



EFQM Model-based Assessment of Leadership Excellence in Technical and Vocational Schools of Tehran

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Abstract

In this study, leadership excellence criteria for boys' technical and vocational schools were evaluated based on the European Foundation Quality Management Model. The aim was the needs assessment of excellence courses for the mentioned schools. A survey was done to collect the essential data and inferential analysis was carried out. The population of principals was 109 people from Tehran. The sample size was 86 people selected from the districts of 1, 9, 11, 13, and 15 using two-stage random cluster sampling method. The instrument was a questionnaire of principals' excellence, including 5 components and 25 items in the field of leadership. The content validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by the management faculty members. The reliability measured by Cronbach's alpha was 0.97. The Data were analyzed by Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to determine the normality status. Then through a one sample t –test, the research questions were answered. Results demonstrated that school principals had acceptable conditions with slight differences in the fields of providing mission, vision, utilizing management systems and customer interaction methods. But enhancing the excellence culture and supporting changes have not been successful in schools. Finally, the study results were discussed and some suggestions were presented.

Keywords: EFQM Model, Leadership Excellence Assessment, Organization, Technical and Vocational Schools.

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Introduction

Nowadays, competitive advantage and improving performance regarding quality and quality management is one of the main organizational strategies. Challenges such as high competition in industries and also increase in customer expectations require a high quality of products and services as a main strategy for service organizations to be competitive and successful. In fact, the quality of services and products is a differentiating factor which has become a competitive tool for a pioneer service organization. Pioneer organizations continuously attempt to maintain their high quality and enhance their systems performance in order to gain customer loyalty (Mohanty & Yadav, 1994).

Therefore, organizations are always interested in being evaluated from the inside and outside to find their strengths and weaknesses and strive very hard to reinforce their strengths and eliminate their weaknesses in order to achieve the excellence status. In addition, organizations apply a set of international standards to identify strengths and weaknesses (Wiklund et al, 2003).

Organization excellence models offer a proper framework to recognize improvable areas and identify strengths and weaknesses. If these models are correctly applied, they are efficient tools that are capable of institutionalizing concepts and values of the organization, development and implementation of strategic plans, self-assessment practices, organizational learning, continuous improvement, and identifying the possible best process and providing benchmarking (Jelodari Mamaghani, 2005).

The most important fields of an organizational excellence model are the field of leadership (management) and staff (human resources). The undeniable role of leadership in growth, promoting the organizations, and increasing importance of human resource organizing as the major capital of an organization will always guarantee, as an integral part, the success of the leader in evaluation (Ghorbani et al, 2008).

Since management is the foundation of any organization, reviewing management practices utilized in the organization and comparing the results with the existing standards, assists the managers and directors in learning more about all aspects of organization management and eliminate shortcomings and promote strengths which cause the excellence of managers.

The Ministry of education as a great and influential institution in the community increasingly needs to implement a program that defines the direction of management excellence, facilitates, and accelerates achievement of its goals. In order for any organization or institution to develop and continually improve it needs to have a template (Khayyamdar and Zandian, 2013).

In today's world, leadership in organizations in general and particularly in educational organizations have been highlighted and responsibilities of educational managers in such a society is growing heavier day by day. In this regard, performance assessment of educational managers can play an important role in providing a qualified education and thus enhancing their performance and achieve in innovation and creativity (Goldberg & Cool, 2003).

The above discussion shows the importance of evaluating leadership excellence. In fact, performance measurement is considered an infrastructure for operational improvement and development of educational leadership. When managers are unaware of their performance, they cannot understand their unused capacity. Therefore, for more information or unused available capacity, the quality and excellence of managers should be measured, through which administrators can develop and operate proper needed strategies in order to reach their prospects. According to resource-based strategic management, organizations need to improve their performance on knowledge and self-centralized abilities (Nouri and Charstad, 2009).

Studies show that industrial organizations utilize the excellence model assessment, significantly more than educational organizations. More than 70 national models and 90 national prizes are available

around the world. The EFQM model has a special place in Iranian industries and the leading countries in education also pay particular attention to it (Sharafoddini, 2016).

Excellence in word means ascending and superior. Organizational excellence is the organizational commitment to sustainable development of an organization for customer satisfaction that continually increases the national interests of the organization in a caring atmosphere (Mirbagheri, 2002).

European Foundation of Quality Management was established by fourteen leading European organizations in Brussels, Belgium in 1988. This organization decided to improve quality excellence as a fundamental procedure in continuous improvement. The EFQM excellence model delivers a model of organization that is superior in idea and practice to other organizations and shows how to behave in a competitive environment for growth, survival and supremacy. EFQM excellence model is an on-mandatory framework based on nine criteria, 5 qualifying criteria and 4 results-related criteria. Qualifying criteria cover what the organization has done and results-related criteria cover what the organization has achieved (EFQM Excellence Model, 2010).

Jangi Zahi (2015) in a study titled "Evaluation of Payam Noor University of Chabahar" stated that University scored 166.8 points in enablers sector and 153.4 points in results sector. The highest satisfaction percentage belongs to the field of leadership with 44.5 and the lowest satisfaction percentage was for the processes field with 24.5. Overall, Payam Noor University scored 321 out of 1000 points in organization excellence which is very weak. Agha Taher & Khadem (2015) in another study entitled "Performance evaluation of student and cultural assistance of Elme and Farhang University" reported that in the field of enabler, the highest and the lowest scores respectively belong to processes, policy and strategies. In the field of results, the highest and the lowest score was for customers and employees, respectively. Hajebi & Zeinalipour (2013) in a similar study titled "Performance evaluation of Hormozgan Medical Science University" concluded that enablers with 309 points have a better status than results with 304 points and a faculty in terms of performance quality obtained 613 out of 1000 showing a good score. Prospect scored lowest in this study. Khajeai & Nazemi (2012) in a study titled "Performance evaluation of private middle and high schools in Varamin" Stated that excellence model is not only useful for industrial and organizational assessments but for private schools as well. In addition, Mojibi et.al. (2012) in another study entitled "Performance evaluation of education organization in Mazandaran province" found that the excellence status in fields of enablers was average and unfavorable for the field of results. Similarly, Salehi et.al. (2011) in a study titled "Study performance enabler indicators of organizational excellence model in educational organization of Sari", reported that all indicators were optimum for the education organization of Sari. Ghorbani et.al. (2008) in another study entitled "Performance evaluation of Shahid Rajaei Teacher Training University of Tehran in the fields of leadership and staff" concluded that organizational excellence status in the field of leadership and staff at the University was assessed as average. Davies (2007) in a study titled "Examining the role and impact of integration of academic culture in universities of Great Britain, effects on implementation of EFQM excellence model" stated that the better the integration in these universities, the more efficient the implementation of the EFQM excellence model. Some aspects of culture fit well with the EFQM excellence model and some aspects and concepts work as cultural barriers in the implementation of the EFQM excellence model.

Osseo-Asare, Longbottom and Murphy (2005) in another study entitled "Leadership, the best practices for quality assurance in higher education", investigated 42 universities from the United States of America and Australia with the same educational system. They were ranked in four levels of leadership activities. Then the relationship between efficiency and effectiveness leadership activity through using of questionnaires, interviews and tests were determined. Finally, they concluded that leadership excellence is weak.

Lomas (2004) in a similar study titled "Higher education challenges in ensuring the quality of education at Imperial College, London" concluded that there is no remedy to cure all quality pains. Emphasis should be on quality culture, the importance of education, high quality of new teachers, their continuous professional development, and careful study on teachers teaching methods and development of transformational leaders. This study noted, however, that educational managers are not satisfied with their limited power, but they were successful in drawing clear and systematic goals for their schools. With consideration of the above mentioned titles, studies, and observations done in this area, the main question is how leadership excellence situation of Boy's High School in Tehran, is based on the EFQM model?

Methodology

The present research was a survey. The statistical population was principals of 19 districts of education in Tehran adding up to 109 people. Using Cochran formula, the sample size was 86 participants that were selected from regions of 1, 9, 11, 13 and 15 in Tehran through a two-stage random cluster sampling method. The instrument to measure principals' excellence, included: 5 components and 25 items in the field of leadership. The content validity of questionnaire was confirmed by management faculty members. Reliability was determined through Cronbach's alpha coefficient and was equivalent of 0.97. Data were analyzed by Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to determine the normality status. Then through one sample t-test, the research questions were investigated.

Research findings

Table 1 shows the distribution of variables.

Table1- The results of Kolmogorov - Smirnov for variables

Question	1	2	3	4	5
Leadership criteria	Prospect	Management system	interaction	Excellence culture	Change
Significant	0.47	0.167	0.183	0.354	0.649
Distribution status	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal

As shown in Table 1, all the variables are normally distributed. The T-test results of leadership excellence are summarized in Table 2.

Table2- Summary t- test results for the leadership Excellence criteria, in terms of an assumed average 3.

Field-criteria	Mean	T	Significance level	Upper limit	Lower limit
Mission, Vision, Values and ethics fundamental	3.2842	3.845	0.000	0.4315	0.1370
Implementation management system and continuous improvement	3.1816	2.113	0.038	0.3528	0.0104
Amount of Manager Interaction with customers and community representatives	3.3868	4.476	0.000	0.5590	0.2147
Improving the culture of excellence in Staff	3.0576	0.595	0.554	0.2518	-0.1360
Identify and management support from organizational change	3.1724	1.906	0.061	0.3525	-0.0078

Based on results in Table 2, fields of "mission, vision, values and ethics fundamental", implementation management system and continuous improvement" and "amount of manager interaction with customers

and community representatives” in higher secondary schools were significantly higher than average ($p < 0.05$). Hence, they are at acceptable levels. On the other hand, t-test values for fields of “improving the culture of excellence in staff” and “identifying and management support from organizational change” was not significant. As a result, the two criteria listed in secondary schools evaluate the average ($p > 0.05$).

Discussion

According to prospect criteria, despite the fact that was noted by Lomas (2004), principals are not satisfied with their limited authority, but they were successful in drawing clear goals and a systematic platform for the future development of their schools and this item is a fact that all senior managers agree with. The above results are consistent with the study which was done by Mojibi et.al (?) which was the evaluation of an education organization in Mazandaran province based on EFQM model, which evaluated the excellence status in fields of leadership and employees as acceptable. The results of this research are inconsistent with a study by HajebiSolghi and Zeinalipour (2013) that identified unacceptable vision.

Regarding the utilization and management systems improvements, there wasn't a direct link to the reported results. Discussing the excellence criteria in the field of leadership in enablers scope, we can say that the results of the study are consistent with the study done by Salehi, Hajizadeh, Mousavi (2011). It is about a performance review of enabler indicators of organizational excellence model in education organization of Sari that shows, the criteria status of leadership excellence is acceptable. Results in comparison with the study results of Osseo-Asare, Longbottom and Murphy (2005), indicates a low level of leadership.

In relation to the interaction between manager and staff, of course, it is clear that appropriate interactions can lead to significant outcomes such as compliance services managers with needs of schools and compliance training and planning of the abilities and skills of students. Finally, by attracting graduates in community jobs, the external efficiency of education system will improve. According to this criteria, results of the present study is consistent with the findings of other research, such as Agha Taher and Khadem (2015), and Mojibi et.al (2012), that generally evaluated enablers indicators at a desirable level. Also, the results are inconsistent with the results of the study was done by Ghorbani et al. (2008), which evaluated more concentration on the customer using the EFQM excellence model, and estimated low levels for this criteria.

Based on the average score in the criteria of enhancing culture of excellence, unfortunately, a competitive climate and especially constructive competition among Iranian organizations and even the private sector is very weak and pale. In addition organizations are less sought to provide the conditions to overcome their competitors and this can be traced to the absence of a culture of excellence in organizations. Results from analyzing the above criteria is consistent with Davis's results (2007). He stated that in some aspects, there is a good cultural fit with EFQM excellence model and some aspects and concepts which are considered relevant to cultural barriers in implementing the EFQM excellence model. However, results are consistent with Ghorbani et al. (2008), who report that the criteria of enhancing excellence culture, were evaluated as unfavorable, and also consistent with Mojibi et.al (2012), which assessed enablers excellence in Mazandaran education organization as average.

However, in relation to the criteria for the identification and support of change, there is no evidence, but if the change criteria is considered as a subset of leadership, it is possible to say that results are in contradiction with Jangi Zahi (2015), Khajeai and Nazemi (2012), and Salehi et.al (2011) and also are consistent with Ghorbani et.al (2008).

Conclusion and recommendations

According to the average excellence score achieved in the criteria related to the prospect, it can be said that school principals partly provide vision, mission, values and ethics in their work environment. This can be seen in the utilization of management systems and customer interaction.

In relation to the criteria of enhancing excellence culture, the results demonstrated that differences between means are not significant and school administrators have not been successful in promoting excellence culture in schools. Also in relation to supporting changes in the organization, status of excellence criteria, has not been desirable. So, paying attention to the following recommendations may be useful:

- 1- Managers become familiar with discussions of organizational excellence and try to promote and disseminate the culture of excellence.
- 2- Managers are encouraged to support change and welcome organizational change and new experiences in the field of educational leadership.
- 3- It is suggested that training courses for "educational leadership excellence" in Tehran technical and vocational schools be carried out for principals.

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