each individual aspect and controlled for the three different samples of MMs.

*Take in Table 7*
One major argument that can be supported is that what really matters is the ‘hard’ side of TQM; ‘soft’ principles play a less important role in the reported changes of their work aspects. In contrast, TQM techniques and systems affected most MMs’ professional lives. Their familiarity with ‘hard’ TQM practices indicates that they see a positive impact in their career prospects. If the sample is differentiated according to employment sector, it has been concluded that private managers’ familiarity with ‘hard’ TQM aspects mainly influences their opinions about their jobs. There is, however, no effect among public sector managers. The former managers that have reported, in the qualitative part of the research, that their careers have been promoted, are those with a satisfactory awareness of the TQM approach. In addition their colleagues in public organisations who view less impact on their careers are also those with more developed views and understanding of TQM. Also, our qualitative results indicate that MMs are willing to accept tighter top-management control and work harder in order to contribute to the improvement of the quality outcome, whilst their ER is not threatened, but instead promoted, by TQM changes. This argument seems to support what has been called by Collinson et al. (1998) a disciplined worker thesis. According to this, those workers that are most likely to say they work harder and have tighter management monitoring over them are also those where trust in top-management and acceptance of TQM is higher.

Research has shown that MMs career progression has become more difficult nowadays and the promotion issues and job security are being reduced as hierarchical structures are slowly eroded. This study indicates that in SEE organizations that have applied various TQM approaches, some aspects of ER like career management and development, are no longer a responsibility of the organization itself but of the individual themselves. They are the ones who need to be self-driven, motivated and emphasize their multidirectional interest to learn and improve not only technical skills, but also the soft skills that give them the ability and empowerment initiative to manage human capital most effectively. Finally, it could be supported that, even if MMs have some advantages and disadvantages of the application of total-quality based organizational changes, their place in organizations is not in jeopardy. In
contrast, organizational changes lead to alterations in their role – which aids them in seeing their career from a horizontal perspective.

Beyond these findings, it can be supported that ER in SEE are under restructuring since the issue of the adoption of promising management practices, such as TQM, is a major part of the organizational agenda; however, more research is needed in order to clarify whether this restructuring process of ER is seen as beneficial to employees, and especially for those working in organizations operating in turbulent and transforming business environments.

References


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Table 1
‘Soft’ & ‘Hard’ TQM Concepts & Practices Identified in TQM Literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TQM ‘Soft’ Concepts</th>
<th>TQM ‘Hard’ Practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Total Employee Involvement</td>
<td>1. Statistical Process Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Continuous Improvement</td>
<td>2. Quality Function Deployment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Continuous Training</td>
<td>3. ISO 9000 series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Teamwork</td>
<td>4. Pareto Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Empowerment</td>
<td>5. Matrix Diagram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Democratic Management Style</td>
<td>7. Tree Decision Diagram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Culture Change</td>
<td>9. Fishbone or Ishikawa Diagram</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2
The purification of procedure of EFA: Factor Loadings for ‘soft’ TQM principles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TQM SOFT ELEMENTS</th>
<th>Factor A</th>
<th>Factor B</th>
<th>Factor C</th>
<th>Name of new Variables</th>
<th>Alpha Coefficients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continuous Improvement</td>
<td>0.780</td>
<td>0.705</td>
<td></td>
<td>SoftTQM1 Continuous Improvement &amp; Training</td>
<td>0.6596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Employee Involvement</td>
<td>0.803</td>
<td>0.795</td>
<td>0.469</td>
<td>SoftTQM2 Total Employee Empowerment and Involvement</td>
<td>0.7054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Management Style</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SoftTQM3 Quality Driven Culture</td>
<td>0.6219</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extraction Method: Principal Components Analysis – Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser

Normalization

Table 3
MMs’ Responses to TQM and Job Security

“I feel that my job security has been negatively affected by the introduction of TQM policies within my organisation”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Do not know</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole Sample</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
<td>65.1%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Sector</td>
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<td>25.9%</td>
<td>56.5%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Sector</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>72.2%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chi-square: 7.463  DF: 2  Pearson’s R: 0.126  Reject the null hypothesis

Table 4
MMs’ Responses to TQM and Career Development

“I think that the application of TQM programmes promoted my career development”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Do not know</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole Sample</td>
<td>60.2%</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Sector</td>
<td>49.1%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Sector</td>
<td>69.2%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square: 10.521  DF: 2  Pearson’s R: -0.175  Reject the null hypothesis

Table 5
TQM Effects on MMs’ Job Security

Ordered probit estimates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>1st Model</th>
<th>2nd Model</th>
<th>3rd Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Whole Sample</td>
<td>Public Sector</td>
<td>Private Sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=782</td>
<td>N=294</td>
<td>N=488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.215**</td>
<td>0.011</td>
<td>-0.543***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Background</td>
<td>-0.059</td>
<td>-0.127*</td>
<td>0.023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sector of Employment</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational Size</td>
<td>-0.012</td>
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<td>0.062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational Life Cycle</td>
<td>0.104</td>
<td>0.212*</td>
<td>0.158*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of operation</td>
<td>0.173</td>
<td>0.387</td>
<td>0.087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft TQM1: Continuous Improvement &amp; Training</td>
<td>0.055</td>
<td>0.079</td>
<td>0.033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft TQM2: Empowerment &amp; Teamwork</td>
<td>0.015</td>
<td>0.049</td>
<td>-0.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft TQM3: Quality Driven Culture</td>
<td>-0.023</td>
<td>-0.022</td>
<td>-0.041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard TQM</td>
<td>-0.023**</td>
<td>-0.002</td>
<td>-0.066***</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>R²</th>
<th>0.0192</th>
<th>0.0676</th>
<th>0.1601</th>
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</thead>
</table>

****significant at a=1% (0-.01), **significant at a=5% (.01-.05), *significant at a=10% (.05-.1)

Table 6
TQM Effects on MMs’ Career Development

Ordered probit estimates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>1st Model</th>
<th>2nd Model</th>
<th>3rd Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Whole Sample</td>
<td>Public Sector</td>
<td>Private Sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=782</td>
<td>N=294</td>
<td>N=488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.655*</td>
<td>0.221</td>
<td>0.464***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Background</td>
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<td>0.231*</td>
<td>0.043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sector of Employment</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>Organisational Size</td>
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<td>0.188</td>
<td>0.064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational Life Cycle</td>
<td>0.658</td>
<td>0.324</td>
<td>0.238</td>
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</table>
Table 7
Effects of the ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ Aspects TQM on MMs’ Careers & Job Security

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Whole Sample</th>
<th>Public Sector</th>
<th>Private Sector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Soft TQM</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MMs’ Work Aspects</td>
<td>Effec t</td>
<td>Effec t</td>
<td>Effec t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Security</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Development</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hard TQM</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MMs’ Work Aspects</td>
<td>Effec t</td>
<td>Effec t</td>
<td>Effec t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Security</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Development</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R² values:
- Whole Sample: 0.1391
- Public Sector: 0.0856
- Private Sector: 0.1597

**Significant at a=1% (0.01), **significant at a=5% (0.01-0.05), *significant at a=10% (0.05-0.1)