Research on Expectations of Generations for Management Policies

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Extensive Summary

Introduction

The Turkish Language Association defines “generation” as “a group of people who were born in approximately same years, have experienced conditions of same period and therefore similar problems and faith, and been liable for similar duties” (http://www.tdk.gov.tr/).

The first person who started scientific research on generation studies were Auguste Comte in the years 1830-1840. Comte revealed that generational changes are forces moving in historical process and stated that social progress could only be possible with experiences to be transmitted from one generation to the next (Comte, 1974).

On the other hand, the changing world also affects perception, expectations, priorities, view of life and attitudes of people. According to İşçimen (2012), since people who were born in closer periods have similar traits, it creates the concept of generation. As each generation has different characteristics, institutions have to update their systems according to new generations.

According to the address-based population registration data of TÜİK in 2013, population of generations were determined to be 17 million for Generation Z (23%), 25.5 million for Generation Y (33%), 16 million (21%) for Generation X, 12.8 million for B. Boomers (17%), and 4.6 million for Generation Lost (6%).

Differences in expectations and perception of generations affect organizational behaviors of people and therefore business life. Different characteristics between
generations affect management style and leadership as those managed and being managed. This study is intended to determine difference in management perception between generations and reveal expectations for proper leadership styles based on such perception.

Significant differences can be observed both in working methods and expectations from workplace between generations. In today’s workplaces where different age groups work together, a major part of problems encountered arises from differences in perception, management, implementation and communication between generations (Keleş, 2011). Management of different generations is a work of art. While young generations want to create a quick effect, middle generations want to believe in purpose of entity. On the other hand, old generations do not like change or uncertainty (UNJSPF, 2013). Therefore, entities or organizations can create and effective and efficient work environment by constantly updating their management policies according to such differences.

Akdemir (2014) emphasizes two critical elements of business management. One of them is managers and the other is approaches related to management culture. Managers seek to fulfill of business purposes by penetrating into sources of entity according to management culture created. Leadership approaches adopted by managers in businesses can be autocratic, participative or extreme democratic depending on management culture specified by top management.

For this purpose, the generation concept and generation categories have been discussed primarily. Social and professional characteristics of generations have been addressed to and compared based on various criteria.

Method

In this study, information has been collected through survey method. For purposes of the research, domestic and foreign literature were scanned to determine difference in management perception of generations in business life and reveal their expectations for proper leadership style based on such perception, and then a survey form was prepared using expert opinions as well. Since the main population could not be fully reached to, randomized study was carried out by simple random sampling method. The first group of questions in the survey defines demographical characteristics while the second part uses 20 pentad Likert scales. This 20-question scale was tested for reliability using Cronbach Alpha test. Cronbach Alpha coefficient was found to be 0.785 for the scale used. This indicates that the study provides sufficient reliability.

The survey was applied to 1248 people working in various industries in the Marmara Region, and 964 surveys remaining after elimination of missing-deficient surveys were analyzed through SPPS 21 statistical packaged software. Expectations for operating conditions and personal traits of generations were sought to be determined by two groups of questions in the survey. Demographical characteristics of survey participants were classified first and then ANOVA test was used to determine whether answers given to each item by generations create a significant difference in between or not. Subsequently, answers given to scaling questions by generations were subjected to distribution analysis by departments, and Two-Way MANOVA test has been used to
analyze how the variables of generation and department vary by each item in the scale and whether or not there is a significant difference between them, and which items vary.

Results

Based on the research result, averages of answers given by generations to 20 work life and personal trait questions were compared and it has been determined that there is an apparent common opinion and perception regarding to all except for four items. To be clearer, management perceptions and expectations for leadership styles of all generations are similar to characteristics determined for Generation Y irrespective of age or experience. It has been concluded that management perception among generations and work life order in Turkey is not parallel with the Western societies in this respect.

The result obtained from the stage two was revealed in analysis of personal traits and management perceptions of generations by departments.

Differences between generations seen in almost every department are determined to be conflicting. Most of the answers given to 20 questions in all departments are found to be homogenous except for significant differences found in a few items. The greatest variations between generations were found in Top Management among all departments.

Based on the result obtained from the survey, participants have a character that adopts flexible working principle, wants to hold initiative, is inclined to team work and team leadership, seeks affinity and sincerity, has a negative view of long and tiring work hours, and has vision targets.

Expectations for leadership styles of generations that do not like to be inspected, expect award or promotion in case of success and adopt a management and leadership approach providing a trust-based working environment can only be fulfilled by democratic leader type.

Discussion

It is highly important for management organization studies to determine generations’ personal traits, management perception, relation with management and expectations for leadership type. Recently, research conducted on management perception of generations has shown an increase.

The result obtained from the study clearly indicates that personal traits and management perception of the Turkish social structure regarding to business life are not parallel with differences between generations in the literature. More clearly, it can be said that characteristics of all generations are identified with characteristics of Generation Y. In this context, for purposes of arrangement and organization of business life in our country, it is important to study and analyze perceptions of generations more deeply rather than creating a vision based on foreign literature.