Abstract

Purpose
The main objective of this paper is to theoretically investigate the human resources (HR) context and content on total quality management (TQM), business excellence and ISO 9000:2000.

Design/methodology/approach
The HR-quality relationship has largely been ignored or underestimated. This paper investigates the existing literature and digs into the various approaches and frameworks in order to evaluate the rhetoric and the reality of this relationship. The examination of differences, similarities and convergence is of high importance in understanding the contribution of HR issues to all of these quality approaches.

Findings
Besides the "good stories" of implementation of the European Quality Award (EQA) model, the ISO 9000:2000 certification and TQM, the paper reveals a number of problematic areas in relation to effective HR utilization such as: low utilization of employees' skills and knowledge, lack of a vision and a mission for HR followed by systematic design and implementation of strategic human resource management (HRM) practices.

Research limitations/implications
This is the first step towards an understanding of the current status of the HR context and content on TQM, business excellence and ISO 9000:2000. The paper addresses a series of issues concerning organizations worldwide in their road to quality improvement and business excellence. There is a need to further evaluate organizations by measuring their HR performance and the degree of quality implementation in the future.

Practical implications
The paper is aiming at both Quality and HR people within the organization. Quality cannot be achieved without fully utilization of organization's HR, and the HR function needs a new vision and practices that are focused on internal customer satisfaction.

Originality/value
The paper provides a reliable and objective depiction of the current status of the HR context and content on TQM, business excellence and ISO 9000:2000 through the examination and analysis of a state-of-the-art literature review studies, including all the various approaches, practices and perceptions recorded so far in the literature -some of them based on empirical data and some deriving from rhetoric and "good-stories" or "how things ought to be" perspective.

Keywords
European Quality Award, Business excellence, ISO 9000 series, Human resource management
Developing a human resource (HR) strategy to support the business plan requires human resource management (HRM) planning to be recognized as a fundamental part of the business planning process. This paper argues that integrating HR strategy and strategic planning is fundamental to achieving business excellence. This is demonstrated in the alignment model shown in Fig. 1 (NB in part based on Kanji’s model, Kanji, 1995). The long-term failure of companies, who have reengineered or attempted TQM, is often regarded as an implementation failure rather than a fundamental conceptual failure (Dyason & Kaye, 1995). Alternatively, there is the view that the long-term organizational stress that goes with sustained improvement effort is too much for some organizations. Keywords: Business Excellence, Human Resources, European Quality Award, Research, Greece 1.0 Introduction Only recently quality experts, researchers, academics and practitioners realized that human resources issues can be at the core of the quality philosophy and that employee involvement and commitment is essential for the successful introduction and implementation of quality initiatives, programmes or practices and techniques (Blackburn & Rosen, 1993; Soltani, et.al, 2004; Kufidu & Vouzas, 1998; Vouzas, 2005). It is widely accepted that TQM has a high human resource context and that quality Human resource management.