

THE CAF AS AN INSTRUMENT THAT SUPPORTS THE KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

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Abstract: *The CAF Model is a common European quality framework that can be used across the public sector as a tool for organisational self - assessment. Many organisations that are thinking of implementing the quality management system ask why to use the CAF Model. CAF is an excellent starting point for an organisation in its way to quality. Being a self-assessment tool it also has the advantage of involving the employees of an organisation and asks them to openly express their own views. The CAF Model supports very strongly organizational learning and it is proven that it helps individual employees in an organisation but also CAF improvement teams to share valuable organizational insights, to discover overlaps in organisational processes and thus reduce redundant work, to set new systems for retaining intellectual capital as employees turnover in an organization, and to adapt to changing environments.*

Keywords: CAF, Common Assessment Framework , self – assessment, quality, knowledge management

1. INTRODUCTION

The CAF provides a self-assessment framework that is conceptually similar to the major Total Quality Management (TQM) models, but has been specially conceived for public sector organisations. It aims to be a catalyst for a full improvement process within the organisation. As a Total Quality Management tool, CAF subscribes to the fundamental principles of excellence: [1]

- Results orientation
- Citizen / Customer focus
- Leadership and constancy of purpose
- Management of processes and facts
- Involvement of people
- Continuous improvement and innovation
- Mutually beneficial partnerships
- Corporate social responsibility.

Knowledge management issues are strongly presented in all principles. Due to the effective implementation it is necessary to start with a change of thinking, approach to processes, ability raise and competencies of all stakeholders, mainly employees. This approach leads an organisation towards knowledge raise and thereby towards knowledge management.

Management by processes and facts. This principle guides the organisation from the perspective that a desired result is achieved more efficiently when related resources and activities are managed as a process and effective decisions are based on the analysis of data and information.

Continuous learning, innovation and improvement. Excellence is challenging the status quo and effecting

change by continuous learning to create innovation and improvement opportunities. Therefore continuous improvement should be a permanent objective of the organisation.

Many organisations that are certified according to the ISO 9000 standard raise the same question. It is possible to use the CAF for self-assessment also in this context. CAF is a quick and relatively easy-to-use tool which can be used alone or in conjunction with other quality management tools as a "health check" or as a means of identifying areas for improvement on all aspects of the functioning of an organisation. CAF is the bracket around all other quality management tools in use. CAF asks if your organisation runs process management, ISO, agreement on objectives, etc. So for an organisation that is ISO 9000 certified, the implementation of the CAF Model could broaden the view on the organisation. Many organisations have implemented the CAF Model in order to identify possible partners for benchmarking / bench learning projects.

2. THE CAF AS AN INSTRUMENT THAT SUPPORTS THE KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Knowledge management efforts usually focus on organizational objectives such as improved performance, innovation, the sharing of lessons learned, integration and continuous improvement of the organization.

The organizations need proficient, interested and contended employees for successful performance. It is important to understand wider contexts and to see the

importance of own work person satisfaction. The employees have to be well informed about the organization performance as well as about the long-term organizational goals.

On the other hand, employees should understand the aim of its organization, its role and their interest in its progress. Therefore it is important to inform employees at all levels of organizational hierarchy about management vision, strategy and goals of the organization, as well as process of achieving these goals. Gained information and employees' knowledge are reflected back to their loyalty, trust in the leadership of the organization and willingness to achieve high performance in their organization. [4]

Trust to the company management creates a good opportunity to employees' motivation, their stronger cleave to the employer and active participation at the processes of change. Company has different options for this in the area of internal communication, which can assume an intermediary role between management and employees.

The environment where employees are actively involved in meeting the objectives and developments in the organization and quality management system which fully works is created by senior management by leadership and management activities.

We can say that company culture influences the run of the organization through the employees. The managers in each level of hierarchy and their knowledge, behaviour and approach play the important role. [3]

The CAF Model supports very strongly organizational learning and it is proven that it helps individual employees in an organisation but also CAF improvement teams to share valuable organizational insights, to discover overlaps in organisational processes and thus reduce redundant work, to set new systems for retaining intellectual capital as employees turnover in an organization, and to adapt to changing environments.

Corporate culture as a set of values, attitudes, thinking patterns, and ideas is expressed and is observed in the behaviour of employees. If the management tries to influence and shape the behaviour of employees to desired direction, it is important to deal with the corporate culture.

If the company wants to reach and retains qualified employees, whose are loyal and engaged, managers would to apply concept of company culture:

- Mediation of information
- Life long education
- Improvement movement
- Respect employees
- Compensation system
- Parity
- Treating with minorities (religion, origin...)
- Culture development
- Reasons to be proud on organisation
- Company events

Scale of this principles is only informative and don't involved all cultural aspects, which are related to the company management.

The CAF creates a new culture of learning, sharing and open dialogue in an organization when implementing according to the main CAF principles. It plans, supports, promotes, monitors a culture of innovation and improvement through the whole model and all its criteria from criterion 1 to criterion 9.

As a concrete example in the criterion 4 Partnerships and resources and directly in the sub criterion 4.4 Manage information and knowledge the model focuses on the knowledge management: [1]

- how an organisation develops systems for managing, storing and assessing information and knowledge in the organisation in accordance with strategic and operational objectives,
- how it ensures that externally available relevant information is gained, processed and used effectively,
- if it constantly monitors the organisation's information and knowledge, ensuring its relevance, correctness, reliability and security. Also aligning it with strategic planning and the current and future needs of stakeholders,
- if it develops internal channels to cascade information throughout the organisation to ensure that all employees have access to the information and knowledge relevant to their tasks and objectives,
- if it ensures access and exchange of relevant information with all stakeholders and presenting information and data in a user-friendly way,
- if it ensures, that key information and knowledge of employees is retained within the organisation in the event of their leaving the organisation.

In the criterion 4.5 Manage Technology the model considers evidence on what the organisation is doing: [1]

- to implement an integrated policy of technology management in accordance with the strategic and operational objectives,
- to efficiently apply appropriate technology to:
 - manage tasks
 - manage knowledge
 - support learning and improvement activities
 - support the interaction with stakeholders and partners
 - support the development and maintenance of internal and external networks

On the result side of the model it also asks if an organisation measures results and monitors outputs and what results an organisation achieves.

The CAF supports a process of learning - and the focus is indeed on sharing experiences and on learning. Organisations have the opportunity to find partners that they would like to share experiences with in order to mutually improve their operations and results.

3. BASIS OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN TEN STEPS OF IMPROVEMENT WITH THE CAF MODEL

The CAF certainly is a strong instrument that supports the knowledge management in different steps.

The process of applying the CAF can be described in 10 general steps. These 10 steps are divided over three major phases: Phase 1 is the start and the launch of the CAF journey; Phase 2 is the self-assessment process; and Phase 3 is the use of the self-assessment results to create an action plan and launch the improvement actions in the organisation.[1] These 10 steps can be seen as the driving guidelines of a good CAF application. These steps therefore constitute a strong base for detailed guidelines of the knowledge management for a public administration organisation. (Figure 1).

4. CONCLUSION

CAF correspondents and CAF Resource Centre in EIPA in Maastricht bring a new product of the CAF Model that supports CAF users in their journey towards quality.

It is the CAF External Feedback Procedure. The CAF External Feedback Procedure provides external feedback on the assessment that, has taken place with CAF. It is a procedure available to CAF users only. Its purpose is to verify and comment on, through external appreciation, the quality and effectiveness of implementing the CAF model. [2]

The significant moment happened in 2003. Slovak central governmental bodies as one of a few European countries have been obliged to implement the CAF Model in their organisations till 2008 (The resolution of the Slovak Government n. 900 on September 24, 2003 imposes ministers and chairmen of central administration bodies to implement the Common Assessment Framework in the public administration).

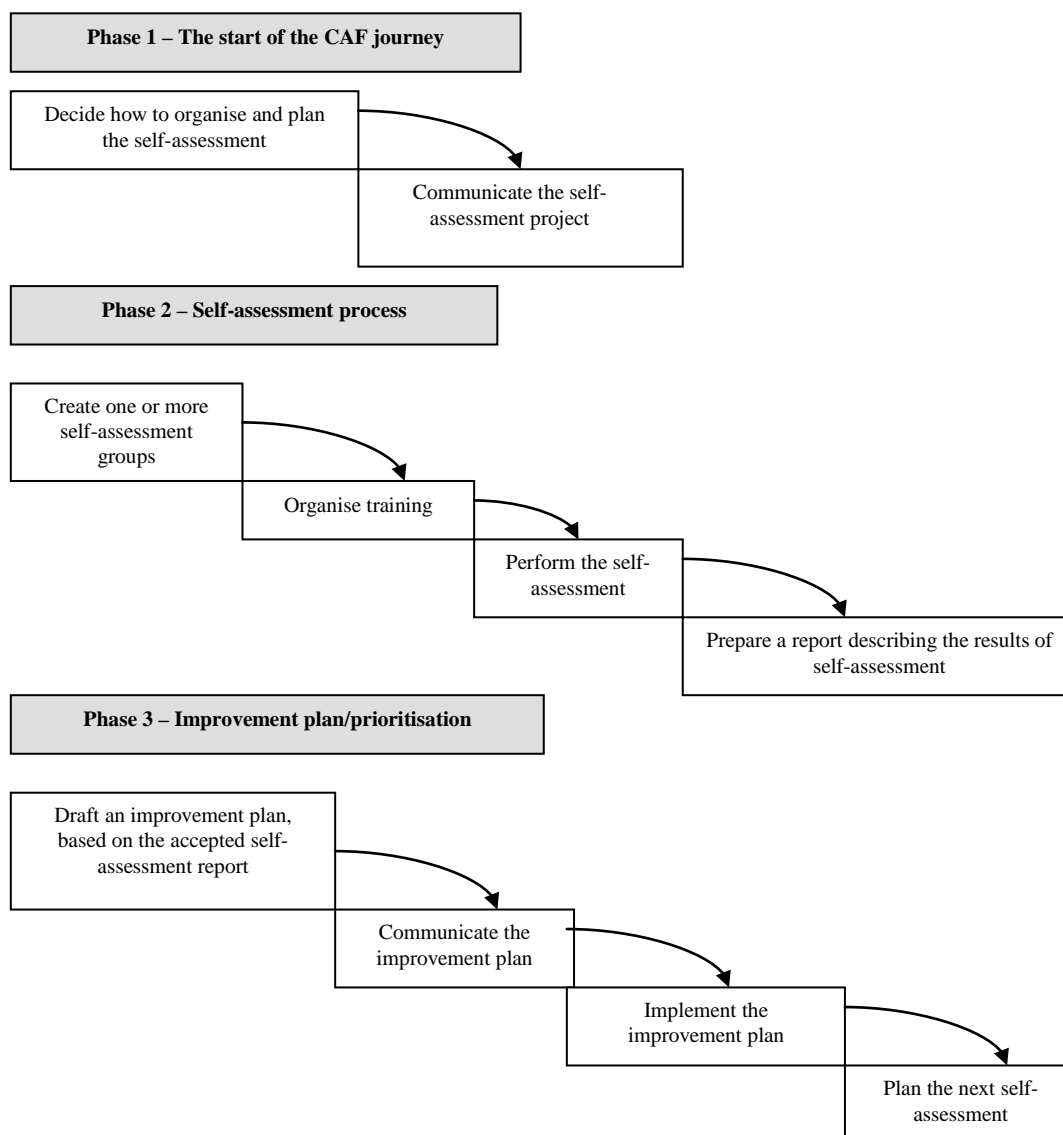


Figure 1 The process of applying the CAF

The Slovak Office of Standards, Metrology and Testing (SOSMT) is the coordinator of the state quality policy in the Slovak Republic. The main strategic quality policy document is the National Quality Programme of the Slovak Republic for years of 2009 – 2012 with specific objectives and activities.

SOSMT was managing the project Implementation of the CAF Model into public administration since 2003 - 2008. At the same time SOSMT implemented the CAF Model in the own organisation in order to improve own internal functioning.

During its existence the CAF model has found its place between the many existing quality management tools. The CAF Model has become a great success all over Europe. Over the past 10 years, nearly 2000 public sector organisations all over Europe have used the model and the number of CAF Users is still growing.

CAF is a joint project for management and staff and very often CAF is the first occasion in which management and staffs meet to discuss the state of affairs of the organisation and the options for the future in order to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

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