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## ENRICHMENT OF EMPLOYEES' SUGGESTION SYSTEM

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### ABSTRACT

**S**ince activity environment of organizations is changing rapidly, organizations, in order to survive, should adapt to the conditions, identify all risks and opportunities of external and internal environments and take suitable action. Employees' suggestion system is a strong tool that facilitates achievement of these goals for organizations. Therefore, in this article, current suggestion system has been studied and a new system has been presented. In this system, AHP software has been used for classification of suggestions and it has two reward phases, one for identification of problem and other for the best suggestion. This study is an applied one in terms of purpose and can be used in all organizations. It has a descriptive nature and data collection method is of library type of documental type. Results of this study show participation of many professionals in problem solving, while in the old system, a suggestion was supported only by one professional's mind.

*Keyword: enrichment, employees, suggestion system, AHP*

## **1. Introduction**

### **1-1 Description**

Suggestion systems and programs are based upon the reasonable assumption that employee can contribute thoughts for the purposes of the organization's operations and/or decreasing costs .essentially, a contract is set up between employees and the organization in which the employees are offered rewards for worthy ideas(Michael,2000)

During the past few years, suggestion systems have received increasing attentions from researchers .Suggestions systems definitely can increase management capabilities on learning through feedback received and improving the entire system. A good suggestion system can disclose any existing shortcomings in the system and helps management team detect better solutions to overcome troubles. Despite the advantages, many managers try not to use such systems for various reasons such as fear in management resistance, weakness in suggestions system, etc. However, there are many evidences, which indicate that management teams normally attempt to understand their shortcoming through suggestion systems (Milner et al. 1995; Recht&Wilderom, 1998; Heresy & Blanchard, 2001;Anderson, 2004).

### **1-2 Value of the subject**

Creativity is an internal and intellectual process of bringing about new ideas (Koontz et al., 1980). Organizations are required to be creative and innovative to the extent that their environment is unpredictable, unstable or threatening (Roni Reiter-Palmon, Jody J. Illies, 2004). In a turbulent environments, heightened competition, and unpredictable technological change, more and more managers are coming to realize that they should encourage their Employees to be creative (Shalley& Gilson, 2004). Researchers have suggested that creativity—the generation of novel and useful ideas (Amabile, 1996). If the employees are treated as a part of organization effort, then they are much interested to contribute more ideas to the organization. Organizational and supervisory factors are effective in motivating employee to participate in environmental innovations that can increase the sustainability (Ceres, 1995). Hence it is the obligation of a top management and leaders to motivate and nurture their employee's creativity. The company must understanding the behavior of the employees and creates a culture to drive employee's creativity in the organization. Suggestion systems can be a useful way to obtain and utilize employees' creative ideas; effective suggestion management systems must also motivate employees to think creatively and to participate in the suggestion process (James Fairbank, Spangler, Scott, 2003)

### **1-3 Objectives of the Study**

1-introduce of the upgraded employee suggestion system

2-Comparing the proposed system with the Current System and explain its advantages.

3-Introduce of a new conceptual model for enriched employee suggestion system

In this paper firstly, the Current suggestion system and the enriched employee suggestion system will be introduce then the conceptual model will be presented and finally we compare both of mentioned systems.

## 2. Background

The best ideas can come from any employee, anytime, anywhere; people naturally think of ways to make their jobs easier, faster, and more productive. Although these words are a truism, few organizations have effective systems to solicit ideas and then implement the best ones. In many Companies when ideas are accepted from employees, it happens because the idea creator was persistent and vocal, and exerted a lot of personal energy. Having a system that makes it easy for employees to contribute ideas increases the likelihood that good ideas will be submitted. (Frese, Eric, and Cees, 1999)

A suggestion system is a set of procedures that ensures that employee ideas are handled smoothly and fairly. It takes a great effort to get the flow of ideas started and sustaining that flow (Hartman, 2007)

S. Bahraminasab et al. (2013) 541 supervising radiologist and patient after resident-patient interactions associated with breast biopsy procedures. They were also assessed by faculty, using an end-of-rotation global rating form. They studied 56 completed 360-degree data sets and seven rotational evaluations for seven residents. The results of this pilot study suggested that self, faculty, and patient evaluations of resident performance

Constituted a reliable evaluation of resident competence. However, they reported that more investigation were necessary to determine whether the 360-degree assessment could be incorporated into residency programs and how frequently the assessment could be performed

Nouri and Ahanchi (2012) investigated the barriers of having recommendation systems in education system and focused on management team's shortcomings. They reported that lack of accepting risk among management team is number one barrier in having suggestion system followed by existing conflict between management style and suggestions system and lack of management's belief to suggestions system, weakness in education for suggestions system and fear in management disruption because of having suggestions system. The other barriers coming in the last priority in terms of their relative importance include lack of management's support to suggestions system and weakness in management position because of accepting suggestions system.

Pirayesh et al. (2012) presented a study to study the effect of information technology, hiring high quality skilled management team, using high quality standards and increasing employees' wariness on managing internal control. The survey implemented a questionnaire based on Likert scale and distributes among the people who work in either administration or financial sectors of governmental agencies in province of Zanjan, Iran. Their results showed that the implementation of information technology positively influences management team to control their system, more effectively, using more skilled and specialized managers positively influences management internal control, an organization with suitable standard positively influences management internal control and increasing employees' awareness positively influences management internal control

VakilAlroaia and Najafi (2012) investigated a 360° feedback approach for performance measurement of all employees who worked for municipality of the city of Tabas located in east part of Iran. The proposed model of this paper also used hierarchical method to cluster various attributes based on different characteristics and implemented AHP to find out the relative importance of all items. The survey implemented five personal characteristics including cognitive, technical, personal and human skills and for each major item, the proposed model considers various sub-criteria. They reported that technical and cognitive skills were the most important personal characteristics followed by human and personal characteristics. The results of this survey also indicated that responsibility and quality of work are the most important employee characteristics.

Jun et al. (2006) performed an empirical investigation on the transferability of total quality management (TQM) practices to offshore manufacturing enterprises by validating relationships among top management commitment, human resource (HR)-focused TQM practices, employee satisfaction, and loyalty. The research objective was to isolate critical TQM practices, which would enhance employee satisfaction and loyalty among maquiladora workers. The results indicated that employee empowerment, teamwork, and employee compensation had an important and positive impact on employee satisfaction.

Gao et al. (2011) investigated the role of leader trust and employee voice using the moderating impact of empowering leader behaviors.

Wood et al. (2004) examined the feasibility of a 360-degree evaluation to erasure radiology resident competence in professionalism and communication skills. They implemented an evaluation form with 10 Likert-type items related to professionalism and communication skills was filled by a resident,

### **3. Methodology**

The method used in this research is documentary. Several sources have been investigated, including books, articles and research that had been done in this field and related experts have also benefited.

The suggestion system available, the factors of a good suggestion system and the new suggestion system, relevant conceptual model have been introduced.

The main focus of research, says the new suggestion system and its benefits.

In this system, the stage of evaluation from one stage to two stages have been increased and deposed the role of evaluation in second stage to AHP software that is one of the decision management softwares.

### **4. The suggestion system available**

All the suggestion schemes studied had comparable support systems involving scheme administrators, evaluators, implementing managers and awards panels. These groups can be seen as carrying out the following idealized roles (Ursula,2002)

#### **4-1 Scheme administrators**

are responsible for processing suggestions and for the overall administration of the scheme. They delegate suggestions to evaluators and facilitate communication between all scheme participants. A vital part of their job is to provide feedback to songsters and keep them up-to-date on the progress of their ideas.

#### **4-1-1 Evaluators**

are individuals within the organization with the necessary specialist knowledge to assess the merits of suggestions, taking into account their potential benefits for the company and the resources necessary for their implementation. This involves them in working actively with the suggested.

#### **4-1-2 Awards Panels**

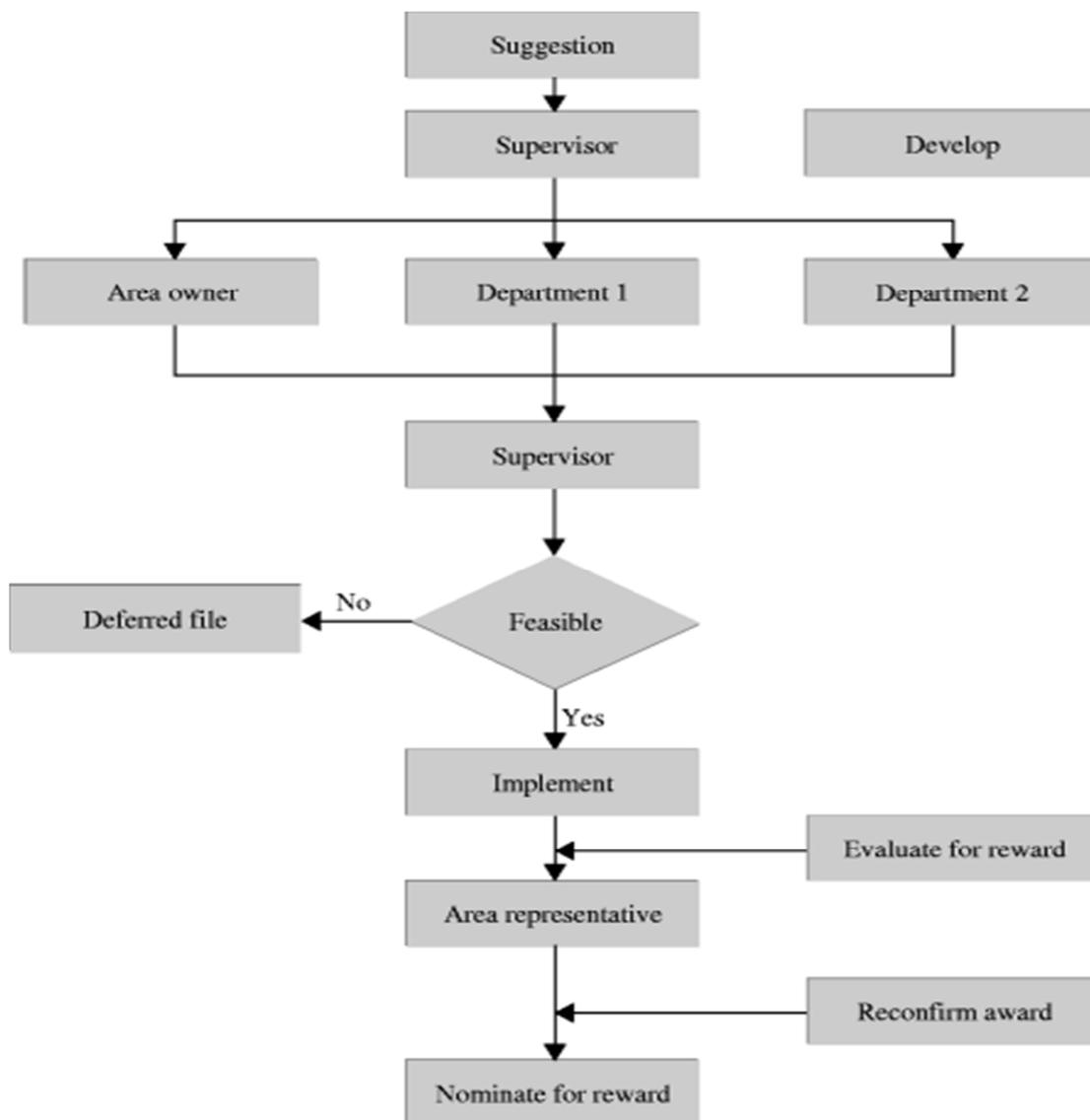
are responsible for the overall strategic development of the scheme, final approval of evaluations, suggestion implementation and the level of awards. They are generally designed to represent the diversity of the organization and thus typically included clerical staff as well as managers. In the two decentralized schemes, awards were determined at local level rather than by a central awards panel.

#### **4-1-3 Implementing managers**

are actively involved in the decision-making process in some organizations. These are the people who will be responsible for implementing the suggestion if it is to be adopted.

All suggestion schemes operate the same fundamental business processes. The initial stage in putting forward a suggestion is preliminary research. Where the information is readily available to them, employees are encouraged to review previous suggestions for guidance and to eliminate duplicates. This leads to the submission of a description of an existing problem, a detailed account of the proposed solution and a list of potential benefits to the company. Most organizations stress that suggestions should ideally be submitted through the natural hierarchy of the organization. However, in the experience of scheme administrators, line managers are prone to manipulate or even block ideas, so the only safe way to submit suggestions is directly to the scheme administrators.

**Figure no. 1:**generally the process employee suggestion system (Moneim,2009)



## **5. Success factors related to suggestion systems**

The success factors related to suggestion systems generally can be divided into the following six main areas:

1) Ease of use; 2) Supervisory support; 3) Colleague support; 4) Clarity of scope; 5) Rewards and 6) Feedback(Arif,and etc,2010)

### **5-1 Ease of Use**

There should be clear guidelines on how to use the suggestion system in order to facilitate raising more suggestions, especially for first timers, new workers, and visitors. Universality covers the ability of employees from all groups to participate. For example, if there is a group of employees who do not know English, then all the components of the system should be made available in a language they are familiar with. If the suggestion system interface is not user-friendly, attractive and efficient, it can potentially inhibit participation. This phenomenon has been quite commonly observed in website usability where it has increased web traffic by 60-100 % (Vividence,2001). In one study, the sales of software jumped by 60 % and many customers cited usability as a key factor in buying the new system (Bias,1994). Major issues with interfaces are: Lack of clarity, use of difficult words and insufficient space to write suggestions. If the form or software interface is congested with information, it can intimidate users as they will think it requires a lot of effort to complete it. Users often report that they are “overwhelmed” by the information crowded user interface (Remus,1994). If software is used, the interface should not require access to more than one page to be able to send ideas which will speed the sending process. In addition, to allow for universality, forms can be designed in different commonly used languages. Moreover, having a serial number on each form can help in tracking ideas and can improve feedback. A flexible system is a system that offers different ways of doing the task and provides options to choose from. A suggestion system can be flexible in many ways, like providing both a paper based and a software based system interface for sending ideas.

### **5-2 Supervisory Support**

The supervisory support was identified in the literature review as an important success element (Farham,1994and Ford,1996). It does add value to usability because in work environment, especially in hierarchical organizations, supervisors have direct influence on workers, and can encourage them to use suggestion systems more frequently and monitor their performance (efficiency). Supervisors can improve the learn-ability of the system by providing training or sending their workers for training courses on the use of the system. Also, they can improve workers' satisfaction from their experience in sending ideas by encouraging and helping them, and facilitating sending the idea and receiving feedback.

### **5-3 Colleague Support**

Support from colleagues is another element that has been cited in literature as very important in enhancing participation in suggestion systems (Van Dijk,2002; Scott,1994; Amabile,1996). When workers can find help through their colleagues, they will most likely use the system, especially first timers, because they can find someone to show them how to use it (learn-ability) thus leading to fewer errors (error recovery). Efficiency in using the system can also develop as a by-product from competition between colleagues who submit more ideas just to outperform others.

#### **5-4 Clear Scope**

As was found in the literature review, for suggestion systems to flourish a clear scope is required (Van Dijk and Turrell, 2002; Stenmark, 2000; Robinson, 2003). Clear scope can also help workers remember what the system is intended for, when submitting ideas again (memorability). Clarity of scope should also include the kind of ideas expected from employees at different levels. Different companies (and departments within companies) want different types of ideas. They want different magnitudes as far as the impact is concerned, and some even run themed periods where workers have to submit ideas on a certain theme for example efficiency, customer satisfaction, and quality.

#### **5-5 Appropriate Rewards**

Reward is another key element identified in the literature review as a major success factor for suggestion systems (Fairbank, 2001; Oldham and Amabile, 1996; Stenmark 2000; Woodman 1993; Recht, 1998). This factor focuses on incentives given to workers for submitting ideas via suggestion systems. From a usability perspective, satisfactory experience is a key element in using any system and it is believed that rewards help in creating a positive experience (satisfaction). In addition, incentives can improve learn-ability by encouraging workers to attend training workshops on suggestion systems, hoping to receive favorable outcome from submitting ideas. Flexibility is a key element in usability and for this element, rewards can be flexible, by offering different types of rewards to appeal to different workers and thus increasing the number of potential participants. This element can be broken into the availability and choice of rewards.

#### **5-6 Feedback**

One other success element for suggestion system is appropriate and timely feedback (Axtell et al., 2000; Fairbank and Williams, 2001; Turrell, 2002; Ford, 1996; and Amabile, 1996). Feedback is important for application, because having no feedback can lead to personnel's feeling ignored and dissatisfied. In addition, all the investigated idea management models recognize the importance of feedback. Feedback can also help in error discovery where personnel can further improve the quality of their ideas based on the feedback they receive. In addition, feedback can improve efficiency as personnel will have the system coordinator / suggestion, to committee comment on their ideas over a period of time, to have better understanding the functioning of the suggestion system. By applying usability guidelines, feedback can be further divided into the mechanism of feedback and the promptness' in providing the feedback. As in the case of rewards, feedback should also be flexible in its delivery using e-mail, verbal, or specially designed certificate. Applied studies on websites show that long loading time for websites or providing information increases user frustration and decreases traffic (Verdinejad, F. Mokhtari, A and Ghasemi, M, 2010). Thus, making a case for, making the feedback faster, in order to make it more usable. Finally feedback should be detailed enough to aid personnel know the status of their idea, how to receive the reward (if any) and if it was rejected, and why?

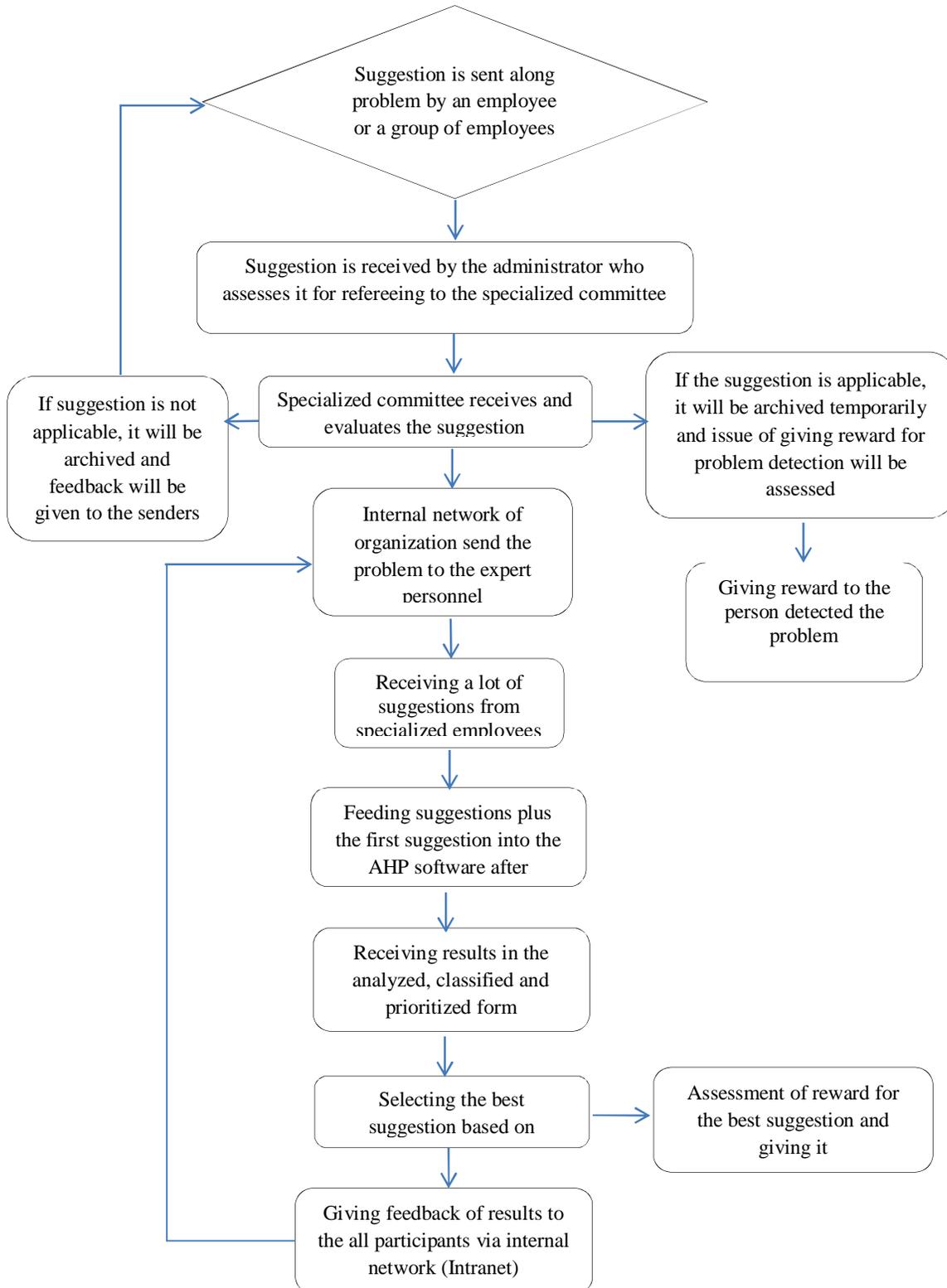
#### **6. Enriched Suggestion System**

In this system, first a suggestion from employees or members of organization after identification of problem or dilemma is received and, after elementary assessment, is sent to the relevant specialized department by the relevant administrator. This department first examines whether the studied problem is really a problem at all or not, whether solving or improving it is effective for organization performance in terms of efficiency and effectiveness; if the answer is no, the identified problem and the relevant suggestion will be archived and necessary feedback will be given to the senders, but if the answer is positive, issue of giving reward to

the proposer will be assessed and the reward of problem identification will be given to the person who detected the problem and the proposed suggestion will be archived temporarily. In the next step, the problem detected by an employee or a group of employees should be sent to the specialized groups consisted of many experts with relevant specialties via mass communication tools including office automation, internal correspondence system or internet. In this method, one or several specialized personnel participate in suggestion making which includes suggestions to present better solutions or improve implementation procedure of presented suggestion.

When various suggestions are received for detected problem, all of these suggestions should be evaluated and therefore, considering large number of these suggestions, human errors and using personal tastes are likely. Therefore, solutions are provided to solve this problem one of which is using AHP analysis and classification software. This software prioritizes suggestions based on measures it receives and then gives them to the decision makers. So prior to feeding suggestions to the AHP system, measures suitable for organization are determined and defined for the system. Then, new suggestions will be entered to the system along with the first suggestion. All suggestions will be analyzed and categorized based on the specified measures and will be announced by the system according to their priority. Specialized Committee can choose the best suggestion as soon as possible easily, assess giving reward to the proposer and take appropriate action in this regard. Eventually, all results along with classification measures will be given to the participants so that everyone can see results of his/her suggestion as soon as possible.

- In this section, you see the conceptual model of enriched suggestion system



## **6. Advantages of applying this system**

- A lot of suggestions are assessed in short time
- Evaluation of suggestions is conducted with minimum error
- Using personal tastes is prevented
- Since one suggestion is given for the detected problem and it has a given profitability for the organization, it is likely that the same problem will be mentioned with a better suggestion some years later by another person and this gives many benefits to the organization. So, this system prevents this during several years because the detected problem is presented to other experts and all of them participate in proposing suggestions.
- Another benefit of this system is application of AHP software which results in presenting suitable feedback to the participants and encourages them to participate in future subjects; and this is a form of motivation of employees.
- Using internal network (Intranet) to present the problem and receive suggestions in the shortest time is another advantage of this system.

## **7. Comparison of the Enriched System and the Current System**

- This system has more evaluation steps than the current system.
- This system is faster than the current system due to using AHP software.
- Human does not have a significant role in evaluation and classification of suggestions but, in the current system, all steps of suggestion assessment are conducted according to tastes and views of experts.
- In this system, there are two reward-giving steps: first, a reward is given to the finder of the problem. Secondly, a reward is given to the best proposer. But, the current system is not so.
- This system ensures employees that their suggestions are assessed carefully and detailed results will be presented to them. Each proposer receives reasons why his/her suggestion is approved or rejected. But, this is not likely to occur in the current system and each person should try to get feedback.

## **8. Conclusions**

This study aims to present a new system of employees' suggestions, compare this new system to the current one, mention its advantages and present a new conceptual model. We conclude that using this system in the highly changing world where organizations should adapt themselves to the conditions and take suitable actions, is quite necessary. Because this system can receive and analyze a large number of suggestions and present results along with feedbacks as decision making options to the managers and, on the other hand, this system plays a significant role in identification of opportunities and threats organizations encounter.

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