Investigating the role of approaches to continuously improve the part of enablers in model of excellence

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

ABSTRACT

The current survey investigates the role of approaches to continuously improve the part of enablers in model of excellence viewpoints of staff in this company. The research method was a descriptive survey and the statistical population consisted of all the staff of Company. (2584 people) out of which 334 were selected as statistical sample, using random clustered sampling and considering the number of population. The research instrument was a researcher made questionnaire using 5-scale Likert and including 25 statements. The validity of the questionnaire was substantiated by specialists and also a number of the participants. The reliability of the questionnaire was substantiated by specialists and also a number of the participants. The reliability of the questionnaire proved to be 0.96 using Cronbach’s Alpha coefficients. To analyze the research data, the descriptive statistics consist of abundance, percent, average, standard deviation and the deductive statistics include single variable test and manova analysis, are used. The findings revealed that role of approaches to continuously improve the part of enablers in model of excellence the leadership, strategy, people, partnerships resources, processes products services customers results, society results were more than average (p<0.05), in regard with demographic data amount, no significant difference was seen in staffs points of view (gender, professional background, field of study and position).

Key words: Management system, Continuous improvement, Model of Excellence, Staff

Introduction

Each organization irrespective to its activity, size, structure and/or the level of success in meeting its organizational goals, needs to put appropriate managerial systems and also a model based on measures the level of success to reach its desires and business strategies [2]. Models of organizational excellence are tools to help organizations to measure their level of being in path of organizational excellence and balanced growth. (EFQM) commits itself to research and update the model using results of thousands European and non-European organizations. By this method, the model is always dynamic and moves toward today managerial thinking. Models of organizational excellence are efficient tools if they are used properly which can internalize organizational concepts and values, codifying and implementing strategic programs, utilizing self-evaluation methods, organizational learning and continuous improvement in organizations and allow identifying best processes and doing optimize mining [5]. The organizations which are truly remarkable have tried to attract their stakeholders' satisfaction by their achievements and showing how to gain this and which achievements they will have in the future. Doing so is difficult even in the best conditions, therefore in conditions in which global competition is increasing, technological inventions are taking place quickly, processes are changing and continuous changes in economy, social conditions, and customer environment, continuity of this is also more difficult [7]. It was by recognizing these challenges that European Foundation of quality management was established to promote a kind of managing organization among European organization which is observable in world class and a guide to sustainable excellence [8]. Model of excellence (EFQM) is a clear framework to evaluate organizations' performance on two parts of enablers and their results. Consequences from this evaluation in the model are organization's strengths and its improvable grounds which offer a list of preferable plans to reach improvement [1]. This model has been established on 9 criteria. Five criteria relate to enablers (leadership, employees, strategy, firms and
resources, processes, products and services criteria) that represent components of an organization and how they interact with each other [11].

Model of excellence of EFQM as a model of quality determines some aspects which organization must pay attention to them to improve results and also some characteristics which must be considered to reach excellence via enabling criteria [3]. The important point is that organizing organizational plans on the principles and criteria of efficiency is an individual way of success to come over existing challenges of globalization. A plan in which efficiency, how to use resources, making agile and taking advantage of knowledge in organization are emphasized on. Several studies have been conducted on determining and promoting key factors of organizations' success to improve their performance which national awards of quality, Doming & Beldridge's model of business success, and EFQM are some results of them. The following studies are some of them:

Riahi [9] conducted a study titled "investigating factors effecting on efficiency of total quality management in 5 governmental ministries". The study results showed paying attention to dignity of customer, trust him as an accepted norm in organization, accuracy of organization actions, manager's efforts to reduce errors in organization and creating motivate systems to deliver correct services to customers, presence of knowledgeable and capable, employees' education related to services they delivering, and presence of training courses and increasing employees' skills and knowledge are some factors affecting on management efficiency.

In a study, Dehnavieh et al [4] titled "the obstacles of using Iran National Quality Award in medical sciences of Iran and giving a strategy" concluded that the most important obstacles included special characteristics of university environment, weakness in performance of top managers, weak participation, weakness in innovation, weakness in communication, weakness in making beds and stabilizing improvement process, weakness in allocating resources and problems coming from environmental factors.

Tari [10] found in a study titled "using the model of excellence (EFQM) in universities of Spain" with the aim of self-evaluation model of European excellent model in five universities of Spain that increasing management commitment, planning for self-evaluation, forming some teams for training and self-evaluating, determining modifications, implementing modifications and reviewing are some steps that a university can take to reach better performance.

Jung & Vang [6] conducted a study titled "investigating the relationship between total quality management and continuous improvement of international project management", the results showed that staff's relationships (including empowerment/staff interference, human issues, clear relationships, broad organizational trainings) have had the most effects in reaching continuous improvement of international project management. Leadership factor (including commitment of top managers to quality, existence of goal and strategy, existence of broad culture of organizational quality, existence of goals for quality actions) has been the second factor influencing improvement of international project management.

In a study titled "moving toward continuous improvement, self evaluating of model of organizational excellence (EFQM)" Wong & Dahlgard [12] showed training employees, increasing managers' capability, employees' awareness of tools and methods of quality management are some factors affecting on continuous improvement.

Study questions:

In the service company's staff viewpoint:
1. To what extent continuous improvement strategies of excellence model in field of leadership plays a role?
2. To what extent continuous improvement strategies of excellence model in field of strategy plays a role?
3. To what extent continuous improvement strategies of excellence model in field of staff plays a role?
4. To what extent continuous improvement strategies of excellence model in field of companies and resources plays a role?
5. To what extent continuous improvement strategies of excellence model in field of processes, services and products plays a role?
6. Is there any significant difference between responders' opinions with respect to demographic factors (gender, age, level of education, major, work experience, type of employment)?

Methodology, community, sampling and methods of analyzing data of the study:

Method of the present study is descriptive – survey. Statistical community of this study includes all staff of the company in number of 2584, of which 334 people were selected by using Coockran's formula and stratified random sampling. The tool for gathering data was researcher made questionnaire on investigating strategies of continuous improvement of excellence model includes 25 questions in 5 fields of leadership, strategy, staff, companies and resources, process and services and products results in Likret's 5-degree scale. Formal validity and content validity of the questionnaire were verified by subjects, and experts in the field of excellence model and also consultants, respectively. Perpetuity of the questionnaire was estimated 0.96 by using Croonbach's Alfa coefficient. Inferential statistics
including t-variable test and analyzing multi-way variance were used to analyze the data.

4. Analyzing and interpreting findings:

**Question 1:**
To what extent continuous improvement strategies of excellence model in field of leadership plays a role, in the service company's staff viewpoint?

Table 1-4: comparison of mean score of leadership with hypothetical average 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard derivation</th>
<th>Derivation of the mean</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Degree of freedom</th>
<th>Level of significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Field of leadership</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>0.040</td>
<td>3.484</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to findings in table (1-4), mean score in leadership of the service company is 3.14. Calculated t is larger than t on the table. So, the role of continuous improvement strategies in the model of excellence in leadership is more than the average level.

**Question 2:**
To what extent continuous improvement strategies of excellence model in field of strategy plays a role, in the service company's staff viewpoint?

Table 2-4: comparison of mean score of strategy with hypothetical average 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard derivation</th>
<th>Derivation of the mean</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Degree of freedom</th>
<th>Level of significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Field of strategy</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>5.74</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to findings in table (2-4), mean score in strategy of the service company is 3.18. Calculated t is larger than t on the table. So, the role of continuous improvement strategies in the model of excellence in strategy is more than the average level.

**Question 3:**
To what extent continuous improvement strategies of excellence model in field of staff plays a role, in the service company's staff viewpoint?

Table 3-4: comparison of mean score of staff with hypothetical average 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard derivation</th>
<th>Derivation of the mean</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Degree of freedom</th>
<th>Level of significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Field of staff</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.037</td>
<td>0.180</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>0.858</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to findings in table (3-4), mean score in staff of the service company is 2.99. Calculated t is larger than t on the table. So, the role of continuous improvement strategies in the model of excellence in staff is more than the average level.

**Question 4:**
To what extent continuous improvement strategies of excellence model in field of companies and resources plays a role, in the service company's staff viewpoint?

Table 4-4: comparison of mean score of companies and resources with hypothetical average 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard derivation</th>
<th>Derivation of the mean</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Degree of freedom</th>
<th>Level of significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Field of companies and resources</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.041</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to findings in table (4-4), mean score in companies and resources of the service company is 3.14. Calculated t is larger than t on the table. So, the role of continuous improvement strategies in the model of excellence in companies and resources is more than the average level.

**Question 5:**
To what extent continuous improvement strategies of excellence model in field of processes, services and products plays a role, in the service company's staff viewpoint?

Table 5-4: comparison of mean score of processes, services and products with hypothetical average 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard derivation</th>
<th>Derivation of the mean</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Degree of freedom</th>
<th>Level of significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Field of processes, services and products</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.036</td>
<td>4.901</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to findings in table (5-4), mean score in processes, services and products of the service company is 3.18. Calculated t is larger than t on the table. So, the role of continuous improvement strategies in the model of excellence in processes, services and products is more than the average level.
**Question 6:**

Is there any significant difference between responders' opinions with respect to demographic factors (gender, age, level of education, major, work experience, type of employment)?

**Table 6-4:** multiple-way variance analyzing scores by using the model of excellence in terms of some variables such as gender, age, level of education, major, work experience, type of employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Sum of squares</th>
<th>Degree of freedom</th>
<th>Mean squares</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Level of significance</th>
<th>The Eta</th>
<th>Statistical capacity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.051</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.051</td>
<td>0.158</td>
<td>0.069</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.079</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>0.082</td>
<td>0.070</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.436</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.109</td>
<td>0.339</td>
<td>0.851</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>0.126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work experience</td>
<td>1.767</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.442</td>
<td>1.372</td>
<td>0.245</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>0.423</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results in table (6-4) show that the scores of level of using excellence model in service company in terms of variables such as gender, age, education level and work experience are not significant.

**Discussion and Conclusion:**

The subject and field of leadership is one of the most important issues in managing and leading organizations. The best asset of a leader is his capacity to help employees to manage themselves better. One of the strategies to continuously improve the part of enablers in model of excellence in target service companies is commitment of managers to new managerial systems and model of excellence, which for this purpose, company's leaders and managers must create a proper system to internalize culture in organization and amplify it on various ways including implementing systems and measurement, in addition to being active in organization's improving activities. Such systems must be in line with reducing managers' works and all kind of physical, mental and nervous stresses applying on them. To meet the desires of this strategy, following works must be at least paid attention to:

1. Managers visualize organization future by defining organization perspective.
2. Managers define organization policy by expressing organization's existential philosophy.
3. Managers determine the values based on which the other members of organization must behave.

A flexible, accountable and finally excellent organization is one in which leadership ability is found everywhere and extend to all levels. In the field of leadership, model of excellent leaders' excellence determines organization desires and policy, facilitates achieving it, creates target values for long term success, applies them through proper activity and behavior and assures creating and applying management system by participating on its own. With respect to what was said, the role of leadership field in strategies of continuous improvement, model of excellence is explainable. Strategy is an integrated, comprehensive and cooperative plan which relates organization to environmental challenges and was established based on the present and future needs and expectations of stakeholders. This filed is established and noticed through a framework of key process. Ultimately, it determines process of achieving organization's desired position in the future. Accordance of existing criteria of service company with social, economic, industrial and business statues in country is one of the strategies of continues improvement in part of enablers of model of excellence, therefore organization should show some evidence about processes and stages of codifying its strategies and how to recognize and screening them. In this regard, some mechanisms must exist to recognize internal and outside environment of organization, and organization's strategies are codified according them. To do so, following actions are offered:

1. Anticipate proper mechanisms to collect and use employees' opinions about codified strategies.
2. Focus on recognizing and codifying effective strategies for organization which have the capability to improve company statue and enhance its level of performance.
3. Monitor society's opinion about organization regularly.

Also, in the field of strategy, focusing on recognizing and codifying effective strategies for organization which have the capability to improve company statue and enhance its level of performance is very important. Therefore, the role of strategy field in continuously improving the model of excellence is explainable. Employees are the main body of an organization; they are origin of inspiration, creativity and motivation in organization and keep it alive. In today world of competition economy in which industry must be more effective moment by moment, utilizing employees more intelligently leads to they can create more value for their organization. Model of organizational excellence also focuses on this. The other important point is that role and value of employees in creating success for organization is critical. Therefore one of the strategies of continuous improvement in a service company is creating a systematic system and continuous motivation of employees. Following activities are offered to meet the requirements of this strategy:

1. Design and create an integrated, cooperative system of salary, create a proper and just method in
this regard with respect to the conditions, type and how to communicate employees with organization.

2- Design and create system of material and moral incentives, individually and in groups including creating effective system to encourage timely for employees.

3- Design, create and implement appropriate information system about health, safety, and environmental issues, increase employees’ social awareness with the purpose of attract their attentions to social consequences of some activities which they are committed to do.

Employees criteria is considered as the third factor of empowering organization in model of excellence and has a special importance so that excellent organizations handle, extend and utilize all potential ability of their employees on individual, team and organizational levels. According to what was mentioned, although the role of human resources as the most important factor of organization growth and survival and increasing competitive ability is obvious, it seems that in compared to other fields, employees have evaluated the role of this field in continuous improvement of model of excellence highly. The reason can be attributed to organizational culture dominant on this organization, written and compiled strategies, participation restrictions, and process of expanding selection in this organization. Organizational resources are of the most important assets in organizations. In model of excellence, the field of participations and resources contain relationships with business parties and also how to treat organization with internal resources and how to manage them. Customers and interest groups are of the most important resources of organization whom must be paid attention to. One of the continuous improvement strategies in enablers’ part of model of excellence is correctly utilize and monitor financial resources to continue activities. Followings are some works are suggested to do so:

1. Recognize and determine financial indicators such as interest, liquidity, sale, current ratios and etc to measure the level of organization's financial success.
2. Provide required facilities and resources to implement plans, policies and strategies of organization.
3. Evaluate and determine financial consequences of organization's performance and proceedings
4. Design and implement required policies and guidance to secure assets (including employees, physical assets, and knowledge information).
5. Investigate and evaluate the effect of organization assets (including internal and external effects including environmental consequences of activities.

In the field of process, the assigned score is higher than intermediate level. Process is a chain of continuous activities during which institutions are transformed to desired outcomes from which added values are resulted. All companies and organizations utilize processes during their working operations. With environmental changes in which today organizations act, employees feel there are new opportunities to do some affairs which, in fact, are not continuity of previous affairs. Indeed, today organizations’ employees have faced to an unknown jump in how to do work and its process. Changing customers' needs, modern technologies introduced to organization, automation, offers system, database, software-based making decision, hard competition and etc. are some cases which have changed companies’ processes. Therefore, today organizations' employees try to do their activities differently. One of continuous improvement strategies of innovative management systems and model of excellence is try to reduce the level of total harmful effects of delivering systems by company. To meet requirements of this strategy, paying attention to existing facts related to market, competitors, social, political, economic statues of internal statue of organization, its technical and operational capability and etc. are important. What is appeared in this regard is relying on effective manufacturing and delivering processes which enhance organization's competitive capability. In this regard, doing each following activities can be useful and effective:

1. Manufacture products and deliver services by following principles of cost, quality and time.
2. Following qualitative, safety, environmental standards and social acceptance and etc.
3. Recognize, explain and anticipate future needs of customer.
4. Inform society and people about specifications of products and services via various ways.
5. Make effort to improve conditions of selling products and delivering services, improve conditions of preparing products, improve and extend product storage, quantity develop of services and proper deliver products to customers, deliver special services to customers.

Therefore, field of processes is one which needs to fundamental attention of manager and employees. According to what was said, the role of processes, products and services in continuous improvement of model of excellence is explainable. Higher scores than intermediate level in this field also indicate that employees evaluate the role of this field in continuous improvement of model of excellence on a high level.

References


