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## Applying Leadership Criterion of the European Excellence model for achieving Quality Management in Higher Education Institutions

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## [Applying Leadership Criterion of the European Excellence model for achieving Quality Mangage in Higher Education Institutions](#)

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### INTRODUCTION

For institutions of higher education to be successful in the future, there is the need to deliver excellence in all its operations. This means that there is a real need to develop more effective and efficient institutional management practices (Steed et al., 2005). In order to reach this goal, many institutions are turning to total quality management models such as the European Foundation for Quality management (EFQM) Excellence Model as an effective and practical tool to support improvement opportunities within higher education establishments. In an introductory text reproduced from the *EFQM Excellence Model Higher Education Version* (2003), the EFQM Excellence Model itself was to take account of current management thinking, practices and working environment. Here, the Model is defined as a practical tool to help organizations establish an appropriate management system by measuring where they are on the path to excellence, helping them to understand the gaps, and then stimulate solutions confronting them. It is in this way that a model is seen to ensure quality and remains dynamic (Steed et al., 2003: 307-319; EFQM Higher Education Version, 2003). According to Saraiva et al., (2003), among several approaches that can be used to guide the implementation of quality management principles in schools, one that has been followed with success involves the adoption of excellence models to support self-assessment practices and continuous improvement.

Steed et al., (2003) pointed out that EFQM Excellence Model recognizes that stakeholder needs are met through the process that describes the working of the organization, hence the improvement of the process is at the heart of any organizational development and it is through processes that the talent of people can be released, which in turn produces better performance. It also follows that improvement in performance can be achieved only by involving the people in the continuous improvement of the processes they work in. It recognizes that senior managers are too detached from these processes to effect long term sustainable improvement, because they simply do not have the 'requisite variety'. Therefore, the maintenance and improvement of the quality of higher education institutions must be the responsibility and full commitment of institutional leadership.

Leadership has emerged in recent management discourse as a key characteristic of outstanding organizations including educational institutions (for example, Peters and Waterman, 1982; Kotter, 1988; Keller, 1983; Blunt and Jones, 1992; Bennis, 1998; Ramsden, 1998). Ogawa and Bossert (1997) assert that leadership is an organizational quality; that an effective performance and

organizational quality are therefore characteristics of effective leadership. Seeing institutional leadership as one of the most influential, most important and most powerful of all positions (Rhodes, 2001), there is now both a critical need and an unusual opportunity for effective leadership. Thus, university leadership has to define and articulate the mission of the institution, develop meaningful goals, and then recruit the talented, build the consensus, create the climate and provide the resources to achieve them (Rhodes, 2001: 223). It is against this backdrop that this paper explores how the leadership criterion of the European foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Excellence Model can be used and applied within higher education for achieving quality management. The main question this paper aims to answer is: What management behaviour does higher education leadership employ in effecting quality management in institutions of higher education? It is hoped that this paper will increase our understanding of how a quality management model, which originally grew out of business and industry, can be applied within higher education contexts, and the role of institutional leadership within the same context in effecting the required future transformation in higher education management. The rest of the paper is organized as follows: After describing the fundamental concepts of excellence, the paper will then explain the structure of the Excellence Model. In the next section, the paper will present leadership criterion of the model and leadership can impact positively on higher education management. These would be followed by conclusions

## THE FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS OF (EFQM) EXCELLENCE MODEL

The concepts that underpin the quality management excellence model are eight in number. This set of concepts is comprehensive and relevant to the sector as they are to any type of organization. However, the EFQM Excellence Model is built around the belief that an excellent organization will recognize and adopt certain concepts. These concepts are expressed as follows (EFQM, 1999: 6-7):

**Results Orientation:** This concept involves organizations achieving the results that delight all the organization's relevant stakeholders such as the people employed, customers, suppliers and society in general as well as those with financial interest in the organization.

**Customer Focus:** This concept entails that organizations should create sustainable customer value. The customer is the final arbiter of product or service quality and customer loyalty, retention and market share gain are best optimized through a clear focus on the needs of current and potential customers.

**Leadership and Constancy of Purpose:** Organizations need visionary and inspirational leadership, coupled with constancy of purpose. The behaviour of an organization's leaders creates a clarity and unity of purpose within the organization and an environment in which the organization and its people excel.

**Management by Processes and Facts:** Organizations should be managed through a set of interdependent and interrelated systems, processes and facts. The model assumes that organizations perform more effectively when all inter-related activities are understood and systematically managed and decisions concerning current operations and planned improvements are made using reliable information that includes stakeholder perceptions.

**People Development and Involvement:** Organizations should maximize the contribution of employees through their development and involvement in organization's activities. The full potential of an organization's people is best released through shared values and a culture of trust and

empowerment, which encourages the involvement of everyone.

**Continuous Learning, Innovation and Improvement:** Organization's should challenge the status quo and affect change by using learning to create innovation and implement opportunities, and the management and sharing of knowledge within a culture of continuous learning, innovation and improvement.

**Partnership Development:** Organizations should develop and maintain value-adding partnerships. An organization works more effectively when it has mutually beneficial relationships, built on trust, sharing of knowledge and integration, with its partners.

**Corporate Social Responsibility:** Organizations should exceed the minimum regulatory framework in which the organization operates and to strive to understand and respond to the expectations of their stakeholders in society. Adopting an ethical approach and exceeding the expectations and regulations of the community at large best serve the long-term interest of the organization and its people.

## UNDERSTANDING THE EFQM (EFQM) EXCELLENCE MODEL

The European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Excellence Model (figure 1), a self-assessment framework for measuring the strengths and areas for improvement of an organization across all of its activities. It is a non-prescriptive and a comprehensive organizational development framework based on nine criteria, consisting five institutional 'Enablers' and four 'Results'. "Excellence" is used because the model focuses on what an organization does, could do, to produce an excellent service or product to its customers, service users or stakeholders.

As is shown in figure 1, the Model is based on the principle that five key enablers of excellence are leadership, people, policy and strategy, partnership and resources, and processes. These activities enable an excellence organizational performance, as demonstrated by the results. In short, the five enablers assess and question whether there are effective approaches in place to enable the achievement of what the organization has planned to deliver in terms of its results. Enablers are based on how we do things in our organizations. The details of the model can provide a rigorous analysis, which question whether in each area, the organization can demonstrate that chosen approaches and strategies.

- are effective and efficient in delivering results;
- are elaborated to their full potential;
- demonstrate continuous improvement

(Steed et al., 2005).

Each of the enablers are broken down into criterion parts to help develop and support knowledge and learning in that particular area. Those different criteria are intended as supportive guidance rather than mandatory checklists.

The results part consists of people, customer, society and key performance, and results; in total, outcomes, which we target, measure and achieve. The results area also question the extent to which benchmarking against the best in class is undertaken and used to enhance learning and improvement

performance. Like the enablers criteria, each of the results are broken down into criterion-parts to help develop and support knowledge and learning in that area.

## Enablers Results

Leadership

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People

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Policy and  
Strategy

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Processes

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People

Results

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Key

Performance

Results

---

Customer

Results

---

Partnerships and  
Resources

---

Society Results

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Innovation and Learning

Figure 1: EFQM Excellence Model. Source EFQM (1999).

While originally a business model, founded in the private sector, it can be used by any organization. Public or voluntary sector experience with the framework is significant. Because the model is non-prescriptive, it does not involve strictly following a set of rules or standards, but provides a broad or coherent set of assumptions about what is required for a good organization and its management. Each organization can use it in its own way to manage and develop improvement, under the control of those who use the methods rather than an external evaluator. Research has shown that this framework, broadly used in industry, is becoming popular in education sector, and its utility is to be tested in higher education (Temple, 2005; Davis et al., 2001; Steed, 2005; Ferreire, 2003; Pupius, 2005; pupius, 2006).

The vision of the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) is *a world in which organizations in Europe excel*. EFQM's mission is to be *the driving force for sustainable excellence in Europe* to raise the general performance of organizations through the systematic identification and promotion of best business practices, commonly referred to as "Total Quality Management (TQM)."

## LEADERSHIP IN THE CONTEXT OF EFQM

The concept of leadership is key to the philosophy of the Excellence Model. Leadership criterion of the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Excellence Model is not necessarily confined to a small group of people within an organization. All individuals, no matter their position in an organization, are able to demonstrate the attributes of leadership described within the model framework. In the EFQM Excellence Model, there are many definitions of leadership, which some would describe as the ability to be able to motivate others to support and contribute to organizational goals. The EFQM Excellence Model considers an organization's approach to leadership against four key dimensions (EFQM, 1999: 12-13).

### **1. Leaders develop the Mission, Vision and Values and are role models of a culture of Excellence.**

This approach relates to the culture of the organization and how this is developed and

influenced by the behaviour of its leadership. It explores the role of leaders in developing long-term view of where the organization is heading and their personal support for the achievement of these goals. Key areas include the development of a Mission and Vision for the organization.

If the leaders of an organization do not set direction and demonstrate their personal commitment they will encounter problems when attempting to mobilize the support of key stakeholders. Equally, if organizational leadership stresses the importance of a particular set of values and behave differently, the lack of consistency will have a negative impact on the credibility of the organization.

## **2. Leaders are personally involved in ensuring the organization's management system is developed, implemented and continuously improved.**

The management system of any organization is concerned with how it realizes its strategic ambitions. This area assesses a number of basic questions such as the following:

- i) Do the leaders of the organization create the conditions necessary to deliver organization's policy and strategy?
- ii) Do leaders create a structure for the organization and its key processes that help or hinder the achievement of strategy?
- iii) Do leaders establish and review measures and results that provide an indication of progress towards the achievement of strategy?

## **3. How leaders are involved with customers, partners and representatives of society.**

This third area addresses the leader's role in relation to key external stakeholders. Understanding and responding to stakeholder needs and recognizing their contribution to the organization are critical components in establishing long-term strategy and designing the organization's management system. The following key questions are to be assessed in this area:

- i) Do leaders meet with key stakeholders in order to understand their needs?
- ii) Do leaders work at creating an environment to help build beneficial partnerships with stakeholders?

## **4. How leaders motivate, support and recognize the organization's people.**

This fourth area concerns the relationship between leaders and the people who work for the organization. It involves how leaders personally communicate organization's mission, vision, values, policy and strategy, plans, objectives and targets to people who work in the organization. Are the

leaders accessible, actively listen and respond to the people? Do they encourage and enable the people who work in their institutions participate in improvement activity? And do they help and support them to achieve their plans, objectives and targets?

The EFQM Excellence Model has some potential benefits for any organization. It provides a holistic framework that systematically addresses a thorough range of organizational quality issues and also gives attention to impacts through the 'Result' criteria. The model provides a clear diagnosis of an organization's objectives and is useful for planning as it makes links between what an organization does and the results it achieves, and how they are achieved. Also, the model seeks to instill a culture of continuous improvement. The culture of continuous improvement may be described as managers and leaders set up ways of working that get everyone involved in ever-ending improvement in the meeting of internal and external customer needs. Furthermore, the model is flexible enough to be used for specific issues, for example, an analysis of an organization's environmental policy in less than a single day as well as providing a framework for a comprehensive review of all the organization's activities over several months. Finally, there is no requirement for external validation, and the model can be used as an internal driven self-assessment tool allowing an organization to be as honest and open as possible in gauging its performance. The Model calls for management of excellence within organizations.

## LEADERSHIP IMPLICATIONS WITHIN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

In higher education as in other settings, leadership by definition refers to practices that extend beyond the usual procedural context of organizational management. Thus, quality leadership implies a genuine kind of leadership – a hopeful, open-ended, visionary and creative response to social circumstances, as opposed to the more traditional dualistic portrayal of management and leadership practices characterized of now obsolete principal practices (Begley, 2004: 16). In this connection, quality leadership is thought of as a metaphor for professionally effective, ethically sound, and consciously reflective practices in educational management. This is leadership that is knowledge-based, values informed, and skillfully executed (Begley, 2004: 15) to manage a range of complex and critical challenges of modern university.

Challenges facing higher education institutions demand the use of the most appropriate current techniques of management to ensure maximum effectiveness, as, according to Bounds and colleagues' assertion, "traditional approaches to management are now inadequate for keeping up with change" Bounds et al., 1994: 5). Leadership is one of the ingredients required to create higher education institution through leadership drive and clear direction within a climate of continuous improvement. The aspiration here is to develop the management system of the university to a level of 'excellence' as defined by the 'fundamental excellence' that underpins the EFQM Excellence Model.

In the EFQM Excellence Model Higher Education Version, Carol Steed defines a range of roles expected of university leadership in order to achieve quality in institutional management. In line with the leadership in the context of EFQM Model, five role areas in leadership behaviour in higher education institutions have been identified (see Steed 2003:18-19). These roles of higher education leadership are addressed under five distinct heading as follows:

1. Developing the university mission, vision, values and ethics, and exhibiting role models of a culture of excellence



This role involves higher education leadership at the senior management level, to provide clear leadership direction and direction setting by producing a vision, mission and values statement. They exhibit role-modeling behaviour by sharing communication and encouraging feedback from staff at all levels. These leaders take active responsibility for improving projects, and involving a cross-section of staff – to encourage and develop learning and role model involvement and empowerment. There must be an active leadership engagement with training and learning activities. This helps to role model the importance of personal development and enhancement, supports the development and enhancement of leadership skills, and could be used to support other staff and student development work in the university, for example, through mentoring etc. In addition, higher education leaders engage themselves in the development and implementation of a code of conduct, linked to the university's core values. This should support the definition of leadership style, delegation, communication, motivation and empowerment of staff.

## 2. Assurance of developing, implementing and continuously improving university management system

Higher education leaders should be personally and directly involved in the process of review and improvement of university management system, which include a cross-section of opinion from other staff. Senior university leaders should take ownership of the process management system, ownership of agreed targets, measures and milestones. They should also assume ownership and development of process for the review and evolution of institutional policy and strategy. Furthermore, leadership in the university should own, drive and actively engage in self-assessment and review activities, including implementation of actions through strategic and operational planning of the university. Finally, leaders should engage in customer (student and other stakeholders) groups to gain direct insight into changes that might be needed to the university management system

## 3. Involvement and interaction with customers, partners and representatives of society

Higher education leaders should meet, understand and respond to the needs and expectations of students, governing bodies, funding bodies, staff internal to the university in other areas, and other stakeholders through pro-active partnership policies (strategic and local), which support the future policy and strategy of the university. Also, university leadership should establish partnerships within and outside the university, as well as within and outside the education sector. This goal can be achieved when institutional leadership takes the responsibility for the pro-active management of specific partnering relationships. In addition to this, leaders should establish and participate in joint improvement activities within and outside the university.

## 4. Motivating, supporting and recognizing the university's people, and nurturing a culture of excellence

Higher education leadership communicates university's mission, vision, values, policy and strategy, plans, objectives and targets, to all staff in a simple way. They should recognize their staff, both team and individual efforts, through the staff appraisal system,. They should also make themselves accessible and actively listen to and respond inspirationally to staff at all levels of the university structure by listening and learning, sharing experience and learning from each other and taking action. In addition, leaders should actively support, encourage and help their staff to achieve their plans, objectives and targets for the benefit of both individuals and the university.

## 5. Identifying and championing organizational change.

In addition to pro-active understanding and selecting the needed change to be made within the institution, to the institution framework or make-up, and the external relationships that the institution needs to alter to drive or support change, institutional leadership should understand the internal and external drivers for change, and their implications. They should be wholly involved in driving forward and developing change plans, and at the same time securing the resources and investments needed to support change. Also, in addition to supporting and enabling other institutional officers and staff to manage the transition and change process, higher education leaders at all levels need to take responsibility for the development of their capabilities and competencies in management as well as academic practices (see Ramsden, 1998).

The above framework does not exhaust other possibilities of leadership role in quality management; rather it highlights some of the behaviours institutional leaders exhibit in order to make higher education institutions become strategically focused institutions. It is important for strategic leaders to have a strategic map or framework to guide them in developing the strategic capacity and capability of their institutions. One area of doing this is for leaders to try to significantly improve the existing way of operating. While doing so leaders also develop capability to shift to a whole new way of operating at a much higher levels. This type of leadership work to significantly improving and extending the life of existing approaches and strategies while at the same time building capacity and capability to move to a significantly enhanced level of operation; as making the strategic leap (Davis, 2003: 295-312).

## DISCUSSION

This paper began by presenting the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Excellence Model as a practical tool that assist organizations including higher education institutions in developing their management systems whether or not they are improving in the area of excellence. The model is identified as a vehicle for helping organizations to determine their strong points as well as areas with room for improvement, and encourage them to create solutions. The model is seen as dynamic, and reflects up-to-date management trends and practices. On examining the Model further, leadership was identified as a driver of institutional enablers, occupying a strategic role in the overall model framework. In the model, leadership is seen as an important factor that affects the success of the implementation of total quality management (TQM). It is also an important criterion in the excellence model, which analyses how leaders create, support and act as role model for a culture of excellence with his or her actions and behaviour. In addition, leadership is seen as a key to the philosophy of excellence in the model.

The model assumes that while the traditional management is about containing and controlling people and events, leadership, while not jettisoning the needs of every day management, is about vision and charisma. A leader embodies the values which he or she preaches, so that people understand where the organization is going, and why, and they are willing to follow the leaders, not from fear but from a sense of belief and shared goals. Leadership motivates by example, and people follow because they trust the leader and the journey the leader the leaders wishes them to take together. Behind the philosophical truth, leadership in the Excellence Model makes a crucial input in the vision-mission-values development and in the upholding of a culture of excellence. The EFQM Excellence Model becomes a possible vehicle for improving leadership in any type of organization.

In the same way, leadership in higher education play the role of creating vision, communicating policy, and developing strategy throughout the higher education establishment. At the top of university leadership is the president in some countries, Vice-Chancellor in others while in some other countries they are referred to as rectors (Green, 1997). These leaders, whatever name they are called, are expected to develop, articulate, and implement visions for the institution that sustain and enhance institutional quality. Through their roles as the chief executive officers of their institutions, they also have significant management responsibilities for a diverse collection of activities. Since these generally require the expertise and experience of talented specialists, the university president is the university's leading recruiter, identifying talented people, recruiting them into key university positions, and directing and supporting their activities. Unlike most corporate chief executive, the president is expected to play an active role generating the resources needed by the university, whether by lobbying the governments, seeking gifts, bequests and endowments from alumni and friends, or entrepreneurial efforts (Duderstadt, 2002; Clark, 1998).

Furthermore, not only that leadership in higher education should always reflect the fundamental values of the institution, for example, they should encourage freedom of inquiry, be open to new ideas, commit themselves to rigorous study, and a love of learning. They also have other greater responsibilities in preparing the overall institutional plan and strategy. Their effectiveness will no doubt be determined more by the role they play within the university. For instance, university leaders should concern themselves with maintaining links with municipalities, local and regional authorities or local businesses. In short, institutional leaders in higher education should concern themselves with the new role of rooting their institutions into their local economic and social fabric. The achievement of this goal depends on the extent to which leaders are provided with the necessary legal authority and appropriate training (Demichel, 2000: 7-15). Dill and Sporn (1995) argue for a strong institutional leadership, which has to be counterbalanced by measures taken by leaders towards a more network-oriented model of institutional governance. The aim of this type of institutional governance is for the leadership to encourage the academic staff members to mobilize their own capacity for the best of the whole institution as Dill and Sporn concluded.

In sum, higher education leaders have roles to play in strategic management in the university as Bayenet et al's (2000) study showed. They identified different attributes to characterize these roles. For example, they see institutional leaders as pilots – keeping the institution on course, as conductors – striving for harmony, or university policy makers? For Bayenet and colleagues, it seems good idea for university leaders to draw up basic strategic framework that leaves players some room for innovation. This will help the university institution become a kind of network enterprise, with core players using incentive and arbitration to manage a network of fully fledged entities. Furthermore, university leaders have to work with various corporations, as more and more new occupations and functions are springing up in universities, in fields such as strategic management, intake and internal marketing policies, continuing education, internationalization, and new information and communications technologies, the new functions for institutional leadership are bound to involve the development of new training policies for members of the institution based on more than one process of internal organizational change. One aspect of that change is the development of strategic evaluation (Bayenet et al.; 2000: 65-80).

## CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this study has been to apply the leadership criterion of the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Excellence Model to the context of higher education. Within the Model, leadership criterion has been singled out as a very important concept in any quality system, as factor for quality management and institutional improvement in general and higher education in particular. It was assumed that the 'traditional' leadership theories of only planning, controlling, commanding etc are no more sufficient to confront the problems facing higher education institutions of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. What is required today in the great efforts to achieve institutional change and effectiveness is the development of leadership and strategic management in such a changing institutional environment. The strategic management of higher education institutions is increasingly a vital element in higher education improvement and also in raising educational standards, in which competent and strategic leadership plays important part if institutions and system-wide objectives are to be achieved. Research on institutional effectiveness has demonstrated that the quality of leadership is one of the major variables in delineating successful and less successful higher educational institutions (Shattock, 2003).

In looking at one element of strategic leadership in the EFQM Excellence Model, the Model stressed the importance of "effective" leadership and in the context of this paper, visionary leadership, in which senior higher education leaders need to set direction and create a student-focused, learning-oriented climate, clear and visible directions, and high expectations. The directions, Values, and expectations should balance the needs of all stakeholders. We also gather from this study that institution leadership need to take part in the development strategies, systems, methods of achieving excellence in education, stimulating innovation, and building knowledge and capabilities. The Values and strategies should help guide all activities and decisions of the institution. Furthermore, institutional leadership should inspire and motivate the entire staff and encourage involvement, participation and responsibility of all those who work in the institution, and where development, learning, innovation and creativity by all staff members are encouraged.

Through their ethical and personal roles in planning, communications, coaching, development of future leaders, review of organizational performance, and faculty and staff recognition, institutional leaders should serve as role models, reinforcing values and expectations and building leadership commitment and initiative within the institution. In addition to these important roles within institutions, senior leaders should strengthen education through reinforcing the learning environment in the institution that require building community support and aligning community and business leaders and community services within this aim.

Finally, As summarized in the EFQM Excellence Model Higher Education version (2003), visionary or "excellent" leaders develop and facilitate the achievement of the mission, vision, develop values required for long-term success and implement these through appropriate actions and behaviours, and are personally involved in ensuring that the university's management system is developed and implemented. Leaders are not necessarily those who have the formal authoritative power to make decisions. Leaders are those who get things done by implementing necessary decisions, "taking important actions that make things work out (Pfeffer, 1994).

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