

A Review of Service Excellence Models

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Abstract

The fundamental objective of this paper is to critically examine the different service excellence models and to identify the existing gaps within the context of these models through critically analysing the literature in order to provide the basis for future research. The paper highlighted on the critical analysis of different service excellence models. The models were analysed in other to establish a relationship between them with a view to provide a basis for prospective researchers. The review of several service excellence models shows that service excellence delivery relates to the outcome of the service encounter and it is measurement depends on the standard of performance and level of satisfaction received by the user. However, expectations is guided by the changing user needs, while value co-creation, balancing innovation and commoditization dynamics and configuration of service system resources affects service excellence. The research was established on critical review of the service excellence models not on empirical grounds, the review highlight the link between the different models. The paper explores the domain of service excellence which provides a unique area of research.

Keywords: *service excellence, expectation, satisfaction, service users, performance.*

Introduction

The concept of service excellence (SERVEXCEL) dwell upon value added services. SERVEXCEL is the ability to provide an excellent service in order to attract and retain customers, service users want greater choice and will not be manipulated on their perception of reality (Cook, 2008). The quality of service is defined by service user based on whether actual experiences meet expected experiences (Dibb et al., 2006). If the treatment which the customer receives is better than his or her expectations, this is an excellent service. If the treatment which the service user receives is less than his or her expectations, this constitutes bad service.

Service is a deed or act, performance or encounter in time rather than physical objects. Their contribution is narrow because it only concentrates on the intangibility of service instead of the purpose of service delivery (Antonacopoulou and Kandarpully, 2000). Service is defined by Gronroos (2000) as a process consisting of series of intangible activities that take place in the interaction between the customer and the service employees and or physical resources goods or systems of the service provider which are provided as a solution to customer problems, Tilus (2002) share the same view. This definition is more comprehensive, but it excludes the issue of user satisfaction. Similarly, services take place between a donor (service provider) and receiver of service (service user) in order to produce an outcome that satisfies the service user. Furthermore, some scholars see service as an intangible activity performed for a particular client (Gilmore, 1999).

In addition, service is characterised by distinguishing features. According to Gilmore and D'Souza (2006) the distinctive characteristic between service and product include variability, intangibility, perishability, inseparability and the ability to own a service. While, according to Gronroos (2000) the characteristic of service includes:

- Services are processes consisting of the activities or series of activities rather than things.
- Customers participate in the process to an extent.
- Services are produced and consumed simultaneously.

In SERVEXCEL scenario, the service providers are well trained, friendly, contactable, flexible, knowledgeable, honest, trusted, stable, involved and consistent (Jones, 2010). These quests require the presence of characters who can thoroughly justify existing practices, a capability that is anchored on a perfect match between the challenge of the task and the skills of the person, resulting in motivation and commitment (Salomaa et al., 2013). SERVEXCEL is a direct consequence of attention to people, customer satisfaction and loyalty is the consequences of excellence in a series of encounters between service providers and service users (Bitran and Gurumurthi, 2005). A possible antecedent to excellent services is simply extending the level of services beyond the normal expectations of customers, or the ability to regularly surprise customers in order to remain a service leader in the industry (Al Eisawi, et al., 2012).

The provision of services to the community is an important role of government around the world. Thus, the inception and development of service quality have witnessed different challenges and competitions. Similarly, quality in service delivery is very crucial for service providers (Zeithaml, et al., 1990; Reichheld and Sasser, 1990; Parasuraman, et al., 1985). This is inevitably true but why is it that service delivery to the service providers is very crucial is not specifically mentioned. On the other side, public authorities are increasingly pressurised to provide service that is efficient and qualitative (Randall and Senior, 1994; Robinson, 2003). This may be due to insufficiency in service provisions.

However, research are carried out in the area of service quality delivery and the user/taxpayer perception of quality (La Barbera and Mazursky, 1983; Parasuraman, et al., 1988; Carmen, 1990; Babakus and Boller; 1992; Parasuraman, et al., 1991; Cronin and Taylor 1992;

Babakus and Gold 1992; Parasuraman, 1994; Steward, 1999; Peter 2001; Teicher *et al.*, 2002; Narit, 2003; Schneider and White, 2004; Chen et al., 2008; Munhurrun and Bhiwajee, 2010; Nor Azila and Al-Momani, 2010; Ramayah, Hazlina and Lo, 2010; Argüelles and Juan 2010). Though, the focus is changing from service quality to service excellence. Scholars have contributed in the area of user satisfaction on the issue of service delivery (Sumaedi, Bakti and Metasari, 2011; Chen and Hu, 2012; Abdul Aziz and Sapri, 2013). Nevertheless, there is a need to extend to user experience, which would provide more feedback in the quest to achieve service excellence.

International Excellence Frameworks

A highlight of service excellence given below includes the three main excellence models which are internationally used. These are:

- i. US Baldrige Excellence Framework
- ii. Business Excellence Framework
- iii. European Framework for Quality Management

These are the forerunners of service excellence frameworks and are drawn from the European Foundation for Quality Management, Confederation of Indian Industry, Global Excellence Model (GEM) council members, Fundibeq (Latin America) and Spring Singapore and Japanese Productivity Centre for Socio-Economic Development.

SE1. Baldrige National Quality Program (BNQP, 2010)

The Baldrige National Quality Program is founded by The United States. The aim of the institute is to improve the effectiveness, excellence and output of organisations in the United States in the interest of its inhabitants. In order to achieve service excellence, the Baldrige National Quality Program has the following features:

- É Provides worldwide leadership in the learning and dissemination of successful approaches and principles, practices, methodologies and performance.
- É Promotes performance excellence
- É Construct the criteria for evaluation and share it.

The Framework's principles or a criterion is expressed in Baldrige performance excellence criteria. This is a framework that any organisation can use to improve overall performance. There are seven attributes within the existing framework. The diagrammatic form of the framework is given below.

- ÉLeadership
- ÉStrategic planning
- ÉWorkforce focus
- ÉCustomer focus
- ÉProcess management
- ÉMeasurement, analysis, and knowledge management
- ÉResults

The Baldrige National Quality Program's Framework is depicted in Figure 1 below.

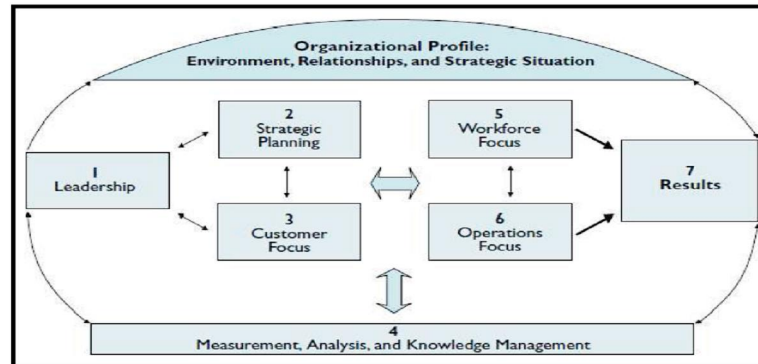


Figure 15: Service Excellence Framework, Source: (BNQP, 2010).

Business Excellence core values and concepts are the attributes embedded in the organisations. They are the foundations of successful organisations (BNQP, 2010). Three areas covered by a service Excellence framework are: Education, Business and Non-profit organisations and Health Care. The framework offers an assessment tool to evaluate improvement efforts and feedback reports from a team of trained experts, highlighting organizational strengths and opportunities for improvement, self-assessment tools are also provided and assessments are subsidised. However, the model cannot be applied directly without considering the regional, ethical, social and economic situation of a particular country. Which implies that the model needs to be tested before it can be concluded that it can provide the solution or a shift from service quality to service excellence domain.

SE2. European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM, 1988)

European Foundation for Quality Management was founded in 1988; EFQM claim that their framework is the most widely used organisational framework in Europe and it is the basis for the majority of national and regional quality awards EFQM is the custodian of the EFQM Excellence model. The framework is based on nine benchmarks, five of these are Enablers and four are Results. The enabler criteria covers activity of the organisation. While the Results benchmarks shows the achievement of an organisation and how these achievements are made. See Figure 2 below.

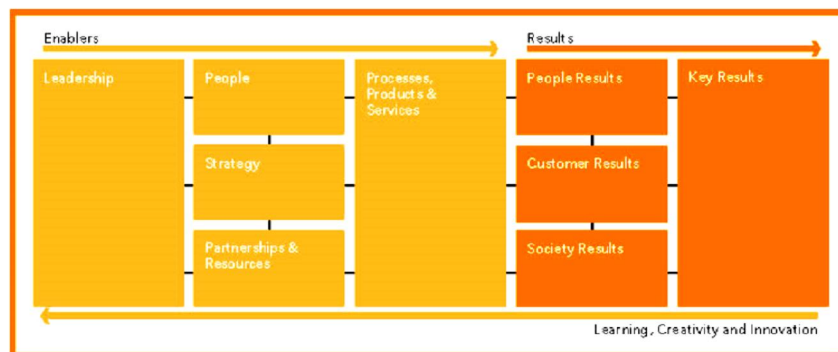


Figure 2: European Foundation for Quality Management Framework Source: (EFQM, 1988)

EFQM provides frameworks for different types of assessment and assists organisations with internal and external assessments to identify areas for improvement. The EFQM is widely adapted for use in different sectors in different countries, including public interest organisations. A well-documented example is the Singapore School Excellence Model (Ng Pak Tee, 2003).

SE3. Business Excellence Framework (BEF, 2004)

Service excellence dimensions have been approached differently by various researchers. The Framework is designed based on the Australian Business Excellence Framework (Janti, 2004). The Framework provides a set of business excellence principles covering the areas of leadership, strategy and planning, data, information and knowledge, people, customer and market focus, innovation, quality and improvement and success and sustainability. Business Excellence models based on the set of principles outlined below in Figure 3 which shows the Business Excellence Framework.

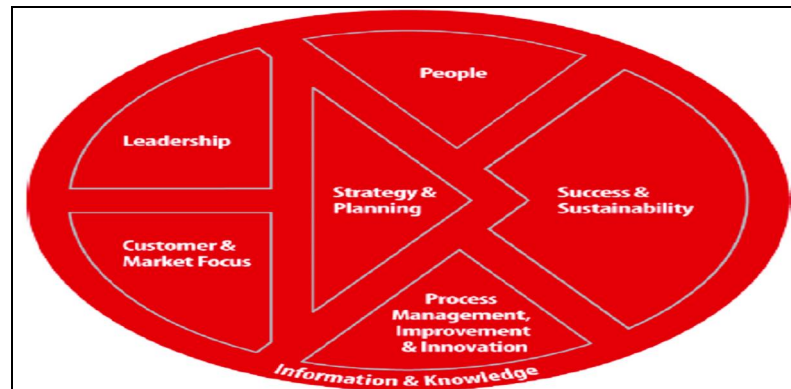


Figure 3: Business Excellence Framework Source: (BEF, 2004).

The business Excellence framework is designed to accommodate Local Government program example Excellence in Local Government (EiLG) is tailored to support councils in integrating BEF. An integrated leadership and management system that describes the elements essential to sustainable organisational excellence (Janti, 2004).

The principles of service excellence according to (BEF, 2004) are as follows:

- i. Mutually agreed plans to translate organisational direction into actions, direction, strategy and action.
- ii. Understanding what customers value, now and in the future, influences organisational.
- iii. Clear direction allows organisational alignment and a focus on achievement of goals
- iv. The potential of an organisation is realised through its people's enthusiasm, resourcefulness and participation
- v. To improve the outcome, improve the system and its associated processes
- vi. All people work in a system; outcomes are improved when people work on the system
- vii. Continual improvement and innovation depend on continual learning
- viii. All systems and processes exhibit variability, which impacts on predictability and performance
- ix. Effective use of facts, data and knowledge leads to improved decisions

- x. Organisations provide value to the community through their actions to ensure a clean, safe and prosperous society
- xi. Senior leadership's constant role-modelling of these principles and their creation of a supportive environment to live these principles are necessary for the organisation to reach its true potential.
- xii. Sustainability is determined by an organisation's ability to create and deliver value for all stakeholders.

SE4. Service Excellence Model (Johnston, 2007)

Johnson model of service excellence is based on four attributes promised service delivery, providing a branded service, delivering beyond expectation of the service user and tackling issues and probes. The scholar emphasised that what is really required is for the customers to be certain that the service organisation can offer a stress-free services which facilitates businesses (Johnston, 2004). Furthermore, scholars like Gauthier (2012) believed that service excellence should not only concentrate on exceeding customer expectations through delivering extraordinary service but rather should focus on customers view of service excellence, which may not necessarily exceeds customers' expectations.

Exceeding the expectation of customers is defied by Johnston (2004; 2007) He posited that service delivery organisations must not imbibe the culture of service delivery beyond expectation but should make a positive effort by supplying a desired service unfailingly, as this may give delight to customers without necessarily thinking of the need to pay more for services rendered. The expectation of customer on service can be met and delivered at relatively lower cost without necessarily putting-up an element of surprise (Gronroos, 1990).

However, Johnson posited that in regards to the determinants of service excellence, four attributes must be considered in relation to keeping the commitments of service towards the customers. These are: delivering the promise of service, providing an extra touch to service delivery, going the extra mile to ensure service delivery and reacting effectively to complaints as shown in Figure 4 below.

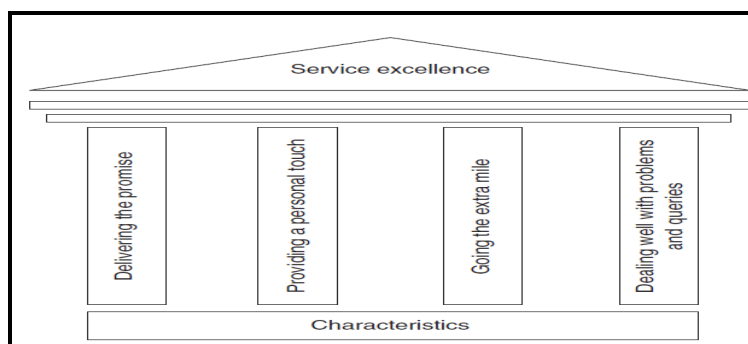


Figure 4: Model for Service Excellence. Source: (Johnston, 2007)

5 Customer Service Excellence Model (Failtre Ireland, 2013)

The customer service excellence model considers an organisation that is relatively intent on keeping their operation reasonably simple, yet comprehensively sufficient to make a significant change in service quality, and in the long run enhance the customer satisfaction which the business is responsive to. This is facilitated to achieve certain objective. A designed Framework assist in make things easier to achieve service excellence. The model focuses on three

interrelated steps: the external customer, the internal customer and the standard of performance as depicted in the Figure 5 below.

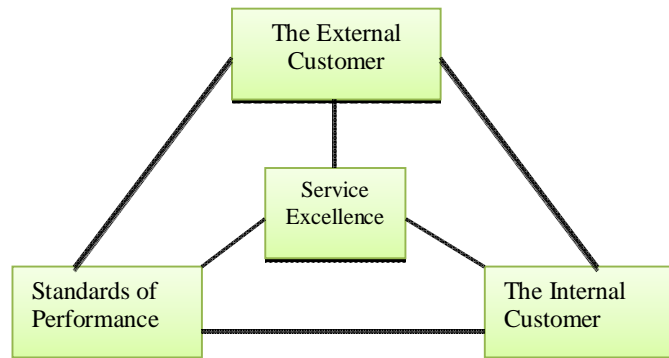


Figure 5: Customer Service Excellence Model Source: (Failtre Ireland, 2013).

- i. *The External Customer*: Organisations that are committed to service excellence, considers their customers in what they do. The model defined and communicate the commitment in achieving service excellence in such a way that the customers and employees knows what the organisation is trying to achieve. However, the commitment should be translated into accomplished through a series of actions which includes:
 - Establish a very good relationship with customers in order to understand needs and expectations.
 - The services and products should be designed around the needs and expectations of the customers and to constantly transform as these needs and expectations changes.
 - Service delivery should consistently go beyond the expectations of the customers.
 - A system for feedback should be introduced to allow for evaluation of performance for continuous improvement.
- ii. *The Internal Customer*: Services cannot be efficiently delivered without the commitment and support of employees within the organisation. Therefore, the organisation should clearly:
 - define the roles and responsibilities of customer service.
 - Co-ordination and integration within the organisation.
 - Training and re-training for employees.
 - Create a conducive working environment.
 - Get all employees actively engage the employees in service excellence delivery to access innovation and ideas.
 - Employee satisfaction should be measured consistently for proper service engagement
- iii. *Standards of Performance*: Guarantee in service provision to the customer is a good virtue and easily help to facilitate the achievement of set objectives through:
 - Devise standards of performance (SOPs) to guide service delivery
 - Connecting and interacting with customers.
 - Train and regularly coach all your employees on how to deliver the standards.
 - Devise mechanisms which enable the organisation to continually improve.

- Constantly monitor and measure your ability to deliver the standards of performance consistently across the service experience.

The basic model of service excellence provides a comprehensive framework for running an efficient service excellence in business.

SE6. Service Excellence Model (Bonita Morgan, 2007)

Excellent organisations are measured by their ability to achieve and sustain outstanding results for their stakeholders through choice, survival, recognition and satisfaction (Morgan, 2007). The study was carried out in 8 pilot countries: Antigua & Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago in a business hospitality background, yet the target is to achieve service excellence delivery. This is carried out in the Caribbean countries to determine the level of service excellence in the hospitality business. Therefore, against this background this leads to a model of service excellence.

The researcher stated that customers need to be re-assured of the services to be delivered for this to be successfully implemented certain criteria has to be met, these are:

- ÉProvides a framework to improve business performance competitiveness
- ÉMotivates employees
- ÉProvides opportunity to benchmark against other organizations
- ÉIdentifies you as a quality employer
- ÉMeasures continuous improvement

There are some crucial steps which facilitate the attainment of service excellence these are:

Self-Assessment Process, use of advisors (if needed), external assessment, certification (biennial)

benchmarking database, user group.

The Standard for Service and Business Excellence comprises 10 steps. These are all measurable objectives; however the standard however is not prescriptive. The Figure below illustrates the Morgan's Service Excellent Model.

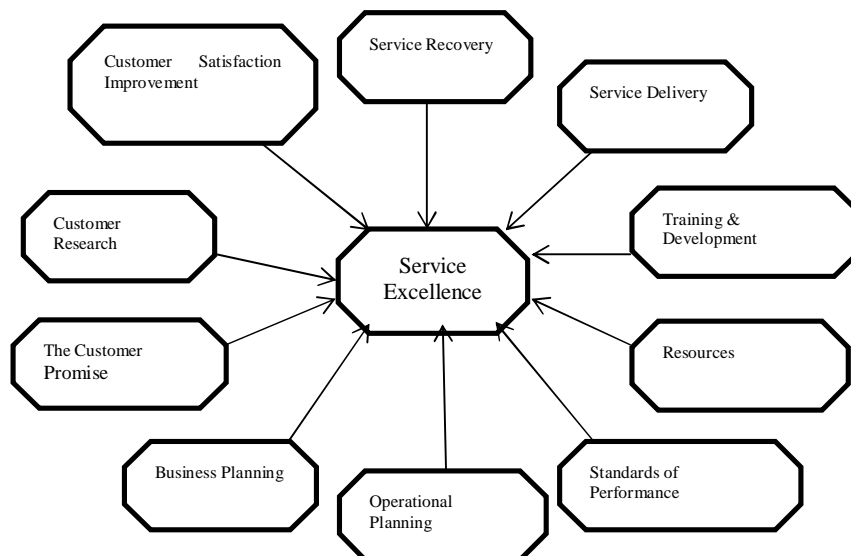


Figure 6: Service Excellence Model Source: (Morgan, 2007).

- i. *Customer Research*: This involves knowing who are the customers and their background. It involves identifying competitors and creates a room for improvement.
- ii. *The Customer Promise*: A policy that ascertains the standards of service and products delivered to the customers should be formulated; also promise of service delivery and standards should not only be communicated but implemented
- iii. *Business Planning*: This suggests the implementation of a business strategy which covers the goals and objectives of the organisation, with a view to measure and evaluates accomplishments against the set standard.
- iv. *Operational Planning*: The organisation should have a plan that classifies strategic peoples' tasks for the delivery of service and also ensure that these tasks are understood by the employees.
- v. *Standards of Performance*: Organisations need strategies to sustain appropriate processes and performance standard to make sure delivery based on promise is made using the framework of strategic procedures.
- vi. *Resources*: This involves processes for classifying equipment people and facilities resource requirements by making it available to the user applying the right technology in view of the financial implication on equipment, building and materials with respect to delivery as of service promise.
- vii. *Training and Development*: Skills and knowledge should be provided to employees for effective delivery, also management performance review, motivations, opportunities, job satisfaction, innovation, creativity and improvement should be encouraged.
- viii. *Service Delivery*: Service performance measurement should be demonstrated and assessed to ensure that service is delivered as promised. Establish procedures for inspecting that service is delivered to the customer as promised.
- ix. *Service Recovery*: There should be a procedure for taking early action to correct poor service delivery and also record customer complaints, comments and requests and ensure that corrective action is taken.
- x. *Customer Satisfaction Improvement*: There should be a recurrent review of service promise to confirm that it continues to meet customer needs and expectations. There should be improvement based on the review for effectiveness of all its procedures and processes that deliver the service promise.

SE7. Best Value Reviews Frameworks (UK and Victoria)

Organisational reviews based on Best Value Principles are designed to ensure that local services are a reflection of local community needs and expectations, both in terms of quality and cost. Best Value framework and principles originated in the UK. In 1999 the Victorian government introduced legislation for Best Value Principles to replace compulsory competitive tendering, the Local Government (Best Value Principles) Act 1999, Act No. 59/1999.

Framework, Best Value Principles can be summarised as follows :

É All services must meet quality and cost standards

É All services must be responsive to community needs

É A service must be accessible to those for whom it is intended

É A council must achieve continuous improvement in its provision of services.

A planned review of services has been viewed as a requirement for achieving a high standard of continuous improvement. Building on the Victorian experience, the City of Ryde

(NSW) who is progressively undertaking Best Value Reviews of each of the 21 service units, has established the following framework for the Reviews:

Stage 1 - Review and Improve (Challenge)

Stage 2 - Measure Satisfaction and Performance (Consult)

Stage 3 - Benchmark and Learn (Competition and Comparison)

Stage 4 -Prioritise Services and Create Innovation (Implement)

Between 2000/01 and 2007/08, Best Value provided the statutory basis on which councils planned, reviewed and managed their performance. Under Best Value, councils had a duty to continuously improve their services. Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) is the new UK external assessment of how well local public services are performing. CAA seeks to assess how well communities are being served by their local public services, including councils, police, health, and fire and rescue services. It emphasises the quality of life of residents and how well these bodies work.

Local Government Victoria provides programs that build on best value principles, in particular the Council Reforming Business program which has an emphasis on procurement. While still a key part of Victorian legislation, Best Value as a methodology does not appear to have any current organisational champions apart from individual councils.

SE8. NSW Promoting Better Practice Program

The NSW Local Government Reform - Promoting Better Practice is a review process that is part of the local government reform program managed by the Division of Local Government, NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet. The program aims to improve the viability and sustainability of councils. The process has a number of objectives:

É to generate momentum for a culture of continuous improvement and greater compliance across local government

É to provide an 'early intervention' option for councils experiencing operating problems

É to promote good governance and ethical conduct principles

É to identify and share innovation and good practice in local government

É to enable the division to use review information to feed back into its work in identifying necessary legislative and policy work for the local government sector.

The program tools include:

É Promoting Better Practice Checklist

É Annual Report Checklist

É Management Plan Checklist

É State of the Environment Report Checklist.

There are a series of five checklists that relate to council's assessment of its ability to meet minimum practice standards is provided. The checklist covers the areas of governance; Regulatory Functions; Asset and Financial Management; Community and Consultation; and Workforce Relations. The divisional review team assesses the council's overall strategic direction, checks compliance, examines practices and ensures that the council has frameworks in place to monitor its performance, and provides feedback to councils. The division encourages all councils to use the program tools as a basis for self-assessment of their own operations and performance. The assessment process involves a combination of self-assessment and external assessment provided by the division resulting in recommendations for improvement.

SE9. Executive on Loan Program (USA)

The Executive On-Loan program is delivered by the Public Technology Institute (PTI), it is a US not-for-profit member supported organisation based in Washington, D.C. that works with local government officials to identify opportunities for technology research, to share solutions and recognize member achievements, and develop best practices that address the technology management, governance and policy issues that impact local government. PTI provides strategic and technical guidance to local governments that are exploring technology related projects. This program is designed specifically for local government in the US. The Table 1 below shows the summary of the reviewed service excellence frameworks.

Table 1: below shows the summary of the reviewed service excellence frameworks

Service Framework/Models		Observation/Contribution	Limitations/Weaknesses
SE1.	Baldigde National Quality Programme	Demonstrate the importance of leadership, practice and approach to promote performance excellence.	The model did not explain how service excellence is measured.
SE2.	European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM, 1998)	Discussed nine criteria for organisational excellence which provide benchmark for assessment.	Lay emphasis on internal staff and commitment of the organisation towards services but did not take into account user needs.
SE3	Business Excellence Framework (BEF, 2004)	The model describes business principle model to achieve service excellence, it is also applicable in local government (EILG).	No feedback mechanism, it does not explain how to measure service excellence.
SE4	Service Excellence Model (Johnston, 2007)	Emphasised on service delivery guarantee to the service user.	Does not provide mechanism for evaluation on service delivery.
SE5	Customer service excellence (Failtre Ireland).	Emphasised on internal service organisation involving the staff, service users and standard of performance.	Did not capture innovation or creativity in service delivery.
SE6	Service excellence model (Bonita Morgan, 2007)	Business performance improvement and employee motivation and measurement of improvement	User needs is not considered when delivering the service, no construct to measure user experience.
SE7	Best value review framework	Design based on community needs	Services delivered did not exceed expectation
SE8	NSW (Promoting Better Practice Programme)	Provide a tool for measurement and evaluation of performance	Did not target the user requirement during service encounter.
SE9	Executive Loan Programme (USA)	Technology and it is application in local government settings, good	Less concern with service excellence.

		governance and policy issues.	
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Source: Author

Discussions

Table 1 summarizes various types of service excellence frameworks. It is emphatically clear from the review that there are issues associated with the reviewed service excellence frameworks. Furthermore it shows that there are two types of customers. The internal and the external customers. The internal customers represent the staff of the organisation, while the external customer represents the service users. The quality of services provided depends on the commitment, specialisation and dedication of staff including the top management. Base on the background of the frameworks reviewed it is observed that that there are issues identified with the framework/models. In order to easily understand these frameworks a classification is made based on the area of contribution of each framework or models.

Category 1: Established criteria to achieve organisational excellence.

Category 2: Performance measurement and benchmarking tools.

Category 3: Emphasised on service encounter and excellence service delivery.

Category 4: Based on community needs and expectations.

Category 5: Technology application in local settings.

In addition, Table 2 is provided below which summarises the contribution based on categorisation.

	Framework Category	Type of Framework	Summary of Contributions	General Weakness of the Framework/Model
SE1, SE2, SE3	<i>Category 1</i>	Baldige National Quality Programme, European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM, 1998), Business Excellence Framework (BEF, 2004)	Established criteria to achieve organisational excellence.	Does not evaluate or measure service excellence. The frameworks did not take into accounts the user needs.
SE6, SE8	<i>Category 2</i>	Investor in People (IIP), Customer service excellence (Failtre Ireland), NSW (Promoting Better Practice Programme)	Performance measurement and benchmarking tools.	There is no constructs to measure user experience and user needs is not well considered.

<i>SE4, SE5,</i>	<i>Category 3</i>	Service Excellence Model (Johnston, 2007), Customer service excellence (Failtre Ireland)	Emphasised on service encounter and excellence service delivery.	Does not provide mechanism for evaluation on service delivery did not take into account innovation in service delivery
<i>SE7</i>	<i>Category 4</i>	Best value review framework	Based on community needs and expectations	Services delivered is more of service quality than service excellence
<i>SE9</i>	<i>Category 5</i>	Executive Loan Programme (USA)	Technology application in local settings.	The Framework is less concern with service excellence.

Table 2: The Summary and Classification of Models/Framework Based on Contributions

Source: Author

Observations

Service excellence frameworks are designed to achieve the most desired result during and after service encounter. Therefore, the frameworks are designed to deliver an excellent service. However, the frameworks in category 1 did not provide any evaluation or measurement on service excellence. The frameworks also did not take into accounts the user need which is very important in achieving service excellence. In category 2, there is no constructs to measure user experience and user needs is not well considered. While the category 3 does not provide mechanism for evaluation on service delivery and did not promote innovation in service delivery. In addition, in category 4 Services delivered is more of service quality than service excellence, while in category 5 the framework is less concern with service excellence.

Conclusion

The paper concluded that almost all the existing frameworks of service excellence have gaps within the framework. Therefore, there is need for a user-centred service delivery design to include evaluation or measurement of service excellence delivery. Measurement of user experience and user needs should also be considered when formulating the design. Due to technological development, growth in population, change in economic and educational status, there is need to promote innovative services to cater for changing user needs in order to achieve service excellence.

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