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THE QUEST FOR QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN ALBANIAN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION – THE CASE OF CAF METHOD AT TIPA

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Abstract

National public administrations nowadays have to adapt to the social changes around the world. One of the main objectives of EU Lisbon Strategy is to develop and improve operations focusing on citizens needs. Instead of a unique standard, CoE recommends for public organizations a set of quality tools designed for self-estimation, such as Common Assessment Framework (CAF). In the context of European integration of Albanian public institutions, the first attempt to use CAF was employed in the case of Training Institute of Public Administration, starting from 2008. TIPA joined thus the community of around 800 CAF users across Europe. The paper describes and discusses the activities undertaken during the initial phase (Institutional Building Capacity and HRM), as well as analyses the output and possible sustainability of the initiative.

Key words: public administration, quality management, CAF

1. Introduction

Social changes are taking place rapidly in the today world and public administrations have no choice, but to properly adapt to them (Pollit, 2004). Lisbon Strategy in UE put already a milestone in the direction of service delivery improvement toward citizens, through client-driven operations and implementation of quality management methods. There are not still unique standards in this field, but European Council recommends for public organizations a set of quality tools designed for self-estimation, such as Common Assessment Framework (CAF). In the context of European integration process, the first attempt to use

CAF in Albanian public institutions was employed in the case of Training Institute of Public Administration, starting from 2008. TIPA joined thus the community of around 800 CAF users across Europe (StaesdheThijs 2005).

CAF is a tool to assist public sector organisations across Europe in using quality management techniques to improve performance. It provides a simple, easy-to-use framework, suitable for self-assessments of public sector organisations. CAF model provides:

An assessment based on evidence;

Means to achieve consistency of direction and consensus on what needs to be done to improve an organization's performance;

An assessment against a set of criteria, which has become widely accepted across Europe as well as other countries;

Means of measuring progress over time through periodic CAF- based self-assessment;

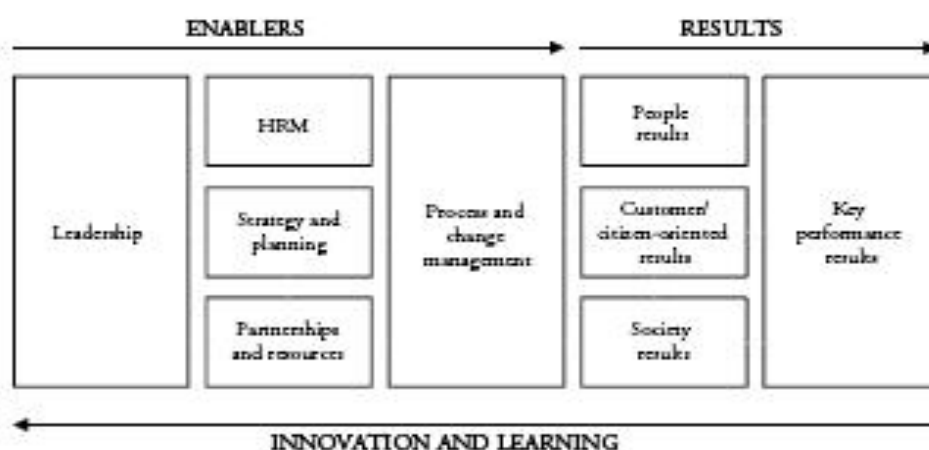
Means to focus improvement activity where it is most needed;

Means to create commitment among employees by involving them in the improvement process;

Opportunities to identify progress and outstanding levels of achievement;

Means to integrate various quality initiatives into normal business operations.

To summarize, self-assessment towards CAF model offers organizations an opportunity to learn about themselves. Compared to a fully developed Total Quality Management model, CAF is a 'light' model especially equipped for getting an initial impression of the organization's performance. It is assumed that any organisation that intends to go further will select one of the more detailed models (such as the Speyer or EFQM models). CAF has the advantage of being compatible with these models and may therefore be the first step in quality management.



The CAF uses a set of nine criteria, which allow analysing and evaluating all the different activities and results of the organization. The Five Enablers criteria deal with what the organisation does in order to achieve good results. They cover the organisation's leadership, its policy and strategy and how it manages human resources, its external partnerships and internal resources as well as its working processes and processes for organisational change and learning:

Leadership: how leaders and managers develop and facilitate the achievement of the mission and vision of a public sector organisation; develop values required for long-term success and implement these via appropriate actions and behaviours; and are personally involved in ensuring that the organisation's management system is developed and implemented.

Strategy and planning: how the organization implements its mission and vision via a clear stakeholder-focused strategy, supported by relevant policies, plans, objectives, targets and processes.

Human Resource Management (HRM): how the organisation manages, develops and releases the knowledge and full potential of its people at individual, team-based and organisation wide levels; and plans these activities in order to support its policy and strategy and the effective operation of its people.

Partnerships and resources: how the organisation plans and manages its partnerships and internal resources in order to support its policy and strategy and the effective operation of its processes.

Processes and change management: how the organisation manages, improves and develops its processes in order to innovate and support its policy and strategy and fully satisfy and generate increasing value for its customers and other stakeholders.

The Four Results criteria concern the results your organisation actually achieves with regard to customers/citizens, the people of the organisation, society at large and your key business or activities. The CAF looks for results in 4 perspectives as following:

People results: The results the organisation is achieving in relation to the satisfaction of its people.

Customer citizen-oriented results: what results the organisation is achieving in relation to the satisfaction of its internal and external customers.

Society results: What the organisation is achieving in satisfying the needs and the expectations of the local, national and international community at large (as appropriate). This includes the perception of the organisation's approach to quality of life, the environment and the preservation of global resources, and the organisations own internal measures of

effectiveness. It will include its relations with authorities and bodies, which affect and regulate its business.

Key performance results: what the organisation is achieving in relation to its mandate and specified objectives and in satisfying the needs and expectations of everyone with a financial interest or other stake in the organisation.

These nine criteria are each sub-divided into a number of sub-criteria that build substance around the meaning of the criteria. The sub-criteria identify the main issues that need to be considered when assessing an organisation. Using the CAF provides an organisation with a powerful framework to initiate a process of continuous improvement.

The CAF provides means of measuring progress over time through periodic self-assessment and a link between goals and supportive strategies and processes. It allows focusing improvement activity where it is most needed.

The CAF is now used in the public sector in several EU Member States and Candidate Countries, in particular at the local level and in a variety of government agencies. Responses have shown that the CAF has been found to be a suitable tool for starting on the "journey to continuous improvement".

2.Summary of the results of the analysis of current procedures in TIPA

a) Strengths of training needs assessment:

A significant work has been done regarding the civil servants training needs assessment in TIPA. A comprehensive Training Needs Assessment Manual has been developed⁵, recommendations regarding the amendments to the Civil Service Law drafted, and some training in the client organizations carried out. The most important strength is that TIPA has recognized and started to play more active role in the training needs identification process

b) Improvements with regard to training needs assessment:

Main Problem: the new TNA system is designed but not implemented yet. TIPA needs:

to intensively support the process of implementation of Training Needs Assessment Manual and setting up new TNA system in the client organisations.

to strengthen and systematize the cooperation with client organizations (line ministries, state agencies and local self-governments) with the aim to establish a regular cooperation mechanism and identify training needs through that cooperation.

⁵ Developed by the project "Encouraging the Reform of the Albanian Civil Service" (European Union CARDS 2003 programme)

to strengthen the capacities of the HR departments in the field of training and professional development.

-to use other training needs assessment approaches in addition to the TNA manual (until the TNA manual is being implemented).

c) Strengths of training organisation and delivery:

TIPA has adopted and uses a complex set of procedures for training organization and delivery composing of 38 methodological steps. In addition TIPA has also other procedures and standard forms that regulate the management of training courses and the related roles of people involved, resource used etc.

Thus, after training needs assessment, TIPA prepares a training action plan for 6 months, which is helpful for TIPA's operation. In addition TIPA prepares specific ToR to each type of Training course, selects the trainers, and monitors their performance. Training managers of TIPA have sufficiently clear tasks and operational procedures.

TIPA's staff is also aware of some necessary improvements to be undertaken in certain segments of procedures and methodologies for training organization and delivery. Several workshops were organized for such a purpose.

d) Improvements with regard to training organisation and delivery:

Quality and process of preparation of ToR for training. ToR seems not to be considered as a key instrument defining the most important aspects of the coming training events.

Trainers are usually identified independently of ToR which focuses mostly on a general profile of the training and much less on the profile and quality of trainers. Importance of ToR is especially related to new training courses.

Selection of trainers suffers due to weak competition and efforts to explore alternative sources for trainers are limited. Sometimes the trainers are exclusively selected amongst the employees of trainees' organization (i.e. training on fiscal policies or procedures).

Interaction between the trainer and training manager is relatively good but improvements can be adopted here to ensure that the trainer is preparing and going to deliver the expected quality of training.

Training materials are limited to only two types i) a narrative material ii) a PowerPoint presentation. The trainers do not use other types of training materials yet (i.e. games, etc.) and in several cases the training materials provide low added value. Payment constraints are an impeding factor in enriching the training materials.

TIPA's marketing efforts before the training amongst the potential participants are too little. Contacts are mostly limited to the chief of HRM department of beneficiary. A more intensive

contact with participants in advance of the training course by the training manager and trainer would have a double positive impact i) promote the participation ii) help the trainer to know the profile and specific training needs of the participants in advance of training.

e) Evaluation of the training results:

The Institute regularly evaluates all training courses through asking participants to complete the feedback questionnaires after the end of the training course. This evaluation provides the Institute with information about the participants' direct reaction to the training (Did the participants like the course and what did they like? Was the course content realistic? Were the training methods suitable and the trainers effective? Was the training environment adequate? etc.)

Main Problem: "reaction" evaluation does not offer enough information in order to fully evaluate the training outcomes. TIPA needs to further develop the training evaluation procedures and when it comes to more important training programs (or training courses covering a critical mass of participants from one particular organization or administrative domain), to perform also evaluation of learning and evaluation of the training impact on trainees performance⁶.

3. Enablers versus results

The overall scoring for Enablers of 66 shows that overall the performance of such criteria is at mid level, or using CAF terminology, TIPA's Enablers PLAN, DO and CHECK. Regarding the scoring for results criteria (54), the outcome of the exercise shows that TIPA is having a slight improvement trend and is achieving a good part of established targets. This self-evaluation of TIPA's staff converges with the project experts' independent evaluation. The difference between scoring of enablers and results is partly objective (due to the fact that inputs are objectively not transformed 100% in results) but also it demonstrates the typical problem of organizations, especially public organizations, that are more inclined on inputs and less on results.

The highest scoring was provided to "Strategy and Planning" with 72; "Processes" with 69, "partnership & resources" with 68 and "leadership" with 65 points out of 100. The enabler criteria "people" with 57 seems showing relatively more problems compared to the others and may be considered with higher relevance by TIPA. As a matter of fact, TIPA has developed its three annual strategies, and is planning its activities on training every year

⁶ A simplified and shorter version of the Donald Kirkpatrick's four levels model for measuring the effectiveness of training programs (suggesting four levels for evaluation: I – Reaction, II – Learning, III – Behaviour, and IV - Results and impact)

based on an advanced methodology of training Needs Assessment. TIPA also has a rich set of procedures and methodologies related to management of resources (finance, information, materials) and have a leadership that motivates and supports the staff and is able to manage the Institute and its relations with the stakeholders and outside factors.

It is also interesting to analyse the sub-criteria that show in which sub-aspects TIPA performs relatively well and in which not that well. For example, in case of criteria “people”, while seems that there is a sound promotion of internal dialogue much more need to be done in relation to human resource management. In overall, TIPA has still much to do to improve the performance of its enablers that would also increase the overall scoring of self-evaluation. Some improvements are under control of TIPA itself. On the other hand, as explained in other parts of this report, some key factors are not under the control of TIPA and if not modified accordingly, will hinder the progress of TIPA. The self-evaluation based on CAF methodology has shown a “surprising result” – a high scoring regarding criteria of “people results” with 70 points out of 100 vs. 24 points regarding “society results” while the “customer results” are in the middle with 55 points.

4. Conclutions

As a matter of fact (observed also by the project team), the staff of TIPA is motivated and enjoys their work (with the exception of physical working conditions which are really bad). Working for TIPA gives to them a lot of satisfaction. Regarding direct clients, the civil servants, according to evaluation forms that TIPA collects regularly after each training course, the level of satisfaction of trainees seems positive and improving. At the same time, the self-assessment results stress clearly the importance to improve significantly the evaluation procedures and the need to implement the system for the evaluation of impact of TIPA’s training provision. On the other hand, TIPA’s image and reputation (general public, media, and even public organizations) needs to be improved through better promotion of its services among the stakeholders.

The results of the CAF indicate clearly to the areas where TIPA has to dedicate much more attention to. TIPA needs to improve its HRM practices, address the customers’ needs better, improve the training evaluation mechanisms as well as improve its public imago, which in return would provide TIPA with benefits, such as stronger government support, higher attractiveness for civil servants and other potential clients.

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