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# SQCs in Turkey as “Imece Circles”

Hayal Köksal

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**Abstract** The history of Total Quality in Education and Students’ Quality Circles in Turkish educational institutions is introduced through “İmece Circles (İCs).” The history dates from the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, and industrial quality-focused reforming actions in the 1980s. The Total Quality implications of the Ministry of National Education in 1990s will be discussed, with an account of the efforts of the writer as the Director of the Turkish Center for School of Quality and the Director General for Turkey for the World Council for Total Quality and Excellence in Education. The theory, practices and outcomes of nearly 2,000 ICs will be reported. Among the key innovations has been “Total Quality Management,” and its implementation, through various methods and tools, in different settings such as “Quality Circles.” The article concludes with some recommendations.

**Keywords** İmece circles · Students’ quality circles · Turkey

*“Theory and Research illuminate Practice, and Practice informs Research.”*  
*Zmuda, Kuklis and Kline, 2004:3*

## 1 Historical background

### 1.1 Changes in the new era

Since the beginning of the 20th Century, world citizens have witnessed drastic changes. Two World Wars, and rapid improvement in communication and information technologies, increased the speed of change and psychological chaos. Managerial systems started to look for new solutions, to increase productivity. Total Quality Management (TQM) was accepted as the only way by many industrial leaders after the Second World War. It was the main reason for the rebirth of the Japanese people and Japanese industry. Through fathers of Total Quality, techniques and tools were shared; sample cases were publicised and those organisations who internalise not only the methodology but the philosophy of “continuous improvement” have gained great success. The new movement started in the production sector of the industrial world and moved to service sectors like education.

Nations are now competing with each other to attain world quality leadership. Quality is not just about words. Quality in any sphere can only be accomplished by commitment, hard work, good communication, effective leadership and love. Quality people are not a matter of chance, but result from a constant and continuous effort to groom them. People with commitment, positive outlook and leadership abilities have a pioneering role.

One good sample of such charismatic leaders is Mustafa Kemal, who is also known as Atatürk, the father of the Turkish nation. Turkish society experienced “Enlightenment” as a

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state policy during the period of the Republic (1923) under the great leadership of Atatürk. His ideas and reformative soul might be seen in the following paragraphs written by Arat in 1996: 29

“...He foresaw that the only power which will keep alive and improve the new institutional and cultural environment was qualified man power. As a first and a fundamental step he brought forward the principle of the ‘Unity of Education’ so that education did not remain as a privilege for a minority, but became available for the masses...”

This law was passed on March 3rd, 1924 simultaneously with the law of abolition of the Caliphate. Article 2 says: “All the schools and religious schools administered by the trustees of private foundations shall be transferred and brought under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of National Education” (Baysal 1996). These steps were followed by the *Clothes (or Hat) Reform, the Alphabet Reform* that were related to the changing environment of culture and had symbolic meaning. The *Principle of Secularism* symbolising religious reform was part of these reforms.

These laws have had a significant role in the Turkish modern educational system. The National Educational Ministries wanted to keep educational unity and quality at consistent levels, with no difference between the schools of the West and the East. The principles of Atatürk can meet our contemporary needs: the solidarity and unity he provided are very important. Leaders such as Atatürk or Gandhi are considered as sources of happiness and hope. Peace was always in their dreams, and the official motto of Atatürk: “Peace at home, Peace in the World” offered to educate peaceful “total quality persons” of the future, without discriminating between ethnic groups.

“In 1923, the Turkish Grand National Assembly was founded by a mosaic of people consisting of hadjis, clergymen, merchants, farmers, scholars, Kurds, Lazes and Circassians. In such an Assembly, decisions regarding war and peace and individual reforms were taken after bitter discussions and the republic, which many people could not even dream of, was founded. Isn’t this the clearest proof of Atatürk’s tremendous openness to democracy?” (Saylan 1996).

## 1.2 From industry to schools

For many years after the Second World War, some core factors affecting productivity in Turkish industry were neglected. However, in the early 1980s, Turkish enterprises showed rapid development, entering foreign markets. As years passed, due to high international competition, Turkish firms aimed to take advantage of more effective HR

Management, with widespread applications. TQM was perceived as an important organisational change agent (Özkanlı and Ateş 1999).

In 1991, KalDer (The Quality Association) was founded, and in 1993, it started TQM consultancy seminars for the business world. Starting from 1993, TÜSİAD (Turkish Industry and Businessmen Association) and KalDer have been giving “Quality Awards” to firms. For instance, well-known Turkish corporations like BRİSA Bridgestore Sabancı Tyre Industry and Commerce (1993), TAI-TUSAŞ Motor Industry (1994), NETAŞ-Northern Electronic Telecommunication (1995), Kordsa (1996), Arcelik (1997), Eczacibasi (1998), Beko and Askaynak (1999), Eczacibasi, Artema and ATA Investment (2000) and Zekai Tahir Burak Research Hospital (2001) were recognised, due to their success in quality applications. In 1998, the National Quality movement started in Turkey. Quality Control Circles started for the production sector in the same year, and the “Educational Expert Group” was formed within KalDer.

The writer, who was one of the academic founding members, worked voluntarily within the group for 3 years, along with colleagues from various educational institutions. She acted as the facilitator of the “Teacher Training Group” within the “Ministry of National Education and KalDer Educational Conference.” The Educational Expert Group was the “KalDer Expert Group of the Year 2000.” In the same year, many experts came to Turkey from various countries to share their experiences concerning quality. One of them was John Jay Bonstingl from Maryland, USA. He gave ten seminars in Istanbul, Ankara and Gaziantep, and he co-founded the Turkish Center for Schools of Quality™.

The Ministry of National Education in Turkey launched a “Quality Campaign” in all Turkish Schools in November 1999. Following the “Unity of Education” principle, all schools in seven regions were invited to participate in the quality improvement movement. The top administrators of the Ministry were taken into a series of training seminars about “Quality in Schools,” starting from the academic year 2000–2001. The aim of the seminars was to establish the main goal and applications of quality philosophy in the minds of the people, starting with school leaders. The movement is still continuing. Due to some errors in the launching and implementing procedures of the movement, it was perceived as a “top-down and paper-work” process by school principals and teachers, rather than a life style and philosophy of ongoing improvement, which fits the spirit of education. Unhappiness of teachers and school leaders about the “low quality of education” in Turkish schools had been a common complaint for years. A need for change was strongly felt by the academics. The demand for “quality improvement in education” was a bottom-up call from the teaching–learning process, that is classrooms and schools.

After a short time, they were either forced to participate in a “long procedures list movement” that was considered as a heavy burden on the shoulders of the teaching staff, or “school improvement teams” were formed in schools, and some people were assigned to work within them. However, only after full internalisation of “the Quality philosophy,” can the change start at any institution. People need time to notice the need for change. “Quality blossoming” might last between three and 5 years. Thus, they gain some insights, and they start applying the new philosophy to their personal and professional lives.

### 1.3 Pioneers of schools: ELTers

The writer graduated from Izmir Teachers’ Training College in 1976. After working at various secondary schools as a teacher of English, she completed her B.A. at the Educational Faculty of Marmara University in 1985. She had her MA in English Language Teaching at Gaziantep University in 1992, and her Ph.D. in “Educational Sciences” in 1997. She encountered “TQM in Education” in the early 1990 s during her MA classes, and she was impressed by the “Human-focused Philosophy.” Her interest in quality grew under the influence of her Ph.D. advisor, Prof. Dr. Tokay Gedikoğlu, during her “Educational Sciences” Doctoral studies in Gaziantep. In 1998, she published a quality reference book for school leaders. After the first book in the area written by Cafoglu (TQM in Education: 1996), this was the second, informing educators about the history, tools and applications of TQM in school settings, including Strategic Planning processes for school leaders (Introduction of TQM on the Way of Creating Schools of Quality: 1998).

As a believer in the great power of unity and collaboration (İmece), she was one of the first members of a professional NGO in 1995: “The Association for English Language Education (İNGED/ELEA).” She organised quality-focused seminars for teachers of English. The first seminar took place on 24th November 1998 in Değirmendere, Kocaeli. This was because the Mayor of the Değirmendere was the first local governor of Turkey who started the TQM Movement. Those seminars created interest in quality improvement efforts in schools. The foundation of the first İNGED Special Interest Group: “Quality in English Language Teaching/Q-ELT” was approved by the Governing Body of İNGED in 1999. It was for teachers of English working in Turkish primary and secondary schools, and lecturers in higher educational institutions.

Goals of that interest group (Q-ELT) were determined as follows:

- To create “Quality” awareness among ELT teachers in order to improve the quality of ELT classrooms.

- To come together as a professional group to share experiences.
- To attract the attention of teachers and language learners to the importance of the quality of in-class activities and ELT Management.
- To provide information on quality issues in general, and specifically in ELT.
- To help teachers form a notion of customer–supplier chain in educational settings, circulate ideas, news, etc.
- To share and care for the problems of ELT classrooms, in order to meet the greater demand for communication in the fast expanding world of teaching a foreign/second language to Turkish students effectively.

The objectives were

- To improve the quality of English language teaching at Turkish schools.
- To develop learning strategies of language learning.
- To organise seminars, training programmes and conferences to train young teachers, to renew the knowledge of experienced teachers and to share experiences.
- To follow the recent developments in the area.
- To motivate the use of innovative approaches and recent technology in the ELT classroom.
- To conduct benchmarking studies among the schools.
- To help ELT teachers realise the importance of customer–supplier relationships in their classroom.
- To find effective ways to assess the success and the improvement of students, even asking their opinion about it.
- To enable teachers to gain leadership skills.
- To organise “Share and Care” meetings with ELTers in various cities of Turkey.
- To conduct forums and discussions, in order to find out main problems of ELT classrooms in Turkey.
- To found a “Reward System” for the teachers and good language learners.
- To search different ways of creating “life-long learning motives” in ELTers.

The first products of Q-ELT were sub-committees in various schools. “Kültür Q-ELT Group” was formed in 2000, with thirty-three members working for the Kültür University and Kültür Schools. The second sub-group was formed at İşık University. In May 2001, the first meeting of Q-ELT Teams was held at the Foreign Languages School of Yıldız Technical University, Istanbul, with more than 250 teachers. The team shared their knowledge and experiences about Quality and its application to ELT classrooms. The Prep School of İşık University, under the leadership of Mrs. Divris, showed a great commitment to quality and Q-ELT, by sending native speakers/instructors of the Prep School to the campuses of Anatolian Universities, where native

speakers were rarely found. Until 2004, those meetings went on at various schools of Istanbul, Ankara, Bursa, Bolu, Edirne and Adana. Thousands of ELT teachers have had the advantage of learning about the philosophy and applications of Total Quality in schools.

During the Spring term of the 2000–2001 Academic year, a new project design, named “İmece Circles (İCs)”, was piloted in an elective course, named “Quality in Language Teaching,” at the Foreign Languages Department of the Educational Faculty, Boğaziçi University. Main problems of FL classes in Turkish schools were analysed and listed through the “7 Planning and Management Tool” of Brassard, and then 18 student teachers chose their main interest problem areas and formed “İCs/Students’ Quality Circles.”

All the quality tools and their uses (Brainstorming, Fishbone diagram, Pareto diagram, Gantt Card, Matrix Analysis) were taught to students. The members of the circles studied their project topics intensively, with counselling when needed. At the end of the term, teams presented their projects. The main steps were: selection and definition of the problem, current situation analysis, analysis of area of improvement problem, innovative actions and implementation (as a pilot one) and sharing the results. It was a collaborative study, and it aimed to teach future leaders how to apply the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) Mindset to their professional and private lives. The following year, six main problems were chosen by the student teachers, and the results were presented to the FL teachers at a large regional conference. Motivation, self-improvement needs, assessment problems, use of technology at FL classes and material development were studied by the teams. Thus, student teachers pioneered the new methodology in their future schools. MacMillan publishers supported the event and published a book in 2004.

## 2 Recent developments

### 2.1 From national to international: Turkish center for schools of quality<sup>TM</sup>

While quality seminars and courses were going on in Turkey, the “1st Invitational International Retreat of Quality Leadership,” was held in Maui, Hawaii, led by the quality expert John Jay Bonstingl, founder of International Centre for Schools of Quality<sup>TM</sup>, and two interest groups of the Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) in Virginia, USA. This provided an opportunity to follow the quality journey of the Malcolm Balridge Quality Award of USA. It was a magnificent experience for 15 invitational participants to see the benchmarking process between a hotel and a school.

Bonstingl and Koksal co-founded the Turkish Center for Schools of Quality<sup>TM</sup> in Istanbul in 2000. The goals of the Center have been determined as:

- Creating Quality Awareness among Turkish educators.
- Establishing the TQ philosophy in Turkish schools through activities such as: “seminars,” “share and care meetings,” “conferences” and “projects.”
- Assisting the Turkish people to bring inner quality to the surface and
- Informing other countries about quality improvements in Turkey.

During the first year of the Center, almost 5,000 teachers and school leaders were informed about quality, through 51 seminars in various Turkish cities. The aims were to establish the concept of Total Quality in Education (TQE) among educators, to accept some volunteer organisations as members of Turkish Center to collaborate and to lead them on the path to being “Schools of Quality.” The key point was:

“Total Quality Management in education is not a top-down management initiative which would be a burden to you, as it was sensed by most of you due to misguidance. It is an attempt to change the culture in a positive way, which involves everyone at every level in the organisation.”

It was pointed out that “Quality is in every one of us.” The principles of the Center were based on the personal quality strategies of Bonstingl (1992): Personal Leadership, True Partnership, Systems Focus, Process Orientation and Dedication to Ongoing Learning and Improvement.

Through “Quality awareness” seminars, Turkish educators were encouraged to think about every aspect of the school life in a critical and challenging way. It was hoped that, by adopting an open mind to a quality culture, this would encourage all to look for opportunities for improvement in every setting.

Here is the content of the “Quality Awareness Seminars,” designed and instructed by Koksal (2000):

- Definitions of “Quality,” “Total Quality” and “Total Quality Management in Education.”
- Historical development of TQM and its philosophy through the comments of some worldwide experts of quality.
- Four main pillars of TQ and 14 principles of Deming.
- Customer–Supplier Relations in general and at school.
- Leadership in TQM and PDC/SA Cycle.
- “Change of Individual” and “Change of Culture.”
- Some basic tools of TQM and their applications to the school environment.
- TQ at school and in the classroom through Quality Circles.

During the seminars, the meaning of being a “School of Quality” was also explained, and the road map of success was shared. According to those teachings, a “School of Quality” meant: “A school which aims at establishing the quality philosophy, and a fundamental change within the borders of the school, together with all the customers, suppliers and stakeholders.”

The vision of the Center was formed as:

“From one end to the other, every school is a ‘School of Quality’ in Turkey!”

The mission statement was:

“We help all the school leaders and the other school people to learn and internalise the philosophy of TQM, and then lead them to follow their own quality way, based upon the principles and values of the Ministry of National Education, in order to realise the needs, wants and expectations of the Turkish people.”

The final part of the mission differentiated the Center from other quality-focused organisations. We do not use a dictated “quality model” for Turkish schools. We dream of designing an original “Model of Quality,” developed by the personnel, staff and all the supplier–customer groups of each school, based upon the values, beliefs and profile of the participants and appropriate to the school culture and climate. Turkey is a unique country, with almost 40 ethnic groups within the borders under a single flag. Diversity is the source of unity, under the motto of: “Peace at Home, Peace in the World.”

Starting from 2000, the Ministry of Education commissioned in-service training seminars for the directors of various departments, concerning TQM applications. The Turkish Center for Schools of Quality™ was one of the well-known suppliers of those seminars. The Directorate of Private Schools, The Directorate of Personnel Department, The Directorate of Vocational Schools and the Directorate of Improving Education through Research (EARGED and YÖDGED) were among the clients. Professor Bonstingl came to Turkey to give quality seminars in 2000 and in 2004. His book “Schools of Quality” was translated and adapted into Turkish. In many cities of Turkey, most school leaders were brought together, and the “first-step training” was provided to the participants. Nearly thirty thousand educators attended the seminars over 7 years.

The Turkish Center for Schools of Quality™ still exists as a networking system for schools and school people within Turkey (<http://www.kaliteokullari.com>). Through seminars, articles and projects, it continues to realise its

mission. Steps of being a School of Quality might be listed as follows:

1. Quality Awareness seminar to administrators, teachers, support personnel and parents;
2. Leadership training for administrators and teachers;
3. Road Map Drawing of the school and preparing Strategic Planning;
4. SWOP analyses of every subject area;
5. Quality Awareness seminar to students; and
6. İCs training for future projects.

The Center focuses on in-service training programmes to sustain its goal. They guarantee being a “School of Quality” after a 35-hour-seminar programme.

## 2.2 Preparation of qualified future teachers

According to the “Quality philosophy,” leadership is the most important factor for the success of quality improvement efforts in any organisation. Arcaro (1995) says that everyone is at the top of something. That means: every person, at any position, is the leader of himself/herself, and also the people s/he is in contact. So, teachers, as leaders of their students, should be well informed about the quality philosophy and its classroom applications, for the sake of creating a change environment in their classrooms, and being good models for their followers.

The Ministry has supported quality efforts in Turkish schools for more than 10 years, and almost every school has taken part in quality improvement efforts. After such a long time, for Turkish school settings, the most important change agents are school principals, and especially teachers who take part in the learning–teaching process. Teachers are the key factor, and they should be attracted towards that change process. If only in-service training is considered the needed step to inform the teachers, a huge mistake is made. Following the motto of “Catch them Young”, the significance of pre-service education is obvious. Sometimes it is difficult to influence experienced teachers, whereas teacher trainees might be engaged more easily in quality practices before starting their professional lives.

The writer has led numerous courses: “Quality in ELT,” “Introduction to Teaching,” “Developing Communicative Competence,” “Innovative Teaching” and “Nonviolence in Education” have been given at various departments of the Educational Faculty of Boğaziçi University since 1997–1998 academic year. From the very beginning, quality tools have been used to establish a quality philosophy among the students. Within 28 academic terms, almost 1400 teacher trainees were taught. That meant forming and guiding nearly 700 İCs.

1. "Quality in Education" course at Yeditepe University for 2 years in 2006 and 2007, meant 50 ICs with 200 teacher candidates.
2. Between the years of 2003–2005, another course was opened for engineering students under the name of: "Personal Quality and Leadership," at Istanbul Yıldız Technical University. With the participation of 100 engineering students each term, 600 students were taught how to apply quality circles steps.
3. In the academic year of 2007, an MBA "Human Resources Course" to the 22 teachers and principals of Bahçeşehir University was given, and 22 projects were produced and shared.

Outcomes of those studies might be listed as follows:

1. Some of the student teams presented projects at international conferences.
2. All the projects of students' circles were collected in CDs at the end of each term and were distributed to them to establish their "personal quality libraries."
3. Evaluation is peer-assessed and project-assessed in courses, so tension is not felt among the students during the term.
4. All the reflections are collected through SWOP surveys at the end of each term and used to modify courses. The graduates give positive feedback and report that they use similar techniques in their courses.
5. Quality Awareness Seminars given to teachers and principals were published as a book in 2003 by Academy Printing House: "The Truth about Quality."
6. In the same year, the Ministry of Education Publishing House printed the children's quality awareness book: "I am a Quality-Lover Student." It is a book with photos, to make the content meaningful and joyful for the small children. That book was reprinted in 2007 with a new title: "Me: Life-Long Learner with the Child Within." Towards the end of the year 2003, 16 students' circles presented their projects. Those projects and the steps of them were collected in a book: "Creating Power of Unity at schools through ICs Students' Quality Circles (SQC)" and published in 2004.
7. In 2005, the Ministry of National Education revised the curricula of elementary and secondary schools. Instead of the Behaviourist approach, Structuralism was approved to train "thinking and problem-solving" new generations. That meant applying project-based and activity-based teaching within classes, tailored for the individual needs of students. Most of the teachers were not accustomed to such kind of instruction design. So, the writer, with three students from Boğaziçi University, wrote: "A Bunch of In-Class Activities" in 2006. It consisted of 150 in-class activities to support the teachers.

During the 2011–2012 Academic Year, the students of the Educational Faculty, Boğaziçi University will take a new course: "Teachers of the Future."

### 2.3 Technology use through ICT projects

Turkish Center for Schools of Quality™ and Adrian Meyer from South Africa met on a cyber platform through Prof. Bonstingl. As the CEO of National Youth Development Trust of South Africa (NYDT), Meyer was training the children of Africa, living in very primitive areas. He led some students in Pretoria to take part in EXPOs and invited some Turkish schools. Two schools from Turkey were volunteers. With the valuable guidance of Prof. Dr. Ümit Serdaroglu (The Father of Assos), those schools won Gold Medals in EXPO-2002. They were:

1. Gaziantep South Euphrates High School with "Zeugma Project" and
2. İstanbul Eyüboğlu High School with "Assos Project."

Since student teams have added value to the tourism of Turkey, teams including Dr. Köksal and Prof. Serdaroglu were awarded with the Honorary Medal of the Ministry of Tourism and Culture.

In 2003, six school circles participated in the EXPO projects. Due to technical problems between SA and Turkey, Turkish Schools could not get in touch with the judges in time, and all the teams won only one silver medal under the umbrella of Turkish Centre for Schools of Quality. It was decided to start an original Turkish ICT Project involving national school circles first, and then international ones. The above-mentioned six projects were assessed on a national basis, and they were given "ICT Seagulls Awards" with the support of Microsoft Turkey. The collaboration with Microsoft, under the leadership of Mrs. Şeniz Ciritçi, went on in two programmes:

### 2.4 ICT Seagulls project

In 2004, The Turkish Centre for Schools of Quality announced a collaborative project with Microsoft Turkey for secondary schools called "ICT Seagulls Project Competition (<http://www.bilisimcimartilar.com>).". The ICs system was improved for the Seagulls Project focusing on a web page design. The project was collaboration based, not rivalry or competition based. Continuous improvement, team spirit and positive feelings were accepted as the main ingredients. In that year, there were 5 project teams. In each team, there were seven students and two teachers as facilitators (one from the field of interest/theme, the other from the IT field). Students determined their projects after a brainstorming and matrix diagram session. Through a fishbone activity, they defined the root causes of their

problems, and then they improved their solutions. They used various tools to collect data, and then they showed the solutions of the problems through their children eyes. They witnessed the tangible and intangible benefits of the Plan-Do-Check-Act Mindset. During the process of the Project, they kept diaries, shared responsibilities through a good division of labour and followed all the steps of project management. In order to share their study, including all the steps taken, they designed a web page. The first projects were on the following topics:

1. Improving a Health Programme for the Secondary Schools (Kuleli Military High School).
2. Components of a Qualified Educational System and Improving the Study Skills of the Students (From the Students' Perspective). (Kuleli Military High School).
3. Importance of Children Games on the Personal Development and Creativity of Future Adults: A Sample Children Game from Turkey: "9 Stones" (Turkish Educational Foundation's, Gifted Children High School).
4. Finding solutions for the Environmental pollution (Private Devran High School).
5. A detailed study on a Historical site of Istanbul: The Moda Region (Private Sezin Schools).

With the support of Microsoft Turkey, a good platform was formed. Mrs. Şeniz Ciritçi, the PİL Co-ordinator of Microsoft and Mr. Mehmet Nuri Çankaya supported the teams. During the Award Ceremony in Istanbul, the international judges Prof. John Jay Bonstingl from USA and Dr. (Mrs.) Vineeta Kamran from CMS, Lucknow, India, Mr. Mark East from MEA Microsoft, and Robert Green from Microsoft UK took part, and they contributed to the "Professional Improvement" of the teachers concerning technology use in schools.

In 2005; 24 project teams registered, but only 16 of them could complete the difficult journey. In 2006, nearly 50 projects registered, but only 31 of them could design their web pages. Each year, the project has been modified. This is a very important characteristic of that project. Nothing stays the same! Quality means continuous improvement. For instance, in 2006 Kindergartens, NGO circles and also international circles were included in the project. Peer-assessment (20%) was added to the evaluation process, and teams were asked to include Turkish and English PPTs to their web pages to inform the international partners.

There were some other changes in 2007. A large collaboration was tried with the Educational Technologies Department of the Ministry of National Education and Microsoft Turkey. Through a signed protocol, 171 teachers were trained from different regions of Turkey as Co-ordinators of ICT Seagulls Project. Those co-ordinators were supposed to train their peers in their cities and schools. With

this programme, teachers would train new generations who are skilful at problem solving, teaming, sharing and caring. 171 teachers could only lead 93 projects. The Award Ceremony was held by the Ministry in Ankara. Nearly 1000 students and teachers contributed a lot to the ceremony. However, due to some financial and administrative problems, state school teachers and students saw some difficulties. Microsoft had to stop being the main sponsor of the project, and the Turkish Center decided to lead the journey alone in 2008. ICT Seagulls awards were handed in during the 11th. International Convention on Students' ICs, which was held with the support of CMS and WCTQEE at Yeditepe University, Istanbul on 28–30 August, 2008. Out of 32, 4 of the projects belonged to private schools. An NGO partner (Turkish Educational Volunteers Society/TEGV) had prepared 17 projects from different cities of Turkey. 8 projects were from South Africa, and one was from India. After the Convention, all the papers and projects presented in the Convention were complied into a Convention Book (258 pages) and printed by UNESCO Turkey in 2009, co-edited by Ali Baykal, the Educational Committee Head of UNESCO (Koksal and Baykal 2009).

In 2009, the most exciting change was the registration of "disabled teams" That was meant to empower the handicapped. 60% of the assessment came from peer-assessment. Blog design, drama, case study presentation and art were included, with web page design. 25 projects registered, and 19 of them finalised their projects. One of the outstanding projects belonged to Sivas team. They dealt with the problems of Vocational School graduates in Turkey. A team from the eastern part of Turkey, from Ağrı-Diyadin, had prepared an impressive drama for their Atatürk Project. The project for the disabled students conducted by Little Angels High School from India was also admirable. Due to the existence of 7 projects from Muğla schools, the Award ceremony was held there with the support of Muğla Municipality. In 2009, the web page of ICT Seagulls Project was chosen as the "Second Best Educational Web Page of Turkey."

In 2010, 20 projects completed the project. One team from India and 19 teams from Turkey worked on the Importance of Art for training qualified persons. The ceremony took part in Sarıyer, Istanbul with the support of Sarıyer Municipality. One of the most striking projects was "Empathy," conducted by the spinal cord paralytics.

In 2011, 23 projects started their journey on two main themes: Dignity and Fairplay. Kingston University of London participated with two circles. There are two Turkish university teams and one disabled team of adults from the Spinal Cord Paralytics again. Nepal, South Africa and India are the other participating countries. Projects will be completed on the 1st of June 2011, and then the assessment phase will start again. The International Award

ceremony of the year 2011 will take place in Lucknow, India at City Montessori School, during the 14th International Convention of Students' Quality Control Circles on 3rd December 2011.

The project has become a highly respected project competition within eight years. It shows the power of unity and collaboration, nationally and internationally.

## 2.5 Innovative teachers programme of microsoft

During the ICT Seagulls project seminars at Microsoft Turkey in 2004, the writer was asked to link with the Microsoft Innovative Teachers Programme, within the "Partners in Learning" Project. That collaborative project lasted for 5 years and involved World Wide Innovative Teachers Programmes and seminars in Prague, London and Stockholm. The whole programme was localised into Turkish settings, with a 32-hour programme to train teachers and a 32-h programme to train coaches.

In 2005 summer, two pilot groups of teachers (50 in total) were trained in the Beşiktaş region of Istanbul. The participant list was chosen with the Regional Educational Director of the Ministry of Education and the Microsoft Project Manager. Voluntarism was essential. Teachers with at least 3 years experience were accepted. After the ending of each pilot group, necessary modifications were made, based upon survey and observation results. 500-slided powerpoint programs and practice books were prepared by the writer. Those who participated in the first pilot groups were given the chance of preparing innovative projects to participate in the 1st Turkish Innovative Teachers Forum that was held in Istanbul, and the Europe Innovative Teachers Forum in Estonia.

In 2006, Turkey was represented in Philadelphia, at the World Wide Innovative Teachers Forum. The writer was among the international jury members assessing the other countries' representatives. At the end of evaluation process, the Turkish Innovative Teacher was designated the "Second Best Innovative Teacher" in the division of "Collaboration Projects."

During 2007 and 2008, chosen teachers by the Educational Technology Directorate of the Ministry of Education were assigned to various in-service training centres of the Ministry within Turkey (Koksal 2007). Four groups of Innovative teachers (100 in total) were trained at various venues through IT project designs and were evaluated. Then, they were invited to join the national and international Innovative Teachers Forums. The successful teachers were taken on further five-day training with their school principals. The aim was to train them to be teacher trainers within their cities, with the support of school principals. 40 Coaches and 40 school principals were trained, and then the entire Programme was delivered to the authorities of the Ministry.

All those Certified Innovative Teachers learned how to conduct İCs Projects at the end of the programme, and each of them was supposed to participate in every year's National Innovative Teachers Forum.

While the seminars were going on with experienced teachers, an elective course was opened at the Educational Faculty of Boğaziçi University to train future innovative teachers. The modified book with the teacher trainees' projects will be prepared soon. A more developed course "Teachers of the Future" will start in 2011–2012.

## 3 Discussion

### 3.1 Reasons for using a cultural name for SQC concept

"Quality Circles" is a participative philosophy, woven around quality control and problem-solving techniques at the bottom level, according to the Brochures of CMS (2003). It exemplifies the policy of people building, respect for human beings and creates a participative management culture. The main purpose behind Quality Circles is to build people and produce quality people first, before making quality products or providing quality services.

Students' Quality Circles or İCs, as they are called in the Turkish version, are "improvement teams," which are used to focus on finding new ways of doing work, learning a new topic or subject, thinking critically and creatively (Man 2003: 15). Bonstingl talks of "Support Teams/S-Teams" (2001a, b: 42). "...S-Team members pledge to support each others' efforts towards continuous academic and personal improvements..." That is what we need for the strong and happy future of the earth: Thinking, sharing and also caring brains and hearts.

"İmece" within Turkish villages and towns is a well-known collaboration concept to deal with difficult or expensive tasks like harvesting, organising marriage ceremonies, etc. It tells a strong teamwork. Joy, fun, love and respect are included. It was also used by the teachers and students of Village Institutions, which were opened during the Enlightenment Period to train poor, but talented village boys and girls with the recommendation of Atatürk between the years of 1940–1948. It had lasted a short time, but the trained 17,125 young villagers have always been good models for society, even with their second and third younger generations. Those children had been trained to read 25 classical novels every year, playing a musical instrument, listening to classical music and learning by doing. Those characteristics of the word "İmece" had motivated the writer to use İCs instead of Students' Quality Circles. Whenever a person living in Turkey hears this word, s/he understands what it means. "İmece Circles" includes teamwork philosophy, time and conflict management, portfolio management,

effective use of quality tools and focus on the PDCA Mindset. The students who are trained in these main issues become successful leaders of their own lives, and also of the community (Bonstingl 1998; Kamran 2003; Man 2001, 2002; Köksal 2004). Starting from 2001, the writer has trained and guided nearly 2,000 Students' Circles, which roughly amount to 4,000 teachers and 16,000 students within different courses and projects, resulting in the book *For Unity in Education: Imece Circles*.

### 3.2 Outreaching social change

The writer was invited to City Montessori School, India (CMS) to participate in the 6th ICSQCC in 2003, with two ICs' Teams. After examining and studying the Students' Quality Control Circles at CMS; the writer improved her model of Imece Circles, based upon the beliefs, values and requirements of Turkish Society. The main target was to lead school children to engage in critical thinking throughout their lives and then design a project following the main steps of project and portfolio design, aiming at:

- Determining the problem areas and creating solutions for them through critical thinking skills,
- Understanding the cultural differences and improving empathy for them,
- Being environmentally literate persons for the safe of our planet,
- Developing teamwork skills and learning to be leaders,
- Improving communication skills,
- Learn and use the technological devices such as the Internet, computers, modern presentation skills (ppt.) and web page designs.

Jagdish Gandhi, the founding manager of CMS, and also the Chairman of the World Council for Total Quality and Excellence in Education (WCTQEE), speaking at the Annual Meeting of WCTQEE, which was held in Istanbul on 30th August 2008:

"...It was very significant in the history of the Quality Control Circle concept within academia when Dr. Vineeta Kamran, Principal of the City Montessori Degree College, was invited in September 2004 by Dr. Hayal Koksal, Educational Quality Consultant and Researcher of Turkey, to share the philosophy of Total Quality Management. Her visit to Turkey was eventful, and subsequently opened a new era of exchange. We organised Atatürk Week celebrations in CMS for unity and peace. We also named the big conference hall in CMS as 'Atatürk Hall', and Dr. Hayal Koksal was kind enough to grace the event with her presence."

Dr. Hayal Köksal has continued to work relentlessly on the concepts of quality and peace. She went on introducing International Students' IMECE Circles at her Turkish Center for schools of Quality. Upon Dr. Köksal's invitation—Dr. Vineeta Kamran, myself, and the QC Team participated in the 11th ICSIC Conference in Istanbul, and we were highly impressed by the success of the convention..."

Prof. Richard Ennals who is the vice chairman of WCTQEE and professor at Kingston Business School in London, shares his ideas about ICs as follows:

"...Turkey has played a pioneering role in the Quality movement in both industry and education, providing sound foundations for current development processes. Students' Quality Circles, or İmece Circles, have provided a focus in Turkey and internationally..."

Priya Baligadoo from Mauritius sets aside a chapter to ICs of Dr. Köksal within her UNESCO Report (2011), of which an edited version appears in this special issue.

### 3.3 Hugging the disabled

In Turkey, ICs methodology is being taught to future professionals, including teachers, engineers, architectures and MBA holders. An ICT Project is being applied for 8 years, forming more Circles, including K-12 graders along with their teachers and parents. Starting from the year 2008, the disabled circles were included in within İmece. A project with a group of paralytics was completed in 2008 and presented at the 11th ICSIC in Istanbul. It was named as: "Non-Obstacled Istanbul." On the 17th of December 2008, Dr. Köksal participated in the "1st International Convention on Empowering Disabled" held in Mauritius. That meeting was a turning point for the disabled İmece. Within the 7th International ICT Seagulls Competition, a team of spinal cord paralytics' team collaborated with two high school teams. A book including 30 real-life stories of students from Boğaziçi University, and 20 stories from the paralytics was printed in 2010: "Removing Obstacles through Empathy."

Turkish Center for Schools of Quality™ and the Association for Continuous Improvement have started a collaborative project with the "Association for Spinal Cord Paralytics (<http://www.tofd.org.tr>). To include disabled adult circles, they started to work together in August 2010 (Koksal 2010). At Hüsnü Ayık Nursery Home of TOFD in Gürpinar, 14 spinal cord paralytics were trained to apply ICs' Philosophy to feel happier and more fruitful. Four psychology students from Bilgi University are assisting. After the programme, the volunteers will take a Certificate Programme,

"Leadership Academy for the Disabled. The curricula for the disabled (24 h a week), for the trainers (32 h a week) and for the families (12 h a week) has already been developed.

#### 4 Conclusion

In this section, we present some final remarks based on the lessons learned. "TQM is a vehicle for change!" as Greenwood and Gaunt stated in 1994. It requires a clear statement of purpose and must be a managed process. It needs a planned process of implementation, and a means of evaluation and feedback. The most important factor, the commitment of the leader to the TQM process, must be total and evident. The commitment must be to change the culture, to improve the process, to satisfy the customers and to ensure survival. The leader should involve everyone, train everyone, lead from the top, set up "Quality Circles" and develop Action Plans.

If we want to be successful in the "quality journey" of the schools, the following points should be kept in mind during the "change process" (Greenwood and Gaunt 1994):

- We need to get better at everything.
- We want to survive, but through our cultural values and beliefs.
- We can only be successful if we all work together with love and respect.
- The process of continuous improvement must be ongoing in everything we do!

I conclude this article with the poem I wrote for the "İmece Circle" approach.

#### İMECE CIRCLE\*

Its first syllable is to be human,  
Maximal satisfaction of the expected, and its result,  
Everyone hand-in-hand,  
Covering all; from the beloved to the sullen.  
Effective input in the one hand, "love" in the heart  
and "real leadership" in front.  
Continuous "belief and trust from the heart" is  
necessary,  
Illusions unwelcome no place for "untruth."  
Rarely, though, but there is slight, "Sweet  
Competition."  
Creation, production and progress—the objectives.

Learn what "İmece" really is, the "Collective spirit," Elucidating the way to the "Total Quality Individual."

\*Written by Hayal Köksal, 7 August 2008, Istanbul, Translated by Esra Özkaya Saltoğlu and Edited by Ryan Nash; March 2009

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