

INCREASING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION THROUGH IMPROVING OF UNIVERSITIES PERFORMANCE IN SLOVAKIA

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Abstract

This article deal with the problem of using CAF model – The Common Assessment Framework as an important tool of self-evaluation of quality in organization of public sector and use quality management techniques to improve organizations performance. This model is applied in condition of the Technical University in Zvolen, there are selected two valuation criteria's – employees and results bearing on employees. It is an important premise that specific categories of organizations are universities because their performance depends on educational level of their customers, especially students, who acquired his knowledge in applied business practice. CAF model allows organizations to systematically improve their performance also universities in Slovakia and thus contribute to better satisfy customer needs, business practices and society as a whole.

Key words: quality management system, model CAF, university, human resource.

Classification JEL: M 140 Corporate Culture, Social Responsibility

1. Introduction

Development of key reforms and their successful implementation requires attention not only to achieve economic results but also increasing the quality of public services for citizens, together with the reduction of costs on these services. Particular area in the public sector holds the educational services provided by school system in the Slovak Republic. Quality and level of educational services determined educational level of population and high-performance potential of society. One of the strategic objectives of improving efficiency and quality of educational process, development of excellence of Slovak universities and enhancing their international recognition is to build quality management systems and implementation of the model CAF.

2. Basic Information about CAF Model

The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is total quality management tool inspired by the Excellence Model of European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) and the model of the University of Administrative Science in Speyer. The CAF is a result of co-operation among the UE ministers responsible for Public Administration. It is jointly developed under ate aegis of the Innovative public Services Group (IPSG), a working group of national experts set up by the Directors – general in order to promote exchanges and cooperation where it concerned innovative ways of modernizing government and public service delivery in EU Member states (The Common Assessment Framework – CAF, 2006, p. 6).

The CAF is offered as an easy to use tool to assist public sector organizations across Europe to use quality management techniques to improve performance. The CAF provides a self-assessment framework that is conceptually similar to the major TQM model, EFQM in particular, but is specially conceived for public sector organizations, universities, taking into account their differences. The CAF has been designed for use in all parts of public sector, applicable to public organizations at the national, federal, regional and local level. It may also be used under a wide variety of circumstances e.g. as part of systematic programme of reform or as a basic for targeting improvement efforts in specific public service organizations.

The CAF has four main purposes:

1. To introduce public administration to the principles of TQM and progressively guide them, through the use and understanding of self-assessment, from the current „Plan – Do“ sequence of activities to a full fledged „PDCA“ cycle.
2. To facilitate the self-assessment of a public organization in order to obtain a diagnosis and improvement action.
3. To act as a bridge across the various model used in quality management.
4. To facilitate bench learning between public sector organizations (The Common Assessment Framework – CAF, 2006, p. 8).

CAF model is a self-assessment tool that consists of criteria and sub criteria towards the formulation of ideas for continuous improvement. To achieve these goals were developed following elements:

- a) 9 criteria and 28 sub criteria of CAF model;
- b) assessment panels of enablers and results;
- c) the procedure for self-assessment, design of individual areas of improvement.

The structure of the CAF model is illustrated in Figure1.

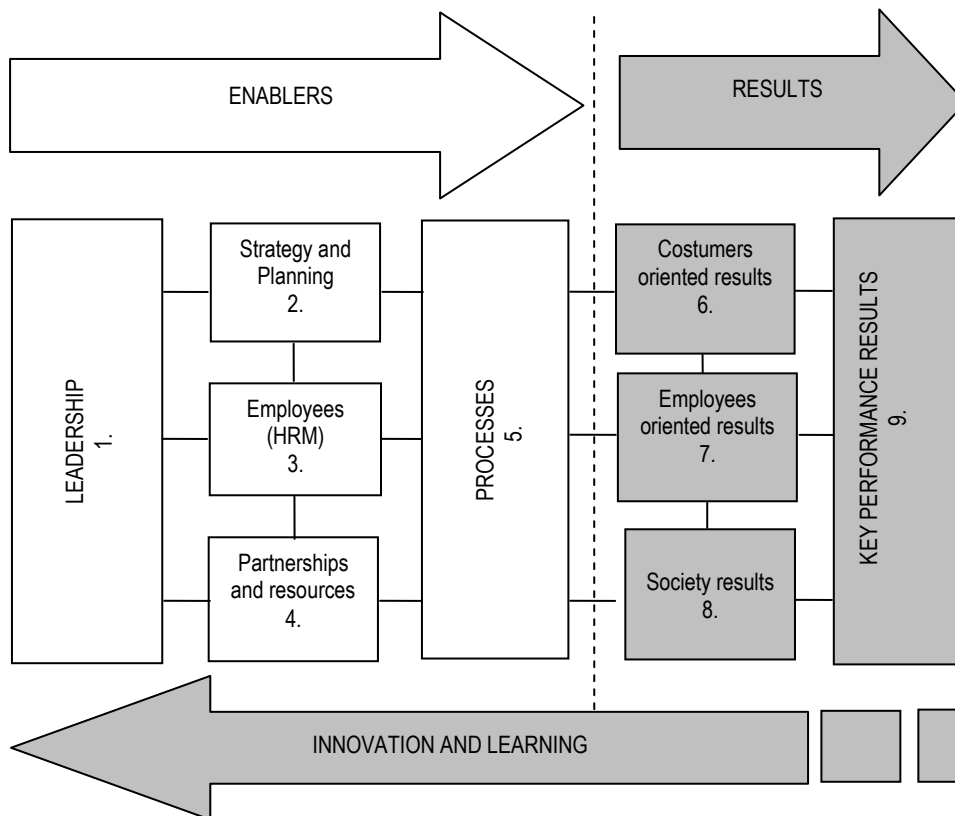


Figure 1: The structure of the CAF model

Source: The Common Assessment Framework – CAF, 2006, p. 11

The nine-box structure identifies the main aspects requiring consideration in any organization analysis. Criteria 1 – 5 deal with the Enabler features of organization. These determine what the organization does and how it approaches its tasks to achieve the desired results.

In the criteria 6 – 9, results achieved in the fields of citizens/ customers, employees, society and key performance are measured by perception measurements and internal indicators are evaluated. Each criterion is further broken down into a list of sub criteria. The 28 sub criteria identify the main issues that need to be considered when assessing an organization (Gejdoš, 2008, p. 132).

The next section will discuss about the criterion employees and criterion employees oriented results of CAF model, which significantly affect the performance of the organization because human resources management in the most fundamental sense means that the organization gets high-performance and their performance must increase. Ensuring of this goal is possible through the continual increasing in the use of all resources which organization has (Koubek, 2002, p. 17).

Criterion 3. Employees

Employees are the organization and they are the organizations most important asset. The way in which employees interact with each other and manage the available resources ultimately decides organizational success. Criterion 3 assesses whether the organization aligns its strategic objectives with human resources so that they are identified, developed, deployed and cared for to achieve optimum utilisation and success. The organization manages, develops a releases the competences and full potential of its employees at individual and organization-wide levels in order to support its strategy and planning and the effective operation of its processes.

When organizations create framework to allow employees to continually develop their own competencies, to assume greater responsibility and to take more initiative, employees contribute to the development of the workplace. This can be enabled by making sure they associate their own performance goals with the strategic objectives of the organization and also by involving them in the establishment of policies related to the recruitment, training and reward of employees. Finally, criterion 3 spotlights the ability of managers / leaders and employees to actively cooperate on developing the organization, breaking down organizations silos by creating dialogue, making room for creativity, innovation and suggestions for improving performance. This also helps to increase employee satisfaction. Taking care of employee's well-being is an important aspect of human resource management (The Common Assessment Framework – CAF, 2006, p. 38).

Criterion 7. Employees oriented results

This criterion addresses the satisfaction of all employees in the organization. Important are the results of organization achieving in relation to the competence, motivation, satisfaction and performance or its employees. It is also important for all kinds of public sector organization to directly record people results concerning the employees:

- image of the organization and its mission,
- the working environment,
- the organizations leadership and management systems,
- career development and the development of personal skills,
- the product and services the organization provides.

Organizations should have a range of internal people-related performance indicators through which they can measure the results they have achieved to targets and expectations in the area of employees overall satisfaction, their performance, the development skills, their motivation and their level of involvement in the organization (The Common Assessment Framework – CAF, 2006, p. 72).

One of the compulsory elements of the CAF model is a score. Although the most important output of self-evaluation is the strengths and areas for improvement, the results are starting points, Table 1, 2.

Scores made on the basis of PDCA cycle (Plan, Do, Check and Act):

- a) The evaluation panel assumptions more emphasis on their own course of PDCA cycle and progress is expressed as a spiral, where each turn cycle can occur at the stage of improvement: Plan, Do, Check and Act.
- b) Bench learning activities are normally taken into consideration at the highest level of all these phases.
- c) This method of scoring provides more information on those areas where improvement is needed most.
- d) Panel evaluation of the results shows that it is necessary to ensure that the earlier trend of acceleration, or to focus on achieving the objectives (Šatanová, Merková, Hanáčeková, 2009, p. 120).

Table 1: Assessment panel 1

PHASE	Scale	0 – 10	11 – 30	31 – 50	51 – 70	71 – 90	91 – 100
	Evidence	No evidence or just some ideas	Some weak evidence related to some areas	Some good evidence related to relevant areas	Strong evidence related to most areas	Very strong evidence related to all areas	Excellent evidence compared with other organization, related to all areas
PLAN	Planning is based on stakeholders needs and expectations. Planning is deployed throughout relevant parts of organization on a regular basis.						
DO	Execution is managed through defined processes and responsibilities and diffused throughout the relevant parts of the organization on a regular basis.						
CHECK	Defined processes are monitored with relevant indicators and reviewed throughout relevant parts of the organization on a regular basis.						
ACT	Corrective and improvement actions are taken following the check results throughout the relevant parts of the organization on a regular basis.						
SCORE							

Source: The Common Assessment Framework – CAF, 2006, p. 95

Table 2: Assessment panel 2

Scale	0 – 10	11 – 30	31 – 50	51 – 70	71 – 90	91 – 100
TRENDS	No measurement	Negative trend	Flat trend or modest progress	Sustained progress	Substantial progress	Positive comparison with relevant organizations for all results
TARGETS	No or anecdotal information	Results do not met targets	Few targets are met	Some relevant targets are met	Most of relevant targets are met	All the targets are met
SCORE						

Source: The Common Assessment Framework – CAF, 2006, p. 103

3. Evaluation of universities performance and quality

The concept of quality can be difficult to define but is becoming increasingly quantified and applied in the commercial world and industry. Quality is a concept that is vital to modern competitiveness whether in industry or academia. The “mark” of quality means that a product meets the standards and requirement of the customer. In education this may mean the student as a customer or for example it may relate to the requirements for publication and recognition in an academic discipline, or the fulfillment of a research contract.

Quality products should be produced, defined by quality design, conforming to set standards, satisfactory performance, lack of breakdown and ease of maintenance. These are fundamental principles that may be applied to education (Hekelová, 2007, p. 539).

Education of employees can be characterized as a continuous process in which adaptation occurs and change work behaviour, knowledge, skills and motivation of employees that they learn by using different methods (Galajdová, Blašková, Vetráková, Hitka, Kuchárová-Mačková, Potkány, Lejsková, 2007, p. 92). Thus, the aim of education is to care for, that the organization should have the quality people it needs to achieve its objectives of improving its performance and its growth area.

The university must constantly monitor and evaluate quality of provided services. The basis is the identification of performance and satisfaction. Performance is the ratio between the planning and carrying out quality. Relationship between the expected quality and perceived quality can be expressed in terms of satisfaction. Finding the current state of quality and its assessment is the basis for further improvement. Example of an evaluation system of quality universities is shown in Figure 2.

In general, therefore, we can talk about three basic approaches to quality assessment:

- a) assessing the quality of external organizations (or external quality assessment),
- b) self – evaluation by university (or internal quality assessment),
- c) combination of external and internal quality assessment.

External quality assessment, for example, accreditation (Slovak Ministry of Education Slovak Republic), various certificates according to international standards (European EN ISO 9000) or ranking and rating of universities.

Self – evaluation by university can be implemented for example using the EFQM excellence model and the CAF model (The Common Assessment Framework). Detection and evaluation of the quality of university training in science and research, or artistic activities for the university in most industrialized countries established laws governing the operation of

universities. This level of evaluation must be conducted for the whole university as well as at the level of individual faculties, and is part of the annual report on the activities of the university.

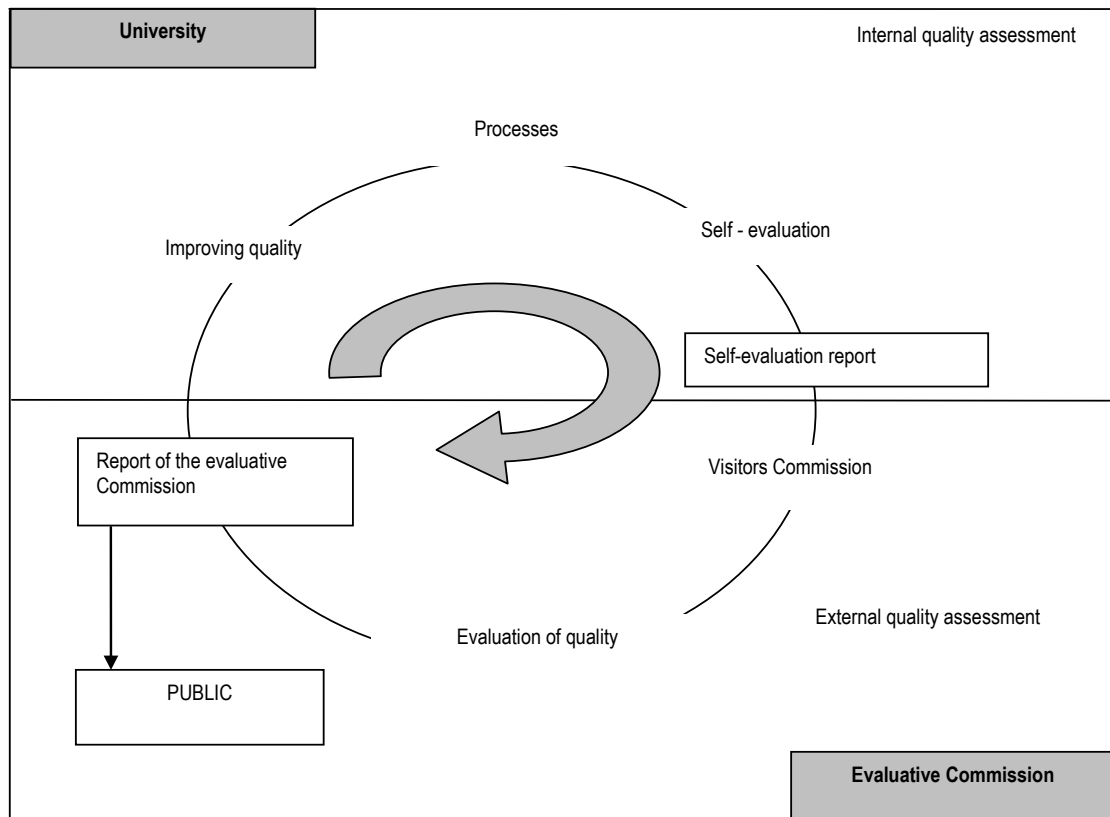


Figure 2: *Quality assurance system at the university*

Source: Šatanová, Merková, Hanáčeková, 2009, p. 118

The problem is often not the obligation to carry out the assessment, but the fact that they are not set accurate benchmarks for action by universities. Therefore, it is perceived only as a set of statistics - the number of courses and disciplines, the number of accepted students, the number of students in each class, the number of graduates, participants in scientific conferences, publications of educators, etc. (Šatanová, Merková, Hanáčeková, 2009, p. 244).

4. Performance evaluation of the Technical University in Zvolen by the selected criteria of CAF model

Implementation of the CAF model at the Technical University in Zvolen consisted of *several steps*:

1. step – the start of the CAF journey (define the scope and the approach of the self-assessment, choosing the scoring panel, define and implementation a communication plan, involving of the staff in the self-assessment).
2. step – composing the self-assessment team, choosing the chair of the team at the University, information and training of the management team, list with all relevant documents, define the stakeholders, the products and services that are delivered and the key processes.
3. step – undertaking the self-assessment – undertaking the individual and team assessment, scoring.

4. step – drawing up a report describing the results of self-assessment, internal reflection act, present the report to management of the University.
5. step – external assessment by the team of external evaluators of CAF model.

After the external assessment by the team of external evaluators of CAF model the University must continued by implementations of CAF model with *following steps*:

1. step – drafting an improvement plan, based on the accepted self-assessment report (prioritize improvement actions, realistic time scales, integrating the action plan in the normal strategic planning process.
2. step – communicating about the improvement plan (internet, web presentation), implementation the improvement plan, planning next self-assessment(realistic time scales, training the new member of team and management.

Table 3 present the final result of external assessment by the team of external evaluators of CAF model (all 9 criterions).

Table 3: Final result of external assessment by CAF model

Criteria	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Overall evaluation	31	44	34	39	31	26	28	46	39

Source: Spättná správa z externého hodnotenia podľa modelu CAF 2006, 2009, p. 5

4.1. Overall evaluation criteria 3 – Human recourses management (HRM)

As an organization manages, develops and uses knowledge and full potential of their employees on individual, team-based and full-organization levels and how these activities are planned to support its policy and strategy and effective work of their employees.

Strengths:

- a) Planning for human resources is based on Development plan of the university, planning education, training and retraining of teaching and research staff.
- b) The existence of the reconstruction of universities, which fills the role of ensuring appropriate working conditions for employees.
- c) Special conditions for employees in the resolution of wage compensation for sick leave embedded in the Collective agreement.
- d) The intention to increase the proportion of teachers with academic qualifications supported offering courses in collaboration with another university.
- e) Using methods of working groups (brainstorming) for gathering ideas and suggestions for solving current problems.
- f) Access to care for the needs of the socially disadvantaged people with disabilities through the creation of adequate conditions for their movement in the organization (wheelchair access).
- g) Extent of support from universities for external mobility of teachers.

Areas for improvement:

- a) Consider processing a separate document for the strategy and policy management of human resources.
- b) Establish and regularly use the tools of the satisfaction survey of employees to better understand the requirements of employees and to obtain feedback on the implemented measures.

- c) Implement a unified and transparent system of remuneration of staff to improve support for employees in managerial positions and their motivation in performing the tasks and objectives of the organization.
- d) Establish mechanisms for the active involvement of employees and their representatives in the formulation of plans, strategies and objectives, designing processes and in the identification and implementation of innovative activities.

4.2. Overall evaluation criteria 7 – Results in relation to employees

Results are achieved by the organization in relation to its employees.

Strengths:

- a) Openness to change, which tends to rationality and efficiency in all aspects of the university activities.
- b) Level of education ability of staff from the university, including the obligation of teaching staff to attend educational minimum.
- c) The existence of non-cash compensation of employees (rehabilitation stays, etc.).

Areas for improvement:

- a) Consider the establishment, respectively review of indicators relating to the relationship with employees and employee performance.
- b) Assess the appropriateness of implementing all the staff satisfaction survey using the questionnaire (in line with the model in the CAF), the regular statistical evaluation.
- c) Consider how to compare the results achieved in relation to employees across the faculties – internal benchmarking.
- d) Implement a system to evaluate the effectiveness of educational activities for the staff and the efficiency of resources for education.
- e) Implement a unified and transparent system of remuneration of staff to improve support for employees and their motivation in the tasks of achieving the objectives of the organization and active involvement in the innovation organization.
- f) Through staff satisfaction survey to identify the degree of their satisfaction with the culture of the organization with access to social issues if their method of improvement.
- g) Establish a regular assessment of the suitability of the indicators used for the performance of employees.

5. Conclusion

The human factor in any organization is an essential element for achieving high performance. Effective human resource management in the field of corporate training should take care to ensure that the knowledge and skills of employees in organizations not only accumulated but that is mainly used in the rational interest of achieving the objectives (Galajdová, 2004, p. 9). Without adequate health and welfare of its staff organization can not achieve excellent performance. Specific categories of organizations are universities because their performance depends on educational level of their customers, especially students, who acquired his knowledge in applied business practice.

Using the CAF provides an organization with a powerful framework to initiate a process of continuous improvement. The CAF provides:

- an assessment of University based on criteria which has become widely accepted across the public sector in Europe,
- opportunities to identify progress and outstanding levels of achievement,
- definition the steps on what needs to be done to improve an organization (University),

- a link between the different results of organization and supportive practices or enablers,
- to create enthusiasm among employees of the University by involving them in the improvement process,
- to integrate various quality initiatives into business operations of the University,
- measuring progress over time through periodic self-assessment of the University.

CAF model allows organizations to systematically improve their performance also universities in Slovakia and thus contribute to better satisfy customer needs, business practices and society as a whole.

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