



The Importance Of The Continuous Improvement Strategy (Kaizen) In Raising The Efficiency Of Institutional Performance In Organizations

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to demonstrate the importance of applying the Continuous Improvement strategy (Kaizen) in raising the efficiency of Institutional Performance in organizations, and to identify the principles of applying this strategy as one of the dimensions of the Total Quality philosophy on which administrative institutions are based, to achieve high levels of Institutional Performance. The researcher relied on the descriptive approach during his presentation to a descriptive, introductory study of the study's concepts, displaying its contents, and then analyzing them to reach the relationships that connect them to reach the possibility of testing the hypotheses and the extent of their verification within the framework of the results reached. The study concluded that Continuous Improvement strategy (Kaizen) is considered one of the dimensions of Total Quality Management, and it has a prominent role in the development of organizations, as it saves organizations from a lot of financial and material burdens, because it depends on making continuous and permanent partial improvements, and is based on specific rules, directives, standards and operational procedures. Therefore, Continuous Improvement contributes to raising the efficiency of the employees' performance and organizational units.

Keywords: Continuous Improvement, Kaizen, Efficiency, Institutional Performance.

Introduction

The concept of Continuous Improvement is one of the strategies that seeks to improve high-quality outputs that enjoy a competitive advantage, whether these outputs are related to service or production. Organizations rely on the strategy of Continuous Improvement (Kaizen) to confront the obstacles and challenges they face and affect their survival and existence, as it is considered one of the dimensions of Total Quality Management without the need to make radical changes in the structure of the organization through continuous development of management and its tools, and providing an appropriate innovative environment, that requires an integrated infrastructure, building an organizational culture and an organizational climate that motivates employees to provide their best and increase the efficiency of performance in the organization in order to achieve in its turn, the efficiency and quality of the service provided.

Literature Review

Studies in Arabic:

A study (Sidqi, 2020) entitled: "Requirements for Developing the Performance of the Educational Supervisor in Light of the Kaizen Philosophy (Continuous Improvement)."

The study aimed to develop the performance of the educational supervisor in light of the Kaizen philosophy (Continuous Improvement), and to develop a proposed vision for this role in light of the Kaizen philosophy. The researcher relied on the descriptive approach in collecting information with a structured description in addition to analyzing and organizing it, relying on the design of a questionnaire directed to teachers and principals in general secondary schools in Assiut Governorate. The study reached a set of results, the most

important of which is the interest of administrative supervisors in implementing their administrative and leadership tasks and the presence of continuous follow-up by all parties for these tasks. The study also concluded that the performance of the educational supervisor depends on administrative work without technical aspect, and that there are deficiencies in the role of the supervisor in determining training needs. For teachers, and the supervisor's lack of appropriate training and preparation for the supervision profession.

A study (Felmban, Alsharief 2020) entitled: "The Role of Kaizen's Strategy (Japanese Model) in Empowering Human Resources (Field Study on Female Employees in the General Administration of Education in Jeddah)."

The aim of the research is to identify the role of the Kaizen strategy in empowering human resources and the descriptive (analytical) approach was used, by designing a questionnaire of 30 items distributed to a random sample of (276) female employees. The study concluded that there was a statistically significant relationship between the empowering human resources and the Kaizen strategy. The majority of the sample members were familiar with the concepts related to the Kaizen strategy with an approval rate of (71.2%), and the degree of empowering human resources in the organization was with an approval rate of (59.7%).

A study (Ahmed, 2019) entitled: "Requirements for the Success of Kaizen Japanese Strategy for Continuous Improvement in Government Institutions Applying to the Telecommunications Sector in Egypt."

This study aimed to determine the availability of the requirements for the success of the Kaizen strategy for Continuous Improvement in the telecommunications sector in Egypt. What are the most important factors that affect Continuous Improvement in the telecommunications sector? The researcher relied on the social survey approach by describing and analyzing the phenomenon, designing a questionnaire and distributing it to a vertical stratified sample of (123) workers in telecommunications companies (Orange, Vodafone, Etisalat, and We). The study concluded There are a set of results, the most important of which is the absence of a statistically significant direct relationship between the Kaizen strategy on the one hand, and Top Management support, the rationality of decision, training and qualification, as dimensions of Continuous Improvement, and the presence of a statistically significant direct relationship between the Kaizen strategy and employee participation, trust, and documentation, as dimensions of Continuous Improvement.

Studies in English:

A study (Hashim, Fuzi, Adam 2022) entitled: Conceptual Framework of Kaizen Practices on Organizational Performance. The research aimed to identify the impact of Kaizen practices on organizational performance. A quantitative approach was used, where questionnaires were distributed to collect data from the selected sample. The research concluded that Kaizen practices are suitable for application in higher education institutions because they can provide an important advantage for the organization's performance.

A study (Khalil, Hamid 2021) entitled: "The Role of Continuous Improvement Strategy (Kaizen) in Organizational Innovation: An Analytical Research in the General Company of Electrical and Electronic Industries /The Ministry of Industry and Minerals."

The aim of the research is that most organizations today suffer from wasting time, effort and cost, and face difficulty in achieving the best performance and competing strongly. The researcher used the statistical analytical approach and distributed (108) questionnaires as a statistical sample society capable of analysis, targeting general managers, department head, and division head. He used additional tools to collect data (personal interviews - observations). The data was analyzed using a number of statistical methods (simple regression - Pearson correlation coefficient).

One of the most important results found is that the company has sufficient and creative capabilities, but with regard to Iraqi production, it does not have competitive and creative capabilities.

Research problem

The business environment at present time is characterized by complexity and intensity of competition. This imposes on organizations the necessity of responding to the changing needs, desires and expectations of customers, in order to maintain their ability to compete, increase their market share, and improve their competitive position, through following management methods that contribute to raising the efficiency of Institutional Performance and providing high quality products and services that guarantee success and excellence. The problem of the study can be expressed through the following question:

What is the importance of applying the Continuous Improvement strategy (Kaizen) in improving and raising the efficiency of Institutional Performance of organizations?

Research Purposes

This study aims to provide a clear vision of the Continuous Improvement strategy (Kaizen) as one of the modern administrative methods for developing organizations, to identify the principles and steps that can be followed to implement this strategy and to know the role it plays in raising the efficiency of Institutional Performance in organizations.

Research Terms

Continuous Improvement (Kaizen): It is an expression of endless practices of improvements and changes in the various aspects of the organization's activity to what is good and beneficial within the framework of desire and effort. It is not innovation or invention, but rather a process of improvement and development of the available inputs and an attempt to improve step by step, without any additional costs. (Abu-Backer, Alshatnawy, 2022, 2515)

Institutional Performance: An integrated system that reflects the results of the businesses within the organization in light of its interaction with elements of the organization's internal and external environments, the work carried out in accordance with regulations and standards, and the method of providing these works to the client to achieve the required service. (Al-Maamari et al., 2023, 395)

Efficiency: The value of the resources used to produce one unit of products or services, therefore it is a concept for rationalizing the use of resources in all its forms, and its measurement depends on two indicators: the extent of providing various resources, and the ways to use those resources to achieve goals. (Al-Maamari et al., 2023, 395)

The Concept of Continuous Improvement (Kaizen):

It is a management philosophy created by the founder of Toyota's production system (Taiichi Ohono) to lead organizations. This philosophy is based on making the process permanently better, and this strategy enables continuous and gradual change through rational management of time and space. The Japanese expert (Masaaki Imai) developed this strategy in 1984, who defined it as an improvement in which all individuals in all departments participate all the time (Felmban et al., 2020, 154). This improvement, according to the Japanese concept, begins with making slow and slight changes gradually in succession in the work and that are continuous, that means "doing a little thing in a better way every day and improve it constantly," provided that all employees participate in this process with the support and backup of Top Management and supporting departments, with the aim of raising the level of quality and performance, and eliminating waste. This results in added value to the process and the customer, and gives the organization a competitive advantage that enables it to maintain its position (Ali, 2021, 526). This concept is defined as the relentless pursuit of developing and improving quality in order to maximize the benefit obtained by the consumer, and reduce the cost to the lowest possible extent without touching quality. (Al-Bekheet, 2021, 117)

The application of this philosophy in Japan was after World War II, especially during the Japanese reform period, and it focused in the fields of education, which aims to improve the individual as a whole, in addition to other sectors such as industry, profit-making institutions, and governmental and non-governmental organizations. This strategy is distinguished from other management systems that in other systems development occurs when there is a problem in a specific sector and development is the task of one person, or a specific group of employees, whereas in the Kaizen strategy everyone participates in improvement without waiting until the problem occurs. (Jad, 2020, 2)

Continuous Improvement as One of the Dimensions of Total Quality Management:

Total Quality Management practices have emerged as a modern administrative innovation in response to the increasing intensity of competitiveness, and the superiority of Japanese companies in providing high-quality products and services in accordance with customer requirements, and achieving efficiency in operation (Alfatlawy et al., 2021, 225). The concept of Total Quality Management is based on a set of dimensions, namely planning for quality, Top Management commitment, focus on human resources, employee participation, customer focus, quality control/quality inspection, and continuous improvement that aims to continuously develop processes and activities related to material and human resources and make fundamental changes in the long term (Salem, 2023, 11). Continuous Improvement in performance requires rapid response to changes on the one hand, and simplification procedures and operational activities on the other hand to achieve a complementary relationship between quality and speed of response to development and productivity. Improvement includes all products and procedures that organizations need in their activities and operations, which reflects positively on the organization's ability to meet customer requirements and adapt with environmental changes, and maintaining competitive position by achieving the following: (Abd El-Haq and Farouk, 2021, 4)

- Enhancing value to the customer by providing new services.
- Reduce errors, defective units and waste.
- Improving productivity and effectiveness in using all resources.

Requirements for Applying the Continuous Improvement Strategy "Kaizen":

Implementing the philosophy of Continuous Improvement depends on providing high-quality service at the lowest possible cost by applying simple and effective operating rules, and it is based on a set of requirements, which are: (Soliman, 2021, 105)

A- Establishing operating rules: by preparing a set of practical procedures to achieve the organization's goals to achieve Continuous Improvement and reduce waste of time, effort, or resources.

B- Establishing cleansing rules: An unorganized work environment is one of the biggest obstacles to improving operations, so rules must be established to control performance plans, training in discipline skills, time management, participation, and communication with others.

C- Eliminating waste: This means eliminating activities that do not add real value to the service provided. The best methods must be found to reduce any waste by achieving sufficient flexibility to accommodate fluctuations in demand, by developing a series of external activities on an ongoing basis to eliminate problems that are not related to added value.

D- Spreading a culture of Continuous Improvement: by setting clear goals to achieve the organization's goals and reaching sustainability.

E- Promoting a culture of teamwork: The Continuous Improvement strategy depends on teamwork activities through work teams, the most important of which are: work groups, problem solving, work teams specialized in implementation, and negotiation when problems arise before making a decision.

F- Encouraging employees' creative ideas and initiatives: by strengthening the system of suggestions and ideas, positive participation in presenting suggestions, no matter how small, and enhancing employee discipline.

Obstacles of Implementing the Continuous Improvement Strategy "Kaizen":

Implementing the Continuous Improvement strategy "Kaizen" faces many obstacles, the most important of which are: (Ahmed, 2019, 331)

1. The monopoly of information and its retention by many managers, and their refusal to share it with others.
2. The monopoly of power and decisions, which are in the hands of managers and the refusal to delegate part of the powers to others.
3. Weak empowerment of workers in organizations, and their lack of involvement in planning and decision-making.
4. Insufficiency of the horizontal and vertical organizational communication system.
5. The reluctance of some workers to participate, which does not only mean sharing information but also sharing responsibilities.
6. Weak training and qualification programs that are devoted to knowledge management and participation.

Institutional Performance:

Performance refers to the degree to which the employee achieves and completes the tasks and duties assigned to him. Performance reflects the way in which he is achieved or how the employee satisfies his job requirements. It is defined as visible behavior that can be observed, measured and evaluated. It is a function of successful work, and this function changes with the change of organizations or employees or its material and technical capabilities, and performance embodies the organization's ability to achieve its goals efficiently by using the resources available to it effectively and efficiently (Khader, 2020, 32). Institutional Performance is affected by a group of factors, some of which are internal and subject to the organization's control, such as motivation and skills, and it is a relative control, seeing that the interconnection of internal factors among themselves and their influence on factors and variables of the external environment and here lies the organization's ability to control these factors and maximize their positive effects and reduce the negative ones. There are factors that are not subject to the organization's control, which it belongs to the external environment, such as economic, social and legal factors, which greatly affect performance. The mitigation of this negative impact of the environment on performance is by the ability to adapt quickly. (Al-Anazi and Hatf, 2019, 48)

Therefore, Institutional Performance is the result of both individual performance and the performance of organizational units, in addition to the effects of the economic, social, and cultural environments on them. Starting of the presence of many external factors that affect the organization's performance and are outside the scope of its management, it is necessary to focus on measuring Institutional Performance, which essentially builds to measure the performance of the individual and management in light of both internal and external influences, and organizations need to measure performance with the aim of controlling and reducing deviations during work, self-evaluation, management evaluation, determining the improvements required to be implemented, and continuous improvement by identifying sources of defects and process directions, preventing errors, and identifying opportunities for improvement. (Idriss and Abu Elrous, 2022, 385)

Efficiency of Institutional Performance:

Performance efficiency means the optimal way to invest available resources in the best possible way, at the lowest costs, in the least time and with the least effort, that is, the difference between inputs and outputs, which contributes to achieving goals and objectives (Al-Qahtani and Shuaibi, 2022, 191). When measuring the efficiency of Institutional Performance, it relies on a group of indicators whose relative importance varies according to the prevailing economic, social, and political system in the country. The indicators must be appropriate to the nature of the objectives of the organization under evaluation, and these criteria can be summarized as follows: (Al-Fayad, 2020, 49)

- Productivity standard (quantity of performance output): This means the relationship between inputs and outputs, and work in this is considered the most important moving element and capable to continuous

improvement in order to increase productivity, especially since it contributes to achieving efficiency in the use of other inputs.

- Customer satisfaction standard (quality of performance output): Considering that the customer is the one who determines quality, and in return, quality is what achieves customer satisfaction, which contributes to increasing the competitiveness of the organization, knowing the beneficiaries and identifying their needs, thus working to raise the efficiency of Institutional Performance as an attempt to satisfy them and provide services that match or exceed their expectations.
- Performance behavior standards: According to these standards, the primary consideration is for the individual's behavior and not for the quantity and quality of the production he provides. These standards include addressing customer complaints, attending to work, managing meetings, writing reports, and cooperating with colleagues.

In order for these standards to be more reliable and effective, they must meet a set of conditions, which are: (Maryam, 2019, 29)

- A. Validity:** Those who design standards must verify the aspects contained in the scale. The internal factors in the scale must express exactly those required by the work performance.
- B. Consistency:** This means stability and correspondence in the results obtained at different times or by different people, that is, the results must be similar from time to time, and from one person to another.
- C. Discrimination:** that is, distinguishing between different levels of performance in order to distinguish efforts with the goal of discrimination in wages and salaries.
- D. Facility of use of the scale:** It means clarity of the scale.
- E. Acceptance:** meaning justice and reflects the actual performance of individuals, and is determined either according to the behaviors are practiced by the individuals or on the basis of the results which achieved by them.

Job performance is determined through the interaction between three elements, which are estimative knowledge, procedural knowledge, and motivation, as these three elements must be present together to reach high levels of performance (Naasani, 2020, 200). Therefore, after appointing workers, it is necessary to ensure that they have the necessary knowledge to carry out the tasks required of them, and the extent to which they perform these tasks by evaluating their performance, identifying the pressures they face, and trying to alleviate these pressures and providing a motivating environment to reach better performance (Nairat, 2022, 11).

The Importance of Continuous Improvement in Raising the Efficiency of Institutional Performance:

Continuous Improvement helps business organizations discover new methods for improving the quality of operations performance, and using human and material resources efficiently and effectively by creating an environment that stimulates the achievement of quality, which requires the work of all employees at administrative levels to continuously improve the performance of their work (Almarhdy, Sagher 2024). , 119). Reaching a high degree of Institutional Performance is achieved by understanding and assimilating the importance of adopting a Total Quality philosophy in bringing about Continuous Improvement, and the process of improving performance goes through several steps, which are: (Al-Fayad, 2020, 50)

- **The first step:** Performance analysis: This is done by testing the organization's performance within its priorities and capabilities, which is a definition and analysis of the current and expected situation of problems in work performance and competition.
- **The second step:** Identifying the main causes of performance problems: By analyzing the gap between desired and realistic performance, and knowing the deviation in employees' performance from standard performance, this allows management to know the reasons behind the decline in performance and whether the reasons are related to the employees or to other reasons, so analyzing the reasons is an important link between the gap in performance and appropriate procedures for Continuous Improvement in performance. (Al-Anazi and Hatef, 2019, 47)
- **The third step:** Choosing the intervention or treatment method: It is an organized, comprehensive and integrated method of responding to performance problems and their causes. This response is a set of procedures that represent more than one means of improving performance, and the organization's goals must be taken into account before implementing the procedures to ensure their acceptance at all levels.
- **The fourth step:** Implementation after choosing the optimal method: it is put into practice with the design of a follow-up system, and the concepts of change must be included in daily work, taking into account the impact of the direct and indirect matters of change to ensure the effectiveness of the organization and achieve its goals efficiently and effectively.
- **The fifth step:** Monitoring and evaluating improvement in performance: This is a continuous process, and there must be means of monitoring and follow-up that focus on measuring the change that taking place, to provide early feedback on the results of those means, and to evaluate the effect achieved in closing the gap in performance, and to continuously compare actual and desired performance.

Based on the above, these steps allow the work team into the organization to know the data and information related to the organization, determine the priorities required to carry out improvement, train workers to

acquire new knowledge and experiences to solve problems, make the required changes, and know the applications and tools necessary for quality control, and performance evaluation becomes is not only limited to the president's evaluation of the subordinates, but there is an evaluation of the president's performance by the subordinates (Qarash and Hebal, 2019, 4), so continuous study and analysis of the results, and drawing lessons achieves efficiency and effectiveness in Institutional Performance, and is reflected in the satisfaction of the beneficiaries and users of products and services (Khalil, 2022, 14).

Research Methodology

In this study, the researcher relied on the descriptive inductive scientific method, by using the scientific method in describing and analyzing it, for the aim of arriving at explanations based on scientific logic, and providing evidence and proofs that helps in analyzing the phenomenon under study by obtaining information about it and describing its variables, determining the relationship between these variables, which are the independent variables (Continuous Improvement Strategy (Kaizen)) and the dependent variable (the level of Institutional Performance of organizations).

Results & Discussion:

Based on the above, the researcher reached a set of results after reviewing the variables related to the research, the most important of which are:

1. The Continuous Improvement strategy (Kaizen) saves organizations a lot of financial and material burdens, as it depends on making continuous, partial improvements permanently, in which all employees participate and is based on specific rules, directives, standards and operational procedures.
2. The continuous improvement strategy (Kaizen) is considered one of the dimensions of total quality management, which has played a major role in developing organizations and achieving superiority and distinction, until it has become a modern management method to develop and improve its performance and maintain its competitive position.
3. The Continuous Improvement strategy works to develop accurate measures to determine the efficiency of process performance and deepen understanding of these processes among employees, to improve their performance and provide high-quality services and products.
4. Organizations reach excellence and leadership through continuous improvement of operations, which includes improving their main elements, which are devices, procedures, materials, and workers. Therefore, Continuous Improvement contributes to raising the efficiency of the employees' performance, organizational units, and the organization as a whole.

Recommendations

According to the results reached, the researcher presents a set of recommendations, which are:

1. Work to create an organizational climate and culture that focuses on the importance of employees' awareness of applying the Continuous Improvement strategy and its tools, in order to reduce as much as possible the resistance change among employees and encourage them to provide their best performance.
2. Work on training and qualifying employees on Continuous Improvement tools such as flow charts, checklists, Pareto charts, cause and effect charts, control charts, and other tools through specialized courses that allow them to increase their experience and efficiency of performance in completing the work assigned to them.
3. Encouraging and motivating the employees in the organization for teamwork, whether through work teams or quality circles, because Continuous Improvement is everyone's responsibility, and teamwork ensures improvement and raising the efficiency of performance by benefiting from mutual experiences within the team, which allows workers to make continuous improvements easier and faster.
4. The necessity of continuing to make improvements in the organization, whether it is related to production or service, in an organized manner, taking into account individual and social needs, in a way that contributes to achieve the satisfaction of beneficiaries and workers alike, since the ultimate goal is to provide the best quality service and gain customer satisfaction.

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