The Effect of Academic Culture on the Sustainability of EFQM Excellence Model use in UK Universities

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Abstract
This paper describes a range of factors, which collectively define the academic culture in UK universities. These factors were explored in four case studies of the implementation of the European Foundation for Quality Management's (EFQM) Excellence Model in UK universities in order to examine their effect on the use of this quality improvement model. It was found that certain of these factors had a good "cultural fit" with the EFQM Excellence Model and its underpinning concepts and others acted as cultural barriers to the sustainable use of the EFQM Model in the cases. The paper provides a framework for assessing academic culture and proposes an ideal mix of cultural factors to facilitate sustained use of the EFQM Model. Strategies are recommended for dealing with situations where the assessed academic culture does not fit well with the use of the EFQM Model. These strategies include both attempts to influence and change the academic culture to provide a better fit with the EFQM Model and also suggested amendments to the use of the EFQM Model to provide a better fit with the academic culture.

Paper
This research was conducted as part of a larger investigation into the factors that affected the effective implementation of the EFQM Excellence Model in academic units of UK Universities (Davies 2004). Davies (2004, p.9) defined something that is effectively implemented as “something that is in operation or use”. This paper draws on that research and focuses on the effect of academic culture on the sustainability of EFQM Excellence Model use in UK Universities. The Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (2005) defines something that is sustainable as “able to continue over a period of time”. Clearly if an organisation is to gain long term benefit from the use of the EFQM Excellence Model then it will need to be used in a sustainable fashion. At the time that the research was conducted, all four case organisations had been attempting to use the EFQM Excellence Model for a period of 3 years. Therefore it can be argued that if the case organisations were still using the model at the end of this 3 year period in a way that was integrated into the management of the organisation, then its use was sustained.

One of the factors that emerged from the literature as impacting on the effective implementation of the EFQM Excellence Model in the context of UK Universities was that of the academic culture. Bardoel & Sohal (1999) point out that, when implementing quality improvement programmes, the time needed to change the organisational culture and attitudes should not be underestimated whilst Chin & Pun (2002) indicate that an over-emphasis on the technical aspects of Total Quality Management (TQM) without people commitment and cultivation of the culture will often delay the real implementation of TQM. Krasachol & Tannock (1999) argue that TQM implementation requires a culture change in the organisation and Buch & Rivers (2001) identify an understanding of the culture of an organisation as crucial to implementing TQM. Munro-Faure & Munro-Faure (1994) are of the opinion that the culture of an organisation must be respected when implementing a quality improvement programme. Anjard (1995) argues that the cultural realities of an organisation need to be understood and dealt with in TQM implementation. More specifically, Anjard (1995) highlights that the behaviour of managers often creates a culture in which quality and quality improvement systems are not valued at the same level as are other systems. If this is so, then a TQM culture cannot exist. These views are supported by Sousa-Poza et al (2001) who argue that unsuccessful implementation of TQM can be blamed on corporate culture and that the corporate culture of many UK companies is not naturally suited to TQM implementation. One of the possible reasons offered for this is the relatively high tendency towards individualism in the workforce. Dellana & Hauser (see Sousa-Poza et al 2001, p.747) identified that
group cultures were most facilitating for TQM implementation and Mersha (1997) warns that rigid socio-cultural systems tend to resist change.

There is much support for carrying out a cultural assessment of an organisation before implementing TQM or similar initiatives in order to identify potential barriers to change and to help in designing the implementation programme. Poirier & Tokarz (1996) argue the importance of understanding the internal personality or culture of an organisation in order that allowances can be made for this in implementation. Atkinson (1990) supports this view and recommends assessing the culture and values of the organisation using a feasibility study. Vermeulen (1997) advocates diagnosing and analysing the character of the organisation to identify potential barriers to change. Chin & Pun (2002), referring to the UMIST-TQM implementation framework, recommend an assessment of the current status of organisational culture before developing and implementing for change. The research of Bardoel & Sohal (1999) with seven cases of TQM implementation suggests that an analysis of the organisation, using cultural auditing tools, can help with the design of a successful TQM implementation programme. Wright et al (1998) argue that clear understandings of perceptions are necessary for those advocating and implementing a total quality programme as this understanding reduces delays.

Silvestro (2001) calls for a contingency sensitive approach to TQM implementation as much of the TQM literature is insensitive to the contingencies of the operational context. This view is supported by Sitkin et al (see Chin & Pun 2002, p.273) who attribute the failure of many TQM programmes to a disregard for contextual factors. Melan (1998) is of the opinion that the contextual aspect of change suggests that TQM implementation should be approached in a contingent way. Savolainen (1999) identified that industry-specific factors, which are related to the nature of the business, need to be taken into consideration in implementation. Beer & Walton (see Savolainen 1999, p.1205) contend: "Rather than assume there is a single way to change organizations we should specify alternative change strategies appropriate to an organization's stage of development."

In response to this view that implementation should be contingent on the organisational context, many authors argue for tailored approaches to implementation. Mersha (1997) argues that the implementation process should be tailored to each organisation's specific situation as the lack of tailoring has been identified as one of the factors that lead to the failure of TQM implementation. This view is supported by Michael et al (1997) who state that the TQM programme should be tailored to suit the individual higher education institution. Sullivan-Taylor & Wilson (1996) interviewed a consultant in New Zealand who claimed to take cultural differences into account and altered the quality programme accordingly. Samuelsson & Nilsson (2002) state that one of the dilemmas in implementing the EFQM Excellence Model is whether to adjust the criteria of the model to suit the organisation and McAdam & Welsh (2000) note that the application of the EFQM Excellence Model usually involves negotiation over how the model should be used, how key terms should be construed and whether particular elements are even appropriate. Raisbeck (2001) sees a tailored management system as being one of the fundamentals for successful implementation of the EFQM Excellence Model.

Samuelsson & Nilsson (2002) advise that, when selecting a self-assessment approach, the organisation's culture must be considered. Several respondents in Samuelsson & Nilsson's (2002) research emphasised that the implementation strategy for the EFQM Excellence Model must be developed with consideration to the company culture and Sousa-Poza et al (2001) agree that the implementation plan should be adapted to the culture.

Duke (2002) argues that, in managing universities, ignoring the rich organic underlife and the uniqueness of each member and group invites resistance whilst Michael et al (1997) warn of the problem of failing to adapt business principles correctly to an academic setting. Taylor & Hill (1992) argue that higher education bodies wishing to embrace TQM theory and practice must make an objective and critical assessment of the
prevailing culture, with a view to establishing its appropriateness. Taylor & Hill (1992) go on to discuss the question that follows from this assessment, what happens if the prevailing culture is considered inappropriate to TQM - can culture be changed? They conclude that it can be changed via changes in environmental factors, but such change will almost certainly be difficult and expensive. Sousa-Poza et al (2001) say that it is unclear whether corporate culture determines the success of the TQM implementation or if TQM modifies corporate cultures. They conclude that there is a middle ground in which an adequate corporate culture must be present to effectively implement TQM and where the implementation process can include activities, such as training, designed to modify the corporate culture.

To summarise this section on culture/context assessment, it is clear that the implementation of a TQM initiative such as the EFQM Excellence Model involves a culture change and group culture is most facilitating in this. The cultural realities of an organisation need to be understood and it is advocated that a cultural assessment should take place. Subsequently it is recommended that a contingency sensitive approach to implementation is employed in which the implementation approach is tailored appropriately for the organisation.

The literature review revealed a number of issues of culture/context that are specific to the University academic context, which are reviewed below. Collectively, these factors provide a framework against which the academic culture in an institution can be assessed.

Holmes & McElwee (1995) state that the management style in higher education is historically different and dissimilar to the style in the traditional commercial industrial sectors in which TQM has had its success. The literature in the area of management style in universities concentrates on the concepts of managerialism and collegialism. Harvey (1995, p.43) defines managerialism:
"Managerialism refers to the tendency in higher education for professional managers to play a much more significant role in decision-making in higher education. Decision-making that has a profound effect on academic processes and quality but which is based on non-academic criteria - often financial criteria or as the result of managerial theory".

Brunetto (2001) views managerialism as the adoption of private sector management tools within public sector organisations. Inglis (see Laughton 2003, p.318) observed that the teaching quality assessment exercise in UK HE was perceived by academic staff as part of a creeping and encroaching managerialism that was a constraint on academic autonomy and a contradiction to the core values of academic culture.

Harvey (1995, p.1) defines collegialism:
"Collegialism is a term meant to imply the institutionalisation of aspects of collegial practices and aspirations".

Harvey (1995) says that collegialism is characterised by three core elements:
A process of shared decision-making by a collegial group in relation to academic matters.
Mutual support in upholding the academic integrity of members of the group.
Conservation of a realm of special knowledge and practice.

Brennan & Shah (see Laughton 2003, p.317) point out that, traditionally, universities have emphasised self and collegial accountability and self-improvement and, as such, Harris (1994) is of the opinion that managers in higher education are mediators of extraneous, market-orientated values, which compete with the collegial values and loyalties intrinsic to the subject disciplinary focus of learning in universities. Davies et al (2001) argue that models of university governance based on the notion of collegiality do not sit comfortably with pressures from customers who expect a business-like response in dynamic situations. Similarly, Srikanthan (1999) highlights the balance required between the academics' need for autonomy
governed through a collegial process of wide consultation and the Universities' need for accountability which is often linked with managerial modes of operation, however Bolton (1995) argues that Higher Education Institutions discourage the active leadership and management of themselves and Pupius (1998) adds that middle managers in higher education lack the authority to change things. Raisbeck (2001) has identified outdated management structures, roles and forums as inhibitors to the implementation of the EFQM Excellence Model in Higher Education, although he does not suggest how these structures, roles and forums should be replaced. Pupius (2002) argues that a balance needs to be achieved between managerialism and collegiality in order that Higher Education Institutions can meet their obligation to be accountable to various stakeholders. Davies et al (2001) argue that it is leadership that is needed to combine the collegiality ethos of universities with the responsive, business-like approach demanded by customers rather than emphasising a managerial approach. Harvey (1999) discusses his view that accountability is easier to gain through a managerial system, however this creates problems of ownership by academics who are likely to look only to comply with management requirements rather than improve quality. Conversely, in his view, the collegiate system is better in encouraging staff ownership, but it may be more difficult to establish accountability for actions. Srikanthan & Dalrymple (2002) argue that, in order to effectively adopt TQM models in higher education, there is a need to move away from managerialism and restore collegialism as the governing principle in higher education, and this should ideally manifest itself as shared decision making, upholding of integrity and commitment to knowledge.

Clearly there is great debate about the appropriate management style necessary for the successful implementation of TQM or the EFQM Excellence Model in the UK University context. On the whole it appears that any approach perceived by academic staff to be managerial in nature is likely to be greeted with scepticism and resistance. There appears to be support for a collegial approach combined with leadership rather than a managerial approach.

The next issue is that of individualism. Rodrigues (see Chin & Pun 2002, p.275) argues that people dominated by an individualistic cultural dimension may not fit well into the group-orientation aspects of management practices. Bolton (1995) highlights that, in Higher Education Institutions, individuals' achievements are ranked above their contributions to teamwork. Taylor & Hill (see Owlia & Aspinwall 1997, p.530) offer the view that individualism is often perceived as the key to personal recognition and advancement within the higher education system. This view is supported by Roffe (1998, p.77) who argues that:

"The individual member of staff is advanced or promoted, by and large, on the basis of individual research, scholarship and writing, or teaching with relatively little emphasis on working in teams to develop organisations".

Roffe's view is supported by Pupius (1998) who highlights that the strength of academic autonomy creates tension and competition between individual and organisation and Raanan (1998, p.2) refers to this as the "Prima Ballerina Effect" in which egotistical individuals (the academic staff) won't act in any unified way. Damrosch (see Silver 2003, p.166) suggests, in today's conditions, people work more closely together in law firms, for example, or in architectural firms, than they now do in many university departments. Chadwick (1995) notes that staff in universities sometimes have difficulty in accepting the notion of interdependence and Elmuti et al (1996, p.30) cite Jauch & Orwig who argue that a TQM system, which requires a culture committed to well-defined and common goals, appears ill suited for higher education. Elmuti et al (1996, p.40) argue that:

"The traditionally autonomous role of the professor is contrary to the TQM goals of promoting teamwork and encouraging group-based problem solving".

Motwani & Kumar (1997) highlight considerable scepticism regarding the use of TQM in educational institutions and one of the reasons for this scepticism is the threat to the individual academic staff's
autonomy. Schaffer (see Owlia & Aspinwall 1997, p.531) expresses concerns that this autonomous spirit, which exists in universities, makes leadership very difficult. Stawicki (1999, p.238) refers to the "hidden rules" of organisational culture that exist within Institutes of Higher Education. Two of these relate to individualism; co-operation is not a declared goal and co-operation is not rewarded. Roffe (1998) indicates that the emphasis in higher education is on the individual and this represents a difficulty for Continuous Quality Improvement since working in teams is seen as central to the successful implementation of a quality assurance strategy. Raisbeck (2001) has observed a tendency towards individual rather than teamworking in Higher Education and argues that this is an inhibitor in the implementation of the EFQM Excellence Model. This view is supported by Bergman (see Owlia & Aspinwall 1997, p.531) who views the individualism of academic staff as a barrier to any transformation process.

Therefore the consensus is that academics have a tendency towards individualism which is reinforced by the promotion policies of universities. As TQM and other quality improvement approaches emphasise the need for teamwork then the issue of individualism is a potential barrier to the effective implementation of the EFQM Excellence Model in UK University academic units.

The critical nature of staff and academic freedom is an issue that helps to determine academic culture. Holmes & McElwee (1995) state the opinion that academics have a reputation for liberalism and non-conformism. The critical nature of academic staff is identified by Ho & Wearn (1996) as a potential barrier to TQM implementation in Higher Education Institutions as academic staff are expected to analyse, challenge, criticize and substantiate evidence. Michael et al (1997) argue that because university academics seek knowledge unendingly, they practice quality inherently and therefore it is likely that they would not see the need for the implementation of a quality model. Giertz (1999) argues that TQM's strong focus on customer satisfaction as a basis for defining quality is anathema to the concept of academic freedom. Matthews (see Owlia & Aspinwall 1997, p.531) views academic freedom as a barrier to applying TQM in higher education as the administration has relatively limited control over academic staff. An alternate view is offered by Dahlgaard & Madsen (1998) who argue that focusing on the scientific approach of TQM may be a great help when trying to implement TQM in a higher education institution. They argue that the causes of problems are regarded as hypotheses by academics, which then have to be tested through a cycle of data collection and data analysis. Giertz (1999) has observed that academics can see TQM as a threat to academic freedom and the key to overcoming this fear is to make a clear connection between what they see as their mission and continuous improvement of the organisation. Raanan (1998) argues that academics often falsely use the notion of academic freedom to prevent change to more effective and efficient ways of working.

There emerges no clear view from the literature on whether the critical nature of academic staff would be an aid or a barrier to EFQM Excellence Model implementation. The notion of academic freedom is a potential barrier to implementation.

Professionalism and the nature of professional services is the next determinant of academic culture to be explored. Cheng & Parsons (see Brunetto 2001, p.469) argue that professional employees place more importance on their professional authority than formal hierarchical authority. In the context of healthcare Downey-Harris & Harrington (2002, p.67) state that:
"Frequently in the past many professionals refused to co-operate with management in the overall managerial effectiveness of institutions and in some cases identified management as being of a lesser rank within the overall organisational setting".

It is possible that this also applies in Higher Education. Brunetto (2001, p.478) states that:
"In the case of academics, the evidence suggests that the authority associated with their professional culture remains a strong influence in mediating how policies are implemented".
Savolainen (1999) found that resistance to the implementation of continuous improvement initiatives was embedded in professional cultures. Morgan & Murgatroyd (see McAdam & Welsh 2000, p.123) consider whether the work cultures of the professionals in the public sector are inimical to TQM. They highlight working practices derived from: the multiplicity of professional specialisms; the primacy accorded the individual professional transaction; and the authority (sometimes autocracy) of seniority and status hierarchies. Silvestro (2001) maintains that the EFQM Excellence Model is particularly difficult to apply to professional services as it tends to be manufacturing oriented and there is an element of professional snobbery towards the customer and Sallis (see Owlia & Aspinwall 1997, p.530) argues that TQM's emphasis on customer satisfaction may cause some conflicts with professionals in education as they see themselves as the guardians of quality and standards. Holmes & McElwee (1995) suggest that total quality will only be brought about in UK Higher Education by recognising and interacting with the professionals. This view is supported by Brunetto's (2001) research, which argues that, in the Swedish higher education sector, the professional authority associated with professionals in organisations needs to be understood in order to implement new policies. Mintzberg has quoted Higher Education Institutions as examples of "professional bureaucracies" (see Bolton, 1995, p.13). In this type of organisation the organisation is dependent on the skill and knowledge of the professionals to achieve its outcomes. Clark (see Silver 2003, p.166) describes higher education as "clusters of professionals tending various bundles of Knowledge". This view is supported by Brennan & Shah (see Laughton 2003, p. 317) who point out that universities have relied on the professionalism of academics to ensure their quality and standing in society. Newton (see Laughton 2003, p.317) identified that academics characterised quality assurance measures as being accountability led as opposed to improvement led, and therefore alien to core values of academic culture. This raises the interesting concept that the EFQM Excellence Model, being improvement led, might gain a warmer reception from academics than the quality assurance approaches.

The issue of professionalism presents a potential barrier to the implementation of the EFQM Excellence Model in UK University academic units as the professionals might see it as a threat to their professionalism. Conversely, the EFQM Excellence Model with its emphasis on improvement might be well received by the professionals, as one of the aspects of professionalism is continual self-improvement.

Co-operation and support is a factor that impacts on the academic culture. Raisbeck (2001) identifies a culture of openness and co-operation as one of the fundamentals for the implementation of the EFQM Excellence Model. This view is supported by Moeller & Sonntag (2001) who identified a supportive organisational environment as one of the success factors in facilitating successful self-assessments in German healthcare.

Therefore it is more likely that the implementation of the EFQM Excellence Model will be successful if initiatives and projects are pursued in an environment of co-operation and support.

The reaction of staff to the Language and Terminology of the EFQM Excellence Model needs to be considered when assessing the academic culture. Helms et al (2001) found that unfamiliar jargon hindered quality efforts in higher education. Coate (see Owlia & Aspinwall 1997, p.537) identified the language of TQM as one of the barriers to TQM implementation in a case of implementation in a United States university. Similarly, Martin & Weill (1999), describing the implementation of TQM in a French university, highlighted that the university tended to reject a language which it considers as only suitable for the business world. Taylor & Hill (1991) explain that the terminology of TQM may need to be modified to make it appropriate and acceptable to the academic community, because the traditions of higher education are different from those of industrial enterprises.

Similar difficulties with the language and terminology of the EFQM Excellence Model have been identified in other parts of the public sector. Awkati (2000) describes problems of understanding with the terminology
and abstract nature of the main criteria names in using the EFQM Excellence Model in social services. Nabitz & Klazinga (1999) detail changes in terminology in the EFQM Excellence Model to suit the Dutch healthcare context whilst Stahr (2001) refers to a case of EFQM Excellence Model implementation in healthcare in which the model's language was orientated into more recognisable, healthcare friendly terminology. Train & Williams (2000) describe adaptations made to the terminology of the EFQM Excellence Model in the UK British Benefit Enquiry Line and Moeller & Sonntag (2001) identified the terminology of the EFQM Excellence Model as a barrier to implementation in German healthcare because it has its foundation in another industry. Thornett & Viggiani (1996, p.29) propose that: 
"Quality is something that is quantifiable and that the language of business and industry can be applied to schools, albeit with a refined "dialect"."

Samuelsson & Nilsson (2002, p.15) noted that some companies have adjusted words in the questions of the EFQM Excellence Model to better fit the "company language". PriceWaterhouseCoopers (2000) in their evaluation of the UK Public Sector Excellence Programme found that several organisations had adapted the terminology of the EFQM Excellence Model to better suit the culture and language of their organisation. PriceWaterhouseCoopers (2000, p.44) are of the opinion that this practice may be important in avoiding the "not invented here syndrome" that could undermine or be damaging to implementation efforts.

McAdam & Welsh (2000) found that a number of stakeholders in Northern Ireland Further Education Colleges emphasised the need to tailor the terminology of the EFQM Excellence Model so that it would be appropriate for use in the further education sector. McAdam & Welsh (2000) argue that this problem reflects general and long-standing differences over the appropriateness of business language in public sector contexts. In Higher Education Institutions, Bolton (1995, p.17) recommends using traditionally acceptable language, for example students rather than customers. Pupius (1998) argues that the culture of higher education does not react well to business language and so appropriate educational language should be developed to communicate the concepts of the EFQM Excellence Model to an educational audience. Zink & Voss (1998) propose that the wording in the EFQM Excellence Model be translated and adapted to an individual organisation's needs as the wording is partly abstract. Owlia & Aspinwall (1997) identified strong support for the notion of changing the criteria and terminology of quality models to better suit higher education. Zink & Voss (1999) argue that the terminology in the EFQM Excellence Model must be translated for each organisation and illustrated by definite examples. They have observed that this is especially helpful for higher education institutions whose staff are often not used to the business wording. Ruben et al (1999) describe a version of the Baldrige framework developed especially for use in United States higher education. The version was designed to address the needs of colleges and universities and utilises language that is familiar to the culture of such institutions. Giertz (1999) offers an interesting dichotomy of opinion on this issue. She points to one point of view, which is that the industry-based terminology of TQM sometimes offends academics and therefore avoiding this terminology will help implementation. The opposite argument is that it is important to keep the terminology since this highlights the fact that the TQM approach represents something new that requires rethinking.

Osseo-Asare Jr. & Longbottom (2002), from a case study of TQM/EFQM implementation in a UK HEI, identified that Deans, Assistant Deans, Heads of Departments, Quality Managers and other personnel involved in quality and performance improvement needed further education and training to help them understand the terminology involved.

A Higher Education version of the EFQM Excellence Model Public and Voluntary Sector version has recently been produced. This interprets the fundamental concepts of the EFQM Excellence Model for further and higher education and offers suggestions to be analysed under the nine criteria in terminology that is more suitable for the HE sector (Sheffield Hallam University, 2003).
It would appear that amending the language and terminology of the EFQM Excellence Model so that it is more suited to the HE context could be an aid in implementation.

The general academic culture of an institution can now be considered. Raanan (1999) concludes from his research that the term 'university' has become too varied to be taken as a single, almost uniform, entity and therefore there can be no single, uniform approach to implementing TQM in universities. Instead the culture and context must be taken into consideration in the implementation as discussed above. In a survey of forty two Swedish Higher Education Institutions (Giertz, 1999) it was concluded that resistance to TQM was greater in old universities than in newer institutions as they were described as having stronger academic cultures. Unfortunately Giertz does not elaborate on what is meant by a strong academic culture. Martin & Weill (1999) describe a transition in the conservatism of academic staff who were traditionally very conservative towards change. They have noted a transition to staff who are much less conservative. They use the United Kingdom as an example in which the newest universities, which have mostly developed from technological institutions (the former Polytechnics), have a very different culture from that of the classical institutions.

The notion of the general academic culture of an institution is mainly abstract save to say that it is probably made up of and determined by other issues explored in this paper, namely management style, individualism, the critical nature of academic staff, academic freedom, professionalism, co-operation and support and (particularly when implementing the EFQM Excellence Model) the reaction of staff to the language and terminology of the EFQM Excellence Model.

To summarise, the issues of culture/context that emerged from the literature which are specific to the university academic context and which could impact on effective implementation of the EFQM Excellence Model and thus its sustainable use are firstly, that it appears that any approach perceived by academic staff to be managerial in nature is likely to be greeted with scepticism and resistance. There appears to be support for a collegial approach combined with leadership rather than a managerial approach. Secondly, that the issue of individualism is a potential barrier to the effective implementation of the EFQM Excellence Model in UK university academic units. Thirdly, that there emerges no clear view on whether the critical nature of academic staff would be an aid or a barrier to EFQM Excellence Model implementation. The notion of academic freedom is a potential barrier to implementation, particularly if this is combined with a lack of co-operative working with administrative staff. Fourthly, that the issue of professionalism presents a potential barrier to the implementation of the EFQM Excellence Model in UK University academic units as the professionals might see it as a threat to their professionalism. Conversely, the EFQM Excellence Model with its emphasis on improvement might be well received by the professionals, as one of the aspects of professionalism is continual self-improvement. Fifthly, that it is more likely that the implementation of the EFQM Excellence Model will be successful if initiatives and projects are pursued in an environment of co-operation and support, and finally, that it would appear that amending the language and terminology of the EFQM Excellence Model so that it is more suited to the HE context could be an aid in implementation.

These aspects of culture were explored using structured interviews with key personnel who had been involved with the implementation of the EFQM Excellence Model in academic units (Schools, Departments or Faculties; dependant on the organisational structure and terminology in use) in four UK Universities and by the review of documents accessed in the organisations using a case study research strategy (Yin, 1994). The cases were made anonymous and labelled ‘A’, ‘B’, ‘C’ and ‘D’. It was seen earlier in this paper that implementation infers effectiveness. Therefore something that is effectively implemented is something that is in operation or use.

The authors have argued that the EFQM Excellence Model would have been effectively implemented when its use had been integrated into the regular management practices of the organisation This was based on the
definition of effectively implemented described above. For example, had ownership of the self-assessment process been demonstrated by staff in schools/departments/divisions carrying out their own self-assessments and/or were the improvement plans generated in self-assessment linked in to the organisation's strategy and/or business planning process? Fullan & Pomfret (see Vrakking 1995, p.44) describe the goal of implementation as:
"maximization of the degree in which the actual use of an innovation corresponds with its intended use".
So if an organisation was actually using the EFQM Excellence Model in the way that it intended, then it could be argued that it had been successfully implemented. The following table (table 1) compares the intended and actual uses of the EFQM Excellence Model in each case.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Intended Uses</th>
<th>Actual Uses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Not clear, possibly self-assessment framework to aid improvement.</td>
<td>One crude self-assessment. Some limited involvement in quality improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Self-assessment framework to aid improvement.</td>
<td>One outline self-assessment in the pilot school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Self-assessment framework to aid improvement.</td>
<td>One self-assessment. To provide a holistic, broader view of the business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To provide a holistic, broader view of the business.</td>
<td>Once as a Strategic Tool (informed the business plan).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A means of integrating other quality and management initiatives and tools.</td>
<td>To motivate staff to get involved in quality improvement activities (lesser intent).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To motivate staff to get involved in quality improvement activities</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(lesser intent).</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Self-assessment framework to aid improvement.</td>
<td>Three self-assessments. Twice as a Strategic Tool (informing the business plan).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strategic Tool (to inform the business plan).</td>
<td>To motivate staff to get involved in quality improvement activities (to a small extent).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To motivate staff to get involved in quality improvement activities.</td>
<td>Benchmarking (internal).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Benchmarking (lesser intent).</td>
<td>Performance Management Tool.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>To provide a holistic, broader view of the business.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A means of integrating other quality and management initiatives and tools.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Comparison of intended and actual uses of the EFQM Excellence Model

In case 'A' the intended use was not clear and the EFQM Model was barely used at all. Therefore the implementation can be described as ineffective.

In case 'B' there was a clear intention to use the EFQM Model as a self-assessment framework to aid improvement, however it was barely used at all in the 3-year period. Therefore the implementation can be described as ineffective.

In case 'C' the intended and actual uses of the EFQM Model corresponded reasonably well, however the Model was only used on one occasion and hasn't been used for over two years. Therefore the implementation can be described as having been somewhat effective, however its use has not been sustained.
In case 'D' the EFQM Model was used for all its intended uses and some extra ones. It was used on a regular basis over the 3-year period. Therefore the implementation can be described as having been effective and sustained.

In the literature review, several authors emphasised the need for an understanding of the culture of an organisation as being crucial to successfully implementing quality programmes (Chin & Pun, 2002; Buch & Rivers, 2001; Munro-Faure & Munro-Faure, 1994; Anjard, 1995; Sousa-Poza et al, 2001).

Poirier & Tokarz (1996), Vermeulen (1997), Chin & Pun (2002), Bardoel & Sohal (1999) and Wright et al (1998) discussed carrying out a cultural assessment of an organisation before implementing TQM or similar initiatives, in order to identify potential barriers to change and to help in designing the implementation programme. In cases 'A', 'B' and 'C' there was no attempt to assess the overall culture. In cases 'A' and 'B' implementation was ineffective and in case 'C' implementation was initially effective but use of the EFQM Model was not sustained. In case 'D' however, the Dean and the project manager discussed some cultural/contextual issues as part of their planning for the implementation and the implementation was effective in this case.

There was great debate in the literature about the appropriate management style necessary for the successful implementation of TQM or the EFQM Excellence Model in the UK University context. On the whole it appeared that any approach perceived by academic staff to be managerial in nature was likely to be greeted with scepticism and resistance. There appeared to be support for a collegial approach combined with leadership rather than a managerial approach (Srikanthan & Dalrymple, 2002; Davies et al, 2001). The management style was only taken into consideration in case 'D'. The perceptions of the interviewees of the management style in each of the cases were:
Case 'A', managerial, and implementation was ineffective.
Case 'B', collegial, and implementation was ineffective.
Case 'C', quite managerial, and implementation was somewhat effective.
Case 'D', a wide-range of management styles, but with a collegial approach in the Faculty Executive, and implementation was effective.

This suggests that the most appropriate management style for the implementation of the EFQM Excellence Model in UK university academic units is likely to be collegial, however the failure to effectively implement the EFQM Model in case 'A' and 'B' was more likely to be because of causes other than an inappropriate management style that were examined within the research (Davies, 2004). It is interesting that implementation was somewhat effective in case 'C' and yet this had a management style that was quite managerial.

In the literature review, individualism was seen as a potential barrier to the effective implementation of the EFQM Excellence Model in UK University academic units (Raanan, 1998; Chadwick, 1995; Motwani & Kumar, 1997; Stawicki, 1999; Roffe, 1998; Raisbeck, 2001). Apart from in case 'D', very little consideration was given to the issue of individualism. It was interesting to note, however, that there was a perception of the staff being individualistic in cases 'A' and 'B' and the implementation in both these cases was ineffective. On the other hand, in the two cases in which implementation was either effective or somewhat effective (cases 'C' and 'D'); the culture was perceived as team-centred rather than individualistic. This lends weight to the argument that individualism is a barrier to the effective implementation of the EFQM Excellence Model in UK University academic units. It is interesting to note that the two cases in which the academic staff were perceived as individualistic, were also the two cases in which the highest proportion of staff time was spent on research activities. Research is often an individual pursuit in universities.
There emerged no clear view from the literature on whether the critical nature of academic staff would be an aid or a barrier to EFQM Excellence Model implementation. The issue of academic freedom and the criticality of academic staff was only taken into consideration in case 'D'. Case 'D' also had the lowest level of perceived academic freedom and criticality exercised by staff. It was thought that the academic staff might critique the EFQM Model and the facilitators would need to be prepared for this. This actually happened during the implementation phase. An incident of this also happened in case 'B' when the Dean's advisory grouped critiqued the EFQM Model at a workshop run by the project manager. The small amount of evidence from this research therefore lends weight to the argument (Ho & Wearn, 1996) that academic staff freedom and criticality is likely to present a barrier to effective implementation of the EFQM Excellence Model.

Savolainen (1999) found that resistance to the implementation of continuous improvement initiatives was embedded in professional cultures. Apart from case 'D', almost no consideration was given to the issue of the professional nature of academic staff. In this case it was thought that staff were used to quality models within the public sector that they engaged with and therefore would be accepting of the EFQM Model. Case 'D' exhibited the most effective implementation. This supported Brunetto's (2001) research, which argued that, in the Swedish higher education sector, the professional authority associated with professionals in organisations needed to be understood in order to implement new policies. In all four cases the perception was that academic staff saw themselves as professionals to a high extent. This research therefore offered no further insight into the issue of whether the professional nature of academic staff might aid or hinder the implementation of the EFQM Excellence Model in UK university academic units.

Raisbeck (2001) identified a culture of openness and co-operation as one of the fundamentals for the implementation of the EFQM Excellence Model. This view was supported by Moeller & Sonntag (2001) who identified a supportive organisational environment as one of the success factors in facilitating successful self-assessments in German healthcare. The culture of co-operation and support was considered to some extent in all four cases. In case 'A' the culture was seen as unsupportive, apart from for mandatory initiatives, and there were some particular concerns about whether there would be support from the school's senior management team. The implementation was ineffective in this case. In case 'B' only pockets of the Faculty were seen as generally supportive of change. The implementation was also ineffective in this case. In case 'C' the culture was seen as moving towards being supportive and co-operative and the Director of the school thought that there would be an expectation from the school members of management support. The implementation was somewhat effective in this case. In case 'D' there was a strongly shared view that the culture in the Faculty was supportive and the Dean had realised that the Faculty Executive would have to be seen to be committed. In this case the implementation was effective. The trend exhibited then was one in which the effectiveness of the implementation increased along with the perceived level of the culture of support in the academic unit. This concurs with the literature. It is interesting to note that, in three of the four cases, the interviewees linked the issue of the culture of support with the issue of support from the senior management.

It appeared from the literature that amending the language and terminology of the EFQM Excellence Model so that it was more suited to the HE context could have been an aid in implementation. This issue was considered in all four cases. In cases 'A' and 'B' the project managers decided not to mention the EFQM Model and this caused some confusion. In case 'C' the decision was taken not to tailor the language and terminology in the EFQM Model and in case 'D' a decision was made to use HE examples to explain concepts. This approach was supported by Zink & Voss (1999) who argued that the EFQM Excellence Model must be illustrated by definite examples. Thus there was little evidence that tailoring the language and terminology to suit the HE context was a significant issue in aiding implementation.
In general then, the cases in which the most consideration was given to cultural/contextual issues ('C' and, particularly, 'D') in the planning element of the preparation phase exhibited the most effective implementations. This supported the literature review, in which several authors emphasised the need for an understanding of the culture of an organisation as being crucial to successfully implementing quality programmes (Chin & Pun, 2002; Buch & Rivers, 2001; Munro-Faure & Munro-Faure, 1994; Anjard, 1995; Sousa-Poza et al, 2001).

It is proposed then that the ideal mix of cultural factors to facilitate sustained use of the EFQM Excellence Model in UK university academic units includes:

A collegial management style
An emphasis on teamworking rather than individualism
A supportive environment

During the course of the research, strategies were discovered that can be used to deal with situations in which the assessed academic culture does not fit well with the use of the EFQM Model.

Attempts can be made to influence the culture so that it fits better with the use of the EFQM Model. Examples of these are:
Selecting staff to be involved whose preference it is to work in teams
Ensuring that there are tangible examples of management support and management involvement in the process
Pilot the implementation in an area which exhibits a collegial management style

In addition changes can be made to the use of the EFQM Model to provide a better fit with the academic culture. Examples of these are:
Tailor the language and terminology in the EFQM Model to suit the culture/context through the use of context specific examples. This had been suggested as an aid to implementation in the Higher Education sector in the literature (Helms et al, 2001; Martin & Weill, 1999; Taylor & Hill, 1991; McAdam & Welsh, 2000; Pupius, 1998; Zink & Voss, 1998; Owlia & Aspinwall, 1997; Zink & Voss, 1999). In addition, education had been carried out in two of the cases to help the staff understand the language and terminology used in the EFQM Excellence Model, as had been suggested by Osseo-Asare & Longbottom (2002).
Use the workshop approach to self-assessment. The benefits associated with this approach are that it; is an excellent way to familiarise management teams to understand the Model, supports team building and allows for discussion and agreement regarding the strengths and areas for improvement, which provides motivation towards improvement actions (EFQM 2003b).
Many writers warned of the potential negative effects of scoring when using self-assessment, which were the use of figures to control behaviour and the risk that scoring could divert attention away from striving for improvement (Dale et al, 1998; Dale et al, 2000; Conti, 1997; Samuelsson & Nilsson, 2002; Lewis, 1999). The reasons given in the three cases in which it was decided not to use scoring coincided with those in the literature, namely that it was better to concentrate on areas for improvement (case 'B'), scoring could be demotivating (case 'A') and concerns about scoring resembling "marking", and the competitive "league table effect" (case 'D'). Therefore it is recommended not to use scoring.

References


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