

# The Excellence Management and the Quality Culture within the Public Institutions

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**Abstract:** The predominant conception within the last few years when formulating a philosophy dealing with quality is to attain *excellence*, respectively realizing products, processes and services having superior characteristics to those offered by the competition, over-passing the standards.

The *excellence* is the attained performance at a certain moment within a competition based upon exigent and complex criteria. The path to the excellence of a public institution is based upon the principle of a permanent improvement, upon the quality cult, upon adapting to change, diversity and competition, upon the excellence management.

The *quality cult* becomes a complementary element for the economic activity; it should be transmitted to all the participants involved in economic and social processes engaged in order to obtain value. An immense role in the process of cultivating the inclination towards quality is giving to education, but also to the management.

*The quality culture starts from the managerial culture!*

The management can be changed without costs - the wrong product/non-adequate service can not be replaced! At this point, the quality strategic management can interfere.

The *quality strategic management (QSM)* represents a new culture at highest levels of the organization. In order to introduce QSM there is a need for *initiative* and *change* from the part of the senior managers and of personal implication, and of a management of excellence.

*Excellence* is permanent competition. Further more, by applying the Deming's principle, PEVA (Plan - Execute - Verify - Act), over the spiral of quality we can have an image of the path towards excellence.

*Excellence* is the record obtained in a competition at a certain moment in time (T1 time). It follows a new competition. The battle for quality continues. Anew record may be obtained (T2 time) and then another and another.

The paper aims to make a comparative analysis, an illustration of the way in which *excellence sustains the improvement of quality* or how *the permanent improvement of quality* leads to *excellence*.

The conclusion is that both models have as a base the excellence of the individual, the excellence of the team, the excellence of the management. The analysis is useful in any organization, more over, within the public institutions where the human factor is decisive.

Excellence is a permanent competition, not a destination.

Excellence is the record (sometimes the world – record) obtained in a competition at a given moment.

It would be wrong to believe that excellence is easily to be reached. Jim Collins (2006) said that “we have few things that attain excellence because we have many good things. Good is the enemy of excellent”.

The concept of excellence was fundamental by Thomas Peters after the year 1980, and his books “In search for the excellence” and “The passion for excellence” constituted an open door for this field. The author propose an assembly of basic principles in search for the excellence, suggesting, among others, an emphasis on action, the understanding of the client, the promotion of entrepreneurship spirit, the development of the basic competences, a preoccupation to survive the personnel “match” and ability.

“The term excellence may have the significance of high degree of perfection”. Excellence represents an ideal towards which the management aims and has aspects linked to competitively, price, profit, satisfying the clients’ needs, culture etc.

Kelada (1990) considers that the pure satisfaction of the client is not sufficient, the client’s expectations should be overpasses, promoting the concept “over client’s expectations”. But who can measure the client’s pleasure degree?

In all models, the used attitudes, competences and instruments in order to evaluate the quality excellence it is necessary to employ some wider definition to characterize quality” quality can not be defined as a ratio to the standards, or compared to the products existing on a certain market, but versus to what has been realized worldwide, excellence being a premise for competitively, so the essential element of the quality concept”. (Ionescu, 1997).

Thus excellence refers to the organization, to competition, quality, to the quality management system, to processes, manager, team, individual, etc. Excellence represents the essence of the managerial thinking.

Excellence do not depends upon the size of the organization. A large and successful company may not be excellent or sustainable. A small company (or middle-sized one) may be excellent and sustainable.

#### The excellence of the individual

“The teams make the organization be considered bad. The individuals make that the organization be extraordinary good”. (Harrington & Harrington, 2001)

An organization may excel only if it valorize the entire potential of each individual belonging to it, stimulating its creativity, offering to each individual reasons to be proud and making this individual to be aware of his/her own value. The Japanese qualitologue Ishikawa (1984) admitted that “the individuals are more productive and more efficient than the teams, in solving quality problems”.

The need to excel is a personal characteristic to each of us. Excellence is valid for any job. The necessity to excel, to be the best we can, is not something that can be imposed. It comes from our inner self, it is our choice.

Though, in order that each employee do his duty excellent, both Japanese people and American people consider that the organization should assure them:

- Training (for improvement and individual culture, for professionalizing , for quality improvement);
- Instruments;
- Time (in order to keep equilibrium between work, family, religion, self).

Individual excellence starts from the employment date. Most organizations have a basic staff that they try to train in order to collaborate and determine it thus to get to the excellence. Sometimes the success of these efforts is strongly influenced by factors that the organization can not control.

Collins’ statement saying that “good is the enemy of excellent” is also valid in the case of the individual, product or service.

We consider that it is wrong to introduce to the evaluation of products, services, employees or organizations the qualification “excellent” without being capable to make the distinction between good, very good and excellent. The facility with which it is frequently attributed this qualification (in fact the qualification excellent should not exist but exceptionally, excellence being as I have already said a competition, a distinction, a prize), is a sign of weaknesses or non-professionalism.

Even the series of ISO 9000:2000 standards comes to support these statements. While ISO 9001 is based upon those requirements of which the certification of QMS depends and not on performances, ISO 9004 aims the sustainable growth of the performances.

#### Collective excellence

Some authors consider that, although the excellence of the individual decides the success or the failure of the organization, it is also necessary an excellent system of team work.

The quality does not rely in achieving the standard or respecting the recommendations for the execution of product or service. The principles of the quality management lead beyond the quality of the process toward the „human spirit of quality” (Hacker, 2002).

In order to attain collective excellence the organization must assure the conditions for applying a method that we will call SITI method:

- Selection of the employees;
- Instruction of the employees;
- Time;
- Instruments.

All these mean the quality culture, excellent management, excellent managers, excellent workers, and the qualifier being granted as a result of a competition.

The success of the institution in enlarging the quality of all the activities depends upon the internal environment, upon the internal environment, upon the managers’ ability to develop human relation, to recognize and evaluate each individual characteristics and talents of the employees, giving each of them the opportunity to attain their maximal own potential, to stimulate the permanent development and training of the staff.

The requirements of the management standards belonging to the ISO 9000 series, in the respect of which there is configured in the firm a system of quality, do not contain explicitly mentions of a cultural order. Although, the implementation of a quality management system and implicitly its auditing are directly conditional of the specific of the organizational culture, of the pre-existing cultural elements at the beginning of the process, of the flexibility to integrate new values and norms specifically to quality.

Possessing inside the institution a quality system is a prove of a performance management, of a management oriented towards cultural values that consider quality a fundamental factor of progress. This supposes the existence of a true quality culture.

#### The excellence of nation

The Americans have stated repeatedly (after they have years after years ignored Deming and his contribution to the „Japanese quality miracle”), that „in order to be competitive as a nation, we must do two things: to improve quality and education”. They became aware that all the companies must have a preoccupation in this direction. And John Akers, former director at IBM has made a resembling statement: the quality dictated on the market starts with education and ends with education.

Until the educational system can be improved, two thirds of the labor force is already at work. As a result, something must be done! Some organizations (from Japan, U.S.A., China, Germany, the society from the Romanian banking system etc) have already found the solution: the training of their own employees. We have come to what it has formerly proposed by the SITI method for the collective excellence.

### The excellence management and the quality culture

The quality culture becomes a complementary element for the economic activity; it must be transmitted to all the participants of the economic processes and to the society engaged in the mechanism of obtaining value. A huge role in cultivating this attitude towards quality belongs to education, but also to the management\*.

### The quality culture starts from the managerial culture

The manager of the public institution must know how to answer the question: „Is, for sure, quality imposed from outside the organization, by the law, or by the citizen – client?“ Among the basic principles of the management one may also find the improvement of quality, or this action means exactly to decrease non – quality, a target toward „zero defaults“. Logics determine us to state that in order to apply this principle it is necessary to change management!

Starting from this point, here is the conclusion: the management can be changed without costs – the wrong product/service can not be changed! Here interferes the strategic quality management.

The strategic quality management (SQM) represents a new culture at the highest levels of the organization.

In order to introduce SQM it is necessary to exist initiative and change from the part of the superior managers and personal implication.

Any change at the managerial or technologic level, consists in reality of two changes: the proper change in itself and the social consequences determined by this change. The social consequence is the perturbation element. The problem appears from the encounter of the two cultures: that of the persons having change as a desire and that of the affected society.

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\* - the famous people worldwide studying quality have noticed and criticized the attitude of many managers regarding quality. Feigenbaum demonstrated that the lack of a link between manager and quality is the cause of a slowdown of quality programs. Juran accuses the managers that they do not take seriously the quality problem and they deal only with the management.

All these belong to the individual culture, of the organization culture as a whole. For the top management the component „organization quality culture“ should represent a constant preoccupation in its way towards excellence. Any managerial system should evaluate at certain intervals the existing culture of the organization.

The creation or/and the improvement of the quality was realized as time passed (diagram.1):

- Conformity with the standards (the guarantee);
- Efficacy (doing well);
- Efficiency (doing better);
- Excellence (doing best).

The components of the total quality system of values are based upon concepts such as: confidence, responsibility, integrity. This system of values leading to high performance and excellence includes: professionalism, implication, empowerment, self-improvement, creativity, innovation, opportunity.

These different sets of values do not exclude mutually, but they complete each – other within a labor-favorable environment, which implies, authorize and give importance to the staff.

Today the quality management represents, first of all, a managerial philosophy, a new model of organization culture, aiming to be client-oriented in all its activities and processes bringing thus long-term benefits. Following the conception of some researchers preoccupied by quality (Boeri, 2006; Hermel, 2006) one may say that total quality is the

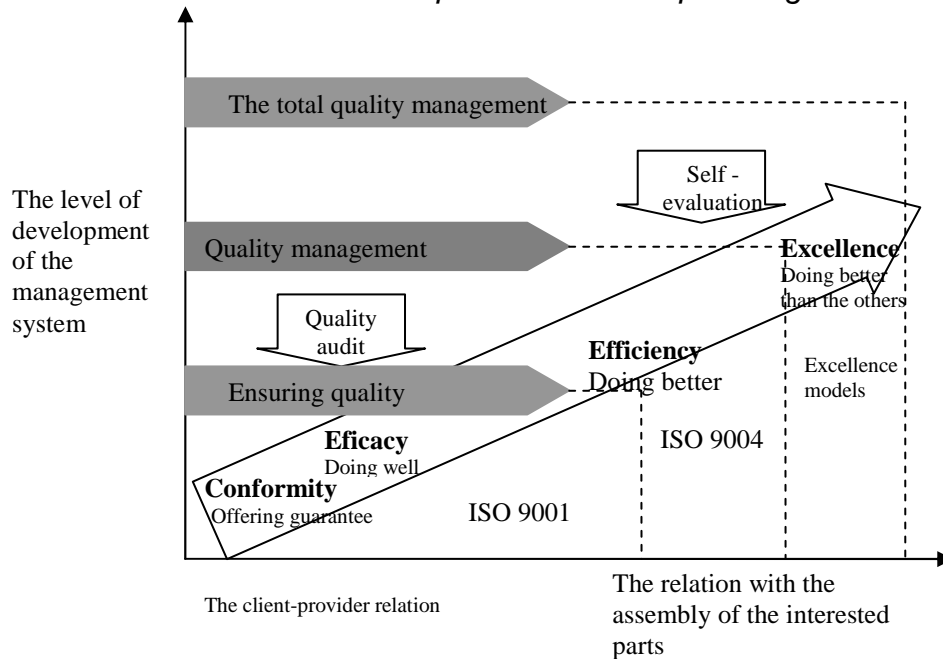
internal strategy of the organization through which methods and practices are established and all the necessary structures to travel on the path leading towards excellence.

Without doubt, when we speak about excellence we should refer to two aspects:

- The attitude towards standard quality (for example the attitude of the top management towards *standard quality*)- the *quality management*
- The attitude towards quality improvement( for example, the attitude of the managers, of the teams, of the individuals towards the *improvement of the performances*) – *excellence management*.

The German specialist Karl Wagner (2006) considers that the process-oriented quality management (PQM)\* leads to excellence. From this point of view, excellence management supposes a set of principles, among which:

- *The consecration and the direct implication of the top management*



**Diagram 1 – The way to excellence**

Adaptation after Monin(2001)

- *Giving the proper importance to the activity of planning;*
- *Using specific techniques and methods of permanent improvement;*
- *Giving the due importance to the staff's training, qualifying and motivation;*
- *Teamwork;*
- *Giving the due importance to SMC*
- *changing (improving) the culture of quality;*

What does one need in order to apply such principles in an organization?

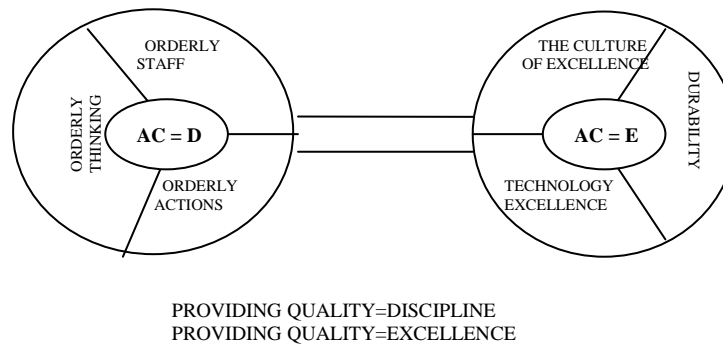
- Orderly employees (the culture of discipline eliminates the persons that do not share the organization's values and criteria)
- Orderly thinking
- Orderly actions;
- Excellent technology;
- The culture of excellence
- Durable quality.

But all these things stand at the basis of the *permanent improvement strategy*, and the permanent improvement strategy is obtained by permanent training.

Why is there need for such a strategy? The answer can be the following: *any organization faces several challenges:*

\* Prozessorientiertes Qualitätsmanagement

- Clients
- Competition
- Legislation
- Technology



*Diagram 2 –The Manager’s “Dumb Bell”*

## The Permanent Improvement Strategy

*The permanent improvement strategy means that excellence is built in time and, more important, is based on the culture of quality.*

The new types of business are based on permanent improvement, transparency and intangible resources of the companies (brand, human resources, intellectual capital, technology, customer relations and partnership, etc), the culture of quality occupying a different place from one country to another.

On the same line with the Juran Trilogy (Planning, Controlling, Improving) or Deming’s PEVA cycle, when we began talking about integrated systems it would have been a good moment to explicitly include *the culture of the organization*. The interconditionings between *culture, motivation, work and quality* are always strong and cannot be easily seen. The quality management also has its own cultural approach. The managers and researchers have lately acknowledged the increase of importance of the culture of the organization, under the influence of socialization and of the creative climate.

The organizations that want to prosper should have a continuous strategy of improvement. Accepting the reality that nothing, and most definitely not even quality management, lacks progress today, we reach the conclusion that *change* (please read improvement) is the only thing that remains constant. Change is a fundamental characteristic of time. It happens both in science and in culture, in economy and in management, in attitude or in fashion, etc.

The permanent improvement strategy (for example, the KAIZEN\* strategy) focuses on the *continuous gradual* improvement of the quality of products, services, and also of productivity and of competitiveness *with the contribution of the entire staff*.

Masaaki Imai (MI) considers that this is a type of “umbrella” characteristic to most of the Japanese concepts and techniques, partly similar to the ones suggested by Sadgrove (KS):

- Client orientation (MI, KS)

\* Kaizen – Japanese concept introduced by Masaaki Imai . it means : KAI = change and ZEN= for the better and the translation is permanent improvement ». The Japanese have a tradition in begging every year a campaign based on a programme of permanent improvement of quality. For example,NISSAN MOTORS started „ 3K 1-2-3 Campaign”, 3-K :Kangae (thinking), Kado (action) și KAIZEN, 1-2-3 =the order of these three processes=thinking, acting, improving permanently.

- CWQC (MI, the Japanese version of TQM)
- Just-in-time (MI, KS)
- Zero deficiencies (MI,KS)
- Participative management (MI,KS)
- Quality circles(MI)
- The method of the “3S”,”5S”,”6S” (MI), etc.

Here are, for example, the “6S” of the successful quality management which Maasaki Imai presented as leading to excellence:

- Excellent **S**trategy
- Excellent managing **S**tyle
- Excellent quality **S**ystem
- Excellent **S**pecialists
- Excellent **S**taff
- Excellent **S**alaries

*“The laws that function in capitalism are the ones centered on the most capable individual”* – said Joseph Juran, the father of quality.

The French management school defines the concept of *total quality* as a “energies-mobilizing policy” (Boeri, 2006). By adopting this concept, the organization equally aims at satisfying the customer, measuring performance and permanent improvement. Among the basic principles of the quality management one can find the one of *permanent improvement*, an action that firstly supposes the diminishing of non-quality, aiming at “zero deficiencies”.

The present edition of ISO 9004:2000 is drawn up as a generic document with the purpose of obtaining the progress of the quality management system towards **excellence**. This international standard focuses on realizing the improvement of the *measured* satisfaction of the clients and of the interested parts.

Continuous improvement is “an activity that is *repeated* in order to increase the ability of fulfilling the requests. The process of establishing the objectives and determining the improvement opportunities is a permanent process...” (ISO 9000:2005, paracgraph 3.2.13). The above mentioned definition reinforces the affirmation according to which excellence is a permanent competition. Actually, Juran’s well-known “*quality spiral*” suggests permanent improvement. Moreover, by applying Deming’s PEVA principle over the quality spiral, we can have a clear image of the way to excellence (Diagram 3).

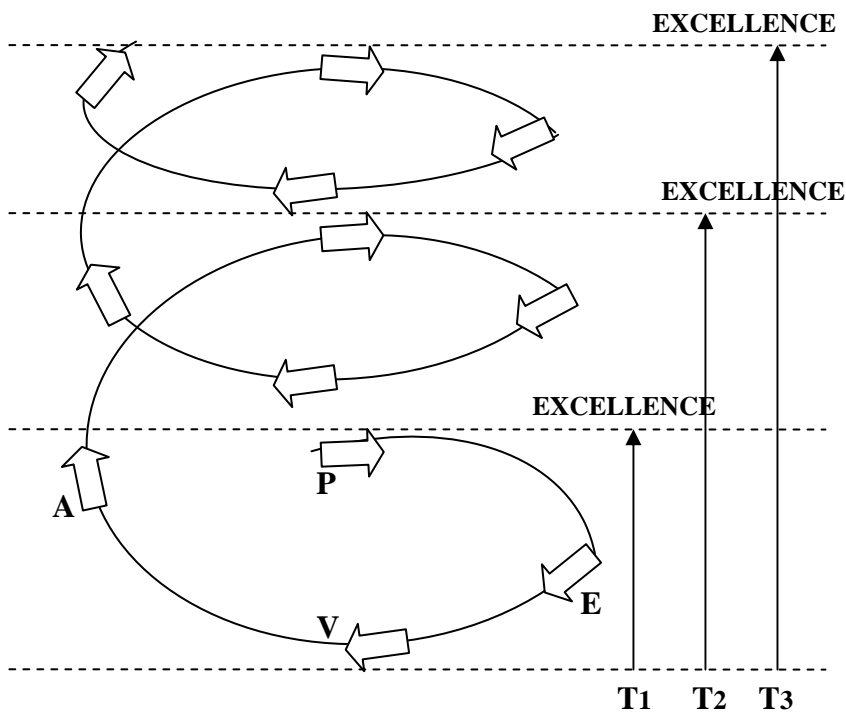
As shown in an anterior presentation, excellence is the record obtained at a given moment (time T1). A new competition follows. The fight for quality continues. A new record (time T2) can be obtained, and then a new one and so on.

According to ISO 9004:2000, there are two fundamental approaches to improve quality:

- *Through projects of radical improvement* which lead either to the revising and improving of the existing processes, either to the introducing of some new processes (usually realised with multidisciplinary teams, outside the routine operations);
- *Through activities of permanent improvement* with small steps, which take place in the existing processes.

Under these circumstances, the employees involved in the introducing of a SMC must apprehend quality as a whole which includes services, order, discipline, and very important, positive attitude towards the team and towards the client.

For all of these things, *education for quality is needed, and for education, there is a need for a national strategy and for the permanent and sustained implication of the institutions of the state and of the organizations, in order to create the strength needed for the change.*



**Diagram 3 – The quality evolution spiral**

The approaching of quality in consent with the requirements of the ISO 9000 standards and of the Excellence Models (Prizes for Quality) is based on common principles. Both approaches:

- a) allow an organization to identify its own strengths and weaknesses
- b) contains evaluating foresights according to generic models
- c) offers a basis for continuous improvement
- d) contains foresights for external acknowledgement

These approaches differ in the domains in which they are applied. *The ISO 9000 standards* offer demands for SMC and guidelines form performance improvement; the assessing of SMC determines the level of fulfillment of these demands. *The excellence models* contain criteria that allow *the comparative assessing of organizational performance* which can be applied to all the activities and the interested parts of an organization. Even hough excellence has been talked about for about 25 years now, the prizes for quality have been being given for more than 50 years. *The Prizes for Quality* are established starting from a referential with several criteria and sub criteria established according to categories of organizations, on the basis of which evaluations are done in order to establish whether the premises needed for the introducing of TQM are fulfilled and how much does the mobilization of the quality stimulating factors influence the obtaining of good results in business.

Over the past years, several studies have debated the complementarity between innovation and total quality. Nha Nguyen (2006) shows that “sustainable development of the system of quality mostly depends on *the capacity of the organization to innovate, purchase knowledge and promote a model of excellence in order to set up that culture of the quality* which would contain the assembly of quality administration techniques”. Boéri (2006) underlines three types of managerial strategies in the field of quality, two of them being applied more often:

- maintaining the improved level;
- the innovation strategy;
- the strategy of permanent improvement.

*Maintaining the level* of quality is a state of satisfaction which can endanger the competitiveness of the organization. *Innovation* is characterized by the “going up the stairs” of performance, provided that pauses are not too long. *Continuous improvement* allows the daily adapting of the needs of the organization to the needs of the clients. The quality-centered strategies from the public institutions do not always belong to the category of the competitive ones, because in this case, the main mission of the institution is the total satisfaction of the client-citizen, of the interested parts, participating in the contest for the prize for quality and not for facing competition.

An example is offered by the European Common Assessment Framework in Public Administration (CAF), inspired from the excellence model EQFM (European Foundation for Quality Management) which uses likewise a series of widely accepted criteria. In the meanwhile, CAF has known new variants, improved due to the EU Conferences for Quality in Public Administration (CCAPUE) from Copenhagen (2002), Rotterdam (2004) and Tampere (2006). The members of EU have assessed the impact of this model which represents for the public administrations:

- the opportunity to identify and promote the best techniques from different sectors of an organization and from other organizations;
- a means of mobilizing the staff and involving them in the improvement process
- the occasion to identify the different initiatives referring to quality in the daily activities.

### **Conclusions**

Therefore, excellence is the performance reached at a certain moment in a competition based on complex and exigent criteria. In the case of the public institutions, the way to excellence is based on the principle of permanent improvement, gathering practical experience, adapting to diversity and competition, to the inevitable evolutions of the economic or legal environment, to the corresponding standards from the respective domain and from similar domains, on chance, challenge and desire to progress. Actually, the reform in public administration supposes “the introducing of the values of the European administrative space: transparency, efficiency, responsibility, adaptability and predictability.” (<http://modernizare.mai.gov.ro>) hence the improvement of the culture of quality and an excellent management.

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