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## Paper 9



### **Labour in A Global World: Management Strategy and Worker Response in the Turkish Whitegoods Industry**

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## **Globalised Management and Local Labour: The Case of the Whitegoods**

### **Industry in Turkey**

#### **Abstract**

This paper is concerned with the situation where goods are produced by workers in underdeveloped countries, in this case, consumer durables, under the direction of managements which have access to modern management techniques. In particular, it considers the significance of new management methods, especially Total Quality Management, for workers employed in whitegoods manufacture in Turkey. It uses interviews and survey data from three plants in the Turkish whitegoods industry.

Where possible comparative data from the British WERS 98 survey is introduced in order to help avoid false judgements about what is exceptional or different. The paper considers how and what managers know of new management techniques. It examines the nature of their implementation with respect to local conditions, especially with reference to 'hard' and 'soft' versions of TQM; and it seeks to show how workers' evaluation of such workplaces is itself grounded in the particularities of their broader locally based expectations and opportunities.

## **Management and the World of Management Techniques**

The origins of Turkish private capitalism, which effectively dates from the 1950s, are in family ownership. This is very evident still today in the ownership of the large conglomerates that dominate many sectors of the economy. However, both in these conglomerates and elsewhere there has been a tendency toward the emergence of professional managers. As one commentator sums it up: a younger generation of professional managers is emerging which has high education standards, no language problems, who are intelligent, willing to learn and work and who have a ‘yankee style’ (Oktay 1996: p. 97).

The contemporary generation of Turkish managers has been more and more able to access international developments in management theory and practice, through the development of business teaching; through an increasing number of joint venture companies; through the emergence of management consultancy both internationally and within Turkey; through new means of communication, including the web; and generally through the operation of what has been termed the ‘cultural circuit of capital’ (Thrift 1999: 42) and the many agents who form part of this and who produce and distribute prescriptions for business. The velocity at which new ideas have been imported into Turkey has increased considerably over the last few decades. For example, it took 30 years for F.W.Taylor’s *Principles of Scientific Management* (1911) to appear in Turkish and much neo-human relations literature of the 1950s and 1960s seems to have remained untranslated with no Turkish versions of McGregor’s *The Human Side of Enterprise* (1960), Likert’s *New Patterns of Management* (1961) or Herzberg’s *Work and the Nature of Man* (1966). The 1970s saw Humble’s *Management by Objectives* (1971) published in Turkish within three years. In the

1980s, at a time when the number of management books published each year has been claimed to have increased by 50 per cent (Wood 1989: 379), a crop of them found their way into Turkish. Ouchi's *Theory Z* (1981) appeared in Turkish in 1987, Peters and Waterman's *In Search of Excellence* (1982) also appeared in 1987, with Imai's *Kaizen: The Key to Japan's Competitive Success* (1986) appearing in Turkish in 1994, Deming's *Out of the Crisis* (1986) in 1996, and Peter's *Thriving on Chaos* (1987) being translated in its year of first publication. In the 1990s Womak et al's *The Machine That Changed the World* (1990) appeared in its year of publication, Hammer and Champy's *Re-Engineering the Corporation* (1993) came out in Turkish the next year, Hammer and Stanton's *The Re-Engineering Revolution* (1995) again came out in its first year of publication, so did Hammer's (1996) *Beyond Re-Engineering*.

Some of the fashions in executive enlightenment are themselves difficult to take seriously (Turks may note with amusement that in Britain top executives from the Bank of England and British Gas have been exposed to Whirling Dervish dance routines in an attempt to find inner peace and enhance business potential, Thrift 1999: 54). However, prescriptions for improved management practice are potentially available to managers in developing countries with a seemingly ever-decreasing time-lag, and since the debate about such techniques is conducted almost exclusively within advanced capitalist societies, some important questions arise: what do managers in developing countries know of such techniques? in which respects do they implement them? how do workers regard their managements in companies where modern management techniques are present? and how far are workers' views of their companies mediated by broader concerns?

This paper asks these questions with respect to contemporary Turkish manufacturing and more precisely in relation to three whitegoods firms. Recent years have witnessed a considerable interest in consumption at the expense of production. Here by contrast the focus is on those who produce the consumer goods that are increasingly imported into the advanced capitalist societies. The three plants considered are respectively producers of ovens at Bolu, washing machines at Cayirova and refrigerators at Cerkezkoy. In each plant interviews were conducted with approximately 50 workers, a questionnaire was completed by approximately 50 managers and other interviews were also conducted with specialist and senior managers in each company and with trade union officials, with further discussions being held with workers of an informal kind. Interviews were conducted in 1999. All three plants were unionised by the same trade union, Turk Metal<sup>1</sup>.

Since we are looking at the significance of modern management techniques in a less developed society it is important not to fall into making assumptions about how these responses differ from those in advanced capitalist societies. Such points of comparison are difficult to establish but in an attempt to provide a rough basis for comparison we have, wherever possible, utilised data from the British 1998 Workplace Employee Relations Survey (WERS 98). Part of WERS 98 consisted of a survey of over 28,000 employees (Cully et al 1999: 9). We have drawn both upon

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<sup>1</sup> Union policy is to leave management free to manage the shop floor which means that the union seldom appears in the following account. However, its lack of internal democracy must be seen to form part of the backcloth against which workers evaluate any move to invite their participation or acknowledgement of their existence by management. The lack of internal democracy of (some) Turkish unions has been long remarked (Dereli 1977).

data for employees in British manufacturing as a whole and upon information on workers in one particular company, which we refer to as the ‘comparator’ company<sup>2</sup>.

### **The Plants and their Managers and Workers**

The washing machine factory in Cayirova is owned by one of the large Turkish conglomerates. This is one of the biggest whitegoods manufacturers in Europe. It is situated inside the Izmit triangle, an area that runs from Istanbul at its apex to Izmit and Bursa and which is the site of heavy industrialisation which expanded in the 1980s as industry spilled out of Istanbul in a second phase of development. Just under 1,000 are employed in its washing machine plant. The plant is a well laid out modern one which has the status of a show plant within the company. The plant has invested heavily in new technology since the end of a partnership with a German multinational in 1986. Metal cutting and bending units are highly automated. There are robotic devices and numerically controlled machines throughout the production process. In the paint unit where metal frames are painted automatically, workers are largely reduced to pressing buttons when necessary. In the pre-assembly unit, most work tasks are highly automated through the use of CNC machines. However, in final assembly unit, most of the work is carried out manually with a minority of women working side by side with the men. In the final quality control, the work tasks are again highly automated. At the time of the fieldwork Cayirova plant had undergone considerable reorganisation of its management, lean management having made for

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<sup>2</sup> WERS 98 included a self-completion questionnaire distributed to circa 28,000 employees. Questionnaires were distributed to 25 employees per establishment. There were two establishments that operated in the domestic appliance industry. Figures cited here are for a WERS 98 manufacturer of electric domestic appliances (serno 12248), which had 24 respondents out of 25. This establishment had over 1,000 employees and was one of 16 such establishments in a foreign owned multinational (further information is not available for reasons of confidentiality). Data that refer to this establishment here are unweighted. The other establishment was a manufacturer of non-electrical domestic appliances and its employees provided only 11 responses. Figures from WERS 98 for all manufacturing are cited in this article to give some indication about the situation in British manufacturing as a whole and are weighted.

less managers in a flatter structure. The plant produces about one and a half million washing machines annually, of which 25 per cent is exported. It has over 50 per cent of the home market.

The Bolu plant is owned by the same conglomerate as Cayirova. It is situated to the east of the Izmit triangle proper and is again a product of the spillover of industry from Istanbul that occurred in the 1980s. Just under 1,000 are employed. Bolu plant was scheduled for management re-organisation, but at the time of the fieldwork this had not yet occurred. There are more long service managers and workers here than elsewhere. Of the three factories Bolu plant is the most labour intensive. Although the company began to upgrade its technology in the mid 1990s as it bid to concentrate more on the international market, most work has not been highly automated with the exception of the metal cutting and bending unit where there are a few computer controlled machines and CNC lathes and the paint unit where work tasks are highly automated. There are no women in the production process. Part of the shopfloor is set up for cellular production but this makes only a minor contribution. Bolu plant produces over half a million ovens annually. It has just over 50 per cent of the home market and 25 per cent of sales are now for export.

The plant in Cerkezkoy is part of a three-handed German-Turkish joint venture company, which dates from 1996/7. One of the partners is one of the biggest whitegoods manufacturers in the world. Situated to the west of Istanbul, this plant is again a product of the industrial overflow that stemmed from there in the 1980s. Nearly 2,000 are employed in the refrigerator plant at peak season, which is itself part of a much larger whitegoods manufacturing complex which employs over 3,000. The

Cerkezkoy plant had recently undergone a major management reorganisation which had stripped out the management levels of deputies and assistant managers and in which the bottom level of management consists of teamleaders (postabasi) appointed by management and in charge of teams between 9 and 45.

Since the arrival of the German partner, who appointed a German managing director, the plant, which hitherto had been starved of investment, has benefited considerably from upgrades to its technology. Most pre-assembly line work in the paint section, in metal cutting and bending, in plastic cutting and in moulding has been highly automated. German managers claim the equipment used is the same as that at the corporation's factories in other countries. Final assembly and some sub assembly (where some women are employed) is labour intensive, but with some final quality control again being highly automated.

The plant has over a third of the home market, producing around a million fridges annually and exporting 40 per cent of them.

The average worker in these plants, all of which are subject to the same industrial agreement, has 8 years service and pay, including bonuses, of about four times the minimum wage (\$120 per month in 1999). Such is the imbalance between the public and private sector that those who have worked more than twelve years will earn fifty per cent more than teachers or policemen and twice as much as nurses. Outside the big private sector firms workers are only likely to get the minimum wage.



## **New Management Methods**

We provided Turkish managers with a checklist in an attempt to establish which modern management techniques they were familiar with. Briefly, in their responses to this over nine out of ten claimed to be familiar with Total Quality Management (TQM), Quality Circles (QCs) and Team Working; seven out of ten with Just in Time (JIT), Kaizen and Flexible Production; six out of ten with Lean Production and five out of ten with Re-engineering. Some differences existed between the plants and these can be seen in detail in Table 1. In particular, there was a higher proportion of managers who were familiar with Kaizen at Cerkezkoy plant and a higher proportion familiar with flexible production at Cayirova plant.

As can be seen from Table 2, the general pattern of response for workers is broadly the same as for managers. That TQM, QCs and Teams were the leading modern management techniques in the plants is further suggested by Table 3 which indicates current company practice or company training constituted the source of knowledge of these methods in seven or eight out of ten cases. By contrast, in the case of Re-engineering, the mass media or books constituted the source of knowledge in four out of ten cases. Briefly, some managers knew about Re-engineering but mainly from books and the media. Most knew about TQM and related practices and these were going on about them at work, TQM in these plants having largely arrived in the first part of the 1990s.

Table 1 Managers' Familiarity with Management Techniques by Plant

Percentages								
	TQM	team working	QCs	JIT	Kaizen	Flexible Production	Lean Production	Re-Engineering
Bolu (n=51)	96	100	96	75	55	59	63	45
Cayirova (n=41)	100	100	100	66	73	90	73	59
Cerkezkoy (n=50)	94	98	88	80	86	68	52	48

Table 2 Workers' Familiarity with Management Techniques by Plant

Percentages								
	TQM	Teams	QCs	JIT	Kaizen	Flexible Production	Lean Production	Re-Engineering
Bolu (n=50)	98	96	100	50	14	14	14	8
Cayirova (n=53)	100	100	100	68	62	47	23	8
Cerkezkoy (n=50)	70	98	42	40	66	18	4	4

Table 3 Sources of Knowledge about Management Techniques for those Managers who Claim Familiarity

Percentage of sources cited

	TQM n=244	Teams n=212	QCs n=192	JIT n=154	Kaizen n=133	Flexible Production n=131	Lean Production n=106	Re-engineering n=90
Company practice	44	56	56	44	38	50	37	24
Training	31	22	26	23	26	12	18	12
mass media	5	4	3	4	2	7	3	11
Education	5	7	4	10	6	11	10	14
Books	12	10	9	15	21	15	22	32
Other	2	11	3	0	7	5	10	6

## **TQM and Power Distance in Turkey**

As a concept TQM lacks clear definition. Even experienced researchers in this field have been reduced to broad approximations. For example, building on previous work, Wilkinson, Godfrey and Marchington (1997: 800-1) suggest three component principles: customer orientation, process orientation and continuous improvement.

By customer orientation they refer to the idea that quality means meeting customer requirements both inside and outside the organisation. It is supposed that this customer orientation provides a common goal for organisational activities and members.

Process orientation refers to the idea that the activities performed within an organisation can be broken down into basic tasks or processes, which are linked in series of 'quality chains' to form extended processes. Each process in the quality chain has a customer, stretching back from external customer, through the various internal customers, to the organisation's suppliers.

Continuous improvement rests on the idea that satisfying customer requirements involves the continuous improvement of products and services. The most effective means of improvement is held to be to use the people who actually do the job to identify and implement appropriate changes.

On paper all this can be made to loosely cohere into a complementary set of practices. In practice it leaves a good deal of opportunity for different practices each to stake a claim as the implementation of TQM. This becomes very evident when Wilkinson et

al inform us: ‘These principles of TQM are implemented using statistical process control (SPC) methods, process simplification, process re-engineering, measurement systems, self-inspection *and teamworking in various forms*’ (1997: 800-1 emphasis added). Apart from anything else, it becomes a moot point whether TQM is a ‘hard’ or ‘soft’ method. As Wilkinson et al themselves go on to comment:

‘Hard’ TQM concentrates on the tools and techniques and the systematic measurement and control of the work process, ensuring conformance to performance standards and the reduction of variability. It also tends to be associated with the BS 5750 and ISO 900 series which are systems-based approaches to audit the policies and practices of organisations. "Soft" TQM, on the other hand, places more importance on areas such as increasing the customer orientation of the organisation, training, teamwork, employee participation and cultural change (1997:801).

Top managers in Turkey are as capable as those anywhere of ‘talking the TQM talk’. For example the Cayirova plant product development manager has spoken of creating ‘a new revitalised organisation supported by fully motivated and empowered employees’ and the (German) MD at Cerkezkoy plant is no less evangelical:

Last year was Quality Year. It was a great success. We filled the big canteen and clapped each other. We are getting there. They are beginning to understand it’s *their* company. *Their company!* In the beginning they were afraid of their managers.

However, there is no need to regard the 'soft' and 'hard' versions as a simple dichotomy and in the Turkish case it would be something of a departure if the 'soft' form were to predominate. Countries which import new management ideas do not do so in an historical and cultural void and early studies of Turkish management stress its authoritarian nature. In the 1960s Lauter conducted interviews with over 100 people who either held a managerial position or were representatives of banking and private industry. An important theme running through his account was that

The applicability of modern management processes by industrial managers in Turkey is impeded by a set of key political, legal, socio-cultural, economic and educational constraints generated by Turkish society during its historical development (Lauter 1968: 23)

Every phase of life from the family through the school and to the government was seen by Lauter to be permeated by authoritarianism. Islam was seen to promote a static way of looking at the world which in turn discouraged departures from orthodoxy and thereby promoted reliance on authority. Turkish managers were held 'to feel that their employees needed continuous surveillance to perform', that 'their subordinates were incompetent and could not be trusted', and employees themselves were seen to put up with this, the 'high degree of centralisation of authority [not seeming] to disturb employees and [not resulting] in major organisational conflict' (Lauter 1969: 94). All this was later to be encapsulated by Hofstede's (1984) concept of 'power distance' – a concept that Hofstede regarded as the property of social systems rather than individuals but which captures very nicely a particular Turkish management style. Hofstede attempted to discover national values in different

countries. He claimed Turks to be high on 'power distance' and generally implied that they were mostly autocratic and given to strictly obeying rules. Whereas some writers have challenged this interpretation, they have sought to supplant it with data derived from Turkish managers' perceptions of themselves (Arbak et al 1997: 87-103). Such a challenge is open to question. This is especially so in the absence of a consideration of the perceptions held of Turkish managers by managers from other nations, and indeed of a consideration of the perception of Turkish managers by Turkish workers. Such alternative sources of information will be considered shortly. For the moment, it seems reasonable to assume that the majority view remains that Turkish managers are apt to have a 'forcing style' with subordinates, and that centralised decision making, authoritarian leadership and the display of power distance all make for a situation in which 'the handling of differences is brisk' (Kozan 1989: 795 and 1994).

Child and Rodrigues (1996: 46) have argued that foreign direct investment (FDI) provides an extremely important potential vehicle for the transfer of managerial and organisational knowledge in developing economies, as well of course for the transfer of technology as ordinarily understood. But relevant here is that FDI in joint ventures can also provide the means whereby external observers, in the guise of foreign managers, can assess managers in a particular country. In the light of the above discussion, it is interesting to note that a survey for the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce which cites the views of Turkish managers held by over 50 expatriate executives, mostly from multinational companies, contains many examples of the long established way of doing things (Oktay 1996: 41,42,43,53):

In general the Turkish management style is terrible. Most managers rule by fear. This is a sign of weakness. Their style is to separate the management from the workers. Most Turks are very flexible but they relate discipline with fear (British manager).

The Turkish system is much more based on 'autocratism'. With a management title you can dictate. In Western Europe you cannot easily say 'do this, do that' (Dutch manager)

In Turkish companies all decisions are taken by the top. The top management decides and the staff cannot disagree (Japanese manager).

Turkish managers are more 'the boss' type. They keep more distance with the people under them (German manager)

FDI can also provide a means of comparison for those workers who can see both foreign and indigenous managers in their everyday work lives. It is therefore interesting to consider how a worker at the joint German owned Cerkezkoy plant acted out for us the way German and Turkish managers came onto the shopfloor. First, he played the German manager. He entered walking slowly, nodding to workers, greeting them, asking how they were, looking around him with interest as he went down the aisle and making occasional enquiries. He even smiled. The worker then played the Turkish manager. To do this he marched in, looked sharply from side to side, and barked commands: 'Ahmet!. Pick that up!. Put it over there! Mehmet! What are you doing? Go at once to the end of the section!'



What Turkish managers say about themselves sometimes starkly underpins such imagery. One described himself to us as ‘the cock of the shopfloor’. What the foreign managers we interviewed have to say about their Turkish colleagues is no less pertinent. A German manager commented about some of his Turkish colleagues:

They are arrogant. Give them power and they become terrible. They love hierarchy...When Turkish managers approach workers they just say “Do this!” There is no background information: nothing on the history; nothing on the future.

Such management styles are not simply part of a diffuse cultural inheritance. Line managers, and indeed team leaders, are often appointed in part for their ability to be hard with workers.

We asked workers an open ended question about whether they thought there were any general problems with Turkish managers (that is problems with managers in Turkey, not necessarily in their own factory). One quarter of them had no opinion on the matter but of the rest the largest category of response concerned communication and related issues. Four out of ten of those replying in each of the three plants mentioned such problems. For example:

‘managers are not close to the workers’ (Bolu plant)

‘managers regard workers as inferior (but not in our factory)’ (Bolu plant)

‘There is a cultural difference. We are at the bottom. They don’t understand our situation. There are different ways of life, different wages, different social rights and different work conditions’. (Cayirova plant)

‘They don’t listen to the workers’ voices’ (Cayirova plant)

‘There is no dialogue between managers and workers in Turkey. They are not genuine. They don’t treat workers with respect. They regard workers as inferior’ (Cerkezkoy plant)

‘Because the managers have more power their ideas are implemented every time in Turkey. If the education level of the workers does not improve this problem will continue’ (Cerkezkoy plant)

Managers themselves tended to express similar views to workers when we asked an open ended question in their survey questionnaire about problems with employees in Turkey. Often their observations about lack of communication were linked to claims about workers’ lack of education:

‘The lack of communication. The lack of education and culture. The lack of knowledge and skill’ (Bolu plant).

‘The fact that both workers and managers didn’t internalise TQM has been leading to communication problems between them’ (Bolu plant)

Communication is the biggest problem. The fact that managers don’t spend enough time on the shopfloor (Cayirova plant)

There is a communication problem between workers and managers. Managers find it difficult to motivate workers. (Cayirova plant)

Managers don't understand what workers want because of the lack of communication between them in some places. Therefore a pressure system of management instead of a participating one continues. This causes low quality and motivation. (Cerkezkooy plant)

The relationship is not managed through respect and responsibility but fear of job loss and getting a dressing down. (Cerkezkooy plant)

A recent study by Wasti (1998) endorses the general view about Turkish managers' highly developed sense of power distance. It finds that employees lack autonomy and that they are afraid to disagree and comments that the internal work culture is more conducive to Theory X than Theory Y. Wasti adds to this the idea that Quality Circles might be expected to succeed in the Turkish context (Wasti 1998: 612, 620, 622). From the standpoint of those who equate TQM and 'empowerment', the link made by Wasti between Theory X and QCs might be taken as evidence of muddled thinking. According to McGregor (1960), who coined the term 'Theory X', one of its basic assumptions is that most people must be coerced, controlled, directed and threatened with punishment to get them to put forth adequate effort. In fact, though, Wasti's speculation is a lot more plausible if TQM is considered in its 'hard' variant (or with the emphasis skewed toward this). Several other management writers have also suggested that TQM fits better in national cultures – including Japan- that have a high level of power distance (Katz et al 1998; Masters 1996; Scully 1996). The

linking of QCs and 'Theory X' is only a contradiction in terms if it is assumed that TQM must be as participative as some of its popularizers imply, and if we forget that for TQM's main proselytiser, Deming (1986), the main concern was more with management action and behaviour - the role of the employee usually being limited to problem identification (Wilkinson et al 1998:807; Edwards et al 1998: 451). In all three of these plants management uses benchmarking, against international averages, sector averages and the performance of 'best companies'. All managements use Pareto diagrams and fishbone methods. The problem is then given to workers. Despite the exhortations to kaizen posted on machines and factory notice boards, this, for workers, is where kaizen really begins. 'We give them responsibility' says the German Managing Director at Cerkezkoy plant. 'Responsibility *not power*'.

### **TQM in Practice**

In their analysis of workplace performance and high commitment work practices in Britain Cully et al (1999: 285 Table 11.5) list a number of such practices that can apply to an establishment's largest occupational group. These are worth reviewing here since they can provide a brief guide to the nature of the three plants. Cully et al refer to: temporary agency workers, employees on fixed contracts, personality tests, performance tests, formal off-the-job training for most employees, profit related pay, employee share ownership scheme, regular appraisals, fully autonomous or semi-autonomous teams, single status for managers and other employees, guaranteed job security. Of these ten practices most do not apply to the three plants.

There are no temporary agency workers. Recruitment of temporary workers is restricted to the fridge plant to meet increased demand over the summer months,

though workers in all plants do serve an initial probation period, usually of one year. In all plants there are also tacheron workers<sup>3</sup>. These perform ancillary functions – in the refectory and to a limited extent on cleaning, packing and warehouse duties. There are no employees on fixed contracts.

Foreign managers tend to be impressed by the temporal flexibility of Turkish workers. A German manager at Cerkezkoy plant told us that when a problem arose a group of Turkish worker worked overnight to put it right:

This is absolutely not possible in Germany. In Germany, there are unions and so on. In here, it is absolutely fantastic. This is really a big advantage.

Expatriate managers in other firms also report delightedly that the preparedness of Turkish workers to work overtime is ‘unbelievable’ (Oktay 1996: 96). Such preparedness is easier to understand given that when managers lay-off workers or make them redundant those who refuse overtime come high up on the list. At Cerkezkoy plant the company varies when workers take their annual holiday entitlement, workers complaining about being forced to take holidays without notice, often in winter a few days at a time. At Cayirova plant, there is an arrangement to allow management to cope with under capacity through short term paid lay off in a way that permits workers to retain some choice, through working overtime later on, when they take their holiday. Functional flexibility is not an issue at any of the plants because of the nature of their trade unionism (note that the German manager cited above had forgotten there was a union).

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<sup>3</sup> Tacheron workers represent between 10 and 15 per cent of the workforce of the three plants. They are employed for less than 11 months to avoid the employer’s obligation to pay compensation on dismissal; they lack legal contracts, receive only the minimum wage, are not trade union members and have no holiday entitlement (Cam 1999; Sugur et al 1999).

There are no personality tests and some managers pride themselves on their ability to make judgements on the basis of the size of workers' hands, their physical appearance and thus implied dexterity and vigour. But competition for such jobs is stiff. In all three factories it is still common for recruitment to operate through networks of family and friends. To have such contacts does not guarantee a job, nor are interviews regularly dispensed with and sometimes performance (aptitude) tests are used. But all the firms require applicants to have a reference from inside and there are all kinds of connections that figure in workers' accounts of how they got in- and which figure yet more so in their accounts of how others did so. Some workers are quite open about having obtained their jobs by 'torpil' (through someone on the inside) like this one at Bolu plant:

I got in with 'torpil'. There was someone close to the family, a deputy director, who worked here. He helped me. I think half of all the employees entered here with the help of someone.

The range of possibilities is very large. At Bolu plant the tradition has been that a father can ask for his son to replace him when he retires. Everywhere there are brothers and fathers who already work in the factory and put in a word, and who tell future applicants about jobs coming up (which firms encourage, not advertising publicly). There are mothers who look after the children of managers, uncles who are trade union officials, fathers who are tailors and make suits for an important manager, cousins who are secretaries to managing directors, managers who one way or another

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can be got to by intermediaries who will put in a good word. In short, linking everything together is a dense web of friends, friends of friends and acquaintances, the web through which the ordinary citizen hopes to touch and be rewarded by the powerful. As a worker at Cerkezkoy plant explained:

It isn't possible to enter these kind of factories, especially the big ones by your own efforts. You have to have a man [a patron] to help you. This man can either work in the factory or be outside, for example, someone who knows a director or a chief in the factory. Governors and kaymakam (the prime local government representative in the town) can help too.

As for the rest of Cully et al's list of practices, there is no profit-related pay or employee share ownership scheme for the largest occupational group in any of the plants. Job security is not guaranteed but compensation is payable in case of redundancy. There is not single status for managers and other employees with respect to common uniforms or parking and to the extent refectories are common there is informal segregation.

There are teams and there is training in all companies. The following account concentrates on four practices often associated with TQM - quality accreditation, training, suggestion schemes, which are often linked to the idea of continuous improvement, and teams. All these practices exist alongside problem solving techniques such as Pareto diagrams and fishbone techniques.

Quality Accreditation. All plants have ISO 9001, ISO 14001 and a certificate from TSE (the Turkish Standards Institute). Bolu plant also has BS 8800<sup>4</sup>. At all the plants the shopfloors display the slogan 'QUALITY FIRST!'. Just what the talk of quality means in practice for either managers or workers is by no means clear. For some managers, notably in HRM (since the mid 1990s all plants have HRM departments) talk of quality brings forth excitement and, quite probably, genuine commitment to the idea. But another possible reaction is formal compliance. We asked one manager, who told us that his plant had got BS 8800 whether it has reduced injuries. 'We obtained our certificate' he replied. 'Yes, but did it work?' we persisted. 'We succeeded' he replied with a twinkle in his eye. 'Our objective was to obtain the certificate and we achieved our objective'.

Training. All three plants had training managers. Only 4 out of 10 of all managers reported any training in the last 12 months. This was partly a function of the disruption caused by management reorganisation at Cayirova plant where only 2 out of 10 had received such training. At Bolu plant and Cerkezkoy plant around half had done so. The most commonly attended courses were those in project management (7), total quality management (6) and crisis management (5), in each case nearly all those attending coming from Cerkezkoy plant. Cerkezkoy plant had a particularly active and enthusiastic training manager who had been specially briefed by managers from Germany and who was in process of developing training in TQM for suppliers as well as for managers and workers.

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<sup>4</sup> ISO 9001 certifies quality over a wide range of activities including design, production, sales, after-sales and R and D. ISO 14001 refers to environmental management and BS 8800 to health and safety.



Workers were asked what training they had received and it can be seen from Table 4 that over 9 out of 10 had received some training with relatively less time having been devoted to this at Bolu plant or Cerkezkoy plant compared to Cayirova plant. On the face of it, the amount of training experienced is on a par with that in the British comparator firm in the WERS employee sample or with that experienced by WERS employees in British manufacturing sample as a whole.

Training can of course take a 'soft' form. For instance, Milkman's *Farewell to the Factory* (1997: 162-9) describes a new training programme instituted at GM's Linden plant. She reports that the training curriculum included various components, ranging from a plant tour of the new technology to presentations on sexual harassment and equal opportunities, safety and fire prevention sessions, JIT, statistical process control, problem solving decision analysis and quality issues. However, the largest single component of this training dealt with the psychology of motivation, with an additional whole day devoted to interpersonal skills. One of the trainers told Milkman of cases where people who had been exposed to courses on 'constructive motivation' and the like had said 'I wish I would have known this twenty years ago ... I can't wait to show this to my kids' and that some had cried in class saying 'If I knew this, this wouldn't have happened between me and my son'. One worker at Bolu plant did in fact tell us 'My home life changed thanks to quality circles. This training changed my relationship with my children at home. Now I don't get angry with them'. He was the only one to tell us this. Training in these plants was not generally about 'constructive motivation'. As can be seen from Table 5 it tended to be oriented to the 'hard' rather than 'soft' variant of TQM. This should put us on our guard about expecting any mental revolution on the part of the workers in these plants.

Percentages	Bolu plant	Cayirova plant	Cerkezkoy plant	Allwhitegoods	wers98 whitegoods comparator firmemp
none	0	9	8	6	63
<one day	52	19	60	43	0
1-<2 days	28	21	18	22	4
2-<5 days	12	23	14	16	21
5-<10 days	6	21	0	9	8
10 days or more	2	8	0	3	4

Percentages	WERS 98 workplaces weighted <sup>2</sup>	all whitegoods employee courses n=479	Bolu plant employee courses n=184	Cayirova plant employee course n=155
health and safety	62	41	40	29
operation of equipment and other technical job training <sup>1</sup>	50	19	14	21
computing skills	42	4	8	4
Teamworking	41	1	1	1
improving communication	41	1	0	2
customer service/liaison	38	0	0	0
quality control procedures	38	22	22	24
problem solving methods	24	12	16	19
equal opportunities	18	0	0	0
reliability and working to deadlines	15	0	0	0
none of these	5	0	0	0
training courses reported per worker (average number)			3.7	2.9

Notes: 1. WERS category is for operation of new equipment only. Vintage is not specified for Turkish data..

2. This data is for all *workplaces* with 25 or more employees, broadly in all sectors of British industry except for agriculture, fishing and mining where, as reported by over 1,600 managers, off-the-job training was provided in the previous 12 months. No direct comparison can therefore be made between these responses and those of the Turkish workers. Also, the absence of training in customer services in the Turkish factories might well be accounted for by this being more common in hotels, restaurants and other services included in the British survey. As against this, the comparative data do serve to underline the total absence of courses on equal opportunities in the Turkish plants and it also suggests the bias of courses in Turkey to what Cully et al (1999: 63) refer to as ‘a hard quality management approach’ as evidenced by courses in quality control procedures. Health and safety courses and those in the use of equipment are prominent in both countries but the Turkish firms seem considerably lighter on what Cully et al refer to as ‘softer’ or ‘people oriented’ skills.

Suggestion schemes. All three plants had a suggestion scheme. In all three notice boards carried monthly information on suggestions made, outcomes and reasons for acceptance or rejection. Points schemes enabled workers to receive presents at the end of the year (not money – according to one of the managers ‘money is too cold’). In Cerkezkoy plant workers who made their suggestion with up to two others gained additional points in an attempt by the management to avoid the individualism commonly built into schemes. Systematic data collected in all three plants suggests this was not successful. As can be seen from Table 6 Cerkezkoy workers were more inclined to keep ideas to themselves than those in the other plants, around half of the workers in all plants saying that they would make a suggestion if they could see an easier or quicker way to do their job. In all three plants suggestions run at roughly one per employee per year. This falls very considerably short of Japanese rates (Kaplinsky and Posthuma 1994: 32). In 1989 Toyota claimed 35 suggestions per employee per year world-wide (Winfield 1994: 49).

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Table 6 What would you do if you found a way to do your job that was easier or faster than the specified way

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Percentages	Bolu plant n=50	Cayirova plant n=53	Cerkezkoy plant N=50
Keep it to myself	6	6	26
Share with only a few co-workers	10	9	4
Tell the team leader	34	42	18
Make a suggestion	50	43	52

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Teams and Quality Circles. As commentators on modern management techniques have noted, TQM typically purports to subsume QCs or teamwork arrangements into a more integrated approach (Ramsey 1991: 6). This does not mean that the approach has to be bottom up. In each plant there are long established teams of between 10 and 100 people. At Bolu plant and Cayirova plant team leaders are mostly university educated engineers appointed by management at pay levels about three-fold that of

the shopfloor. They are not unionised. They have assistant team leaders from the shopfloor but again these are appointed. At Cerkezkoy plant team leaders are mostly appointed from shopfloor workers and also perform 'joker' (relief backup) functions.

A study of nearly 6,000 workplaces in 10 EU member countries found the application of group work to be 'modest'; that group delegation was 'in its infancy in European workplaces' and that the appointment of team leaders was 'in most cases, a matter of managerial prerogative' this being true to a lesser extent in deciding who are to become group members (Benders et al 1999: 51). A similarly subdued commentary on the extent and autonomous nature of teams in British industry comes from WERS98. Cully et al (1999:43 table 3.4) distinguish between cases in which most employees in the core workforce work in teams from other more precise measures of teamworking. Looking at all workplaces in their sample employing 25 or more people, they find that teamworking of some sort exists in 65 per cent of largest occupational groups (that is, groups in which the majority of the workforce is employed) but that there are only 3 per cent of cases in which there is 'fully autonomous teamworking' and only 35 per cent in which there may be said to be 'semi autonomous teamworking'. Fully autonomous teams were rare in all of the occupational groups, rising to only 6 per cent for the group with the highest presence (sales workers). Semi-autonomous work teams were most common in the professional job category (53 per cent) and least common (13 per cent) for plant and machine operatives (the category closest to most of our workers). None of the plants in Turkey reached the semi-autonomous work team level – that is, there were not joint decisions on how work was to be done.

In all three plants quality circles consist of 4 to 6 people and last from 4 to 6 months. Membership is supposedly voluntary but is in practice compulsory. Each QC is organised by one of the team leaders appointed by management. The workers have a 'spokesman' who they elect who is a channel of communication with the team leader outside QC meetings. Not all workers are involved in QCs which largely consist of more skilled and experienced workers. QCs operate by workers responding to management agendas, making their suggestions and management unilaterally deciding what to do. In Bolu plant QCs were first introduced in the early 1990s and there were over 15 set up in 1998. In Cayirova plant there had been QCs since the mid 1980s and over 40 had been set up in 1998. In Cerkezkoy plant QCs had been abandoned in 1997, the new German management making a new and thus far limited beginning in 1999. Six to eight were planned for 2000.

Our general conclusion about the extent of new management methods in the three plants is that it would be rash indeed to expect evidence of a mental revolution on the part of workers in relation to them. As we have seen, managements are aware of some of these techniques, as are workers, and there is evidence of training, teams, and an interest in kaizen and suggestions from the shopfloor in all of the plants. However, it has to be remembered that the main emphasis is on a 'hard' rather than 'soft' form of TQM. Further cause for caution is that even in the plant studied by Milkman, where employees definitely were subjected to a 'soft' approach, those workers who emerged from the training programme expecting things to change on the shopfloor were 'deeply disappointed' (1997: 169).

## **Workers' Evaluation of Managers and Working in the Plants**

In the light of the above cautionary remarks, Table 7 which presents Turkish workers' evaluations of managers' responsiveness to workers needs is remarkable in two respects. In each and every case, Turkish managers seem to be rated more highly by Turkish workers than British managers are by British workers; and this is so whether we compare Turkish workers' evaluations of their managers' behaviour to those of workers in the British comparator firm or to those of employees in British manufacturing as a whole.

The fact that Turkish workers evaluate their managers as highly as they do might be thought to be associated with their level of job influence. However, if we again make a comparison with the British WERS data there is no clear evidence that they were more likely to perceive they had a lot of influence over how they did their work (Table 8) and the same table suggests they were more likely to be worried about their work. On the other hand, 77 per cent of them felt that their right to make decisions had *improved* compared to five years ago (Bolu plant 80 per cent, Cayirova plant 74 and Cerkezkoy plant 78).

The possibility arises that *relatively small* as the differences so far brought about by the new management methods have been, they have gone *some* way to affect these workers' assessment of the firms in which they work. The WERS investigation used an item on climate which took the form: 'In general, how would you describe relations between workers and managers here?'. Turkish workers gave higher evaluations on this than workers in the comparator British whitegoods firm or workers

in British manufacturing as a whole, the respective responses for 'very good' and 'good' being 60 per cent, 23 per cent and 44 per cent.

However, the evaluation of climate, and behind this a generally negative or positive view of the factory, is not simply a matter of management practice and style. It is *also* a function of much more broadly based constraints, opportunities and expectations. In this context it is necessary to consider the differences that exist between the three Turkish plants. On the question of climate there are two quite different levels of response; the first for Cayirova plant and Cerkezkoy plant where 49 per and 40 per of workers rated climate as good or very good; the second for Bolu plant, where 90 per cent of workers did so. This difference is not attributable to Bolu plant workers experiencing a greater degree of interest and skill in their jobs; nor to them feeling that they have a greater degree of influence on the range of tasks in their jobs; nor is it attributable to their jobs actually requiring more training than those at Cayirova plant and Cerkezkoy plant (Table 9). Bolu plant workers are not especially impressed by the intrinsic nature of the jobs they do. What they are impressed by is what these jobs offer them compared to what they (or indeed their children) could expect elsewhere in their area. The point is underlined by their unanimous verdict that they are satisfied with their pay (Table 10). The difference between the plants is that the agreement which gives all the workers the same pay favours those at Bolu plant since they live in an area where the cost of living is considerably lower. Similarly, though there is no reason to assume that these workers are any more secure than those at Cayirova plant they clearly feel that their jobs are secure compared to others they might do. They live in an area where there are no comparable sources of work and where to work for a major conglomerate means good pay, security, credit in local shops, respect from

future parents in law. In addition Bolu plant management has had a paternalist side, providing a coffee house for workers in the town and buses to take them to Friday prayers. These are good jobs for people like them, living where they live and, compared to other workers, they are more sanguine about the lives their sons and daughters would lead if they were to work there too<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Table 11 provides data on those against their children entering the same plant because positive replies were sometimes qualified: 2 workers said 'yes' but only with respect to a son, not a daughter; 2 said their son worked in the plant already; 4 (all from Bolu plant) said they would favour their son working there if they failed educationally.



Table 7 Evaluation of Management

How good managers are at various activities: Percentages 'very good' and 'good'	all Turkish white goods workers	wers 98 comparator firm employees	wers 98all non-management manufacturing employees
Keeping everyone up to date about proposed changes	54	33	33
Providing everyone with the chance to comment on proposed changes	43	17	22
Responding to suggestions from employees	69	17	26
Dealing with work problems you or others may have	82	25	38
Treating employees fairly	62	33	41
Average management score	62	25	32

Table 8 Perceived Job Influence and Worry about Job percentages

	all Turkish whitegoods	Bolu plant	Cayirova plant	Cerkezkoy plant	WERS 98 comparator firm employees	wers 98 all non management manufacturing employees
Overall job influence ('a lot') <sup>1</sup>	33	38	46	16	46	33
Worry about my work outside working hours (strongly agree and agree)	49	44	47	56	26	20

Note: 1. Overall job influence is an overall measure of perceived job influence created by summing the answers to three WERS 98 questions on different spheres of influence and scaling back to the original categories. The three spheres concern how work is done; pace of work; and range of tasks undertaken (Cully et al 1999: 142).

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**Table 9 Workers' Intrinsic Job Evaluations by Plant**

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Percentages

	Bolu plant	Cayırova plant	Cerkezkoy plant
Satisfied or very satisfied with interest or skill in job	76	89	78
Time taken to learn job 2 weeks or less	40	17	10

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**Table 10 Workers' Broader Relative Assessments of Working in the Plants**

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Percentages

	Bolu plant	Cayırova plant	Cerkezkoy plant
Satisfied or very satisfied with pay	100	74	56
Agree or strongly agree job is secure in this workplace	78	34	28
Rate job as good one for someone like me	96	87	74
Against son or daughter working in the plant	26	64	86

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## **Discussion and Conclusion**

The social meaning of working in these factories is in some ways similar to that reported in some sectors of developed capitalist societies. For example, in their account of Suzuki-GM's joint venture CAMI car plant in Canada, Rinehart et al point out that the relatively high wages and job security of such plants represent 'a last hope for many to enjoy the "middle class" lifestyle that forms the basis of full citizenship in much of Canada and the United States' (1997: 170). This 'last chance', as they point out, exists in the context of widespread joblessness, underemployment, the absence or erosion of a state social security net, growing wage polarisation, and, as a consequence, employment insecurity. What has to be said here, however, is that each of these features afflicts the Turkish population – but more acutely.

In relation to the majority of Anatolia, the Izmit triangle is a zone of relative prosperity.

Compared to millions who are less fortunate, it has been the achievement of these workers to join the corporate sector working class: they have higher than average wages; they have social security rights; they are relatively secure, even compared to the majority of those employed in manufacturing and this matters a great deal in a society in which there is no unemployment benefit; 30 per cent have cars compared to less than 10 per cent nationally; 60 per cent own their homes (generally flats, but a significant achievement in a society where payment is by cash in advance only). Any tendency for these workers to rate their position more highly than, for example, British workers rate theirs should therefore be considered entirely consistent with their local material position inside Turkey. Certainly, everything cannot be reduced to the

effect of the global modern management techniques to which management in Turkey and other developing countries increasingly has access.

For one thing, the actual implementation of these particular techniques also needs to be taken into account. These plants are not implementing 'soft' variants of TQM and as with the plant that is often regarded as the Turkish leader in TQM 'it is difficult to see the emergence of a democratic workplace' (Yildirim 1999: 200). Writing of plants in Mexico, Helper (1995:270-1) has referred to 'kaizen from above'. This fits the Turkish case very well. There is another point however, which may have wider significance for some other developing countries: such is the bureaucratic formalism that has typified large scale production in Turkey, and much of Turkish life, that when managers invoke ideas of company citizenship, and perhaps more importantly, behave in a non-bureaucratic manner and engage more directly with workers, workers are likely to appreciate this.

On a more particular point, it was seen that one of the factories, Bolu plant, constituted a micro-zone of further advantage for workers employed in the large corporate sector, compared to those employed in the Izmit triangle itself. There is nothing fixed about the Bolu plant workers' position of course, which could be undermined by the termination of the industry-wide agreement. But the local advantages that Bolu plant workers enjoy go a considerable way to explain their more positive stance toward their plant and its management. And there is a further relevant factor. The new management techniques had not gone so far at Bolu plant at the time of the fieldwork as had been the case in the other two plants; nor had its management been made as lean as elsewhere. In practice, Bolu plant's management veered to old

style paternalism, which puts a further difficulty in the way of interpreting our results as a vindication of the ‘new’ management methods. If anything, it suggests that the less such methods were deployed the happier the workers were. It bears repetition too that the introduction of new management methods into these factories has been a relatively recent affair. Since workers’ positive evaluations of management methods can diminish over time (Rinehart et al 1997), the relative freshness of the initiatives to which these workers were exposed must also be taken into account.

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