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An exploration of the organisational excellence architecture required to support an award-winning business excellence journey

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, especially to my loving mother. She passed away last year, but her prayers continued to give me strength throughout this PhD journey.

Abstract

The Business Excellence (BE) approach and its underlying philosophy are now established means of enhancing organisations' performance. BE is institutionalised through BE models to achieve excellence in strategies; business practices; and, stakeholder-related performance results. In turn, these activities contribute to the organisation becoming best in their respective market. While numerous studies have examined different aspects of BE, there remains a lack of research on the actual BE implementation required to guide researchers, consultants and practitioners. The absence of a unified framework has led to inconsistent practices across organisations, of which some has resulted in results less than expected. To bridge this gap, this research introduces the novel concept of Organisational Excellence Architecture (OEA). OEA refers to the formal support structure, resources, processes and assessment tools used to assist the implementation of BE within an organisation. This research explores the OEA supporting award-winning BE maturity.

A sequential mixed methods approach was adopted that resulted in participation from 50 organisations across 17 countries. Contributions were acquired by way of an online survey, followed by optional structured interviews to identify BE their implementation approaches and best practices. The empirical data guided the iterative development of the OEA model established from the literature and the subsequent refinement of the final OEA model. This model is supported with an OEA design toolkit. The toolkit includes OEA design tool guidelines; an OEA design assessment tool; best practices examples; and, four research articles.

This study makes a contribution to the BE literature, providing detailed, updated research on BE implementation approaches and best practices. It offers practical insights for BE practitioners and organisations, enhancing the understanding of effective BE implementation strategies. Future research is now invited to validate and refine the OEA model and the OEA design toolkit to improve their applicability and effectiveness across diverse organisational contexts.

Acknowledgment

I thank God for blessing me beyond my expectations.

My PhD journey was different in many ways. I joined a PhD Programme from a corporate background. The practitioner's experience gave me a valuable perspective and enabled me to view organisational performance issues through a practical lens. However, transitioning into the academic domain presented its own set of challenges. Fortunately, I was blessed with a strong support system that helped me navigate this exciting but unfamiliar journey. This PhD study would not have been possible without the help of all the people I thank below.

I am deeply thankful to my supervisory team for their constant guidance and support throughout my PhD journey. Each of my supervisors contributed uniquely to my development and success. Firstly, I am grateful to Dr Robin Mann for introducing me to the fascinating world of Business Excellence and for his insightful mentorship throughout my research journey. His help extended beyond my academic endeavours; he was extremely supportive in managing the personal challenges I encountered during the last four years. Thank you, Robin, for everything and, for the opportunity to work closely with you and for sharing your invaluable expertise. Your guidance has profoundly shaped my personal and professional direction.

During the final stages of my research, there was an unexpected change in my supervisory panel when Dr Robin Mann moved from Massey University. From my Chief Supervisor, he became my secondary supervisor, but thankfully, he still stayed on the team and continued in his subject expert role. Fortunately, Dr. James Lockhart agreed to become my new Chief Supervisor, and the transition of 'change of supervision' went smoothly for me. Thank you, James, for taking on this role and being helpful throughout my research journey. Your guidance has been instrumental in enhancing my research skills. Thank you for those countless coffee meetings, which provided invaluable guidance. Without your support, this thesis's timely submission would have been impossible. Thank you, James!

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Overview

In today's competitive and dynamic business landscape, organisations can deploy Business Excellence (BE) practices to improve and sustain their performance. At its core, BE involves a commitment to continuous improvement and excellence across all aspects of an organisation's operations. BE practices have produced numerous benefits, including greater competitiveness, improved efficiency, and increased stakeholder value (Zapletalová, 2023). BE practices are structured around BE Models (BEMs), such as, the Baldrige Excellence Framework (administered by the National Institute of Science and Technology, United States) (NIST, 2024b) and the EFQM Model (administered by the European Foundation for Quality Management) (EFQM, 2024). These models offer principles and criteria for organisations to assess and improve performance. Some 70 countries actively promote business excellence through awards and/or initiatives (Ghafoor & Mann, 2023) using these models and others. However, despite the widespread adoption of BE's practices, there is a notable gap in understanding how these can be effectively implemented and sustained in organisations. The aim of this research is to explore a proposed Organisational Excellence Architecture (OEA) required by organisations as they pursue award-winning business excellence maturity.

A brief introduction to BE is provided in the following section, with more detail following in the Chapter Two. Section 1.3 presents a brief summary of current BE implementation research in which the research gap motivating this research is identified in principle. A further gap to which the research subsequently contributes is also explored in detail in Chapter Two. The research aim, and specific research questions, are identified in the Section 1.4. Due to this thesis being presented with 'publications' an overview of methods is provided here in Chapter One. The chapter concludes with a thesis outline, that also identifies the publication status of the four (4) papers completed to date.

1.2. Introduction to Business Excellence

Business excellence can be defined as the achievement of superior strategies, business practices, and stakeholder-related performance results, validated through assessments utilising proven business excellence models (Adebanjo & Mann, 2008, p. 1). BE evolved from the philosophy and practices of Total Quality Management (TQM), emphasising continuous improvement, innovation, and organisational learning (Dahlgaard-Park, 2011; Enquist et al., 2015). BE is operationalised through BEMs. The models provide a structured approach for achieving strategic objectives and pursuing excellence within an organisation (Adámek et al., 2017; Lasrado & Uzbeck, 2017).

1.3. State of current BE implementation research and identifying the research gap

The BE implementation literature can be categorised into several research domains, including but not limited to BE practices by sector (Fahimi & Amirabadi, 2024; Gómez-López et al., 2019), industry (Parast & Safari, 2023; Tsiotras et al., 2016) and geography (Chawla & Joshi, 2011b; Salih & Dolah, 2023), as well as those by design and the impact of BEMs (Escrig & de Menezes, 2016; Gómez-López et al., 2019). Researchers have also examined the implementation enablers and barriers for BE and TQM, categorising them into four main components: internal structure (Bauer et al., 2005; Evans et al., 2012; Lasrado, 2018); resources (Para-González et al., 2022; Tarí et al., 2023); processes, such as, BE training (Hchaichi, 2023; Leonard & McAdam, 2002), communication (Allan et al., 2000; Baidoun et al., 2018; Brown, 2013a; Salih & Dolah, 2023), action planning (Kamal, 2023; Pattison, 2011), and; assessment approaches (Angell & Corbett, 2009; Araújo & Sampaio, 2014; Metaxas & Koulouriotis, 2019; Rangsungnoen, 2023). Although a synthesis of these has not yet been undertaken, the components have emerged largely in isolation of one another.

Beyond these four core components, some other factors, such as the BE maturity level of an organisation (Bolboli et al., 2015; Mohammad et al., 2011; Negron, 2020; Tickle et al., 2016), and the size and sector of an organisation (Adeyemi et al., 2014; Bagheri et al., 2019; Garza-Reyes, 2018; Gomes et al., 2019; Sila, 2007) have also been identified. Lastly, the urgency or speed of BE implementation has also emerged as a critical factor for the delivery of agile and adaptable strategies (Carvalho et al., 2017; Mann et al., 2012; Saleh & Watson, 2017). However, despite extensive scientific inquiry into the different elements of BE implementation, the research landscape lacks a unified view of BE implementation.

Generally, BEMs are not prescriptive (Carlos Bou-Llugar et al., 2005), leaving BE implementation to the individual organisations to decide how to operationalise BE without specific guidelines (Dahlgard-Park, 2008; Mohammad et al., 2011). Studies such as those by Bolboli et al. (2013) and Lasrado and Uzbek (2017) highlight this gap and the need for research to provide guidance to both academia and practice. This research attempts to bridge the knowledge gap by investigating the optimal OEA required to implement and sustain successful BE within an organisation. It further identifies how BE award-winning organisations implement their OEA to achieve BE maturity and embed excellence culture into their organisational ‘DNA’.

1.4. Research aim and objectives

The aim of this research is to explore the OEA required to support award-winning business excellence maturity. In this research context, the BE maturity of an organisation indicates the degree to which the organisation has integrated BE principles into its operations and culture. It describes the progression

from initial awareness to full implementation, where excellence becomes intrinsic to organisational practices and recognised by recognised BE award bodies.

To achieve this research aim, the following objectives were set for this research:

Objective 1: To undertake a literature review on how organisations implement business excellence and identify any research gaps.

Objective 2: To develop a conceptual/theoretical OEA model, including its definition and core elements.

Objective 3: To refine the OEA model based on research respondents.

Objective 4: To present the final OEA model with a supporting OEA design toolkit.

Schematic diagram depicting how each of the objectives are met within the thesis, and how they individually and collectively contribute to the broad aim is presented diagrammatically in Figure 1.1.

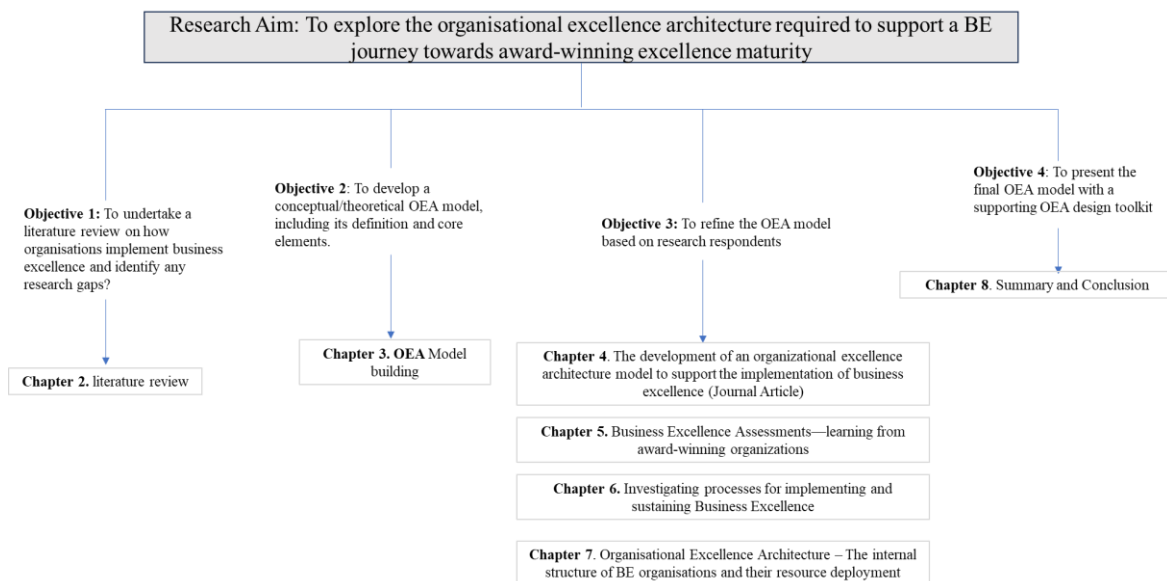


Figure 1.1: Research objectives and their relationship to the thesis chapters.

1.5. Considerations of research methods used in this study

The aim of this section is to introduce the broader considerations that shaped the inquiry from its onset. First, engagement with practitioners was considered to be essential. A distinctiveness of the broad genre of BE research is its applied nature. The nature of inquiry, the implementation of BE, has practical outcomes: How things are actually done in organisations

pursuing BE, and as a consequence the implications of BE research on the organisations themselves.

With regard to the scope of the study, the following conditions were also set:

- a) Respondents were invited to contribute but limited to GEM Council member organisations and their respective members; and,
- b) Participating BE organisations must have undertaken at least one assessment (either self-assessment or external assessment) of their performance using a BE model in the last five years.

The Global Excellence Model (GEM) Council is a network of representatives from leading quality and BE organisations that promote and facilitate the use of excellence models globally. All leading BE models, such as, the EFQM Model, the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award model, and other leading national and regional models are, in effect, members of the GEM Council. This research was restricted to GEM Council member organisations and their respective members to ensure that respondents have a shared understanding and commitment to BE. This alignment allows for a more consistent and comparable set of data on BE practices, as these organisations are likely to be more actively engaged in advancing BE principles.

The stipulation that participating organisations must have conducted at least one assessment of their performance using a BE model in the last five years ensures that the data collected is relevant and current. This condition ensures that the organisations involved have recent experience with BE implementation and are likely to provide insights that reflect the latest trends and challenges in BE practice.

Ontology in research refers to the nature of reality being studied, essentially addressing what exists in the field of inquiry (Goldkuhl, 2011). In this research, ontology focuses on identifying which aspects of BE implementation are significant and can be explored. This reflects the researcher's understanding of the broad research area, developed through the combination of two decades of working in roles engaged with forms of BE and the subsequent literature review presented in Chapter Two. Epistemology, on the other hand, informs the study's methodology (Morgan, 2007). It guides how BE implementation knowledge can be reliably acquired, reflecting the underlying dominant paradigms (Kuhn, 1974) of inquiry. Therefore,

epistemology in this study dictates the selection and application of the specific research methods used to ensure valid results are produced. Consequently, the research employs a Sequential Mixed-Methods Design (as illustrated in Figure 1.2) to provide the tools necessary to achieve each of the research aims. Mixed methods is expected to provide the comprehensive exploration of OEA within BE mature organisations required and combine the conceptual OEA model developed from the literature review (Chapter Three) with the practical insights to be gained from the BE practicing organisations examined in this study.

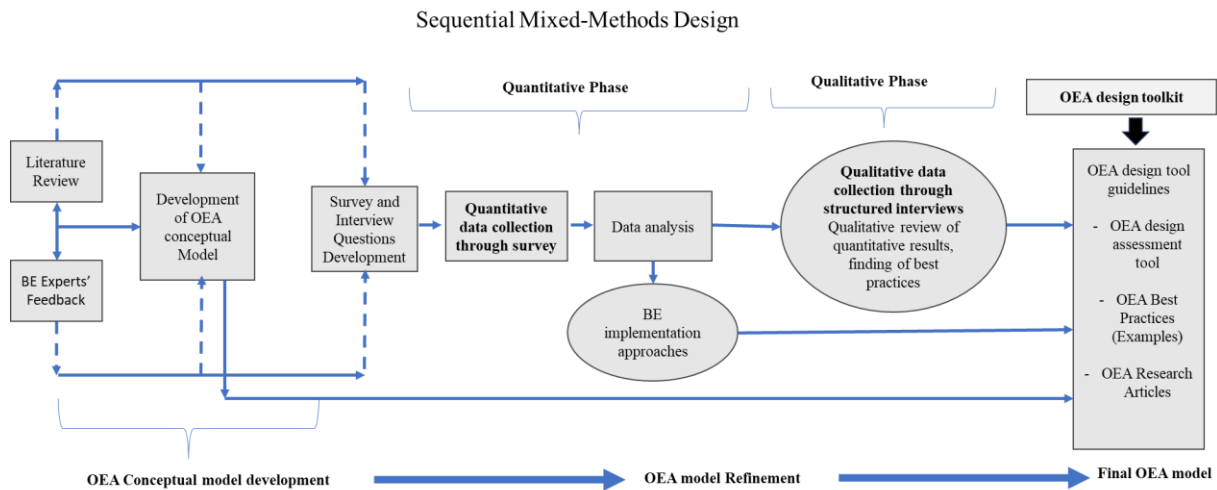


Figure 1.2:Planned research design (Sequential Mixed-Methods).

1.6. Thesis outline

This thesis follows the publication format, whereby each article stands independently, addressing specific research objectives, while together they respond to the broad aim of the research. Chapter Two offers a detailed examination of the literature on TQM and BE with a focus on BE implementation. Building on the literature analysis, Chapter Three presents the development of the OEA conceptual model. The subsequent chapters (4-7) have been published or are ready for submission as detailed below:

- **Chapter 4:** Published in *The TQM Journal*, this chapter introduces the development of an Organisational Excellence Architecture model to support BE implementation. It is cited as follows: Baig, A., Mann, R., Lockhart, J., & Macpherson, W. (2024). The development of an Organizational Excellence Architecture model to support the implementation of business excellence. *The TQM Journal*, Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print. <https://doi.org/10.1108/TQM-11-2023-0375>
- **Chapter 5:** Also published in *The TQM Journal*, this chapter discusses business excellence assessments approaches and best practices from award-winning organisations. It is cited as follows: Baig, A., Mann, R., Lockhart, J. & Macpherson, W. (2024), "Business excellence assessments –

learning from award-winning organizations", *The TQM Journal*, Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print. <https://doi.org/10.1108/TQM-03-2024-0098>

- **Chapter 6:** Prepared for submission to *The Total Quality Management & Business Excellence Journal*. This chapter explores processes that support the implementation of business excellence. The anticipated citation is: Baig, A., Mann, R., Lockhart, J., & Macpherson, W. (2024). "Exploring Processes that Support the Implementation of Business Excellence." *The Total Quality Management & Business Excellence Journal*.
- **Chapter 7:** Ready for submission to *The Total Quality Management & Business Excellence Journal*. This chapter examines how BE organisations deploy their resources and internal structure to implement BE. The intended citation upon publication is: Baig, A., Mann, R., Lockhart, J., & Macpherson, W. (2024). "Organisational Excellence Architecture – How BE organizations deploy their resources and internal structure to implement BE." *The Total Quality Management & Business Excellence Journal*.

A synthesise of the insights gathered from each of the preceding articles to formulate the OEA design toolkit is then presented in Chapter Eight. This chapter draws to a clear research process, in the form of the research aim and each of the research questions. The intent with Chapter Eight is to ensure that a coherent synthesis of the research is developed with specific implications for both researchers and practitioners.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1. Chapter introduction

The objective of the literature review is to identify the research gap in detail and to explore why the gap emerged. The chapter is presented in six sections. An overview of BE and its theoretical foundation is presented in Section 2.2. This section identifies the path and origins of BE from its roots in quality inspection (QI) from the early 20th Century. The common BE models (BEM) are then introduced, and their key characteristics discussed in Section 2.3. Their shortcomings are identified in Section 2.3.3. Section 2.4 begins the process of exploring BE implementation. Two groups of attributes, components and factors, emerge as being essential for effective BE implementation. These are then grouped and a hierarchy (tree) of components and factors presented. A summary of the chapter is provided in Section 2.5, as are the research aims and questions that emerge from the review.

Having outlined the structure and objectives of this chapter, the following section presents an overview of business excellence and its theoretical foundations in Section 2.2.

2.2. An overview of business excellence and its theoretical foundation

The concept of 'excellence' encompasses diverse interpretations, denoting high performance and quality across various cultures and historical contexts. It is a term well-acknowledged in multiple disciplines and is frequently employed to characterise superior performance (Rusjan, 2005; Savolainen, 2000). In drawing on both ancient Greek philosophy and Confucian teachings, Dahlgaard (2009) observes that excellence fundamentally involves realising one's utmost potential and positively contributing to societal harmony. But this observation does not reveal the core attributes necessary for achieving excellence in various domains. Excellence goes above ordinary achievement. It involves attaining one's peak potential and enhancing societal well-being. However, quite how it is achieved is a continuous source of debate. The context of BE is no different.

While the literature does not conclusively trace the origins of the concept of excellence in managing organisational performance, its application is firmly established. Peters and Waterman (1982), in their landmark book *'In Search of Excellence – Lessons from America's Best-Run Companies'*, provided the foundational reference to excellence in organisational

performance, emphasising organisational attributes critical for achieving and maintaining world-class performance (Dale et al., 2000). This remarkable and influential publication sparked widespread discussion on excellence in organisational performance and established a benchmark for subsequent research.

Ian Raisbeck, the Chairman of the European Foundation for Quality Management, described business excellence as "the overall way of working that results in balanced stakeholder satisfaction, thereby increasing the probability of long-term business success" (Edgeman, 1998, p. 190). Similarly, Ritchie and Dale (2000) defined BE as a long-term commitment to adopting best practices to foster a culture supportive of the business's needs and objectives, aiming for top-tier status and continuous high performance. Dahlgaard-Park et al. (2013) also argued that excellence and quality are intricately linked, depending on each other in a dynamic relationship. Thürer et al. (2018) offers a more recent definition, describing excellence as a blend of operational efficiency and service effectiveness. Adebajo and Mann (2008, p. 1) also examined the concept. They defined excellence as the outcome of effective strategies, practices, and performance results, evaluated through established BE models, targeting sustainable, world-class achievements. While other researchers have primarily focused on defining excellence, Mann and Adebajo introduced the perspective of 'established BE models' into the discourse, offering further clarity in the literature. Building upon these insights, Ghafoor et al. (2020) concluded that business excellence is both a philosophy and a structured approach to achieving excellence in organisational performance, strategies and business practices. From these definitions that cover various aspects of BE a summary emerges as follows:

“Business excellence (BE) refers to a holistic management approach that aims to enhance an organisation's operational effectiveness and business practices to generate value for customers, employees, and shareholders. Business excellence is achieved through the systematic application of proven excellence models to regularly assess and improve strategies, processes, and performance results.”

Two dimensions of business excellence emerge from this summary. The first is that the conventional recognition of excellence has both relative and absolute outcomes. Relative being an organisation's performance relative to others, while absolute being in terms of value creation. The second is the achievement of business excellence, that is this domain anyway, is contingent on the pursuit of the proven excellence models. That then produces an iterative

process of pursuit that produces excellence, from which further performance enhancement is achieved. The focus of this research is ‘how’ this is to be achieved.

The following discussions delve into the BE literature on BE implementation processes and procedures. It starts with the theoretical foundation of business excellence and the role of BE models in implementation at the organisational level.

2.2.1. The theoretical foundation of business excellence

The emergence of BE is deeply rooted in Total Quality Management (TQM). The philosophies of Edward Deming (1900-1993), Joseph Moses Juran (1904-2008), and Philip Crosby (1926-2001) laid the groundwork for TQM with emphasis on continuous improvement; the leadership role in quality; and, the strategic approach to achieving zero defects (Evans, 2016). Deming introduced the Deming Cycle (originally known as the Shewhart Cycle) and stressed that statistical methods be used for quality control (Deming, 2018a, 2018b). Juran focused on the managerial aspects of quality, proposing the Juran Trilogy, which emphasises quality planning, control, and improvement. He also highlighted the importance of the Pareto Principle in quality management (Juran, 1995). Crosby championed the concepts of "Zero Defects" and the quality cost approach, advocating for prevention over inspection (Crosby, 1979). Together, their contributions underscore the importance of a comprehensive, proactive approach to quality management, where organisational culture, leadership commitment, and systematic processes work harmoniously to enhance product and service quality.

2.2.2. The evolution of TQM

The origins of TQM can be traced to Quality Inspection (QI) in the early 20th Century, which emphasised task specialisation and the role of inspectors in ensuring production quality. The transition to Quality Control (QC) during the 1920s marked a significant shift towards process control and sampling-based inspection to standardise processes and mitigate quality variations. The advancement to Quality Assurance (QA) in the 1960s then represented a further evolution, integrating comprehensive methods to enhance customer satisfaction by preventing quality issues (Goetsch, 2016). From which Total Quality Management (TQM) emerged in the 1980s as a culmination of quality-focused methodologies, evolving from QI, QC, and QA into an all-encompassing business management philosophy (Pike & Barnes, 1996). The period from the 1970s to the 2000s marked the golden era of TQM, during which its principles were adopted across industries on a global scale. However, by the late 2000s, TQM had lost its appeal as

organisations increasingly sought more comprehensive approaches to achieve excellence beyond quality management alone (Dahlgard, 2009). The concept of BE encompasses both quality and factors like leadership, strategy, customer focus, employee engagement, process management, and societal impact, offering a more holistic framework for organisational improvement. With globalisation and increased competition, organisations need to excel in aspects beyond just quality to remain competitive. While TQM remains relevant and valuable in many contexts, the concept of BE offers a more comprehensive and integrated approach to achieving organisational success in today's rapidly changing business landscape.

2.2.3. The emergence of Business Excellence (BE)

The demise of TQM gave birth to BE, which is the most important contribution of TQM to this research. Although BE is seen as separate from TQM (Oliveira & Gomes, 2024), it was founded on the TQM practices of leading and managing organisations efficiently (Chawla & Joshi, 2011a). Nevertheless, researchers, including Dale et al. (2000), Tarí and Dick (2016) and (Ho et al., 2023) categorised BE as the next step of TQM. BE is institutionalised in an organisation by way of the BE models. The leading BE models are now discussed.

2.3. Introduction to leading Business Excellence Models

BE Models (BEMs) were introduced in the late 1980s to make excellence a more structured practice (Alanazi, 2020; Lasrado, 2018). The models still serve as a platform for organisations to embed a culture of continuous improvement within their organisational 'DNA' (Adámek et al., 2020). The use of BEMs, such as, the Deming Prize, Baldrige Excellence Framework, European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM), Australian Business Excellence Framework (ABEF) and their respective awards has now been successful in attaining sustainable organisational performance (de Carvalho et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2022). BEMs offer a structured and holistic approach to organisational improvement. They provide an opportunity to learn from other organisations to manage change, develop a performance-based culture and subsequently create shareholder value (Zapata-Cantu et al., 2016).

BEMs are administered by the awards governing bodies referred to as business excellence custodians (BECs), who provide general awards administration, training and sharing best practices to their clients, including private and public organisations (Ghafoor, 2021). According to Ghafoor and Mann (2023), the Baldrige Excellence Framework (administered by the National Institute of Science and Technology, United States) and the EFQM Model

(administered by the European Foundation for Quality Management) are among the most used models in some 70 countries. Further details of the leading BEMs follows.

2.3.1. Baldrige Excellence Framework

The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) has served as a leading physical science laboratory and non-regulatory agency for the Department of Commerce in the United States (NIST, 2024c). A major Programme run by NIST is the Baldrige Performance Excellence Programme (BPEP), which oversees the only Presidential Award for performance excellence in the country. The BPEP offers a wide range of products, such, as the Baldrige Excellence Framework (BEF), which is dedicated to improving organisational performance. The BEF is a nonprescriptive set of principles and practices that can help organisations improve their strategies, improve results, and become more competitive (Purba, 2021). It was launched in 1988 after the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Improvement Act of 1987 was passed to improve the competitiveness of US businesses (Evans, 2016). The framework comprises seven critical areas and is based on several core values and seven categories (NIST, 2024a). Since its inception, BEF has constituted a powerful set of guidelines for improving business performance (Furtasan Ali, 2023; Rangsunnoen et al., 2023). The 2023–2024 Baldrige Excellence Framework emphasises key areas for organisational success: agility, innovation, and transformation to stay competitive; risk management and supply-chain resilience for reliability; societal and environmental sustainability as a corporate responsibility; adapting to changing work and workforce needs for flexibility; and, prioritising diversity, equity, and inclusion to foster an inclusive workplace culture. This approach outlines a holistic vision for sustainable excellence and resilience in modern business practices. The BEF core values and categories are presented in Figure 2.1.

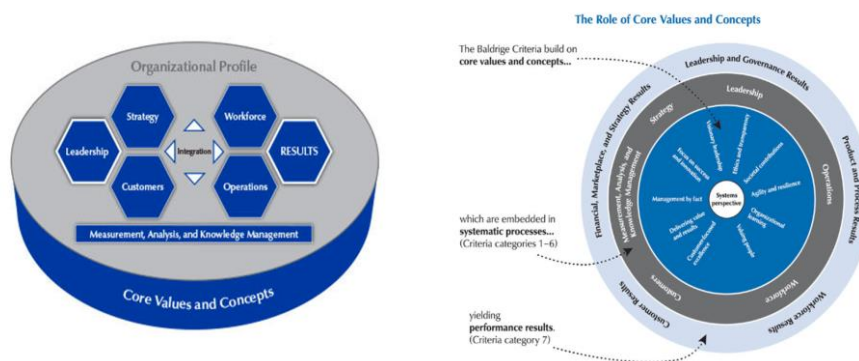


Figure 2.1: Baldrige Excellence Framework and the role of core values and concepts (NIST, 2024).

Baldrige Excellence Framework – ADLI approach

The Baldrige criteria evaluates how well an organisation's processes and systems help achieve its mission. This evaluation uses the methodology of ADLI (Approach, Deployment, Learning, and Integration). "Approach" examines the methods an organisation uses to carry out its processes. "Deployment" looks at how these methods are applied across different parts of the organisation. "Learning" assesses the organisation's ability to improve and innovate through regular evaluations. And, "Integration" checks how well the methods align with the organisation's goals. (Hertz, 2018). The ADLI methodology helps organisations understand how effectively they operate, encourages continuous improvement, and ensures that their daily operations support their long-term objectives.

The Baldrige Excellence Framework is *the* pioneer BEM, designed to provide structured guidance for organisations aiming to improve their performance across multiple dimensions. This framework encourages a holistic approach to organisational improvement, fostering a culture of excellence and innovation that supports continuous learning and adaptation to changing market and operational demands. However, while the Baldrige Excellence Framework provides a robust framework to guide organisations on '*what*' is required to achieve excellence, the model is largely quiet on '*how*' to operationalise the framework at an organisation level.

2.3.2. The European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Excellence Framework

The Baldrige Excellence Framework was introduced to enhance U.S. business productivity. The EFQM model was launched by the European Foundation for Quality Management in the early 1990s and aimed to increase European enterprise competitiveness, serving as a regional productivity reference (Narasimha Murthy et al., 2021). Despite the model being launched over 30 years ago, the EFQM model is still the most accepted and implemented BEM worldwide (Ghafoor & Mann, 2023). Since its inception, the EFQM model has been used by organisations as a useful self-assessment tool (Giménez Espín et al., 2023; Gómez et al., 2017)). However, the model has now evolved since its inception and scope beyond that of a self-assessment tool (Fonseca, 2022). The latest version of EFQM (Figure 2.2) was launched in November, 2019 (Nenadál, 2020). Unlike the old version of EFQM, which primarily deals with organisational assessment (Bolboli & Reiche, 2016), the new model is designed to steer organisations to manage transformation and disruption through effective change management. In addition, the

new model is positioned as a management tool rather than just an assessment tool (EFQM, 2020; Fonseca, 2022). The new model also aligns the organisation's purpose and strategy with the current United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

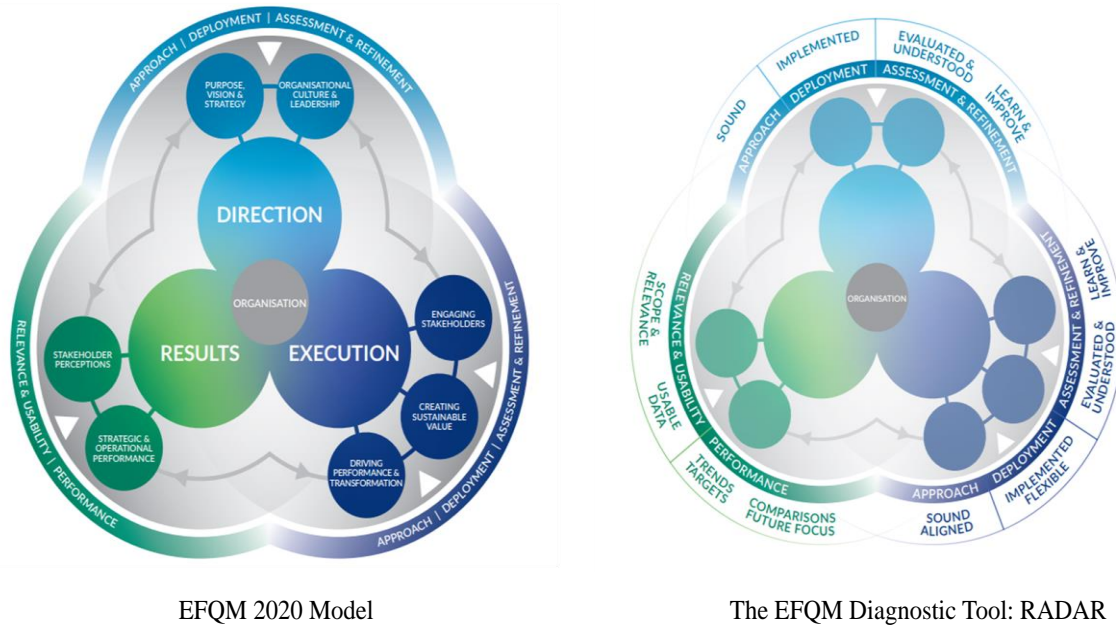


Figure 2.2: EFQM Model and RADAR Diagnostic tool (EFQM, 2024).

The current EFQM model's criteria are described as follows:

Direction – sets the direction for an organisation to define an inspiring purpose. The direction-setting prepares the organisation to define an inspiring purpose, create a vision, and execute its strategic plans.

Execution – while taking the lead from the direction set by the organisation's purpose and vision, the execution criteria drives the level of performance required for success today while driving the necessary improvement and facilitating transformation.

Results – inspiring purpose and execution with embedded high performance in the organisational culture produce exceptional results. The results criteria expect that outstanding organisations create sustainable value for stakeholders and drive performance and transformation.

While the Direction and Execution criteria are split into various parts, the Results criterion provides indicators for evaluating organisational performance across different dimensions.

The EFQM – RADAR approach

The RADAR (Results, Approach, Deployment, Assessment and Refinement) diagnostic tool, integral to the EFQM Excellence Model, is a comprehensive framework for assessing an organisation's performance (Fonseca, 2022). It embodies a systematic approach to evaluation, focusing on four key elements: Results, Approach, Deployment, and Assessment and Refinement. This methodology enables organisations to critically examine their outcomes (Results) based on their strategies and actions (Approach and Deployment) while continuously identifying opportunities for improvement through rigorous Assessment and Refinement. By applying the RADAR logic, organisations can gain insightful feedback on their operational effectiveness and strategic direction, facilitating continuous improvement and excellence (EFQM, 2020). The new model seems to be less prescriptive (Fonseca, 2022). The tool's structured approach helps align organisational processes with desired outcomes, making it a cornerstone for achieving sustained excellence in various operational contexts.

The EFQM 2020 model offers a framework and methodology to help organisations cope with the changes, transformation, and disruption. However, it still lacks guidance on how to operationalise BE implementation and does not provide a roadmap or toolkit for embedding a culture of continuous improvement within an organisation.

2.3.3. Critical review of BEMS

In the last three decades, these BEMs and their respective awards have contributed significantly enhancing performance of the organisations introduced. They are now emerged as efficient quality and improvement tools that enable organisations to improve their respective performance (McAdam et al., 2013; Oakland & Tanner, 2008; Zapata-Cantu et al., 2016). However, their effectiveness is not without limitations. The following shortcomings of BEMs have been identified:

- (i) They are non-prescriptive being primarily positioned as an assessment tool and, therefore, does not guide organisations on implementation approaches (Bolboli et al., 2013; Dahlgaard et al., 2013; Dahlgaard, 2009);
- (ii) BEMs lack guidance for integration at the operational level (Dahlgaard et al., 2013; Mohammad et al., 2009; Pfeifer et al., 2005; Rusjan, 2005);
- (iii) BEM overemphasises value creation and often lack the strategic alignment required for sustained competitive advantage (Daniel et al., 2019; Thürer et al., 2018).

It is evident that while BEMs are designed to accommodate diverse organisational strategies and contexts, they present challenges in specificity and the lack of implementation guidance from which organisations accelerate their BE journey. Therefore, investigating the current research landscape of BE implementation is important to identify appropriate successful BE implementation with the intention of then disseminating this knowledge to the BE community.

2.4. Components and factors of BE implementation

Researchers widely concur that TQM practices are operationalised through BE implementation (Adebanjo, 2001; Adeyemi et al., 2014). TQM and BE implementation research are collectively examined to establish the current state of BE implementation research. The current BE/TQM implementation research encompasses a diverse range of areas, including investigations into the impacts and practices of BEMs across various sectors: public (Rawabdeh et al., 2021); private sectors, including large multinational corporations (Zapletalová, 2023); small and medium-sized enterprises (Tejaningrum & Wahyudin, 2022); across different industries (Liu et al., 2021); and, within various geographical contexts (Li et al., 2024; Tutuncu & Kucukusta, 2007). Given the primary focus on BE implementation, the pertinent literature was reviewed to identify the critical enablers and challenges of BE/TQM implementation. Various studies on BE implementation have identified some of the essential attributes (components and factors) for successful BE implementation. BE implementation components are categorised into *resources, internal structure, processes, and BE assessments*. In addition to key elements, some factors, such as, an organisation's BE maturity, size and sector, and urgency or speed in which it wants to implement BE have also emerged as critical to BE implementation. Each element and factor are now discussed in detail. The relationship between each component and subsequent BE implementation is identified. Figure 2.3 depicts the BE components.

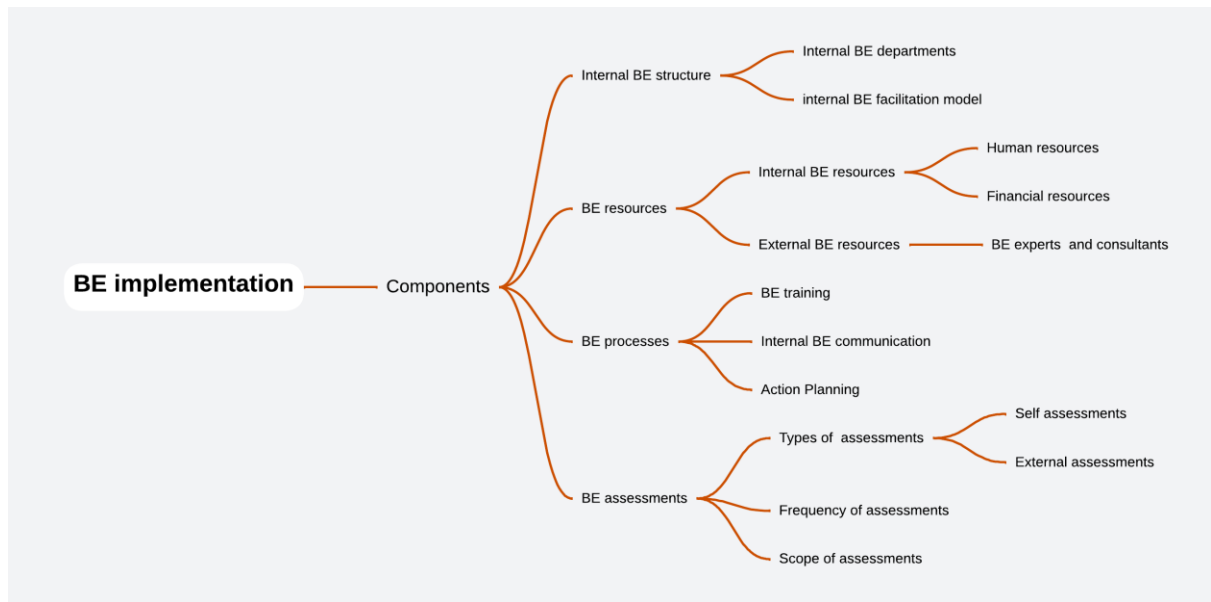


Figure 2.3: Components of BE implementation.

2.4.1. BE implementation and organisational BE maturity

The BE maturity level of an organisation also appears as a key consideration for BE implementation as it determines the readiness of an organisation to adopt and sustain excellence practices effectively. Numerous past studies have sought to define BE maturity levels to assist organisations in their pursuit of excellence. Dale and Smith (1997) presented a seven-stage maturity process that ranges from 'Unaware' to 'World-class', where BE is fully integrated with business strategy and becomes a way of life for those introduced. Saunders and Mann (2007) outlined four stages of BE maturity: starting, progressing, mature, and excellent. Mohammad et al. (2011) developed a four-stage maturity model comprising Beginning, Progressing, Advanced, and Role Model stages. Building on past research, Tickle et al. (2016) identified five levels of BE maturity, from 'Awareness' to 'Advanced.' The impact of BE maturity on BE implementation is further explained in Section 2.4.3.

2.4.2. Components of BE implementation

The critical components of BE implementation identified from the literature review are now identified and discussed.

BE resources: Implementing BE requires a strategic investment in human and financial resources. These elements are fundamental to supporting activities necessary for facilitating BE activities, such as training, assessments, award preparation, and excellence projects that are important for successful BE implementation. Studies, such as, those by Mann et al. (2011) and

Baidoun et al. (2018), have underscored that inadequate resources are a significant barrier to long-term commitment to BE. Similarly, Calvo-Mora et al. (2014), through their examination of 116 private Spanish firms, delineated soft-hard TQM factors essential for BE, including management and human resources, strategic partnerships, and process management, further highlighting the interplay between resource availability and BE success. While those two studies primarily highlighted the importance of human resources in the success of the BE and TQM implementation, Aladwan and Forrester (2016) highlighted the lack of financial resources among the key challenges in implementing BE in the Jordanian public sector. These findings are reinforced by Baidoun et al. (2018) within Palestinian healthcare organisations, which advocated for financial and human resources to enhance service quality. Echoing this sentiment, Talapatra and Uddin (2019) identified financial constraints and inadequate planning as primary obstacles to TQM implementation in the Bangladeshi garment sector. Similarly, Periañez-Cristobal et al. (2021), whose study of 205 Spanish organisations, provided contemporary insights into the strategic application of resources. Their findings reveal that top-performing organisations are distinguished by their strategic vision, commitment to meeting stakeholder needs and expectations, and emphasis on human resources through training, learning, and knowledge sharing.

The main means to achieve excellence appears to be management's commitment to the process and the availability of human resources (Afthonidis & Tsiotras, 2014). The engagement of external BE consultants also emerges as a strategic response to facilitating capacity building and effective change (Ghafoor, 2021). While these studies collectively point out the importance of adequate resources in BE/TQM implementation, the literature is largely silent on responding to guide organisations on how to deploy resources holistically considering different organisational and geographical contexts.

BE internal structure: Initiating the BE journey is a strategic decision that requires an internal structure to support, facilitate, and operationalise BE initiatives (Saleh & Wang, 1993). The internal structure serves as the organisation's framework for embedding BE initiatives into every part of operations through integration and coordination, fostering a culture of continuous improvement, innovation, and remaining competitive (Ubaid, 2023).

BE and TQM literature also highlights the central role of corresponding internal organisational structure in embedding a culture of excellence across an organisation since the inception of BE. Using a broader perspective of management theory, Bauer et al. (2005) examined BE

implementation and concluded that a less complex and less formalised structure appears to contribute to successfully implementing business excellence. Al-Marri et al. (2007), examined the critical success factors (CSFs) in TQM implementation in 250 banks in UAE banking sectors and identified sixteen CFS to TQM implementation, including the role of the robust Quality Department. These departments improve coordination and integration (Aladwan & Forrester, 2016) and enable internal efforts to align quality management practices deployment (McAdam et al., 2019), leading to achieving organisational excellence goals and greater competitiveness in their respective marketplace.

Establishing a well-defined hierarchy and reporting structure is of utmost importance for boosting employee engagement and empowerment. This approach enables collective efforts towards achieving excellence. To effectively implement this approach, organisations establish improvement or project teams (Angell & Corbett, 2009) and steering committees (Brown, 2013a; Lasrado, 2018). These teams then serve as catalysts for change by guiding, coordinating, and monitoring all BE activities (Garza-Reyes, 2018; Tata & Prasad, 1998). Meanwhile, steering committees provide leadership support, ensuring alignment and progress of BE projects (Brown, 2014; Liu, 1998). Hence, the internal organisational structure is more than just a means of operational support. It serves as a pivotal facilitator of strategic agility and for achieving excellence. These coordinated efforts improve efficiency and effectiveness by streamlining workflows and allowing adaptability to embrace new challenges and incorporate innovations crucial for BE initiatives.

BE processes: BE processes refer to the structured BE-related activities and tasks within an organisation that are designed to ensure efficient and effective task execution to achieve an organisation's holistic excellence goals and objectives. From the BE implementation viewpoint, the scope of processes includes training and education (Amponsah & Ahmed, 2017; Antony et al., 2022; Dahlgaard & Anninos, 2022; Periañez-Cristobal et al., 2021), internal communication (Georgiev & Ohtaki, 2020; Salih & Dolah, 2023; Talapatra & Uddin, 2019), action planning (Ahmed et al., 2003; Al-Dhaafri & Alosani, 2020; Ekiz Kavukoğlu & İsci, 2023; Metaxas et al., 2018), excellence project selection (Adebanjo et al., 2016; Gijo & Rao, 2005; Pattison, 2011), and knowledge sharing (Liao et al., 2007; Nenadál et al., 2018). The following paragraphs explore each of those BE process in detail.

BE training: BE training involves educational programmes to BE knowledge, skills, and internal capabilities critical for achieving and sustaining business excellence (Zairi &

Alsughayir, 2011). BE training equips employees with the necessary competencies to effectively contribute to the organisation's BE objectives, promoting a culture of continuous improvement, quality, and efficiency (Adamu, 2019). It includes comprehensive learning about excellence concepts (Aladwan & Forrester, 2016), BE models (Al-Majali & Almhirat, 2018; Tickle et al., 2016), and applying specific tools such as BE assessments (Pattison, 2011; Tarí & Madeleine, 2010), benchmarking tools (Leonard & McAdam, 2002; Mohammad et al., 2010; Salih & Dolah, 2023) and lean methodologies, such as, Lean Six Sigma (Albliwi et al., 2014) among others. This training empowers employees (Aladwan & Forrester, 2016) and helps organisations create a culture that facilitates improvement projects and ensures customer satisfaction (Adebanjo et al., 2016). Organisations adopt strategies to bolster internal capabilities for BE and TQM deployment, including in-house training on improvement tools and specialised BE technical skills training, such as, certification and leadership development (Pattison, 2011; Saruta, 2006). Support from country or regional BECs further facilitates ongoing training for member organisations (Ghafoor et al., 2023). Despite the importance of training in building organisational capabilities, the existing research landscape largely lacks research on how BE organisations deploy BE training and education programmes to build internal capabilities required to support the organisational excellence agenda.

Internal BE communication: BE communication refers to the strategic dissemination of information, knowledge, and practices related to BE initiatives within an organisation. Effective BE communication is crucial for fostering a culture of continuous improvement, aligning employees with the organisation's BE goals, and ensuring that everyone in an organisation is engaged in achieving and sustaining excellence. Internal communication helps the leadership team communicate organisational strategies to the wider employees (Al-Majali & Almhirat, 2018), as the lack of communication could lead to a lack of coordination, cooperation and teamwork (Gijo & Rao, 2005), which may hamper the improvement drive. Organisations are required to communicate their improvement agenda and corresponding implementation plan with all the employees (Attri et al., 2017). Effective communication motivates, avoids misunderstandings, and improves employee engagement in implementing improvement initiatives (Baidoun et al., 2018). A comprehensive communication approach is essential for active leadership engagement and fostering two-way communication (Mbatha & Garad, 2022; Mosadeghrad, 2014). This includes tailoring messages to different employee groups, highlighting successes and learnings, and providing comprehensive training and education to enhance understanding and engagement with BE initiatives (Bakotić & Rogošić,

2017; Liu, 1998). A comprehensive communication approach is, therefore, expected to ensure that BE principles are effectively integrated into organisational culture, promoting continuous improvement and excellence.

Action planning: The action planning process is a structured approach organisations use to translate their BE strategies and goals into specific, actionable steps. This process allows organisations to define clear objectives, assign responsibilities, set timelines, and allocate resources effectively, ensuring that the overarching strategies and goals are operationalised in a manner that can be executed, monitored, and evaluated. It's an essential component of strategic management and operational planning, facilitating the alignment of daily operations with long-term excellence objectives (Tarí & Madeleine, 2012). The action planning process is central to leveraging OFIs and improvement projects identified during the assessment exercise (Ahmed et al., 2003; Hosseini Ezzabadi et al., 2015; Porter & Tanner, 2012). While the literature emphasises the critical role of the action plan, it also highlights the importance of the action plan review process in achieving desired outcomes from the action plan (Araújo & Sampaio, 2014; Metaxas et al., 2018). Follow-up is crucial because it anchors accountability, ensuring that all parts of the organisation consistently work towards excellence. It enables the early identification and resolution of deviations or challenges in achieving improvement initiatives agreed upon in the action plan, allowing for adjustments that align strategic initiatives with excellence goals (Metaxas et al., 2018). Follow-up also generates feedback on the effectiveness of business practices and strategies, fostering a culture of continuous improvement. This approach ensures that efforts towards business excellence are dynamic and responsive, leading to sustained success and competitive advantage.

Business excellence assessments

BE assessment systematically evaluates an organisation's performance against standards or criteria designed to measure excellence in business operations. Through this process, BE assessments play a central role in embedding a culture of continuous improvement by identifying opportunities for potential improvement and strength of an organisation.

BE assessments are defined as the core of the excellence journey and have been widely researched and discussed in BE implementation research since BE inception (Hides et al., 2004; Hillman, 1994; Hohan et al., 2015; Kamal, 2023; Saunders & Mann, 2005; Tarí & Madeleine, 2010; van der Wiele & Brown, 1999; Williams et al., 2006). Influenced by Deming Cycle

(Plan-Do-Check-Act, PDCA), the EFQM's RADAR (Results, Approach, Deployment, Assess, Refine) and Baldrige's ADLI (Approach, Deployment, Learning, and Integration), widely used by organisations to assess their organisational maturity (Conti, 2002; Lobo et al., 2022; Rajagopalan, 2020).

BE assessments are categorised into internal (self) assessments and external assessments. Each type serves a different but critical purpose in the organisational improvement journey. Each type of assessment and the BE assessment deployment required are now discussed.

Self-assessments: As the name suggests, self-assessments refer to the type of assessments when organisations use their internal resources and capabilities to assess their internal processes and operations. These self-assessments play an integral role in identifying organisational strengths and weaknesses (Garza-Reyes, 2018; Lapoint, 2022), facilitate internal alignment with organisational purpose and strategic objectives (Rawabdeh et al., 2021) and provide a roadmap for future improvements (Samuelsson and Nilsson, 2002; Liu and Ko, 2018). While self-assessments are simple and less resource-intensive exercise, overreliance on self-assessments could lead to 'self-blindness'. To avoid this potentially critical risk, mature organisations also seek external performance reviews and validation through external assessments.

External assessments: External assessments are deployed to seek external perspectives and validation on organisational performance (Daniel et al., 2019). External BE assessors conduct external assessments to provide a more rigorous and unbiased view of organisational performance. These assessors (usually volunteer assessors from different organisations) are industry experts, and BEM certifications provide extensive and impartial feedback on organisational performance (Ghafoor, 2021). BE mature organisations frequently participate in BE award assessments, a form of external assessment that uses teams of approved assessors. Award bodies administer the award assessments. Leading award bodies include Business Excellence Australia, the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Institute of Quality, the National Institute of Standards and Technology (United States), EFQM (Europe) and the Dubai Government Excellence Programme, among others (Ghafoor & Mann, 2023). While providing extensive feedback on organisational performance, award assessments are also being used for recognition and to benchmark against other industry leaders (Lasrado, 2018). Both internal and external assessments contribute to a holistic understanding of organisational performance. While low mature organisations rely on self-assessments, mature organisations often deploy

both self-assessments and external assessments for a more comprehensive and expert view of the organisational performance. These assessments facilitate the identification of OIF and help identify best practices that lead to excellence.

The assessment deployment process: The deployment of assessment processes entails a series of steps (Gadd, 1995; Garza-Reyes, 2018; Hakes, 1995; Porter & Tanner, 2012; Tarí & Madeleine, 2010). These steps include *planning* for assessment (which may involve choosing a self-assessment model and forming and training a self-assessment team, *the data collection* phase (gathering information, conducting the assessment, results compilation, and finally *implementing an action plan* based on the assessment recommendations. The effectiveness of assessment processes in driving organisational improvement is well-documented, albeit with varying degrees of success. Studies highlight the positive impact of external assessments in promoting continuous improvement and strategic focus (Lasrado & Uzbek, 2017; Rawabdeh et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2022). However, challenges, such as, integrating assessment outcomes with performance improvement strategies and ensuring comprehensive engagement across all organisational levels can impact the effectiveness of these assessments (Davies, 2008; Van Der Wiele et al., 2000). Nevertheless, the right levels of leadership support (Brown, 2013b), internal capabilities (Carvalho et al., 2023) and employee engagement (Salih & Dolah, 2023) at different organisational levels may help organisations manage post-assessment deliverables and drive excellence to achieve desired results.

2.4.3. Factors influencing BE implementation

In addition to the BE components, a series of factors emerged to influence successful BE implementation. Each of the factors identified in the literature are explained in the following paragraphs:

BE maturity of an organisation: Organisational BE maturity is a critical determinant of the strategic path an entity will follow. Researchers like Negrón (2020) and Bolboli et al. (2015) highlight that high BE mature organisations often possess a solid foundation of BE principles. As both Mohammad et al. (2011) and Tickle et al. (2016) further elaborate, this foundation facilitates the adoption of advanced BE strategies and tools that focus on innovation and sustaining excellence. In contrast, for organisations at the early stages of BE maturity, the emphasis might be on establishing quality management systems and embedding basic BE principles into their operations. Therefore, the organisation's maturity level significantly influences the organisation's strategy towards BE implementation strategy.

Size of an organisation: The size of an organisation plays a pivotal role in shaping its BE implementation strategies, largely due to the inherent differences in organisational structures, resource availability, and management systems accompanying varying sizes. Adeyemi et al. (2014) and Bagheri et al. (2019) have explained large organisations' unique challenges and needs stemming from their complex and multi-layered organisational structures. These complex structures are required to address the organisation's diverse and complex needs. On the other hand, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) encounter a distinct set of challenges in their BE journeys, as highlighted by Garza-Reyes (2018) and Sila (2007). These challenges are predominantly framed by resource constraints and less formalised management structures, which, while offering flexibility, also present hurdles in adopting and sustaining BE practices. SMEs often need more financial and human resources than their larger counterparts, making it essential for them to adopt a leaner and more focused approach to BE implementation. This approach needs to be resource-efficient, prioritising key areas that can deliver maximum impact with minimal investment.

Sector of an organisation: The sector or industry in which an organisation operates also impacts its approach to BE implementation. Each sector has unique characteristics, challenges, and goals influencing its operational and strategic priorities. This differentiation in priorities directly impacts how BE principles are adopted, adapted, and sustained within organisations. As Al-Tabbaa et al. (2013) and Eriksson (2016) observe, private sector organisations are typically driven by commercial objectives, focusing on profitability, market share, and shareholder value. This focus on short-term financial performance can sometimes overshadow the commitment to long-term quality and excellence implementation, as these initiatives often require upfront investment with benefits that accrue over time. The pressure to deliver immediate results may lead some private sector entities to prioritise initiatives with quick returns over comprehensive BE strategies that foster sustainable improvement and competitive advantage through quality enhancement. Conversely, public sector organisations operate within a different paradigm. Gomes et al. (2019) and Hchaichi (2023) describe it as navigating bureaucratic complexity to enhance service quality and engage stakeholders. The public sector's focus on service delivery, public accountability, and meeting the needs of a broad and diverse constituency demands an implementation of BE that emphasises process efficiency, transparency, and responsiveness to stakeholder needs. The challenges here include navigating regulatory and political environments, which can either facilitate or hinder the implementation of BE practices, depending on the alignment between BE goals and public sector objectives.

Speed or urgency of BE implementation: The urgency of BE deployment also influences organisational strategies, pushing towards adopting agile methodologies that emphasise speed, flexibility, and responsiveness. In studies by Carvalho et al. (2017) and Mann et al. (2012), the authors emphasise the urgency of adjusting rapidly to external pressures or ambitious internal goals, making agility a necessity rather than an option. In such contexts, organisations are compelled to swiftly implement changes that address immediate demands while ensuring these adjustments are sustainable and conducive to long-term goals.

Saleh and Watson (2017) advocate for a balanced approach that harmonises the need for quick wins by establishing a sustained excellence and adaptability culture. This strategic alignment ensures that organisations can handle immediate challenges and prepare for ongoing improvement and innovation. The urgency of implementation, therefore, acts as a catalyst for both immediate action and the embedding of long-term BE principles, fostering an environment where continuous evolution and competitiveness are ingrained in the organisational ethos. Figure 2.3 presents both BE components and factors critical for BE implementation.

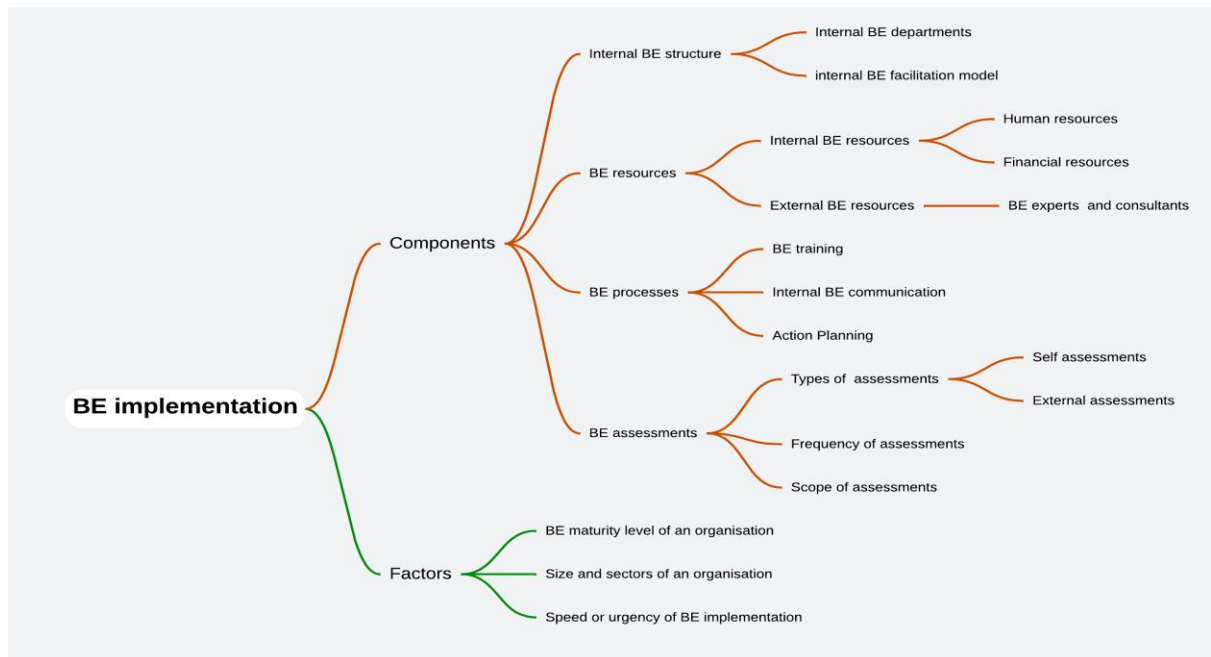


Figure 2.4: Components and factors of BE implementation

2.5. Summary

The literature review has identified the concerted effort among researchers to explore the design of BEMs; their impact on organisational performance; and, the identification of key components and factors crucial for successful BE and TQM implementation. Scholars have a

broad consensus on the positive effects of BEMs on organisational performance that appears to be well beyond doubt. However, researchers have also highlighted the non-prescriptive nature of BEMs as being a potential drawback, arguing that it may limit their utility in guiding organisations through the details of BE implementation. Despite extensive research into BE, the existing literature lacks a unified view of BE implementation. With a clear understanding of the gaps in the current literature, this study introduces the novel concept of organisational excellence architecture (OEA) aimed at providing a unified, comprehensive perspective on BE implementation. To respond to this research gap, the research aims to explore the organisational excellence architecture (OEA) required to support award-winning business excellence maturity. The following objectives are set to achieve this research aim:

- (i) To undertake a literature review on how organisations implement business excellence and identify any research gaps.
- (ii) To develop a conceptual/theoretical OEA model, including its definition and core elements.
- (iii) To refine the OEA model based on research respondents' feedback.
- (iv) To present the final OEA model with a supporting BE implementation toolkit.

The specific research questions of this study are presented in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Research Questions.

RQ 1: what is the current state of research on BE implementation and what approaches are employed by organisations to implement business excellence?
RQ 2: How can an OEA model be theoretically conceptualised to support BE journey towards award-winning excellence maturity?
RQ3: What are BE implementation approaches in internal BE structure, BE resources, BE processes, and BE assessment deployment among BE award-winning organisations?
RQ4: What are the best practices in internal BE structure, BE resources, BE processes, and BE assessment deployment among BE award-winning organisations?

The development of the OEA model is described in detail in the following chapter, Chapter three. The principles of model building and the process through which the OEA model emerged are described.

Chapter 3. The development of the Organisational Excellence Architecture (OEA) conceptual model

3.1. Introduction

The model development process is central not only to scholarly research but knowledge creation itself. Mankind has been creating abstract representations of phenomena for millennia (Bailer-Jones, 2003). The process involves a series of systematic steps to produce an abstract representation of phenomena. The model then ought to provide a comprehensive understanding of a complex scholarly problem (Van de Ven, 2007). Many scientists, while presenting their own contributions, have provided guidance to the broader research community on the process of model development. A selection of these contributions were considered and subsequently guided the development of model building in this research. The process followed, and the key influences are now discussed.

Isaac Newton's pioneering work *Mathematical principles of natural philosophy* (Hattiangadi, 2024; Newton et al., 1934) published in 1687 established the fundamental principles for building scientific theories. These principles continue to influence the development of models across most research disciplines today. Newton emphasised the importance of deducing laws from systematic observations and using mathematical frameworks to express these laws universally. In doing so he set the standard for theory construction that integrates observation with theoretical concepts. Charles Darwin, in "*On the Origin of Species (1859)*", also shared his understanding of conceptualising complex phenomena. Darwin illustrated how the development of the theory of natural selection was a result of a complex interaction of empirical research, theoretical thinking, and engagement with the scientific community of his time (Darwin, 1872). Albert Einstein's theories of special and general relativity (Einstein, 1905) continued this tradition, and continue to offer profound lessons for the research community. Somewhat later the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) model (Venkatesh et al., 2003) was developed through the synthesis of eight contributing models. UTAUT uses empirical data to validate and refine the relationships between constructs, in a manner common to Newton, Darwin and Einstein. However, unlike its predecessors the UTAUT model aims to explain user intentions and subsequent behaviour in response to the model. The interactive relationship between the UTAUT model and its users was identified as being especially useful for this research, particularly through the iterative development and

refinement stages when contributions from practitioners were being sought, and expected to inform ongoing model development. Accepting this guidance from past research the conventional scientific model-building process was used to develop the organisational excellence architecture (OEA) model and achieve the aims and objectives set for this research.

The method for developing the initial OEA conceptual model is characterised by iterative refinement, integration of knowledge, and extensive collaboration with experts. One whereby the constant pursuit of parsimony is upheld, while being drawn from reliable observations; maintaining explanatory and predicative abilities; and, being able to be refined.

The process began with a comprehensive literature review (Chapter two) with the aim to explore the extant state of business excellence research—in particular implementation—ensuring that the model was grounded in current BE knowledge and the latest BE practices. BE experts’ insights were considered critical to align the model with real-world application, enhancing its practical relevance. This collaborative and evidence-based approach exemplifies the dynamic nature of model building, highlighting the necessity of continuous adaptation and refinement to meet the emerging challenges and opportunities. Figure 3.1 depicts the process used to develop the initial conceptual (OEA) model presented in this research. An explanation of each of the iterations of the OEA model building process now follows.

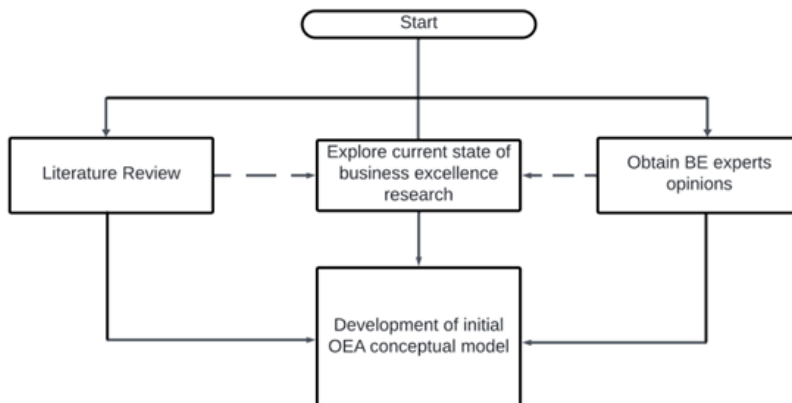


Figure 3.1: OEA model building process.

3.2. First iteration – From the literature

A literature review offers a powerful tool to identify gaps in existing knowledge. By critically examining documented research, new theories (Hulland, 2020; Jaakkola, 2020) may emerge from what at that stage is a largely inductive process. The OEA model is an integrated

framework conceived to unite different aspects of BE implementation identified within the BE and TQM bodies of knowledge. However, the process began with a deductive analysis, identifying key enablers and barriers critical to implementing BE in an organisation. Each of which were reviewed in Chapter Two. That analysis revealed a constant reference to the importance of organisational resources; key processes (i.e., training, communication, and action planning); internal structure; and, assessment. These four attributes subsequently form the key elements (hereinafter components) of the model.

Relationship between the OEA components

According to Alrabadi et al. (2023), Karambelkar and Bhattacharya (2021) and, Porter and Tanner (2012) BE implementation acts as an organisation-wide improvement system integrating improvement activities into the organisation’s operating framework. Therefore, while each component of BE implementation is presented as being standalone, they are interconnected (bound within the organisations), through which BE maturity is achieved. In addition to these components, a set of factors, including the maturity level of an organisation, size and sector, and the urgency or speed in which the organisation wants to implement excellence also emerged from the literature review. The four components and four factors, a total of eight attributes, then provide the basis of the preliminary OEA model (Figure 3.2).

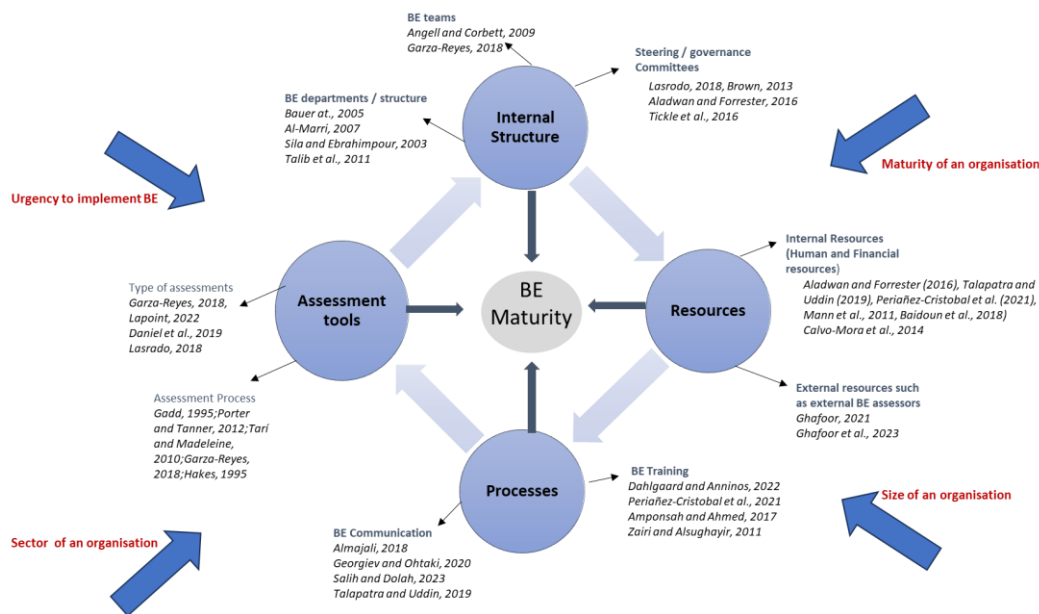


Figure 3.2: OEA model building – First iteration.

The components appear to be largely internally related attributes of BE implementation. Whereas the factors are BE attributes relative to an organisation’s context and its competitors.

Consequently they were eventually arranged in continuous but concentric “rings”, albeit the first as a circle with other as a square frame.

3.3. Second iteration – Engagement with BE experts

Expert opinion is valuable due to its potential to enhance the credibility and validation of study. Jeremy and Duncan (1995) offer insights into the practical application of theoretical models, and identify gaps or areas for improvement (Burgman, 2016; Petropoulos et al., 2022). Fifteen recognisable BE experts from Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, the USA and the UAE were contacted to determine the need for research on BE implementation and to provide feedback on the initial BE conceptual model through formal email requests. These experts were leading academics, consultants and practitioners selected based on their experience in business excellence. These experts, consisting of leading academics, consultants, and practitioners, were selected based on their extensive experience in business excellence. They were asked questions on: 1) the importance of conducting research to explore the OEA, 2) the components and structure of the OEA model, 3) the definition of the OEA, and 4) any other changes they wished to propose for the model and its definition. Experts were invited to participate in online interviews via Zoom or Teams if further clarification or information was needed. This iterative feedback loop between the researcher and expert engagement was found critical in ensuring the model's robustness and applicability.

With their extensive knowledge and practical experience, the BE experts offered perspectives on the model enriching the research and ensuring it was also theoretically sound and applicable in real-world settings: The much needed practitioner lens. Their guidance helped formulate the OEA model; refine the definitions of the eight attributes; and, shape the direction for further model refinement. The OEA conceptual model is presented in Figure 3.3. The model is a synthesis of the different attributes and presented as a coherent framework that may systematically guide organisations toward and through their respective journeys of BE. In doing so it is grounded in extant knowledge; is parsimonious; has explanatory ability – where are we now; predictive capacity – what needs to be done; and, can be further modified as new knowledge is contributed.

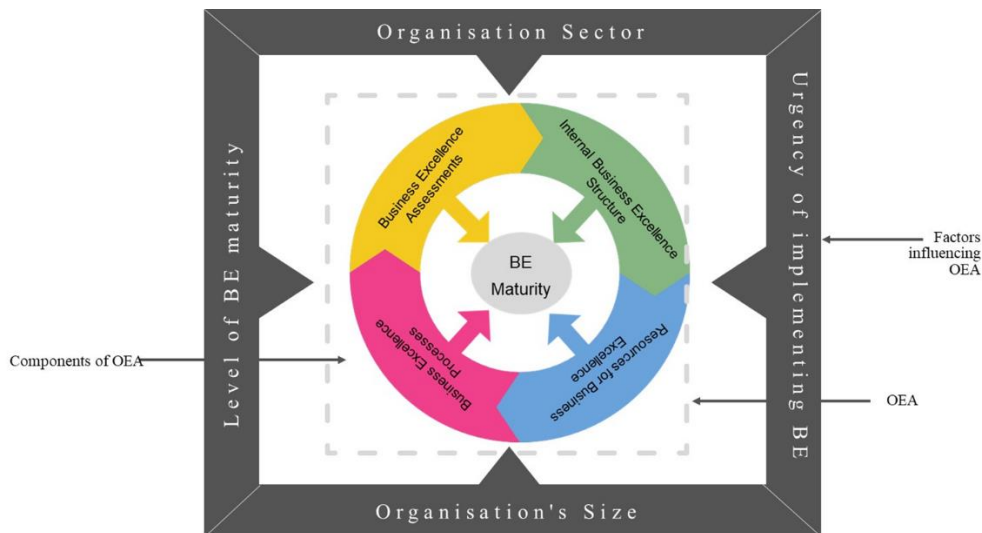


Figure 3.3: OEA conceptual model.

3.4. OEA conceptual model – Definition and scope

OEA is defined as the formal support structure, resources, processes, and assessment tools used to assist the organisation’s implementation of BE. As presented in Figure 3.3, the inner circle represents the four interrelated OEA attributes – components - impacting an organisation's BE maturity. The outer frame represents the four factors that could impact on the OEA and the deployment decisions of the OEA internal components. Each component and each factor of the OEA model are now discussed.

3.5. OEA components

The OEA components refer to the internal attributes required for successful BE implementation.

Internal Business Excellence structure

The component of internal BE structure explores how organisational structures are arranged to facilitate BE activities within an organisation and how these structures are supported by senior leadership. This includes internal structures, such as, dedicated BE teams and departments. The internal BE structure is also expected to include how BE organisations deploy improvement teams and steering committees to facilitate and oversee their business excellence activities.

Resources for Business Excellence

This component focuses on how BE resources, including internal and those externally acquired, are used to implement BE within an organisation.

Internal BE resources: Internal BE resources refer to the human and financial BE resources dedicated to BE activities and improvement initiatives. Personnel resources refer to BE-trained employees working on different BE initiatives, such as, BE assessments and related improvement initiatives. Financial resources refer to the dedicated budget allocated to different BE activities, such as, BE training, assessments, award preparation and other BE activities. Together, these resources facilitate smooth BE implementation.

External BE resources: External resources refer to those resources drawn on from outside an organisation, that are used on an as needed basis. In the BE community, BE experts and consultants both are influential and relatively commonplace in promoting and implementing BE within an organisation. They provide expert support on BE activities, such as, BE training, assessments, award application preparation, benchmarking and other general advisory support to facilitate BE implementation. In the OEA model, these consultants while being considered external, namely, not employees once engaged are expected to be critical to an organisation's BE journey.

Business Excellence processes

The BE processes component of OEA refers to those processes critical to BE implementation. In the scope of the OEA model, processes include BE education and training, action planning and internal BE communication processes, each of which are now explained.

BE training and education: BE training and education refers to the training and education provided to employees to improve internal organisational capabilities and implement sustained BE. BE training includes basic and advanced BE assessment training and training on BE/quality management tools, such as, benchmarking and Six Sigma, among others.

Action planning process: The action planning process refers to the formal planning process following a BE assessment. It involves systematically developing and implementing strategies and initiatives to address identified areas for improvement within an organisation.

Internal BE communication: Internal BE communication refers to strategically disseminating BE information, knowledge, and practices within an organisation. The BE communication process is vital for sharing BE knowledge, promoting BE culture, and engaging with organisation-wide employees on BE-related information.

Business Excellence assessment

BE assessment in the OEA model refers to an organisation's assessment process to identify their current state of BE maturity and improvement opportunities through one of the widely recognised BE models, for example, the MBNQA or the EFQM. BE assessment appears to be a key process for achieving excellence. However, due to the scope and importance of BE assessments in BE research, BE assessment is referred to as a standalone component of the OEA and is investigated accordingly. This component refers to what type of assessment organisations choose to assess their strengths and areas of improvement; the frequency (how often the organisation chooses to be assessed); and, scope (such as, to evaluate only a few departments or cover the entire organisation) of business excellence assessment.

3.6. OEA factors

The literature review identified four factors in addition to the four OEA components, a total of eight (8) attributes. These factors include an organisation's BE maturity, its size and sector, and the urgency with which it plans to implement BE.

BE maturity refers to the organisation's maturity regarding people and operational excellence when planning for BE implementation. The existing BE maturity level of an organisation is expected to influence the organisation's strategy towards implementation. Similarly, the size of the organisation, such as, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) or large multinational corporations (MNCs), could also impact the management approach towards implementing BE due to the different logistics, design and resource availability. The assumption here is that larger organisations are expected to be more resource rich. The sector within which the organisation operates (and competes) may also influence the OEA deployment due to the different organisational settings of private, public, and not-for-profit organisation, in addition to the respective industry. The speed at which organisations would like to implement BE and deploy their OEA also included in the OEA conceptual model.

The OEA model presented in Figure 3.3. is best regarded as a framework. Each of the attributes, in particular the four components are composite variables (Dubin, 1976). Consequently, in containing both epistemic proposition and explanatory elements (Meredith, 1993) it is classified as a framework. With that there comes the need for both parsimony (Guizzardi, 2005) on the one hand and generalisability (Moody, 2005) on the other. The OEA model depicts the various attributes comprising an ideal organisational excellence architecture. They are presented in a manner that reflects their relative proximity to one another in the literature and that resonates with practitioners. At this point in the research it is a ‘best’ representation of OEA and expected to be modified as the research progresses.

3.7. Model improvement process

Model improvement processes ensure that theoretical models remain relevant and effective in addressing complex real-world problems. Following the development of the initial OEA conceptual model, the research design was formulated to engage the wider BE community through online surveys and optional structured interviews. Figure 3.4 shows the complete view of the OEA model building process used in this research.

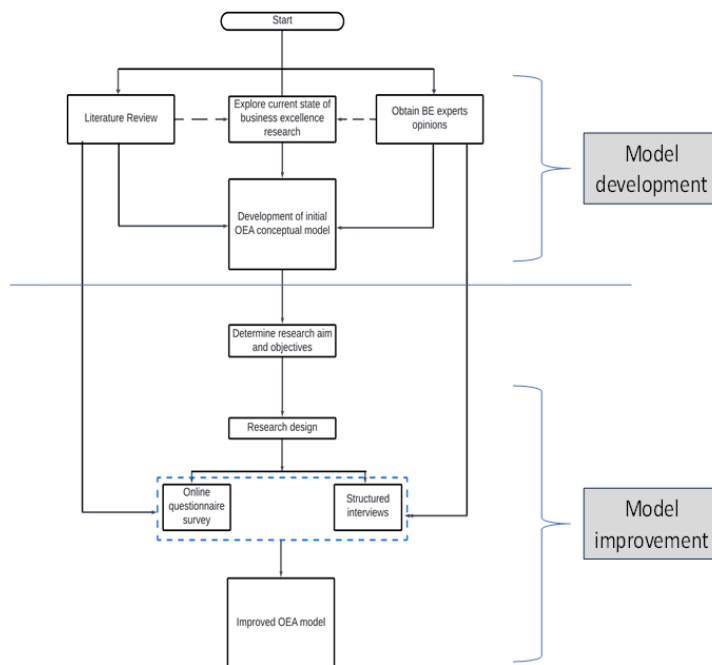


Figure 3.4: OEA model improvement process.

In total, 50 BE-practicing organisations from 17 countries contributed to the research. Out of these 50 organisations, 20 organisations opted-in to structured interviews through which to

share their BE practices, approaches and views on the OEA model. This phase of the research was critical as it aimed to refine the initial model through deliberately greater engagement with organisations actively implementing BE: A process dated to the early contributors on model building, such as, Newton, Darwin and Einstein.

Chapter 4. The development of an organisational excellence architecture model to support the implementation of business excellence

4.0. Addendum

Introduction: This addendum to the following four chapters provides additional detail to that presented to that in the publications. Of note an overview of the participating organisations, including their sectors, geographical locations, and the various BE models these organisations employ to improve their performance is provided. As this thesis is presented in a 'thesis with publication' format, information about the research participants is only briefly discussed in Chapters Four through Seven. This addendum consolidates and expands upon those details and offers a more comprehensive profile of the study's participant organisations than that required by the publishing journals.

A detailed analysis of the sectoral distribution, geographical representation, and BE models used by the participating organisations is presented. This profile provides the necessary context to the research findings and illustrates the adaptability of the OEA model across different organisational settings and their various maturity levels.

Sectoral distribution of participants: The research participants represent a reasonably balanced distribution across public and private sectors (see Figure 4.1), with a majority belonging to the Public Sector (53%), followed by the Private Sector (45%), and a smaller representation from the Not-for-Profit sector (2%). This distribution provided a well-rounded perspective on BE implementation practices, although it is skewed towards the public as opposed to privates sectors, supporting the refinement of the OEA model.

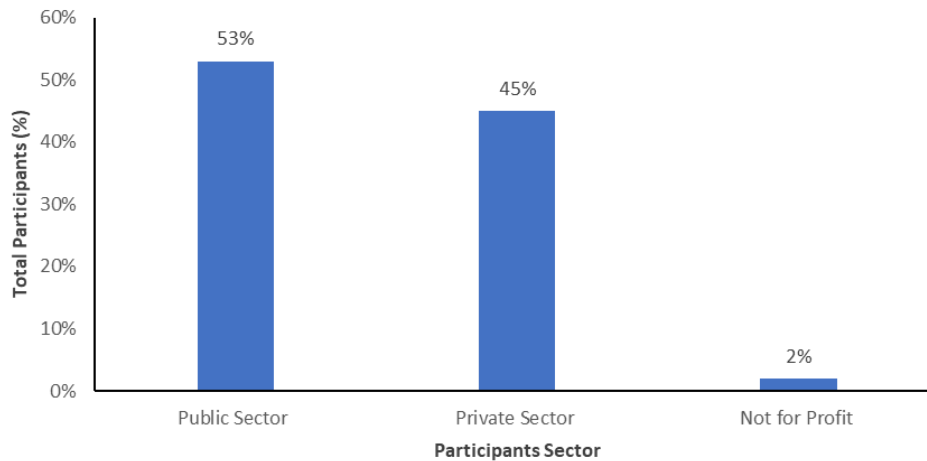


Figure 4.1: Sectoral distribution of participants.

Business Excellence Models used by respondents: The variety of BE models used by the participants (depicted in Figure 4.2) underscores the study’s comprehensive and global scope. Supported by the Global Excellence Model (GEM) Council, Dubai Government Excellence Program and the EFQM, this research includes a high representation of organisations following the EFQM (33%). This is followed by significant adoption of the Dubai Government Excellence Model and the Singapore Business Excellence Framework. The Baldrige Excellence Framework is represented, with 13% of participants using it, alongside smaller representations of other models such as the Swedish Institute for Quality (SIQ) Management Model and the Australian Business Excellence Framework. By capturing a wide range of leading BE models, this study demonstrates that the OEA model developed through this research is relevant and effective in varied operational and cultural contexts, addressing organisations' unique challenges and strategic goals worldwide.

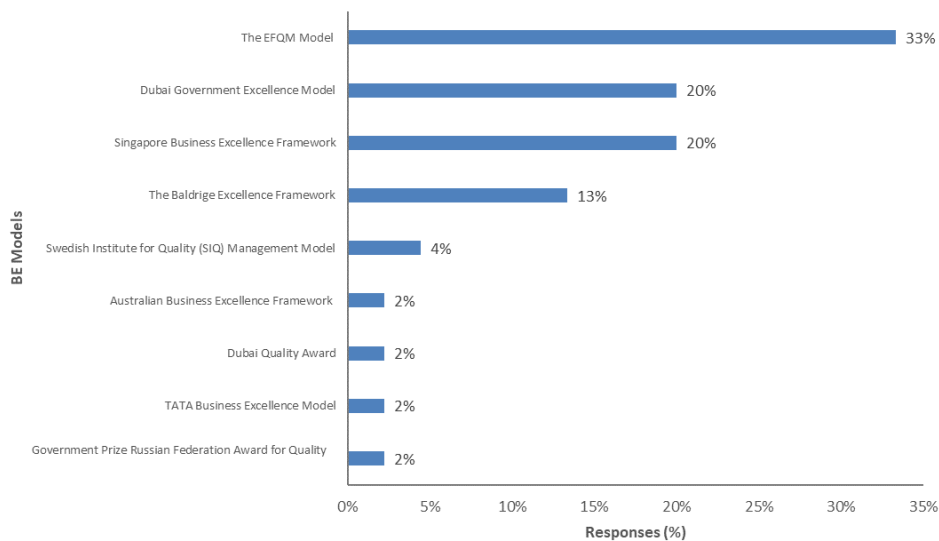


Figure 4.2: The Business Excellence Models used by research participants.

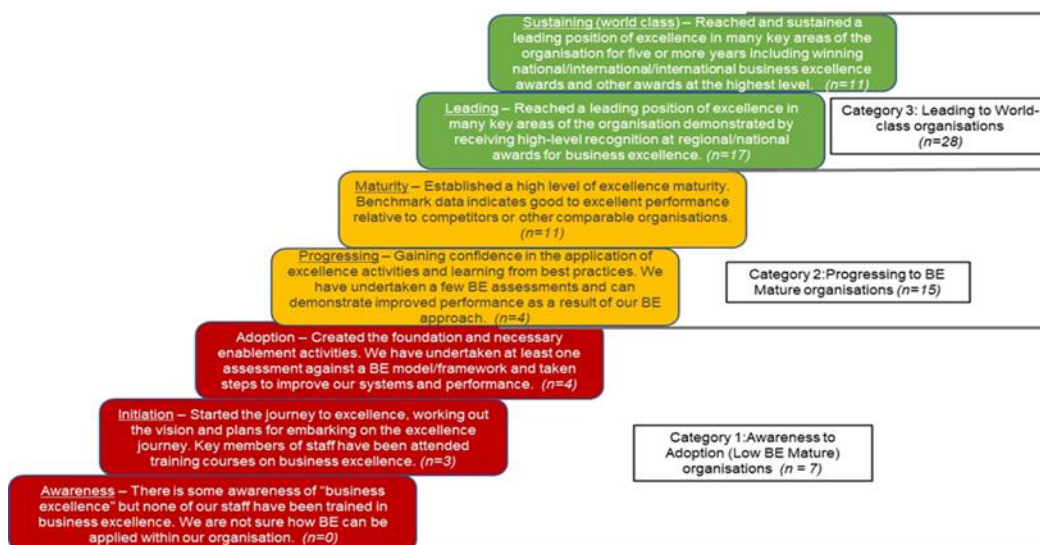
BE maturity levels of participants: In this research, an organisation's BE maturity refers to the degree to which it has embedded BE practices into its operations, culture, and strategic approach. This maturity is often assessed against established BE models, such as the Baldrige Performance Excellence Framework or the EFQM Excellence Model.

The research explores the OEA supporting award-winning BE maturity. To achieve the research objectives, the conventional seven-stage BE maturity model was used. Survey respondents self-identified their organisation's BE maturity stage by selecting the option that best described their level of maturity in response to the survey question. Based on their selections, which aligned with one of the seven maturity levels shown in Figure 4.3, participants were further grouped into three broader subcategories for statistical analysis and presentation. These subcategories include Awareness to Adoption (Low BE Mature); Progressing to BE Mature, consisting of organisations at the 'Progressing' or 'Maturity' stages; and Leading to World-class, representing those at the 'Leading' or 'Sustaining (world-class)' stages. The description of each sub-category is explained in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: BE maturity continuum and sub-categorisation

BE Maturity (Subcategories)	Description	Sample Size (n)
<i>Awareness to Adoption (referred to as Low BE Mature)</i>	This category comprises organisations that selected the 'Awareness,' 'Initiation,' or 'Adoption' stages in response to the survey question.	7
<i>Progressing to BE Mature</i>	This category comprises organisations that selected the 'Progressing' or 'Maturity' stages in response to the survey question.	15
<i>Leading to World-class</i>	This category comprises organisations that selected the 'Leading' or 'Sustaining (world-class)' stages in response to the survey question.	28

Each of the seven levels of BE maturity, a brief description, and the subcategories used in this research are presented on Figure 4.3. Due to its importance, this graph is reproduced in each standalone published or ready-to-be-published articles to explain the BE maturity levels of research participants.

**Figure 4.3: BE Maturity Levels of Participants**

Out of the 50 organisations (respondents) involved in the study, 20 voluntarily agreed to participate in optional structured interviews. These interviews provided deeper insights into the respondents' experiences, challenges, and successes in implementing BE practices. Table 4.2 summarises the distribution of these organisations across the three BE maturity categories and their corresponding participation in the structured interviews. Notably, 65% of Leading to

World-Class organisations participated in the interviews (13 out of 28), while 35% of Progressing to BE Mature Organisations (7 out of 15) opted in for the interviews. This highlights a stronger engagement from organisations with higher BE maturity levels, reflecting their greater interest in sharing their BE implementation experiences and best practices.

Table 4.2: Research participants by maturity levels.

Maturity levels	Number of organisations participated in the survey	The number of organisations also participated in structured interviews	Percentage of organisations participated in structured interviews
Leading to World-class Organisations	28	13	65%
Progressing to BE Mature Organisations	15	7	35%
Low BE Mature Organisations	7	0	0%
Total (<i>n</i>)	50	20	100%

The structured interviews provided a valuable opportunity to identify best practices from the respondent BE mature organisations. These insights are presented in further detail in Chapters Five through Seven.

4.1. Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to address a critical gap in the existing literature on business excellence implementation. While various studies have examined different aspects of business excellence, there is still a lack of comprehensive research on the optimal organisational excellence architecture (OEA) for an award-winning business excellence journey. The absence of a unified framework has led to inconsistent practices across organisations. The aim of this research based on data collected from 50 organisations across 17 countries is to address this gap and present a refined OEA model.

Design/methodology/approach: This study employed quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. Member organisations from the Global Excellence Model (GEM) Council participated through an online survey administered via the Qualtrics software platform. Quantitative data were analysed using the SPSS and Microsoft Excel software tools, while content analysis techniques were applied to the qualitative data to gain detailed insights.

Findings: The findings refine and extend the OEA model. These contributions lead to a refined OEA definition and open avenues for future research, enriching the current understanding of BE implementation.

Originality/value: This study introduces a novel concept of OEA to the literature on business excellence implementation. The refined OEA model provides a fresh perspective on the critical components necessary for an award-winning business excellence journey. This research offers significant value to both practitioners and academics by presenting a unified approach to BE implementation, effectively addressing the previously identified gap in BE research.

4.2. Introduction

There has been a lack of research on the implementation of Business Excellence (BE). Consequently, the organisational excellence architecture (OEA) required to achieve a high level of BE maturity is largely confined to the tacit knowledge of the respective businesses. The aim of this research is to contribute to the process of BE implementation by developing and refining an OEA model. The concept of BE refers to achieving “excellence” in strategies, business practices and stakeholder-related performance results that have been validated by assessments using proven Business Excellence Models (BEMs) (Adebanjo & Mann, 2008). Originating in the late 1980s, BE was operationalized through BEMs, such as, the Baldrige Excellence Framework (administered by the National Institute of Science and Technology,

United States) and the EFQM Model (administered by the European Foundation for Quality Management) among others. Some 70 countries are now actively promoting business excellence through awards and/or initiatives (Ghafoor & Mann, 2023). While BEMs offer comprehensive frameworks for world-class performance (Alanazi, 2021; Alrabadi et al., 2023; Zapletalova, 2023) they often lack effective implementation guidelines (Bolboli et al., 2013) and in doing so posing significant challenges (Brown, 2013a). The present study builds on the authors' existing research to refine an OEA model, using data from 50 respondents across 17 countries.

The paper is structured as follows: literature review, introduction of the OEA conceptual model, research aims and objectives, methodology, results, discussion and conclusion.

4.3. Literature review

This section presents a discussion of the current state of research on BE implementation and focuses on components and factors critical for BE implementation.

4.3.1. State of current BE implementation research

BE implementation literature can be categorized into several research domains, including BE practices by sector (Fahimi & Amirabadi, 2024; Gomez-Lopez et al., 2019), industry (Parast & Safari, 2023; Tsiotras et al., 2016) and geography (Salih & Dolah, 2023; Chawla & Joshi, 2011), as well as the design and impact of BEMs (Escrig & de Menezes, 2016; Gomez-Lopez et al., 2019). Furthermore, literature has examined the implementation barriers for BE and total quality management (TQM), categorizing them into four main components: *resources, internal structure, processes and assessment approaches*.

Regarding resources, both BE, and TQM implementations require substantial human and financial resources commitment (Para-Gonzalez et al., 2022; Tari et al., 2023). Beyond internal human resources, the role of external resources such as consultants has also been emphasized in effective BE implementation (Ghafoor et al., 2023; Lasrado & Uzbek, 2017). While resources form the foundation, the internal structure ensures endurance in BE implementation. Researchers such as Bauer et al. (2005) and Lasrado (2018) emphasized the need for a dedicated supporting organisational structure, including BE teams, departments and committees to oversee BE activities. This robust internal structure coordinates and oversees BE activities (Evans et al., 2012; Tickle et al., 2016).

BE implementation transforms an organisation's strategic aspirations into concrete actions. These actions are viewed as a set of internal processes that bring strategy into action. The literature identifies key processes such as internal BE communication (Allan et al., 2000; Baidoun et al., 2018; Brown, 2013b; Salih & Dolah, 2023), training (Al-Majali & Almhira, 2018; Hchaichi, 2023; Leonard & McAdam, 2002) and action planning (Kamal, 2023; Pattison, 2011) as instrumental for the successful execution of BE strategies. BE assessments, identified as the fourth essential component, serve to enable systematic performance monitoring (Angell & Corbett, 2009; Araujo & Sampaio, 2014; Metaxas et al., 2019; Rangsunoguen et al., 2023). These assessments can be classified as being either internal (self-assessments) or external (Aleu, 2018; Mann et al., 2012). Notwithstanding their importance, these assessments come with challenges, such as the complexity of paperwork (Dahlgaard et al., 2013) and the resource constraints (Ritchie & Dale, 2000) associated with BE assessments.

Beyond these four core components, some other factors also influence successful BE implementation. For instance, organisations with higher BE maturity levels require different BE implementation strategies than those at lower levels (Negron, 2020; Bolboli et al., 2015; Mohammad et al., 2011; Tickle et al., 2016). Similarly, the size of the organisation requires a different BE/TQM implementation approach as large organisations face different challenges, such as complexity, compared to SMEs that deal with resource limitations and a lack of formal management structures (Adeyemi et al., 2014; Bagheri et al., 2019; Garza-Reyes, 2018; Sila, 2007). The organisational sector also plays a significant role: private sector entities primarily focus on financial goals, whereas public sector organisations often face institutional hurdles (Al-Tabbaa et al., 2013; Eriksson, 2016; Gomes et al., 2019; Hchaichi, 2023). Lastly, the urgency or speed of BE implementation has also emerged as a critical factor for agile and adaptable strategies (Carvalho et al., 2017; Mann et al., 2012; Saleh & Watson, 2017). Swift and progressive BE implementation strategies are essential in times when rapid change is required, for instance, in times of crisis or to meet ambitious targets.

Despite extensive scientific inquiry into BE, the literature lacks a unified view of BE implementation. BEMs tend to be non-prescriptive, leaving organisations to decide on BE implementation strategies without specific operational guidelines. Studies such as those by Bolboli et al. (2013) and Lasrado and Uzbeck (2017) highlight this gap and stress the need for comprehensive research to guide both practice and academia. With a clear understanding of the gaps in the current literature, this study introduces a novel concept of OEA aimed at

providing a unified, comprehensive perspective on BE implementation. The development of the OEA model and its refinement are now discussed.

Development of the conceptual model

The OEA conceptual model offers a unified perspective on BE implementation (Figure 4.5), as introduced in Chapter 3. This study dives deeper into the potential for refining the OEA conceptual model and presenting an improved OEA model.

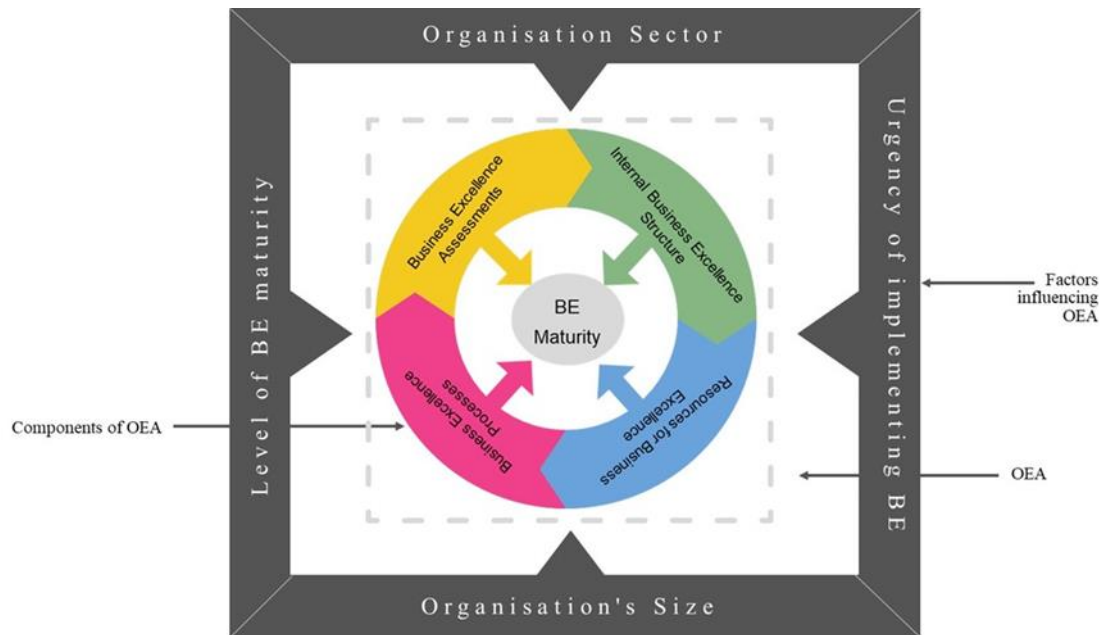


Figure 4.4: OEA conceptual model.

The research aims and objectives

The aim of this study is to refine the OEA conceptual model through the inclusion and synthesis of feedback collected from research respondents. The objectives of this study are as follows:

- (1) To understand the importance of BE implementation research from the research respondents' perspective.
- (2) To refine the components of OEA using research respondents' inputs.
- 3) To refine the factors of OEA using research respondents' inputs.
- (4) To refine the definition of OEA using research respondents' inputs.
- (5) To develop an improved OEA model.

4.4. Methods

This section outlines the study's methodology, covering research scope, sample selection, instrument development, data collection and data analysis approaches.

Research scope¹

The primary aim of this study was to refine and develop an improved OEA model. Utilizing quantitative and qualitative research approaches, the study leverages quantitative methods for robustness and generalizability, complemented by qualitative methods for detailed insights (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). A survey serves as the primary data collection tool, followed by structured interviews. While comprehensive findings from the interviews are reserved for future publications, select insights are integrated into this paper.

Research sample

For validity, the study targeted organisations using BEMs endorsed by the Global Excellence Model (GEM) Council². BE award-winning organisations constituted the primary research sample as these organisations are most likely to have an effective OEA and have experienced the full spectrum of BE maturity. To enable a comparative analysis of BE implementation strategies, the study also included organisations at different stages of their BE maturity, specifically those that had undergone at least one BE assessment. With support from the GEM Council and the EFQM, the study gained access to their member organisations. As a result, 50 organisations from 17 countries (Figure 4.6) participated in the research.

¹ The present study forms part of a broader doctoral research project, and as such, it does not encompass an in-depth examination of the OEA conceptual model development. The detailed exploration and discourse on the OEA conceptual model development will be presented in a separate paper at the later part of the research.

² The Global Excellence Model (GEM) Council is comprised of organisations internationally recognized as BE Custodians of leading Excellence Models and Award mechanisms within their respective geographical regions, areas or trade blocks.

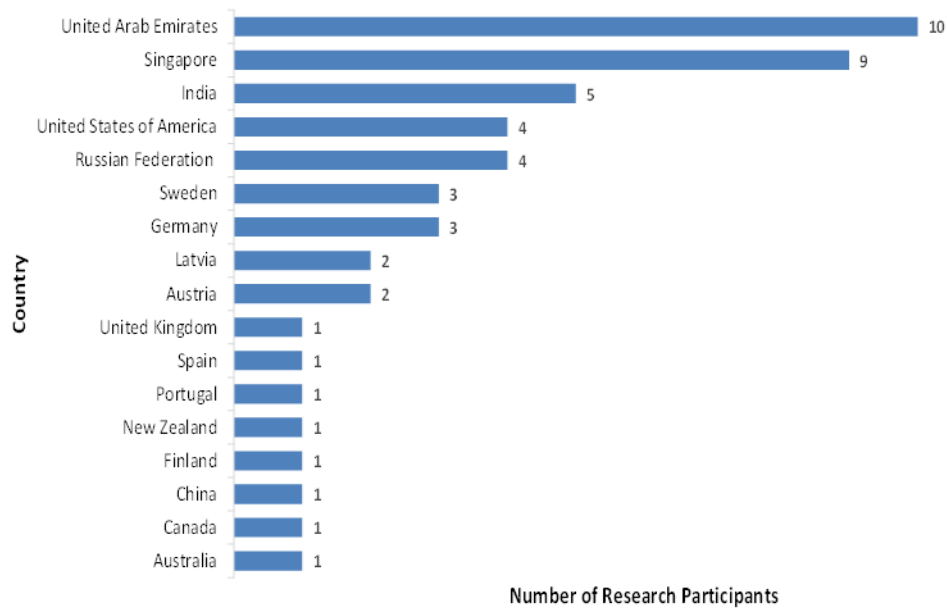


Figure 4.5: Research participants by country (n=50).

Respondents categorization as per their BE maturity levels

The study's seven-stage BE maturity model was based on frameworks outlined in past research (Mohammad et al., 2011; Tickle et al., 2016). Survey respondents were prompted to self-identify their organisation's stage of BE maturity with the question: *'How would you describe your organisation's level of BE maturity? Please select the one that applies'*. Based on their responses, which corresponded to one of the seven BE maturity levels (as shown in Figure 4.7), respondents were then categorized into three subcategories for statistical analysis and presentation; the subcategories are:

Awareness to Adoption (referred to as Low BE Mature, n=7): This category comprises organisations that selected the *'Awareness,' 'Initiation,'* or *'Adoption'* stages in response to the survey question.

Progressing to BE Mature (n=15): This category comprises organisations that selected the *'Progressing'* or *'Maturity'* stages in response to the survey question.

Leading to World-class (n=28): This category comprises organisations that selected the *'Leading'* or *'Sustaining (world-class)'* stages in response to the survey question.

All relevant findings of the research are presented as per these three categories. The use of this categorization allowed a comprehensive – granular - analysis of BE maturity at various BE stages, such as from Low BE mature to Leading to World class.

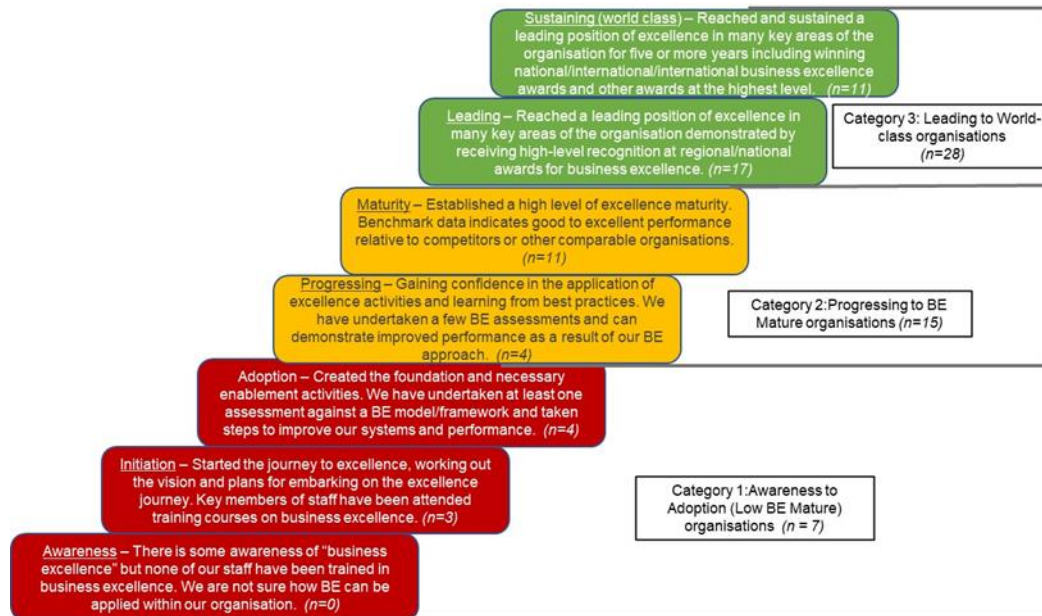


Figure 4.6: Levels of BE maturity.

Developing the survey and the structured interview instrument

The survey instrument was designed to align with the study’s research objectives, focusing on the core elements of BE implementation (see Appendix B). These elements were adapted from the literature and informed by research conducted by Mann et al. (2011) and Tickle et al. (2016).

The survey consisted of six sections featuring fixed alternative questions for quantitative data collection. Respondents also had the option to provide additional insights via open ended questions at the end of each section.

Several iterations of development were pursued to achieve effective survey reliability and validity. Initially, a draft version was circulated among 15 leading BE custodians³, researchers and practitioners, for their feedback. Their input was instrumental in refining the survey items. Subsequently, ethical clearance for the study was secured from the researchers’ host institution, further affirming the survey’s compliance with research ethical standards. Qualtrics software

³ BE Custodians are organisations that are responsible for a variety of activities, such as developing BE models and promoting, facilitating and awarding BE in their countries (Grigg and Mann, 2008).

was chosen for online data collection due to its user-friendly capabilities and secure data storage features.

Data collection

BE organisations were approached through both direct and indirect approaches. For the direct approach, the Centre for Organisational Excellence Research (COER) at Massey University, New Zealand, utilized direct contacts of their existing clients, including previous BE award-winning organisations. As per the indirect approach, organisations were invited via their respective BECs. Five BECs, including the EFQM, agreed to participate and a formal invitation email with the survey link was provided for them to share with their member organisations. Qualtrics software was chosen for online data collection.

The research respondents comprised BE practitioners responsible for BE implementation within their respective organisations. After completing the survey, which produced valuable quantitative data, many of these respondents also engaged in follow-up interviews. The follow-up research interview invitation was extended as part of the survey. Out of the 50 organisations, 20 (40%) opted to participate in follow-up interviews. These structured interviews aimed to enrich the survey findings with deeper qualitative data.

This interview process yielded in-depth qualitative insights. Collectively, the data from both the survey and interviews deepened the authors' understanding of OEA in BE practicing organisations and subsequently aided in the refinement of the model.

Data analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS software and Microsoft Excel. The data were segregated into independent variables, which represented the components of OEA, and dependent variables, corresponding to the respondents' BE maturity levels. Descriptive statistics were presented in the form of bar graphs, while multinomial regression analysis was employed to discern significant differences ($p < 0.05$) in approaches across different BE maturity stages.

The qualitative data gathered from open-ended questions and structured interviews was analysed using content analysis techniques, where the responses were coded and categorized to identify recurrent themes. These themes were then interpreted in the context of the study's objectives and the existing literature. The quantitative and qualitative results were carefully

examined based on prior research and discussed in relation to the corresponding research objective. This comprehensive data triangulation offered enriched information related to OEA model refinement and helped achieve the research objectives.

The following section presents the findings of the study, reporting both the quantitative and qualitative results to understand how BE organisations deploy their OEA.

4.5. Findings

This section outlines the study's findings, organised into four subsections, each corresponding to a specific research objective. It is noteworthy that Objective Five, "To develop an improved OEA model," is not represented by distinct results; instead, it pertains to the synthesis and analysis of findings generated from Objectives One to Four.

A comprehensive analysis of these findings is provided in the Discussion section, where Objective Five is also addressed as an integrative outcome of the research.

4.5.1. Objective 1: Understanding the perceived importance of research on BE implementation from a respondents' perspective

The survey aimed to gauge the perceived practical relevance of this research. Respondents were asked, "In your opinion, how important is it to conduct research on OEA? Additionally, would our research findings be useful to you and other organisations?" They were given five options to respond: Unimportant, Slightly important, Moderately important, Important and Very Important.

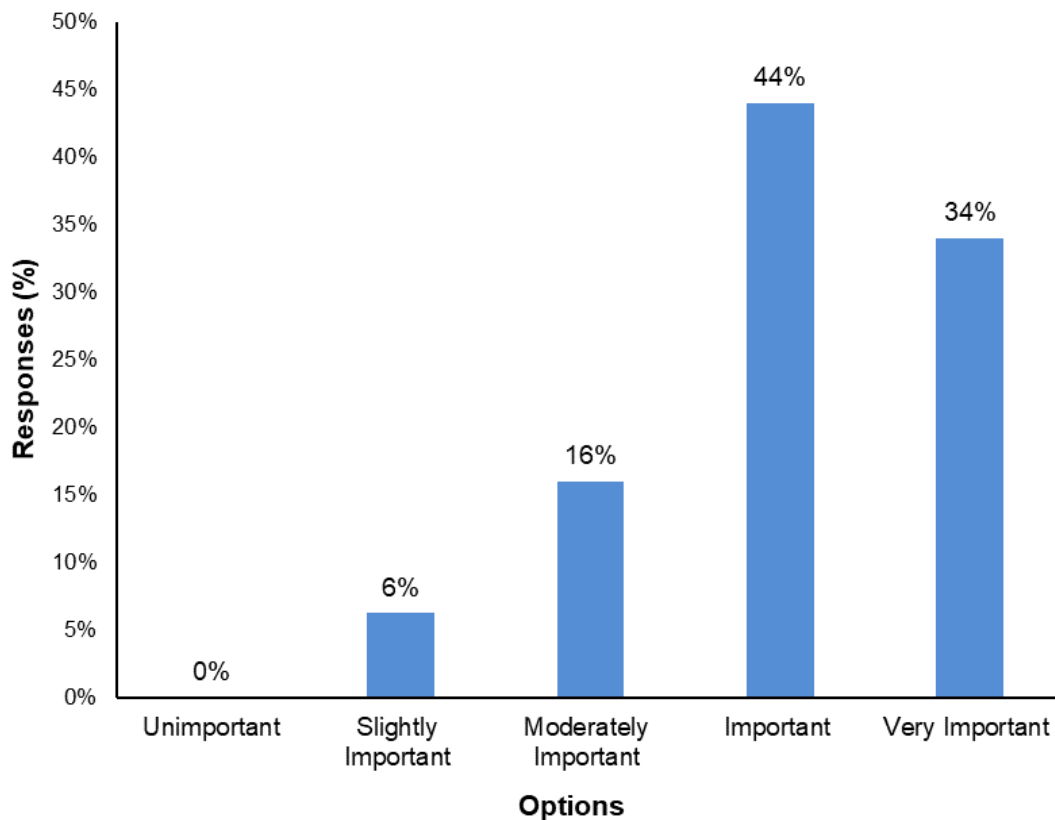


Figure 4.7: Perceived research importance.

Figure 4.8 highlights the respondents' perceived value of this research. As per the results received, 77% deemed the research as "important" (42%) or "very important" (35%). Meanwhile, 16% considered it "moderately important" and 6% saw it as "slightly important".

4.5.2. Objective 2: Refine the components of OEA using respondents' inputs

The results are organised into four subsections, each corresponding to a specific OEA component and related approaches at varying BE maturity levels. These are:

- (1) Internal BE Structure
- (2) Resources for BE
- (3) BE Processes
- (4) BE Assessment Approaches

For ease of interpretation, the bar graphs are color-coded: green represents “Leading to World-class Organisations,” amber denotes “Progressing to BE Mature,” and red indicates “Low BE Mature.” p-values were included where appropriate to indicate statistical significance. The following paragraphs share results for each OEA component.

Internal BE structure

Figure 4.9 illustrates the frequency with which various approaches of the internal BE structure are used at each maturity level. Concurrently, p-values are presented in the results to highlight statistically significant outcomes.

The findings indicate a differentiated approach to BE implementation among Leading to World-class organisations. Interestingly, 93% of these organisations identified their CEOs being pivotal in steering BE activities, compared to 60% ($p = 0.01$) and 29% ($p = 0.02$) in Progressing to BE Mature and Low BE Mature organisations, respectively. Similarly, 86% of Leading to Worldclass organisations reported full involvement of their directors and senior managers in BE activities, contrasting with 40% ($p = 0.004$) and 29% ($p = 0.007$) in the other two categories. Distinctive internal structures also emerged as differentiating factors. For example, 43% of Leading to World-class organisations have a BE Council/Committee overseeing BE-related activities, compared to 33 and 29% in the other two categories. Team size also proved a key differentiator; 57% ($p = 0.02$) of Low BE Mature organisations reported having small teams (five or fewer full-time members) working on BE initiatives in contrast to 14% in Leading to World-class organisations. Conversely, 32% of Leading to World-class organisations reported large teams (more than five full-time members), as opposed to 7% ($p = 0.08$) and 14% in the other two categories. These results suggest that effective leadership and organisational structure, coupled with adequate team size, are prevalent approaches among Leading to World-class organisations.

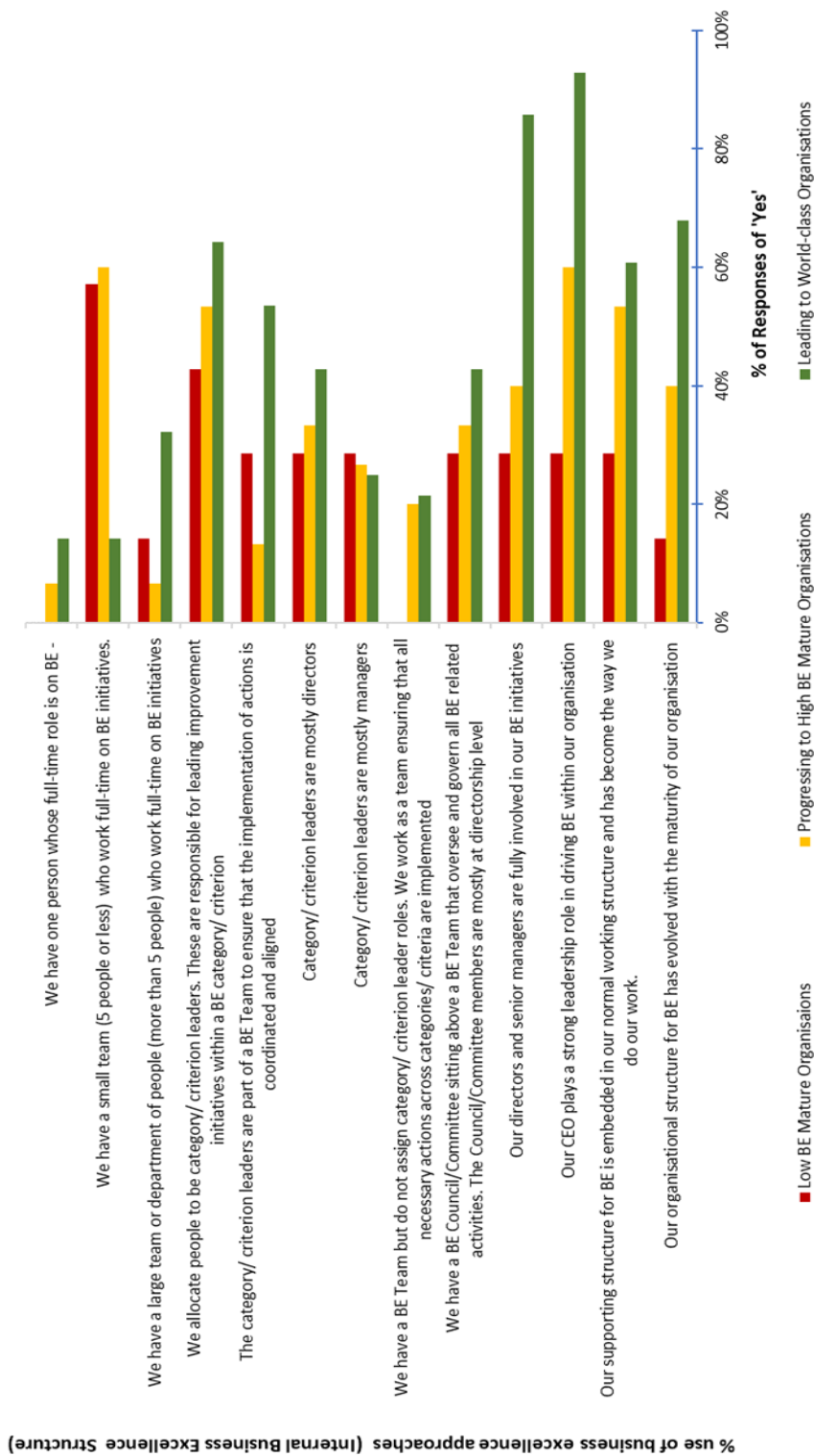


Figure 4.8: Use of BE approaches for internal structure at different BE maturity levels (n = 50).

Resources for BE

The findings reveal distinct patterns in resource deployment among organisations at different stages of BE maturity, as shown in Figure 4.10. As per the results, 61% of Leading to World-class organisations and 80% of Progressing to BE Mature organisations allocate dedicated financial resources to manage BE initiatives. In contrast, only 29% of “Low BE Mature” organisations allocate financial resources similarly.

Regarding external consultation, the data indicate that organisations largely maintain internal expertise for BE initiatives. Only 14% of Leading to World-class and 13% of Progressing to BE Mature organisations reported strong reliance on external consultants. Interestingly, none of the Low BE Mature organisations reported such dependency. However, the role of external consultants is notably present in specific areas such as training and/or assessment activities; 57% of Leading to World-class, 60% of Progressing to BE Mature and 43% of Low BE Mature organisations mentioned the deployment of consultants for specific BE-related activities.

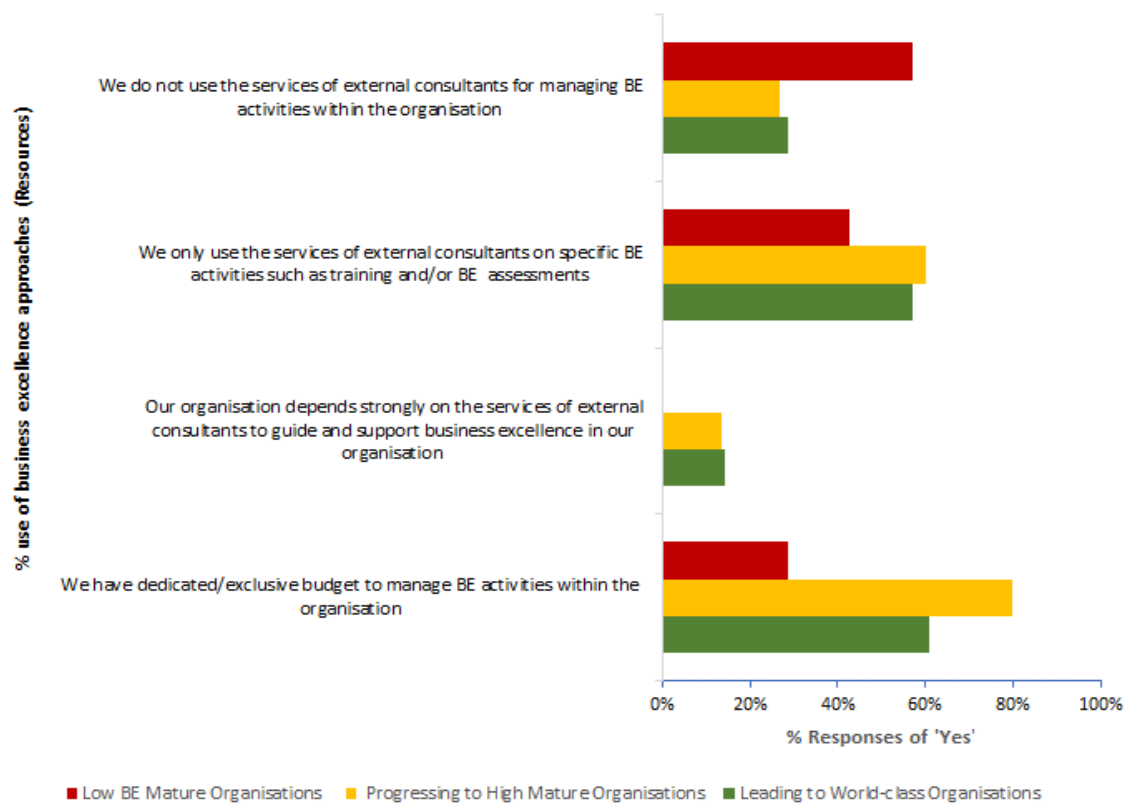


Figure 4.9: Use of BE approaches for BE resources at different BE maturity levels (n = 50).

The results suggest that Leading to World-class and Progressing to BE Mature organisations are more likely to allocate dedicated financial resources for BE initiatives.

BE processes

The results presented in Figure 4.11 outline the three principal processes integral to BE implementation: (1) *BE training*, (2) *Action planning* and (3) *BE-related internal communication*.

The data highlight distinct approaches adopted by Leading to World-class organisations in terms of BE processes. A salient feature is the emphasis on BE education and training. Specifically, 82% of Leading to World-class organisations ensure that their staff possess a basic understanding of BE. This contrasts markedly with Low BE Mature and Progressing to BE Mature organisations, where only 43% ($p = 0.04$) and 40% ($p = 0.007$), respectively, reported a basic level of staff BE understanding. Senior management engagement in BE promotion also emerges as a critical element. The data indicate that 79% of Leading to World-class organisations incorporate their senior management in BE-related events, compared to 33% ($p = 0.05$) of Progressing to BE Mature organisations and 43% ($p = 0.07$) of Low BE Mature organisations.

Interestingly, the same difference was observed in the questions related to setting up improvement teams. Only 14% ($p = 0.01$) of Low BE Mature organisations and 40% ($p = 0.04$) of Progressing to BE Mature organisations confirmed the deployment of improvement teams to work on improvement projects. However, 71% of respondents from Leading to World-class organisations mentioned that they set up improvement teams to work on BE initiatives.

In addition to the quantitative data presented in previous subsections, this section incorporates insights derived from open-ended questions and interviews. The information provided here is a synthesizes of the responses that shed light on two focal areas: *the excellence project selection process* and *the excellence knowledge sharing process*. The subsequent paragraphs detail these findings.

Excellence project selection process: Aligning excellence (improvement) projects with BE criteria is fundamental for BE implementation success. Interviews underscored the criticality of this strategic alignment, noting the pivotal role of project management in selecting and guiding projects conducive to BE. Respondents highlighted the necessity for rigorous approval,

monitoring and evaluation processes to maintain BE alignment, a sentiment echoed by multiple BE award-winning organisations and supported in informal discussions with BE experts.

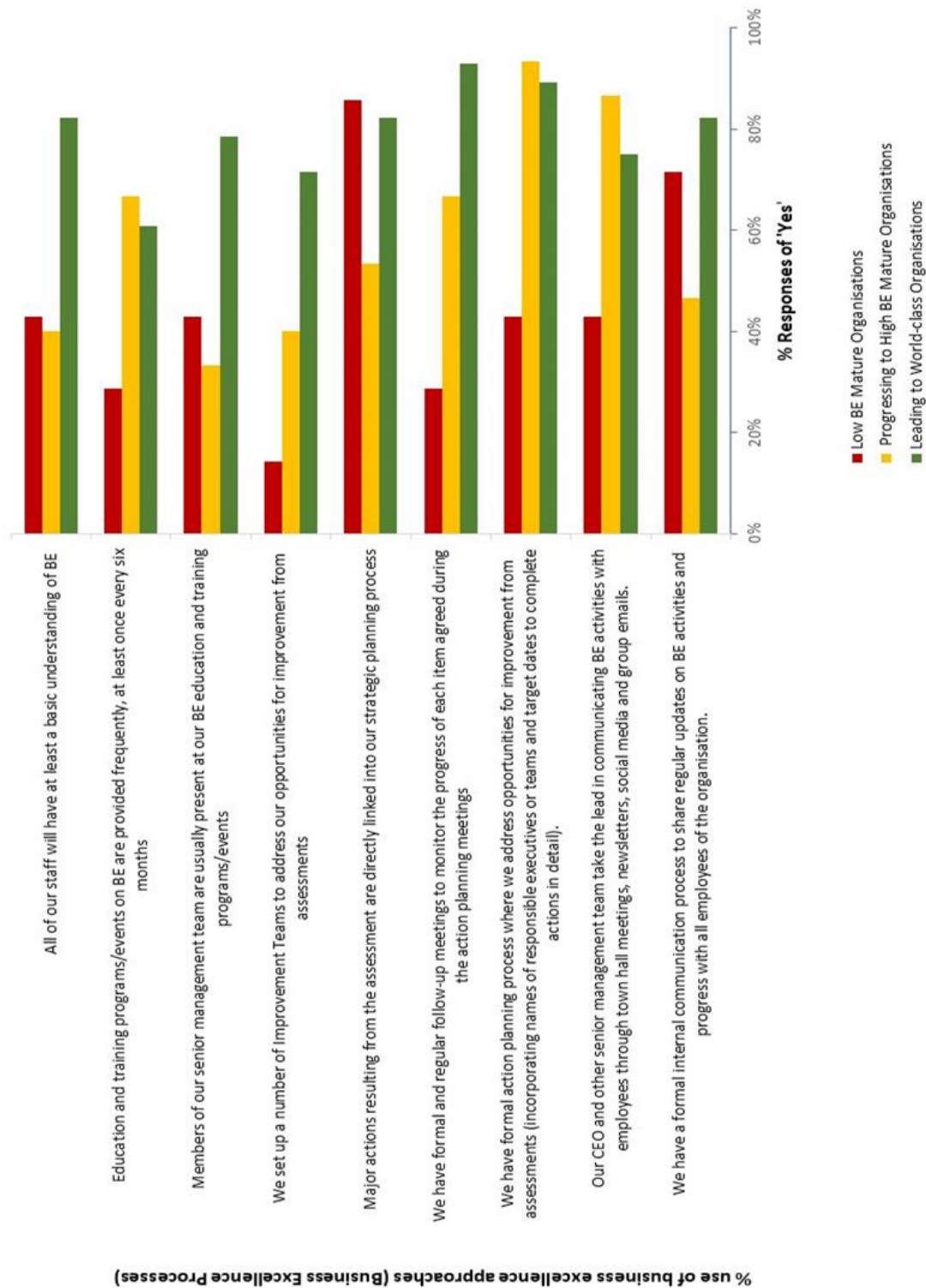


Figure 4.10: Use of BE approaches for BE processes at different BE maturity levels (n= 50).

Excellence knowledge sharing process: The role of knowledge sharing in cultivating a culture of excellence emerged as a theme amidst the research interviews. For instance, a Singaporean respondent identified the need to improve sharing across the organisation of OEA best practices. An award-winning BE Austrian organisation also provided an example of internal knowledge sharing of their OEA. The organisation learnt from when they successfully first introduced the EFQM model in 2003. They decided to follow a similar process when introducing the new EFQM Model in 2020. Both times, to ensure that the understanding of BE became deep among key individuals, four teams of staff were tasked with undertaking a BE assessment of their organisation. This process not only enhanced the understanding of BE among the team members but also with all the stakeholders they interacted with during the assessments. Once the organisation considered that a high level of understanding of the EFQM Model had been reached it then reverted to using a single BE assessment team. This approach helped the organisation improve internal communication as teams had to meet and coordinate with various stakeholders. Conducting internal BE assessments also served as a form of training, providing hands-on learning experiences for the staff across the organisation.

BE assessments

This subsection shares the results pertaining to the different BE assessment approaches adopted by organisations. BE approaches were examined in three different areas, as shown in Figure 4.12, the organisation's approach toward assessment, the scope of the assessments and the frequency of BE assessments.

The results highlight the significant differences in the BE assessment approaches at different levels of BE maturity. Most organisations, regardless of their level of BE maturity, undertake BE self-assessments, indicating their important role in assisting organisations in their BE journey. 93% of Leading to World-class organisations, 73% of Progressing to BE Mature organisations and 86% of Low BE Mature Organisations stated that they undertake internal (self) assessments.

Diverging assessment approaches were particularly evident in terms of frequency and scope. For example, 82% of Leading to World-class and 73% of Progressing to BE Mature organisations engage in regular assessments for national or regional awards. Conversely, none of the Low BE Mature organisations reported participating in such external assessments. Concerning the frequency of BE assessments, the majority of respondents from each maturity

group conduct these assessments annually. Specifically, 57% of Leading to World-class organisations, 47% of Progressing to BE Mature organisations and 43% of Low BE Mature organisations undertake annual assessments. On the other hand, a significant 43% of the Low BE Mature organisations ($p = 0.06$) indicated that they do not conduct regular BE assessments compared to the 7% of Leading to World-class and the 20% of Progressing to BE Mature organisations.

In terms of assessment scope, 79% of Leading to World-class organisations and 67% of Progressing to BE Mature organisations ($p = 0.02$) reported conducting one BE assessment that covers the entire organisation. In contrast, 71% of Low BE Mature organisations indicated conducting multiple assessments targeting different business units or departments. The emergence of real-time BE assessment tools has also been noted. As per results, 32% of Leading to World-class organisations and 20% of Progressing to BE Mature organisations mentioned that they use real-time assessment systems. Interestingly, none of the Low BE Mature organisations reported the use of such tools. One respondent from an award-winning organisation commented on the utility of such systems, stating that:

We have a real-time assessment as we have a very strong IT system. Our real-time system was pivotal in tracking and improving performance. Real-time assessment systems help in better internal and external assessments (Excellence and Pioneering Consultant).

The real-time approach warrants further exploration and will be delved into in greater detail in the subsequent phase of this research.

Analysis of the data in Figure 4.12 reveals a notable pattern: BE mature organisations are more inclined to undertake BE assessments on a regular basis, to use an online system to support BE assessments and are far more likely to undertake an award assessment.

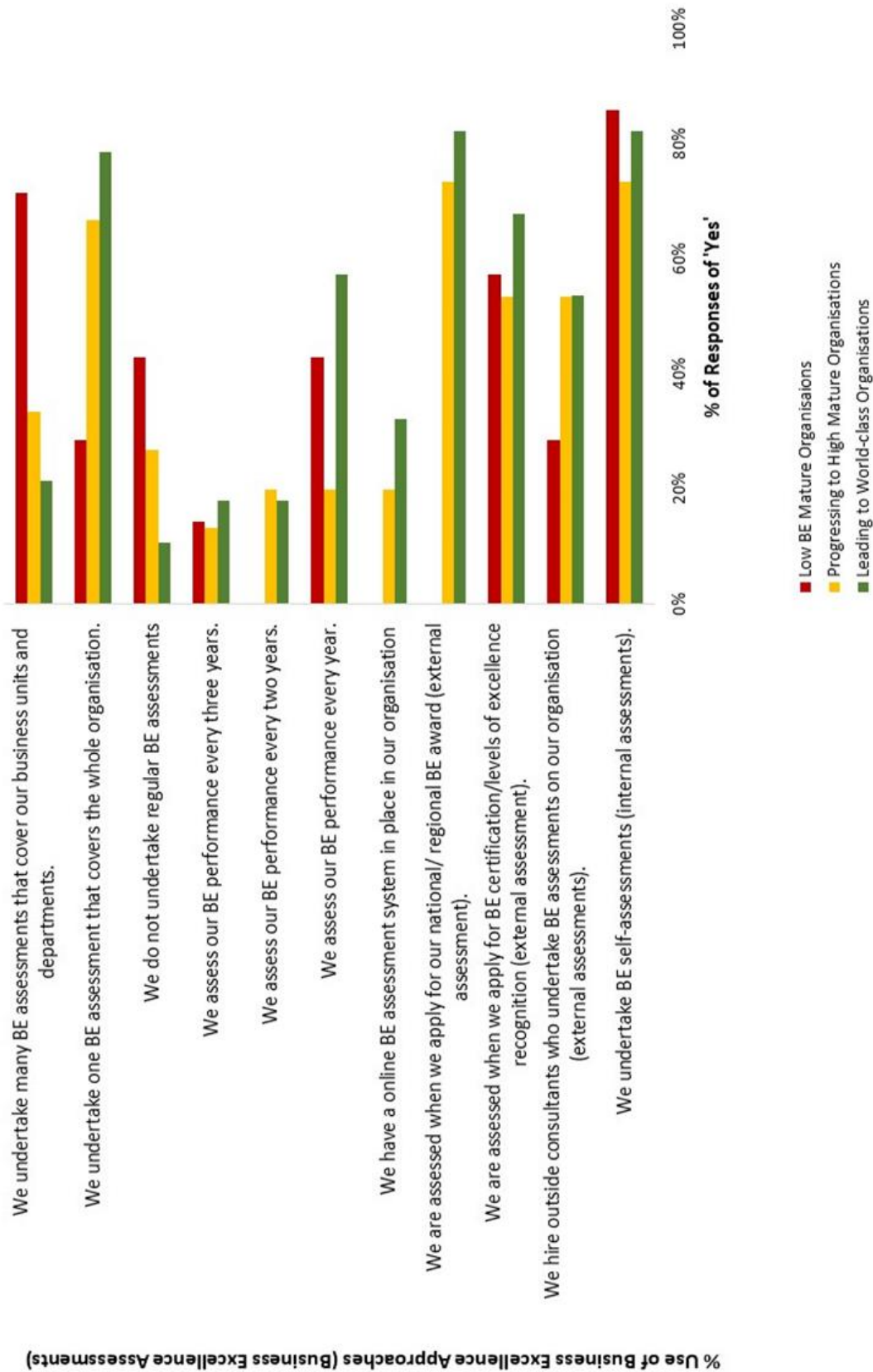


Figure 4.11: Use of BE approaches for BE assessments at different BE maturity levels (n = 50).

4.5.3. Objective 3: Refine the factors of OEA using stakeholder inputs

Figure 4.13 depicts organisations’ perspectives on the critical factors for implementing successful OEA within an organisation. A significant majority concurred with the factors outlined in the conceptual OEA model. Specifically, 87% believed that the level of BE maturity is crucial, 81% agreed the organisation’s size as a determining factor, 79% highlighted the speed of BE implementation or achieving results and 69% identified the industry type as an influential factor.

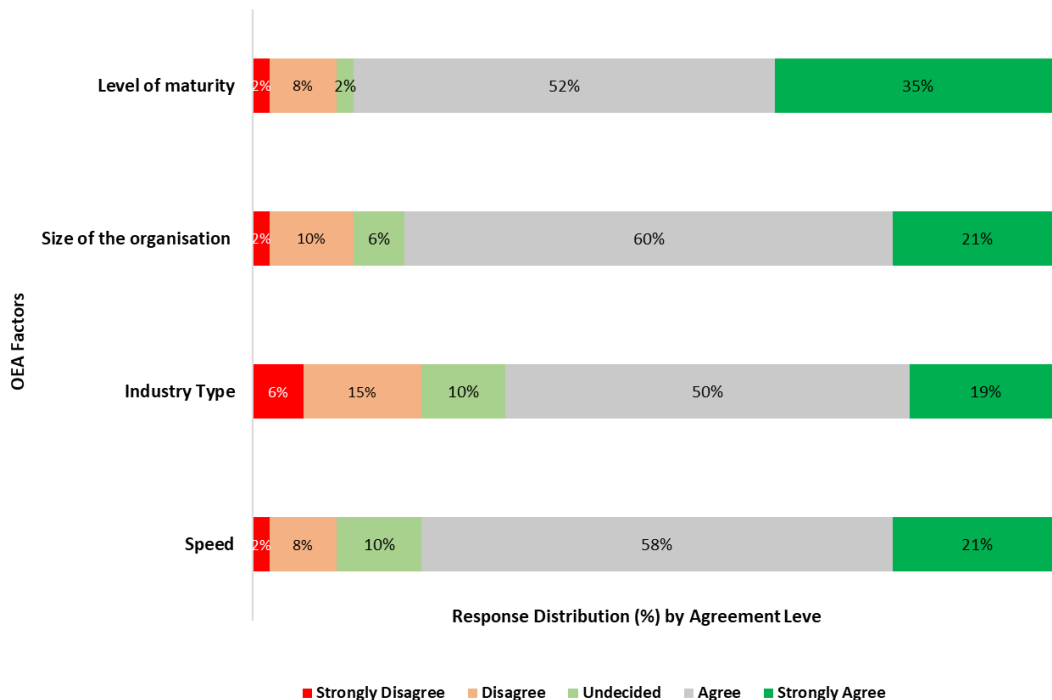


Figure 4.12: Factors impacting the OEA implementation.

These results imply that most respondents agree with the key factors presented in the conceptual OEA model, highlighting their actual influence over successful OEA implementation. Therefore, a general concurrence was established regarding the factors presented in the OEA conceptual model. However, open responses from the survey helped to identify a potential additional factor that was not included in the original model. Several respondents mentioned the importance of including *organisational willingness to change* as an additional factor that could influence OEA and BE implementation.

4.5.4. Objective 4: Refine the definition of OEA using stakeholder inputs

Figure 4.14 shows that 87% of respondents agreed with the proposed definition of OEA: “OEA refers to the formal support structure, resources, processes and assessment tools used to assist the implementation of BE within an organisation.”

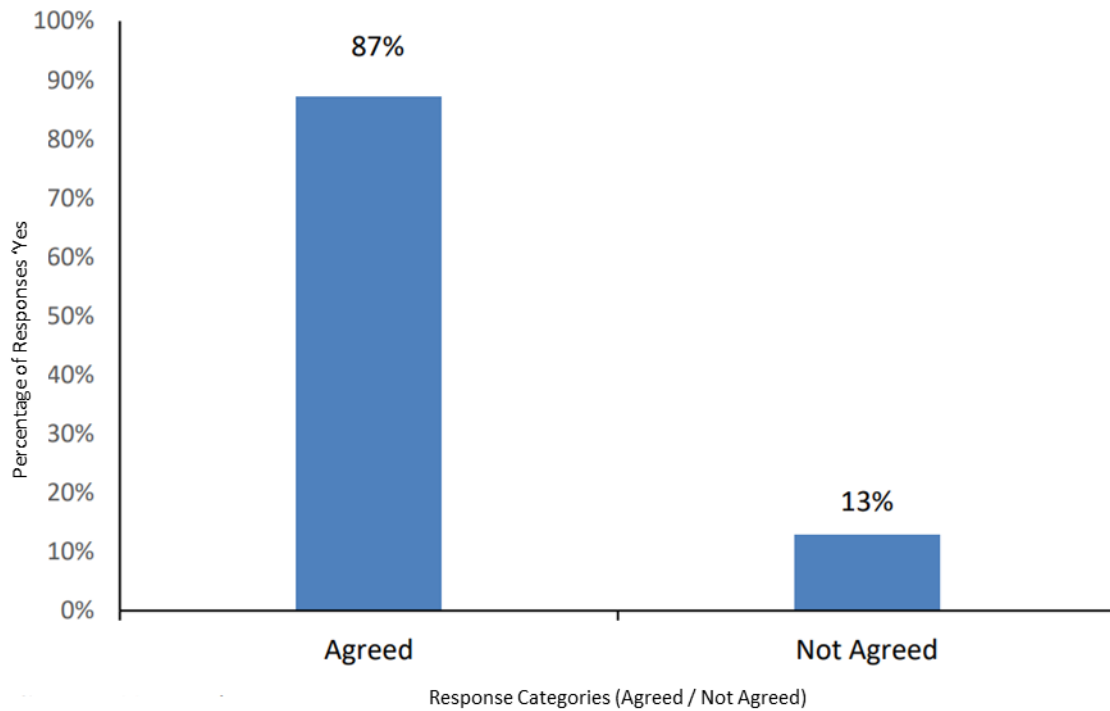


Figure 4.13: Respondents agreement of the proposed OEA definition.

The feedback indicates that the existing definition is appropriate, and as such, no changes have been made to it, as further explained in the Discussion section under Objective 4.

4.6. Discussion

The preceding section offered a graphical representation of the feedback from BE organisations concerning each research objective. In the current section, these responses undergo a more detailed analysis and discussion by each objective.

4.6.1. Objective 1: To understand the importance of BE implementation research from the research respondents' perspective.

A synthesis of current scholarly works reveals three central themes highlighting the imperative for research on BE implementation:

- (1) BE implementation is a complex, lengthy process that many organisations struggle to embed a continuous improvement culture (Dahlgaard et al., 2013; Talib et al., 2011; Rodney et al., 2013);
- (2) The non-prescriptive nature of BEMs leaves BE implementation to the organisations (Carlos Bou-Llusar et al., 2005; Wong, 2000); and,
- (3) The lack of an implementation roadmap poses difficulties for successful implementation (Bolboli et al., 2013; Pfeifer et al., 2005).

The imperative of this research resonated with respondents (refer to Figure 4.8). Notably, BE Custodians, including EFQM, Sweden Institute of Quality (SIQ) and Dubai Government Excellence Programme (DGEP), strongly supported this research due to its potential contributions to the BE community. They also encouraged participation from their member organisations.

Given that the OEA comprehensively addresses BE implementation, these findings are consistent with those of prior research on TQM and BE implementation. Various scholars (Asif et al., 2009; Talapatra & Uddin, 2019; Bolboli et al., 2013; Conti, 2011) have voiced concerns about the failure of BE improvement Programmes due to the lack of a comprehensive implementation strategy. Furthermore, insights from studies (Unnikrishnan et al., 2019; Lasrado & Uzbeck, 2017; Dahlgaard et al., 2013; Brown, 2014) underscore the need for BE implementation research to guide organisations on how to organise their organisational design to implement and accelerate their BE journey. Collectively, these findings emphasize the importance of rigorous research into BE implementation.

4.6.2. Objective 2: Refine the components of OEA using respondents' inputs

The descriptive analysis for Objective 2 shared light on the BE implementation approaches utilized by mature BE organisations. Additionally, the qualitative data explains the distinct approaches that were employed. Subsequent paragraphs analyse the key findings.

Internal BE structure: The findings underscore the impact of diverse approaches in forming internal BE structures. Notable differentiators encompass the CEO's role, involvement of the leadership team and the size of the BE team—approaches instrumental in differentiating BE mature from low-mature organisations. The observed findings align with those documented in earlier research. Aladwan and Forrester (2016) and Alanazi (2021) emphasized the central role of leadership in BE deployment, while Para-Gonzalez et al. (2021), Talapatra and Uddin (2019) and Mann et al. (2011) stressed the importance of adequate resources and established internal structures for effective BE implementation. Thus, the results reinforce the critical role of strong leadership and a well-resourced internal structure in the successful implementation of BE.

Resources for BE: The findings underscore different resource utilization approaches at different levels of BE maturity. BE mature organisations frequently allocate a dedicated budget for BE activities, aligning with the resource-based view theory and previous TQM/BE implementation research (Barney, 1991; Al-Dhaafri & Alosani, 2021; Dahlgaard et al., 2013; Lasrado, 2018). Additionally, many BE organisations tend to hire BE consultants specifically for tasks such as BE training and assessments rather than overarching guidance. This preference is in line with Ghafoor et al. (2023) and Mann et al. (2012), who emphasized the pivotal role of external consultants in BE training and assessments. Collectively, the data emphasize the critical nature of proper BE resource allocation and strategic consultant engagement in attaining BE maturity.

BE processes: According to the findings, Leading to World-class organisations consistently provide BE-specific training for all employees and employ comprehensive action plans to drive BE initiatives. Such practices are in line with prior studies that underscored the importance of BE training (Al-Majali & Almhirat, 2018; Attriet al., 2017; Bakotic & Rogosic, 2017), and the significance of action planning (Attri et al., 2017; Barnawi, 2022; Dahlgaard et al., 2019; Kamal, 2023). The results further highlight the critical roles of effective internal communication processes to increase BE awareness and the role of the CEO. These insights corroborate existing literature, emphasizing the integral roles of internal communication and leadership in steering BE initiatives (Baidoun et al., 2018; Brown, 2014; Araujo & Sampaio, 2014 ;Talib et al., 2011). Collectively, these findings underscore the importance of BE training, action planning, internal communication and leadership in fostering a culture of excellence.

BE assessments: While BE self-assessments are common across all levels, the frequency and scope of assessments differ. Organisations with higher BE maturity more regularly undertake

assessments, especially award and certification assessments (Angell & Corbett, 2009), as regular assessments are key to achieving the desired performance improvement (Kamal, 2023).

The absence of regular BE assessments in less mature organisations suggests possible resource constraints (Calvo-Mora et al., 2014), lack of employee commitment (Aladwan & Forrester, 2016) and lack of leadership support (Dahlgaard-Park et al., 2013). In terms of scope, low mature organisations focus more on smaller assessments covering departments or business units, while high BE mature organisations are more likely to conduct assessments covering the whole organisation. This divergence seemingly contradicts the findings of Tickle et al. (2016) that found no relationship between BE maturity and the scope of the assessments.

The assessment methodologies adopted by mature BE organisations offer beneficial insights for their less mature peers aiming to enhance their evaluation strategies. The following paragraph discusses the new sub-components of the OEA model.

Incorporation of new sub-components into the OEA model: Responses from open-ended questions and interviews identified the “*excellence project selection process*” and “*excellence knowledge sharing process*” as crucial subcomponents within the OEA for successful BE implementation. Additionally, the real-time assessment approach has emerged as a new finding that warrants further exploration. The next section discusses these findings in detail.

Excellence project selection process: The excellence project selection process represents a systematic approach that organisations employ to identify, evaluate and select improvement projects in alignment with their excellence and overarching strategic objectives. Based on respondents’ feedback, a literature review was undertaken to validate this recommendation and determine its potential for additional investigation. According to Porter and Tanner (2012), the BE philosophy supports the integration of improvement projects across the organisation. However, many such projects face implementation challenges (Beer & Nohria, 2000; Saunders et al., 2008; Vora, 2013). These challenges could be due to wrong project selection (Hadi-Vencheh & Yousefi, 2018; Swarnakar, 2021) and wrong focus (McLean et al., 2017; Gijo & Rao, 2005). Moreover, Kornfeld and Kara (2013) identified a gap in industry practices regarding project selection, potentially accounting for the shortcomings in the success of improvement projects. To overcome this challenge, Padhy and Sahu (2011) and Adebajo et al. (2016) recommended a structured approach to evaluate and select projects for better results. Similarly, feedback from BE award-winning organisations also highlighted the necessity of

aligning improvement projects with the excellence criteria. This feedback led to the integration of a business excellence-aligned project selection process within the “BE Processes” component for further detailed analysis.

Excellence knowledge sharing process: Organisations adopt various approaches for knowledge sharing, such as training (Martín-Castilla & Rodríguez-Ruiz, 2008), regular meetings and communication (Tenji & Foley, 2019), benchmarking and BE self-assessments (Tickle et al., 2016). From the OEA deployment viewpoint, the excellence knowledge sharing process deals with how organisations use specific internal expertise and best practices to improve their existing OEA for a sustained culture of excellence. Interviews with BE mature organisations have underscored the significance of an excellence knowledge sharing process. For instance, one of the research respondents utilized its best practice from 2003 on how to educate its workforce on the EFQM model when rolling out the 2020 EFQM model.

While general knowledge management and knowledge sharing process have been extensively explored in past studies (Gimenez Espin et al., 2023), there is a noted lack of recent research on excellence knowledge sharing processes to guide BE organisations on how to use their organisational learning to strengthen their OEA. This finding requires further investigation and has led to the excellence knowledge sharing process being included within the BE Process component of the improved OEA model.

Furthermore, the research highlighted a growing trend toward real-time BE assessment processes from BE mature organisations. This shift reflects the need for continual performance monitoring to identify improvement progress and areas for improvement.

Notably, existing literature offers limited scientific studies regarding real-time BE assessment tools, their design, application or best practices. However, a few books, such as Lasrado (2018), briefly discussed EFQM software for assessments, and Porter and Tanner (2012) examined e-self-assessment using *BQFsnapshot*, which was derived from the British Quality Foundation (BQF). Nevertheless, these tools do not operate in real time. The subsequent phase of this research will probe further into this emergent real-time assessment methodology, assessing how organisations design and implement these tools.

The discussions led to a refinement of the existing OEA model, incorporating the “excellence project selection process” and “excellence knowledge sharing process” as new subcomponents under the “internal BE processes” component of the OEA.

4.6.3. Objective 3: Refine the factors of OEA using respondents' inputs

The findings of Objective 3 align with the existing literature, reinforcing the importance of factors such as BE maturity level, organisational size, sector and implementation speed for the successful implementation of OEA. The majority of respondents validated these factors (Figure 4.13). The following paragraphs examine these findings in the context of previous research.

The prevailing literature highlights the crucial role of these factors in the effective implementation of OEA. Among these are BE maturity (Tickle et al., 2016; Negron, 2020; Carmona-Marquez et al., 2016), the size and sector of an organisation (Eriksson, 2016; Sternad et al., 2019; Conti, 2011; Perianez-Cristobal et al., 2021) and the speed at which the organisation wants to implement change (Saleh & Watson, 2017; Teece & Heaton, 2015). Leaders, therefore, must account for these diverse factors when strategizing OEA deployment, ultimately guiding their organisations toward a high BE maturity.

Furthermore, some respondents from award-winning organisations indicated “*organisation's willingness to change*” as another factor that could influence OEA deployment. This suggestion has been underscored by literature highlighting various drivers fostering an organisation's willingness to change, such as, leadership commitment and support (Brown, 2014; Vora, 2013) and individual employees' commitment toward change (Haffar et al., 2021; Parish et al., 2008). Moreover, the literature also directs some moderating leadership actions such as internal communication (Tenji & Foley, 2019; Hoffmann & Hamidati, 2016); training and education (Adamu, 2019; Georgiev & Ohtaki, 2020; Lasrado & Uzbeck, 2017) and regular assessments (Metaxas et al., 2018; Ritchie & Dale, 2000). These findings align with Objective 3 of this study, affirming the pivotal role of organisational willingness to change in the successful implementation of BE.

4.6.4. Objective 4: Refine the definition of OEA using respondents' inputs

Regarding the fourth objective, there was a notable consensus among respondents, with 87% agreeing with the current definition of OEA, as evidenced in Figure 4.14. This agreement reinforces the existing definition's relevance and applicability.

OEA Definition: OEA refers to the formal support structure, resources, processes and assessment tools used to assist the implementation of BE within an organisation.

Explanation for the definition and factors impacting OEA: While components refer to the internal logistics required for a successful BE implementation, there are some factors that could influence successful OEA deployment. These factors include the size and sector of the organisation, organisational willingness to change, level of BE maturity and urgency to implement BE.

The following section presents the improved OEA model as per objective five of this study

4.6.5. Objective 5 – develop an improved OEA model

The research conducted to address Objectives 1–4 highlights the necessity to refine the OEA conceptual model. Two new subcomponents, the “excellence project selection process” and the “excellence knowledge sharing process,” are now integrated in the “BE processes” component of the OEA. Additionally, a new factor, “the organisation’s willingness to change”, has also been incorporated into the updated model.

The improved OEA model encompasses four key components: the Internal BE structure, BE resources, BE processes and BE assessments. To ensure a comprehensive view of the OEA, the subcomponents of these four primary components have also been incorporated in the revised model. Additionally, the improved model comprises five factors: organisation size, sector, level of BE maturity, organisational willingness to change and the speed at which the organisation wishes to implement BE. The improved OEA model is illustrated in Figure 4.15.

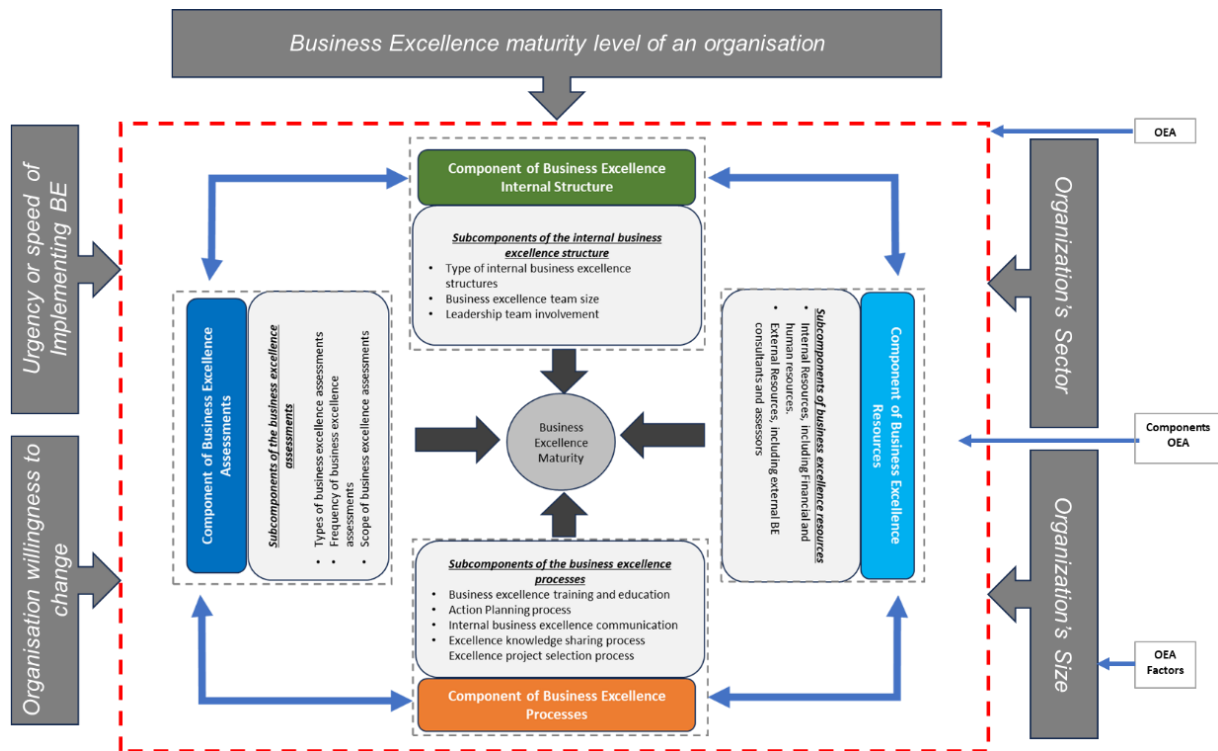


Figure 4.14: OEA improved model.

4.7. Conclusion

The five objectives of this study have been successfully achieved. The findings emphasized the significance of conducting research on BE implementation to guide organisations in structuring their OEA to expedite their journey toward BE maturity. The study refined the conceptual model and introduced two new subcomponents to the OEA. The newly added subcomponents were the “Excellence project selection process” and “Excellence knowledge sharing process” in the “BE Processes” component of OEA. Additionally, the research found the new factor, “organisational willingness to change” that could potentially affect OEA implementation. The revised OEA model, based on the findings of this study, will be subject to further investigation. By presenting a novel concept of OEA, this study contributed to the existing research landscape of BE implementation. However, it is relevant to acknowledge certain constraints of this research, notably its limited sample size. Future enhancements could include incorporating a larger sample size from more countries and conducting more structured interviews to delve deeper into the survey responses. The proposed large and diverse sample size would not only validate the existing research but also provide more comprehensive insights for the future development of OEA. Another limitation was the limited participation from recipients of awards such as the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Awards (MBNQA), Australian Business Excellence Award, Canadian Business Excellence Award and Japan Quality Award.

Participation of more award winners from these countries would enrich a greater understanding of BE implementation in different cultural and national contexts.

Theoretical and practical implications

The findings from this research offer valuable insights for BE organisations, BE Custodians, practitioners, consultants and researchers. Organisationally, these insights aid in structuring infrastructure for efficient BE implementation and achieving high BE maturity. Practitioners and consultants can leverage the outcomes to guide organisations toward more rapid and economical BE implementation. Academically, this work enriches the BE implementation literature, enabling researchers to delve deeper into the OEA model and contribute to the existing body of knowledge.

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Chapter 5. Business excellence assessments – learning from award-winning organisations

5.1. Abstract

Purpose: The aim of the study is to identify best practices from Business Excellence (BE) award-winning organisations on the use of their BE self-assessment (internal assessment) and third-party assessment (external assessment including BE award assessments) for organisational improvement.

Design/methodology/approach: An explanatory sequential mixed methods approach was used to gather data from 50 organisations across 17 countries with varying degrees of BE maturity. Twenty of these, representing 40% of the sample, then participated in structured interviews through which their understanding of the impacts of various practices was explored in more detail. From this sub-sample three (3) emerged as exemplars used as the case studies reported here.

Findings: The findings from the first and broader study of the 50 organisations demonstrate a diverse approach to BE assessments, much of which is tailored to the maturity level of each organisation. BE organisations with a high BE maturity level are more likely to conduct regular assessments, particularly award and certification assessments, and use technology in the assessment process. Key practices identified in the case study organisations were their unique approach to preparing the organisation for assessments irrespective of the BE award criteria; the use of mock assessments to prepare for award assessments; the use of customer-led assessments; thorough action plan review process; the use of internal assessments to grow internal capabilities; participation in regular award assessments; the use of external BE assessors and experts for assessments; increased use of technology to support the assessment process; and, varying assessment types by organisational BE maturity.

5.2. Introduction

Maintaining profitability and competitiveness has become a significant challenge in today's rapidly evolving business landscape. Business Excellence (BE) provides a structured

framework or model to organisations, serving as an effective toolkit from which to address this challenge (Afthonidis & Tsiotras, 2014; Zapletalová, 2023).

This study aims to explore the assessment approaches employed by BE organisations. Two primary objectives drive this study. The first is to assess the current state of BE assessments across various organisations. The aim is to provide a broad overview of how BE assessments are currently being implemented and managed. The second is to then identify and share best practices in BE assessment, particularly from BE award-winning organisations for the benefit of organisations striving to cultivate a culture of excellence.

BE Models (BEMs) or frameworks integrate the principles of Total Quality Management (TQM) with established business practices, offering a strategic framework to guide organisations in aligning their processes, systems, and objectives (Lasrado, 2018; Escrig & Menezes, 2015; Kamal, 2023; Mann, 2008). These models contribute to the achievement of an organisation's core purpose by providing a structured approach to achieving BE. BE assessments then become pivotal for continuous performance improvement and enable organisations to objectively assess performance against established excellence criteria. Through BEM-driven assessments (referred to as BE assessments or assessments hereinafter) organisations systematically identify Opportunities for Improvement (OFI) and strengths; prioritize action plans; and, progress toward enhanced performance and results (Rawabdeh et al., 2021; Rusjan, 2005).

However, despite the widespread adoption of BE assessment tools, not all organisations realize substantial and sustained benefits. Previous studies have identified various operational and logistical difficulties associated with BE assessment deployment. These include resource constraints (Metaxas & Koulouriotis, 2014; Lasrado, 2018); inadequate leadership and employee commitment (McAdam & Leonard, 2005); and, the complexity of assessment criteria (Liu & Ko, 2018). There is also a noticeable gap in research examining the assessment approaches of award-winning organisations. In addressing this gap, we explore the BE assessment approaches organisations employ at varying stages of their BE maturity, ranging from those at low BE maturity to established BE award winners. The research aims to provide actionable recommendations for organisations seeking to enhance their BE assessment strategies. Data for this study were collected from fifty organisations across seventeen countries through a survey questionnaire, with twenty of these, representing 40% of the sample,

participating in subsequent structured interviews. From this latter sample three (3) emerged as exemplars used as the case studies reported in this paper.

The paper begins with a comprehensive review of the relevant academic and practitioner literature on BE assessment. A discussion of the research aims and objectives and data collection method follows. The survey results are presented, augmented by those from the interviews from which a discussion on the contribution of BE assessment to performance is developed. Three exemplars are presented, each of which is used to demonstrate the impact of BE assessment on subsequent performance. Conclusions, limitations and suggestions for future research are presented.

5.3. Literature review

The literature review is presented to establish the context for BE through the introduction of foundational concepts. Key gaps in knowledge are then identified that guide the research methodology adopted. How each of these gaps are addressed within this study is then discussed.

The current breadth and scope of research on BE assessments are reviewed. A targeted search was conducted across the key academic databases, including Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar. Relevant keywords were used to gather a broad spectrum of articles. In total 566 peer reviewed BE journals and books were reviewed. The focus was primarily on articles published within the last fifteen years with the aim of capturing the recent developments in the field. This search was designed to reveal both the dominant themes and methodologies, while pinpointing specific areas concerning BE assessment that have been less frequently explored. This approach was both structured and purposeful, achieving the stringent criteria typical of a systematic broad BE literature review. Importantly, it was used to guide further investigation into under-researched or emerging topics concerning organisational excellence architecture and the use, or otherwise of assessments. The review that follows is divided into three sections: (1). Introduction to Business Excellence Models (BEMs) and the Assessment Process; (2). Types of BE Assessments; (3). Analysis of the Landscape of BE Assessment Case Studies. An explanation of each of the three sections follows.

5.3.1. Introduction to BEMs and associated assessment process

BEMs, originally known as TQM models emerged from the TQM concept (Ghafoor et al., 2023). TQM gained prominence in the 1980s for its role in enhancing organisational competitiveness and productivity (Badri et al., 2006; Talwar, 2011; Amponsah & Ahmed, 2017). The Deming Cycle, or Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA), is central to the evolution of BEMs, which significantly underpins these BEMs. The most popular BEMs are the Baldrige Excellence Framework and the EFQM Model (Ghafoor & Mann, 2023). The PDCA Cycle influenced the development of EFQM's RADAR (Results, Approach, Deployment, Assess and Refine) and Baldrige's ADLI (Approach, Deployment, Learning, and Integration), both of which are utilized to score BE maturity during assessments.

Assessment, which is integral to BE and TQM philosophies, has seen widespread adoption across a diverse array of organisations (Dahlgaard et al., 2013; Gómez et al., 2017). Initially, BEMs served to help organisations identify strengths and OFIs and foster a continuous improvement culture. Over time BEMs have, however, evolved to become comprehensive management models, with assessment remaining crucial for measuring and improving organisational performance (Fonseca, 2021; Murthy et al., 2022).

5.3.2. Types of BE assessments:

The various assessment types used by organisations to achieve BE objectives are identified including internal, those commonly referred to as self-assessments, and external assessments. Both types aim to regularly track performance but through different focuses and strategies (Baig et al., 2024).

Self-assessments are evaluations conducted internally, using organisational resources to examine processes and systems. These assessments are vital for highlighting organisational strengths and weaknesses (Garza-Reyes, 2018; Lapoint, 2022); aligning the organisation with its objectives (Sandholm, 2005); and, setting the groundwork for future improvement (Samuelsson & Nilsson, 2002; Liu & Ko, 2018). However, an overreliance on internal assessment can lead to a lack of external perspective or “self-blindness”. Therefore, mature BE organisations also engage in external assessments to obtain an independent view of performance.

External assessments not only serve the same purpose as self-assessments to identify strengths and OFIs but also provide external validation. They are typically undertaken by external assessors and/or consultants who evaluate an organisation's performance against specific BEM

criteria (Daniel et al., 2019). With their extensive cross-industry experience and BEM expertise, external assessors can provide impartial feedback and recommendations for organisational improvement (Ghafoor et al., 2023). BE mature organisations also participate in BE award assessments, a form of external assessment using teams of approved assessors (usually volunteer assessors from different organisations). These are overseen by award bodies, such as, Business Excellence Australia (ABEF, 2024), Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Institute of Quality (CII, 2024), National Institute of Standards and Technology (United States) (NIST, 2024), EFQM (Europe) (EFQM, 2024), and the Dubai Government Excellence Program (DGEP, 2024) among others (Ghafoor & Mann, 2023). While award assessments provide recognition they enable organisations to benchmark their processes against industry leaders (Lasrado, 2017). Thus, each type of assessment, whether internal or external, serves a distinct purpose, ranging from self-improvement to external validation and industry-wide benchmarking.

External assessments typically adhere to established BEM criteria and procedures (Alanazi, 2021; Gupta & Vrat, 2019). By contrast, approaches for internal assessments vary significantly. A substantial body of research has identified a range of internal assessment methods, including award simulation, pro forma, workshop, matrix chart, questionnaire and software-based assessments (Adebanjo & Mann, 2008; Porter & Tanner, 2012; Samuelsson & Nilsson, 2002). Each method presents its own set of advantages, disadvantages, and resource implications. The selection of an assessment method is primarily based on an organisation's BE maturity and the strength of its internal capabilities for conducting internal assessments. Consequently, as organisations advance in maturity, they often transition from simpler, less resource-intensive methods, such as, questionnaires (Dahlgaard-Park, 2011) to more complex ones like workshops and award simulations demanding greater engagement, resources and expert facilitation (Metaxas & Koulouriotis, 2014). As organisations advance in maturity and employ various internal assessment methods, they must also consider the broader assessment deployment process.

5.3.3. The assessment process:

The process of assessment deployment has been extensively discussed in previous research. Notable contributions include those by Gadd (1995), Antony and Preece (2002), Porter and Tanner, (2012), Tarí and Madeleine (2012) and Garza-Reyes (2018). These researchers outlined various steps for conducting self-assessments. The analysis of these studies reveals

common themes and steps in self-assessment processes including a planning phase (which may involve choosing a self-assessment model and forming and training a self-assessment team); a data collection phase (involving gathering information from different departments according to BEM criteria); conducting the assessments; compiling results and reaching a consensus on identified strengths and OFIs; and, finally, implementing an action plan based on the assessment report recommendations. While these steps contribute to a robust assessment process, the literature also emphasizes the critical role of the action plan review process in achieving desired outcomes from the action plan (Araújo & Sampaio, 2014; Metaxas et al., 2018). These steps, coupled with overarching leadership commitment are instrumental in embedding a culture of continuous improvement within an organisation (Hasan & Hannifah, 2013; Rawabdeh et al., 2021).

The effectiveness of both self and external assessments widely employed by organisations to identify OFIs and facilitate improvement is variable. Numerous studies have found assessment processes instrumental in driving significant improvements. For instance, Angell and Corbett (2009) investigated the New Zealand Business Excellence Award applicants and concluded the positive impact of external assessments in promoting continuous improvement. Lasrado (2017) examined the perceived benefits of national quality awards in the UAE and confirmed their beneficial effects on understanding customer satisfaction and engagement. Similarly, Leonard (2017) presented a case from the United States of America where BE assessments were found to contribute to achieving strategic focus and enhancing performance.

However, not all experiences with assessments have been positive. Van der Wiele *et al.* (2000) identified difficulties in integrating assessment results with performance improvement strategies as a reason for missed growth opportunities. Similarly, Ritchie and Dale (2000) noted that a lack of commitment and involvement from both staff and leadership can undermine the potential of assessments. In his study, Davies (2008) observed that failure to align assessment outcomes with strategic goals can limit the effectiveness of assessments. Aladwan and Forrester (2016), while investigating Jordan's public sector, found that a lack of top management engagement resulted in minimal changes post-assessment. These contrary findings imply that other variables may also impact the effectiveness of assessments. Specifically, the organisation's internal capabilities (Zárraga-Rodríguez & Alvarez, 2013), leadership support (Lasrado, 2018; Araújo & Sampaio, 2013), and level of employee engagement with the assessment process (Corbett & Angell, 2011) appear to play a critical

role. The results of these latter studies suggest that while BE assessments are crucial for enhancing organisational performance the presence of strong leadership, regular monitoring, follow-up on action plans and robust internal capabilities are essential for assessment success.

5.4. Analysing the landscape of BE assessment case studies

Numerous BE researchers and consultants have documented practical applications of BE assessments in guidebooks and through empirically based case studies. Hakes (1995) work was one of the first efforts to guide organisations through the assessment process. He codified the process of self-assessment in his book and presented several case studies from UK based BE award-winning organisations. In another scholarly effort, Ritchie and Dale (2000) investigated the practices of 10 organisations focusing on the process, practice and management of self-assessment. José Tarí (2006) used a case study methodology to examine the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) model self-assessment in a Spanish university. Tarí and Madeleine (2012) compared the application of the EFQM self-assessment model in higher education institutions in Spain and Jordan, utilizing case studies from services provided by public and private universities in both countries. McAdam et al. (2013) investigated the implementation of self-assessment processes from both management and employee perspectives within a major government organisation in the UAE. Leonard (2017) also investigated a single case organisation, demonstrating the positive role of the self-assessment process in strategic planning. While Aleu (2018) conducted a single case study to evaluate the, "are we making progress?" self-assessment tool created by the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA) and validated the effectiveness of the self-assessment tool in identifying OFIs. Most recently, Rodríguez-González et al. (2020) substantiated the effectiveness of self-assessments by detailing the application of the EFQM Model in a hospital pharmacy in Spain. However, despite these contributions, a gap remains in the literature regarding the in-depth examination of specific case studies and best practices in BE assessments. The need for current, detailed studies in this area is evident, particularly to understand the evolving dynamics and applications of BE assessment models thought to be contextually dependent.

While numerous studies have explored the impact of BE assessments on organisational performance, there is a significant lack of multi-country research examining how award-winning organisations implement their BE self-assessment and award-assessment practices. The literature review identifies a significant gap in recent multi-country research on BE

assessment approaches across diverse organisational contexts. Moreover, only six case studies have been produced that examine the BE assessment process in real-world settings. Given this gap in the existing research landscape, there is a pressing need for more detailed real-world success stories to help BE organisations refine and enhance their assessment processes. Accordingly, this study is designed to bridge these gaps by investigating assessment approaches from multiple countries and combines both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, thereby providing a thorough overview of current BE assessment practices and their effectiveness.

The review of the above literature achieved the following. It first revealed that central to the BE assessment process are the BEMs. Furthermore, the literature review helps identify the types of assessments and processes organisations follow. Second, the analysis has helped to identify a gap in the literature of real-life examples (case studies) that showcase the BE assessment best practices of award-winning and BE mature organisations. These may then help other BE organisations reflect and improve upon their existing assessment approaches. Third, the insights gained from the literature review informed the development of the research questionnaire and interview questions. Based on these findings, the following aims and objectives have been established for this research:

5.5. Research aims and objectives

The aim of this research is to identify and analyse the BE assessment approaches used by BE award-winning organisations. To achieve this aim, the following objectives have been established:

Objective 1: Identify the BE assessment approaches adopted by BE organisations.

Objective 2: Identify and explore the best practices in BE assessment among BE award-winning organisations.

5.6. Methodology

The research method including the research scope, sample selections (quantitative and qualitative samples), data collection, data analysis and the relationships between quantitative data, qualitative data and the selection of three exemplars is now discussed.

Research scope

The primary aim of this research was to identify and analyse the BE assessment approaches of mature and award-winning organisations. Explanatory sequential mixed methods were utilized to first survey the common practices in BE implementation, informed by a comprehensive review of existing literature including works by Mann et al. (2011) and Tickle et al. (2016). The second phase involved structured interviews with key personnel from the BE mature organisations surveyed in the first phase to capture their insights on effective BE assessment approaches.

Data Collection

This research used BE assessment-specific data collected from surveys and structured interviews. The first research objective was addressed through data collected via the survey, while the second objective was achieved by integrating data from the interviews. This integration helped identify best practices in BE assessment approaches from the award-winning BE respondent organisations. The mixed-methods approach, blending quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell & Creswell, 2017), provided a more comprehensive view of BE assessment practices, effectively meeting the study's dual objectives and capturing the diverse approaches across different organisational contexts.

Research sample

The sample for this study was selected from organisations using BEMs recognized by the Global Excellence Models (GEM) Council⁴. The study included 50 organisations across 17 countries at various stages of BE maturity, ranging from 'Leading to World-class' to 'Low BE Mature'. This diverse sample allowed for a comparative analysis of BE implementation strategies across different maturity levels and global locations. Out of 50 survey respondent organisations, 20 (40%) also participated in the structured interview. The approach enhanced the validity of the findings and provided a varied perspective on BE maturity, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of BE implementation strategies. During the interviews, potential exemplars (Stablein, 2006) emerged. The three cases presented in this paper were

⁴ The Global Excellence Model (GEM) Council is comprised of organisations internationally recognized as BE Custodians of leading Excellence Models and Award mechanisms within their respective geographical regions, areas, or trade blocks.

developed from multiple (four to six) interviews with key personnel over the data gathering period; access to the organisation’s performance metrics; a willingness by the respective organisations to share their BE journeys; and, recognition that specific assessment attributes were laudable indicators of their award-winning performances.

The BE maturity continuum and categorization of respondents

Respondent organisations were classified using the seven-stage BE maturity which was developed from maturity models presented by (Mann et al. (2011) and Tickle et al. (2016). Respondents in the survey were asked to self-identify their organisation's BE maturity stage. Based on their responses, which corresponded to one of the seven BE maturity levels (Figure 5.1) they were grouped into one of three aggregated categories for statistical analysis and presentation. The three aggregated categories are:

Awareness to Adoption (referred to as Low BE Mature, n=7): This category comprises organisations that selected the 'Awareness,' 'Initiation,' or 'Adoption' stages in response to the survey question.

Progressing to BE Mature (n=15): This category comprises organisations that selected the 'Progressing' or 'Maturity' stages in response to the survey question.

Leading to World-class (n=28): This category comprises organisations that selected the 'Leading' or 'Sustaining (world-class)' stages in response to the survey question.

The quantitative findings are reported in alignment with each of these three categories.

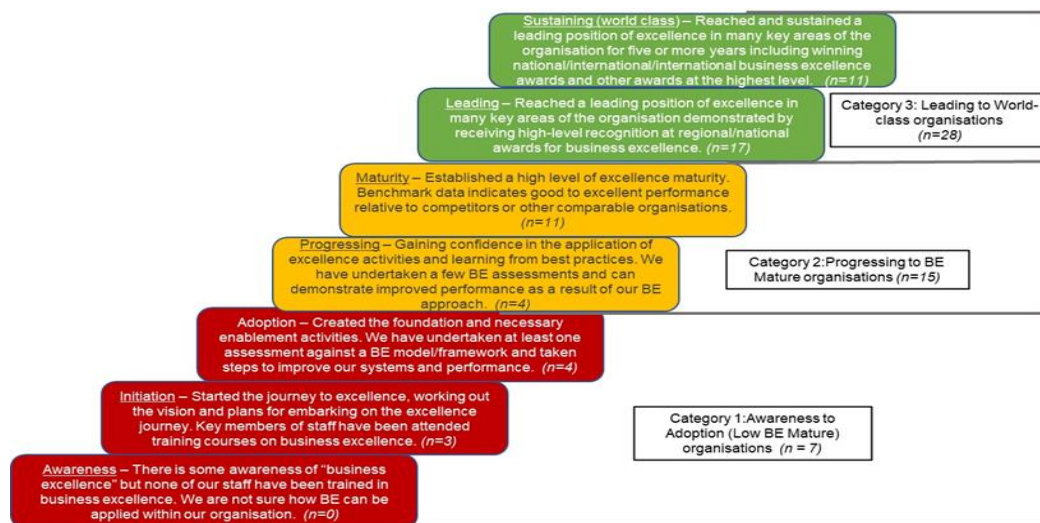


Figure 5.1: The seven levels of BE maturity, and three aggregated-category groupings.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data was processed using a combination of SPSS and Microsoft Excel. The analysis involved classifying the data into independent variables, such as, BE assessments and dependent variables, reflecting the BE maturity levels of the respondent organisations. Descriptive statistics are presented graphically. The qualitative component entailed a comprehensive and systematic analysis of data gathered from interviews with the BE practitioners. The transcription and subsequent content analysis of these interviews provided a wealth of information on practices critical to successful BE assessments. This analysis allowed for the selection and subsequent development of the three exemplars, each of which captures the unique application and methodology of BE assessment within the organisation's context. These cases offered an in-depth examination of each organisation's distinct approach to BE assessment demonstrating the journey towards excellence.

Selection of exemplars

The *a priori* criteria used for the selection of exemplars included distinguished, comprehensive and exemplary BE journeys (e.g., recent award winners from distinguished award bodies) and tangible evidence of a unique approach to BE assessment. This criteria was pivotal to ensure the inclusion of organisations capable of contributing rich and varied perspectives, thereby significantly enhancing the depth and breadth of understanding in BE assessment deployment. The selected organisations recognized for their outstanding achievements in BE represent quite diverse experiences across industries, organisational size and locations. The willingness to share those experiences through this research had partly been anticipated in advance. The fact that the three respondent organisations strove to have their journeys reported is a useful result in itself. While generalizations from the three exemplars (Eisenhardt, 1989) need to be treated with some caution the assessment practices and insights they provide are interesting for analysis and future research and for consideration by organisations aspiring for BE. To adhere to the pre-set research ethics and several legal considerations, the identities of the three cases remain confidential.

5.7. Results and discussion

The results for the two research objectives are now presented. Results for the first research objective are drawn from the quantitative survey, and those for the second are embellished by the qualitative study. These are then followed by a narrative and discussion using each of the three exemplars.

5.7.1. Objective 1: Identify the BE assessment approaches adopted by BE organisations.

A discussion of the BE assessment approaches adopted by BE organisations regarding the type, frequency, and scope of assessments now follows. Figure 5.2 illustrates the BE assessment approaches at different levels of BE maturity.

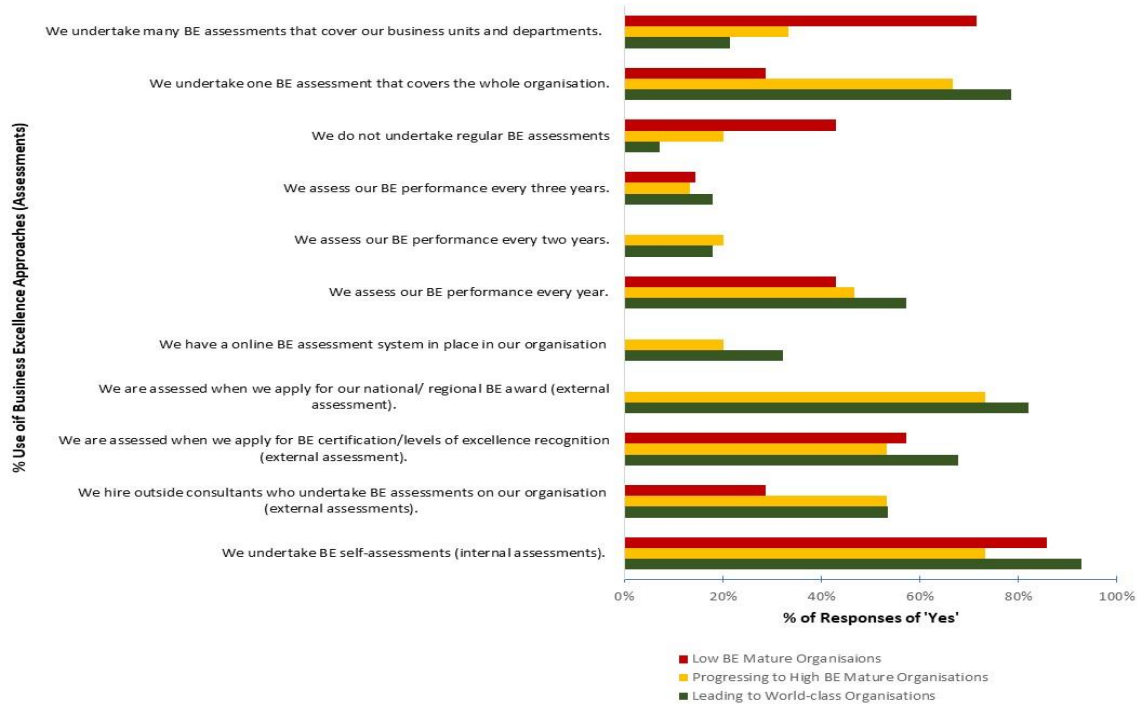


Figure 5.2: Use of BE approaches for BE assessments at different BE maturity levels (n = 50).

Type of assessments

The results (Figure 5.2) indicate that organisations practising BE frequently engage in internal assessments (93% of Leading to World-class organisations, 73% of Progressing to BE Mature organisations, and 86% of Low BE Mature Organisations reported conducting internal assessments) and external assessments. It is also noted that BE organisations seek external assessments at the time of external awards (82% Leading to World-class and 73% Progressing to BE mature organisations) or when seeking BE certification. The results also show that 54% of Leading to World-class Organisations, 53% of Progressing to High BE Mature Organisations and 29% of Low BE Mature Organisations seek outside consultants' assistance to conduct their assessments.

Frequency of assessments: A majority of survey respondents reported conducting BE assessments annually. The results show that 57% of Leading to World-class, 47% of

Progressing to BE Mature, and 43% of Low BE Mature organisations conduct annual assessments. Additionally, 32% of Leading to World-class and 20% of Progressing to BE mature organisations mentioned the use of online BE assessment systems, highlighting their adaptability and forward-thinking approach to technological advancements in the evaluation process. None of the Low BE mature organisations mentioned the use of online systems to facilitate their assessments.

Scope of assessment: Figure 5.2 shows that 79% of Leading to World-class and 67% of Progressing to BE mature organisations undertake one assessment that covers the entire organisation. Conversely, 71% of Low BE mature organisations stated that they undertake assessments that cover business units and departments.

The above results demonstrate that while BE assessments remain a common practice, the types, frequency, and scope of the assessment vary greatly but are largely based on an organisation's BE maturity level: Leading to World-class and Progressing to BE Mature organisations undertake assessments more regularly, are more active with external assessments and conduct holistic, organisation-wide assessments. Conversely, Low BE Mature organisations, possibly constrained by resources and costs, lean toward more focused assessments across various business units and departments.

5.7.2. Objective 2: Identify and explore the best practices in BE assessment among BE award-winning organisations.

The results from the first research objective offer a broad perspective on the assessment approaches used by the survey respondents. Key verbal (i.e., qualitative) explanations provided by the respondents are reported in Table 5.1. These responses offer an insight into the 'how' and 'why' of assessment amidst the organisations and are grouped into three headings of assessment frequency, type and approach.

Table 5.1: BE Assessments –Exemplary quotes from interviews.

BE Assessments	Exemplary Quote
BE Frequency	<p>“We conduct either a self-assessment or an external assessment at least once every two years. So one year would be a self-assessment, and the following year could be an award [external] assessment. This assessment process is repeated regularly, and while it can be labor-intensive, we avoid burdening the organisation with excessive assessments...” (Progressing to BE mature, UAE); “We use the EFQM and the and government (country) excellence model for assessments. Sometimes, we do assessments twice a year like one cycle with the mandatory [country excellence framework] and the EFQM (Leading to world-class, UAE). “We do not undertake regular BE assessments as we are the start of our excellence journey” (Low BE mature. Latvia); “We conduct our assessments after three years because we've not got a huge amount of resources that we can focus just on this..”(Progressing to Mature Organisation, UK).</p>
Type of assessments	<p>“We apply for awards because we really value the feedback. Getting an outside perspective, especially from those not in our industry, has been incredibly helpful. We haven't used all the advice given, since we have to see what fits best with our situation, but it's been really valuable. It's been great...” (Leading to World-class, Portugal); Our internal assessment is informal, where departments come together to discuss their initiatives related to the business excellence framework. Instead of establishing a formal committee for assessment, heads of departments or key members gather to ensure we're collectively meeting our objectives (Progressing to BE mature, Singapore).</p>
Assessment Approaches	<p>“We form cross-functional teams for internal assessments. Each year new teams are formed to conduct an organisation-wide assessment. However, in order to participate as assessor, members should have certified assessor certification..” (Leading to World-class, UAE). “Cross-functional team is not only important due to the mix of different departments but rather due to the different perspective different member bring due to their education background, age and experience in the assessment process. Diversity in assessment team is highly recommended...” (Leading to world-class, Germany); “We also consider assessment as a form of coaching. It's quite intense and diverse in its approach...” (Progressing to mature, India); “One positive aspect of assessments is their role in improving communication and indirectly training senior management. This reinforces the importance of continuing with assessments.” (Leading to World-class, India); “Our self-assessment team comprises of six to eight people from different departments” (Leading to world class, Spain); “Proper documentation and preparation are key to a successful assessment, and we take this aspect very seriously (Leading to world-class, Sweden).</p>

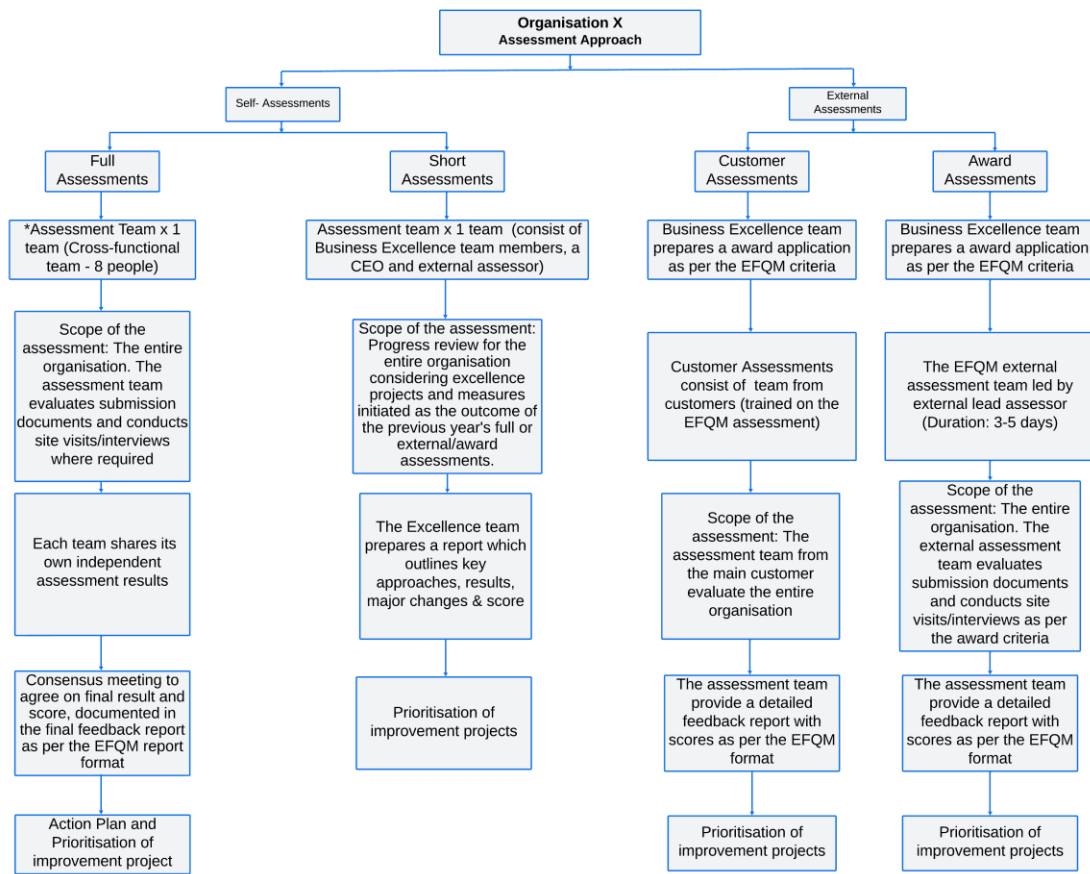
During the iterative process of qualitative data gathering and analysis three case organisations emerged as being exemplary users of assessment to achieve organisational performance. They not only displayed sustained excellent performance through a commitment to assessment but also a willingness to share that knowledge and understanding with others. These three cases showcase the best practices, as determined by the outcomes achieved, in BE assessment approaches. Each of the three organisations is now discussed.

Exemplary Case – X

Organisation X (X) began its BE journey in 2003 with the EFQM. The organisation exhibits an exemplary journey as reflected in its results and the level of BE recognition, such as winning the EFQM Global Awards for 2022.

X employs diverse assessment types, each of which serves a specific purpose in the evaluation and enhancement of performance. Self-assessments are categorized into '*Full*' and '*Short*' assessments, each serving different objectives. Their external assessment strategy encompasses '*Customer*' and '*Award*' assessments. Figure 5.3 illustrates X's comprehensive BE assessment approach.

The organisation embarked on its BE journey using comprehensive self-assessments with four cross-functional teams. The purpose of using four teams was two-fold. First, to check the accuracy and completeness of the assessment approach by examining the differences in each team's assessment findings; and, second, having four teams increased the number of employees who gained intimate knowledge of BE, which aided in developing a BE culture within the organisation. As the organisation matured in its BE practices, it changed its "Full" assessment approach to one cross-functional team and an external consultant. However, four teams were used again when the new EFQM Model was introduced in 2020/21 so that more employees could learn about the new model.



*Initially, four teams were used for the full assessment. Once the process matured, the team size was reduced to one for the full assessment.

Figure 5.3: BE assessment approach of Organisation X.

Complementing the comprehensive “Full” assessments, X also implemented “Short” self-assessments. The primary objective of their short assessment process is to reassess and review progress made since the previous assessments. The “Short” assessments are facilitated by a five-member team, including the CEO; members of the Business Excellence Department⁵; and, an external consultant who collectively assesses the year's achievements against the EFQM categories and criteria, action plans, and improvement measures. They prepare a summary report highlighting key approaches, results, and major changes. The process concludes by re-scoring the organisation based on the accomplished progress, ensuring that both X’s “Short” assessment approach is depicted in Figure 5.3.

⁵ Department responsible for coordinating BE activities within the organisation.

The scope of assessments in Organisation X alternates between comprehensive, organisation-wide “Full” assessments and more targeted “Short” assessments. This cycle entails conducting ‘Full’ assessments in one year, followed by “Short” assessments in the subsequent year, effectively establishing a concurrent and iterative assessment process. Such a structured approach in the scope of these assessments was found by X to be instrumental in achieving sustained BE progress.

Exploring the external assessment process of X revealed interesting insights, particularly in how they engaged with their main customer in the assessment process. In 2007, X involved its main customer in the assessment process by providing full EFQM assessor training to their Technical Directorate team. This decision laid the groundwork for an annual assessment to be conducted by their main customer, aimed at upholding the requisite quality standards. Each year, the customer's assessment team undertakes a thorough EFQM-style assessment, including a comprehensive day-long site visit. The customer assessment includes an in-depth review of submission documents and conducting interviews, thereby ensuring a rigorous and holistic assessment of X's performance. At the end of the assessment, the customer assessment team provides a detailed (EFQM-like) feedback report with a score.

In addition to the customer's assessment, X also seeks external validation by participating in the EFQM awards every three to four years. The EFQM oversees the whole process by providing an assessment team, issuing a feedback report, assessment scores and providing recognition.

In addition to their distinct approach toward assessments, several other key factors contributing to X's award-winning BE journey were identified. Notably, the leadership team's active involvement in the assessment process is seen as being crucial. The composition of internal cross-functional assessment teams is also noteworthy. These teams bring diverse departmental perspectives to the assessment process, enabling the organisation to holistically evaluate and improve performance. Additionally, constituting new assessment teams for each assessment cycle plays a significant role in disseminating the BE philosophy throughout the organisation, providing practical exposure and training at various levels.

Exemplary Case - Y

The organisation for the second case study operates within the public sector in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Having embarked on its excellence journey in 1992, this award-winning entity also employs an exemplary approach to BE assessment.

It was observed that Organisation Y (Y) has successfully combined principles from the country's government excellence program; the EFQM; and, the Deming Prize (JUSE, 2024) to drive their excellence agenda. By synthesizing criteria from each of these awards, they instituted a theme-based assessment approach consisting of 27 themes (refer to Figure 5.4). These themes capture the criteria of renowned excellence models and align with the Y's core business and strategic inspirations. Furthermore, each theme has been tailored to be consistent with global standards, providing a versatile and relevant assessment tool and ensuring they are ready to be assessed by all major award models. This cohesive strategy enables Y to navigate its distinct challenges smoothly and leverage opportunities in line with its overarching objectives.

Y has developed strong capabilities to conduct self-assessments. The Corporate Excellence Department⁶ oversees all business excellence activities at Y. The department also coordinates the assessment processes with the help of cross-functional teams that carry out the internal assessments. The scope of Y's internal assessments is specifically targeted towards OFIs that were previously identified by award assessments. These internal assessments are scored and take place annually.

⁶ Department responsible for coordinating BE activities in Organisation Y.

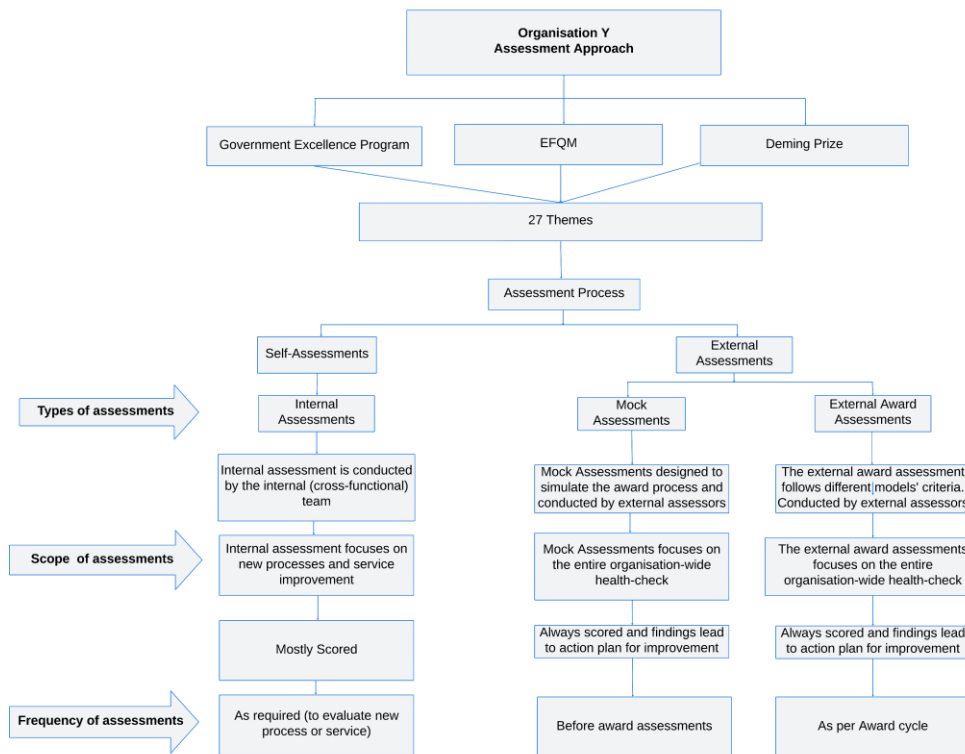


Figure 5.4: BE assessment approach of Organisation Y.

Y employs two types of external assessment approaches: 1) *mock assessments*; and, 2) *award assessments*. Mock assessments are designed to simulate rigorous award processes performed by external assessors. To conduct mock assessments Y contracts experienced external assessors (typically consultants or assessors recommended by award bodies). The mock assessment is conducted before an actual award cycle and helps Y measure the current state of their excellence and maturity and prepare better for the actual award assessment. Both mock and award assessments are scored, and award-based feedback reports are provided to Y with recommendations for performance improvement. The Corporate Excellence Department coordinates and facilitates external assessments.

Like X there are also several additional unique findings of value. Y demonstrates a robust process for reviewing BE assessment findings. The identified OFIs undergo thorough root-cause analyses to pinpoint underlying issues. Based on these analyses, the organisation initiates various improvement projects, either addressing multiple OFIs concurrently or tackling each separately. All OFIs are thoroughly documented in a comprehensive action plan, overseen by the management team. They ensure the timely achievement of milestones by monitoring key metrics such as task completion rates, adherence to the plan, and overall timeline compliance.

Y is also continuously enhancing its local information system. This system is evolving into an AI-based platform, with plans to integrate AI tools like writing bots in future assessments.

Exemplary Case - Z

Organisation Z (Z) adopted the EFQM Model 15 years ago and has a strong emphasis on growth and organisational leadership. The institution was an EFQM Excellence Award Finalist in 2018.

Z's approach consists of an award assessment every three years and follow-up through an annual action plan review (depicted in the flow chart below, Figure 5.5).

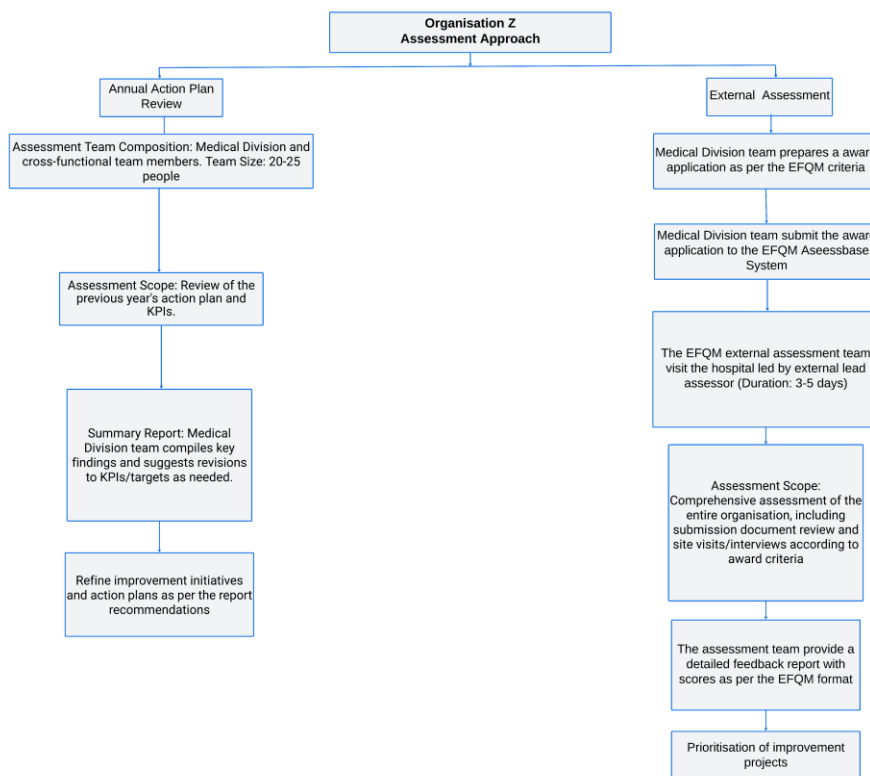


Figure 5.5: BE assessment approach of Organisation Z.

Z has evolved to a stage of BE maturity where traditional self-assessments are no longer practiced. Instead, the organisation has established a comprehensive annual action plan review process. In this process, cross-functional teams, facilitated by a specific Division⁷, conduct an exhaustive review of the progress made on the previous year's action plan, employing a workshop approach as outlined by Porter and Tanner (2012). The primary aim of the action

⁷ The department responsible for coordinating and facilitating excellence activities in Z

plan review process is to evaluate the progress of various improvement initiatives agreed upon in the previous year. But it also serves as an opportunity for the teams to address challenges encountered by action owners and to identify new opportunities that emerge during the implementation phase of these initiatives. The findings from the review process are utilized to revise improvement initiatives and an action plan where necessary. A report detailing all proposed changes is submitted to the management team for their review and subsequent approval.

Z's approach to external assessment is in line with standard external assessment practices. These external assessments are conducted every third year, involving a comprehensive review by EFQM assessors, covering the full organisation. The organisation engages in an external assessment process that aligns with the EFQM criteria. The BE team initiates this by preparing an award application that adheres to the EFQM requirements. This is then submitted through the EFQM AssessBase System. An EFQM external assessment team, led by an external lead assessor, conducts a site visit to the central site over a period of 3-5 days. The scope of this assessment encompasses the entire organisation, with the external team evaluating the submission documents and conducting interviews and site visits according to EFQM assessment criteria. Following the assessment, a detailed report of the findings is presented to the originating Division responsible for assessment. This report is then disseminated to the senior management team, who review it and develop an action plan incorporating recommended improvement initiatives.

Z has implemented a sophisticated IT system to facilitate excellence implementation. The IT system enhances the organisations' effectiveness, efficiency and agility by leveraging a comprehensive dataset to inform decision-making and streamline processes. This web-based IT system enables real-time performance monitoring, integrating quality standards, excellence criteria, and strategic deliverables seamlessly into everyday operations. Building on their IT system, the management team is making progress to further enhance accessibility and functional agility. They are in the process of developing a mobile application that will extend system access to all employees via their smartphones. This initiative is expected to seamlessly integrate with the existing IT infrastructure, ensuring that the convenience of mobile technology supports the drive towards excellence.

5.8. Discussion and recommendations

Self-assessment was identified as a common practice among the respondent organisations across all maturity levels. However, the frequency and scope of assessments differ across the various levels. High mature organisations conduct frequent, comprehensive assessments, that are often linked to awards and certifications (Angell & Corbett, 2009; Kamal, 2023). In contrast, low BE mature organisations are observed to lack regular assessments and conduct smaller assessments covering individual departments or business units. This appears to be due to resource limitations; employee commitment issues (Aladwan & Forrester, 2016); and/or, inadequate leadership support (Dahlgaard et al., 2013). The assessment approaches of BE mature organisations offer practical insights for less mature organisations aiming to improve their assessment approach.

Several best practices emerged from the respondent organisations, especially those used by the award-winning organisations (as identified through the case studies) or were used by the majority of BE mature organisations (as identified by the survey). Nine practices emerged, each of which is now discussed.

5.8.1. Planning for assessments via multiple award criteria

The complexity and time-intensive nature of BE assessments require robust planning and preparedness. An interesting best practice emerged from exemplar Y, which employed assessment planning through multiple award criteria. Y follows three leading BEMs including the country's government excellence program, EFQM and the Deming Prize, and each of these awards promotes performance improvement and excellence in their unique ways. For instance, EFQM emphasizes sustainability and stakeholder engagement, while the Deming Prize focuses on internal performance improvement through TQM (Muhammad Din et al., 2021). Due to their distinct focus, preparing for these diverse awards could be operationally challenging if approached separately. To solve the complexity challenge, Y adopted an innovative approach to prepare for assessments. Y consolidated each of the awards' criteria into 27 themes (capturing all award criteria and core business objectives) and used these in their internal and external (mock) assessment processes. This theme-based assessment approach simplified management efforts and directed them towards a unified internal and external assessment exercise.

This unique approach of assessment planning could be used where the organisation is following more than one award or BEM, as it offers an efficient way to prepare and improve performance. This theme-based assessment approach not only simplifies preparation by reducing duplication in efforts but also fosters a more cohesive and efficient approach to meeting diverse award/BEM criteria. Furthermore, Organisation Y's strategy serves as a model for an adaptable and agile assessment framework, which is crucial for accommodating the varying requirements of different BEMs and awards.

5.8.2. Use of mock assessments

A process of mock assessments in the award preparatory process was used to provide constructive feedback from experienced assessors, enhancing award readiness. Y's practice of mock assessments to prepare for the actual award assessment represents a best practice among the respondent organisations. Y uses mock assessments, conducted by external BE assessors to closely simulate the conditions of award assessment. Mocks are conducted about six months before the actual award cycles, offering a critical assessment of the organisation's current state of excellence maturity and facilitating effective integration of assessors' feedback into their operational processes. External BE assessors conduct these mock award-style assessments and provide scores, detailed feedback reports and recommendations for improvement. The organisation then utilizes these insights to implement improvement initiatives, thereby refining its readiness for the actual award assessments.

While mock assessments could be used to prepare for an award assessment, they present certain challenges that require careful consideration. The resource intensiveness of these assessments demands significant allocation of time, financial, and personnel resources, which might be limited in other organisations. Additionally, there is a risk of complacency, where organisations might overly rely on positive mock assessment outcomes, leading to a false sense of preparedness. The potentially limited perspective provided by mock assessments, often confined to the views of a narrow pool of assessors, may not fully capture the diverse external viewpoints. Notwithstanding these observations, mock assessments are a potential best practice for organisations striving for BE awards, enhancing readiness for actual BE award assessments. However, mock assessments require careful resource allocation and a balanced approach to avoid the onset of complacency.

5.8.3. Customers' role in assessment

Another notable practice identified in the study is X's involvement of their main customer in formal BE assessments. This approach incorporates the EFQM assessment into contracts with this customer, demonstrating the organisation's commitment to continuous improvement and stakeholder engagement. This collaborative method has led to notable outcomes, such as enhanced customer satisfaction and a strengthened reputation as a preferred and influential healthcare provider. The effectiveness of this strategy is validated through EFQM reports, which highlight its positive impact on the organisation's performance. This customer-led assessment approach adopted by Organisation X represents an emerging trend, emphasizing stakeholder feedback's critical role in organisational performance and service delivery improvement.

X's assessment approach of inviting its main customer in formal BE assessments offers valuable insights for other organisations. This stakeholder-centric approach aligns organisational strategies with customer expectations, enhancing satisfaction and fostering stronger customer relationships. Additionally, this method boosts the organisation's credibility and trust, showcasing a commitment to transparency and open collaboration.

5.8.4. A thorough Action Plan Review Process

This research underscores the importance of a robust action plan review process to achieve the strategic outcomes expected from BE assessments. In synthesizing the findings from the three exemplary award-winning organisations (X, Y and Z), a common process emerges in the form of an 'Action Plan Review'. Organisations X and Z use an annual action plan review to assess progress and make necessary adjustments in the action plan, including resource reallocation and management team escalation for support. Similarly, Y adopts a structured approach, monitoring progress through key metrics aligned with strategic goals, leading to management actions for improvement delivery.

Other BE organisations can learn several key lessons from these examples. First, establishing a systematic action plan review process is essential for maintaining management control over progress on improvement initiatives implemented due to BE assessments. Second, the involvement of management teams in these review processes ensures that necessary resources and support are provided, thereby enhancing the likelihood of successfully implementing agreed-upon improvement initiatives.

5.8.5. Use of internal assessments to grow staff capability

The exemplary cases all utilize their internal assessment process to develop internal excellence capabilities. X demonstrated a unique approach to leveraging internal assessments to develop internal capabilities and their internal knowledge-sharing process. Drawing from its successful use of the internal assessment process for training at the time of the introduction of the EFQM model in 2003, X replicated a similar approach in 2020 with the new EFQM Model. On both occasions, they formed four cross-functional teams to conduct BE assessments, a strategy that deepened BE understanding among the assessment team members and the other stakeholders with whom they engaged. This approach served as practical, hands-on training for staff, fostering widespread BE knowledge throughout the organisation. Y also employs cross-functional teams for focused, theme-based assessments, leveraging internal resources for continuous learning and organisational improvement. The holistic internal assessments of both organisations produce continuous learning, knowledge sharing and stakeholder involvement crucial for a dynamic and resilient approach to BE. These approaches illustrate the effectiveness of the assessment process in developing internal capabilities important for a successful BE journey.

Other BE organisations can derive insights from this practice. Cross-functional teams for internal assessments can be used for on-the-job training and BE knowledge integration through cross-functional teams.

5.8.6. Regular award assessments

Award assessments offer organisations an external perspective that can be used to improve their BE approach (Kiriri, 2019; Lasrado, 2018). This research reveals a consistent trend of active participation in BE awards and certifications from the three award-winning organisations. Their active involvement in BE awards aligns with the documented benefits of enhanced performance (Metaxas & Koulouriotis, 2014), innovation (Bovaird & Löffler, 2009) and a clear path toward organisational excellence (Zapletalová, 2022).

Regular participation in award assessments is expected to contribute to continuous improvement and excellence. The awards process fosters a culture of continuous learning and innovation, keeping organisations competitive and providing invaluable external insights from seasoned assessors. Such feedback offers a unique perspective, crucial for holistic

organisational improvement. Award also offer benchmarking opportunities, enabling learning opportunities through the exchange of best practices.

5.8.7. The use of external BE consultants/experts

External BE consultants and assessors appear to play a pivotal role in the quality of assessments. Their external perspective offers an objective view of organisational performance, free from the internal biases that may hinder accurate internal assessment. For example, X uses external consultants for facilitating internal assessments, leveraging their expertise to gain valuable improvement insights on internal BE performance. Similarly, Y employs external consultants for their mock assessments, utilizing their expertise to prepare for the actual award assessments that follow. These consultants bring a wealth of experience and knowledge, having worked with a variety of organisations, and are adept at identifying best practices and areas for improvement.

These best practices highlight the role of external consultants and experts in assessing organisational performance and the value of their external perspective while providing their feedback on organisational strengths and OFIs. BE organisations could learn from these insights and leverage BE consultants and experts in helping organisations improve their own BE performance.

5.8.8. The use of technology to support assessment

The use of technology can greatly improve data and information collection during the assessment process. While investigating the exemplars Y and Z were found to have developed strong IT systems that facilitates accurate and efficient access to data and help the organisations monitor key performance indicators (KPIs) and actions agreed upon as per the assessment outcome. Y deployed a local information system to facilitate accurate data access. Meanwhile, Z adopted a technologically advanced approach, integrating a sophisticated IT system for implementing excellence.

The adoption of advanced IT systems enhances data accuracy and efficiency, crucial for identifying improvement areas and monitoring action plans. Technology also enables real-time KPI monitoring, allowing for swift responses and informed decisions in dynamic business environments. Additionally, technological integration streamlines the assessment process, improving cross-departmental coordination and communication. Finally, sophisticated IT

systems, as exemplified by Z, demonstrate that technology can contribute to the drive for excellence, fostering innovation and continuous improvement.

5.8.9. Varying assessment types by BE maturity

This study reveals the diverse approaches to BE assessments used by the three exemplars. Notably, X demonstrates a dynamic assessment strategy, alternating annually between full internal assessments and targeted short assessments, complemented by an award assessment after three or four years. These varied assessments serve distinct purposes: Short internal assessments, characterized by their less complex nature and reduced resource requirements, serve as an efficient tool for monitoring and ensuring the effective implementation of action plans. On the other hand, Full assessments serve as comprehensive assessments covering the entire organisation. Award assessments then introduce an external perspective on organisational excellence performance, offering the organisation further insight.

In contrast, Y adopts a unique external assessment strategy, employing mock assessments, award assessments and internal assessments all supported by their theme-based preparation work. The mock assessments, conducted by external consultants, are instrumental in simulating the rigor of award assessments, thereby equipping the organisation with enhanced preparedness. Concurrently, internal assessments are strategically focused, examining specific model criteria, KPIs, or themes through a theme-based assessment framework. In contrast to X and Y, Z relies exclusively on external award assessments conducted every third year by external consultants. This reliance on external assessments underscores the importance of an external perspective on the organisational excellence journey and the value attached to the BE award process.

While some divergence emerges across the three cases it also provides real insight into the variety of approaches that can be used by BE award-winning organisations. The findings highlight the imperative of tailoring assessment strategies to align with an organisation's unique strategic context and BE maturity level. The optimal blend of internal and external assessments, their frequency, and the extent to which they are implemented should be aligned with each organisation's overarching goals and operational realities. None of the exemplars described here shied from assessment, but used assessment in its various guises, tailored to their own circumstances to enhance their own BE performance.

5.9. Conclusion

This research has achieved two objectives. It provided an explanation of and insight into the BE assessment practices of mature organisations. The first objective was accomplished through a review of the actual assessment practices reported by survey respondent organisations. The survey revealed that mature BE organisations consistently engage in both internal (self-) and external assessments covering the entire organisation. This finding adds to current knowledge by illustrating the depth and breadth of assessment practices in mature BE environments. The second objective, while built on the first, effectively validated these findings. The best practices from three exemplary organisations were extracted and reported in the form of case studies. The best practices include the development of a theme-based approach to external and self-assessment, ensuring that all efforts are directed to the organisational objectives and the criteria of BE award models. A mock assessment process was also found to be used that helps the organisation better prepare for award assessments. It also involved a customer-led award-style assessment to boost customer engagement and satisfaction, leading to a collaborative assessment approach. Systemic review and action plans for the timely implementation of improvement projects also enhance BE. Additional best practices include leveraging the internal assessment process to improve staff capabilities, regular participation in award assessments to foster a culture of excellence, consulting external BE experts for unbiased insights; utilizing technology to improve data precision and efficiency, and varying assessment types according to BE maturity and unique organisational context. These findings are the first to validate the comprehensive nature of BE assessments and provide actionable strategies for organisations aiming to enhance their performance and competitiveness through more refined assessment practices.

Study implications and limitations

This research provides insights for organisations, BE practitioners, and researchers from the field of TQM and BE, emphasising the need for flexible, comprehensive assessment approaches and active leadership involvement in BE assessments. It advocates for the strategic integration of assessment findings and the regular inclusion of external consultants to offer unbiased insights. For researchers, these findings can enrich the existing body of knowledge in quality management and business excellence. The study also opens avenues for future research, particularly in exploring the impact of technologies like AI on BE assessments. However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the research due to limited time and resources. It

would be beneficial to study in greater depth the assessment approaches of more organisations at each stage of BE maturity across different contexts to enhance the generalizability and richness of the findings.

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Chapter 6. Investigating processes for implementing and sustaining Business Excellence

6.1. Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to identify and examine the processes that support Business Excellence (BE) awareness and understanding within an organisation, such as, training and communication mechanisms. Processes also include the integration of BE into daily work and the selection and management of projects and actions. BE assessments, while part of the BE process, are excluded from the scope of this paper, warrant a separate focus and future research contribution.

This research is part of a larger study on Organisational Excellence Architecture (OEA), which refers to the structure, resources, processes and assessment tools used to assist the implement and sustain BE within an organisation.

Design/methodology/approach: A sequential mixed methods approach was used to identify and explore the BE approaches of 50 organisations with varying degrees of BE maturity from 17 countries. Twenty of these organisations, representing 40%, also participated in structured interviews. The research unfolded in two phases. The initial phase focused on identifying potential BE processes and approaches used for implementation and sustaining BE. The subsequent phase aimed at identifying best practices within these BE processes from which insights for other BE organisations are produced. These may then be used to evaluate and potentially refine their own BE processes.

Findings: This research explores the practices of mature business excellence (BE) organisations. It was found that these organisations are more likely to engage in regular BE training, with leadership teams actively promoting BE through robust internal communication processes. Formal action planning processes are also used to implement recommendations from assessment feedback reports. Key best practices identified include integrating BE methodologies into employee induction programs, utilising diverse training delivery methods, and employing assessments as learning opportunities. For internal BE communication, effective practices involve the adoption of consistent BE terminologies across the organisation; forming cross-functional teams to enhance collaboration; and, employing visual and interactive communication tools. In the excellence project selection process, fostering an overarching

excellence culture emerged as being crucial to align projects with BE criteria. Action planning involves using assessment results to initiate and guide planning processes; forming dedicated teams for in-depth analysis; and, establishing structured follow-up procedures to ensure that improvement projects are effective.

6.2. Introduction

Business Excellence Models (BEMs) are widely considered to be effective tools for improving an organisation's systems and, if implemented well, will invariably enhance organisational performance (Al-Majali & Almhurat, 2018). As a consequence Business Excellence (BE) is actively promoted as a means of stimulating economic competitiveness and societal benefits in over 70 countries (Ghafoor & Mann, 2023). But whilst BE is widely promoted the pathway for organisations to achieve a high level of BE maturity (or high BE scores as assessed against BEMs) remains opaque. It appears that the non-prescriptive design of these models (Lasrado (Lasrado, 2018; Pfeifer et al., 2005) and insufficient empirical research on BE implementation (Dahlgaard et al., 2013) is partly at fault. The aim of this research is to address this particular knowledge gap: to identify the Organisational Excellence Architecture (OEA) necessary to implement and sustain BE. Baig et al. (2024) presented an OEA model (Figure 6.1) based on empirical data from 50 organisations implementing BE. Of the respondents nearly a quarter (23%) are national business excellence award winners. OEA, as illustrated in Figure 6.1, consists of four components: internal BE structure, resources, processes, and assessment tools.

This paper focuses on the component BE processes. From an OEA viewpoint, BE processes refer to those processes that support Business Excellence (BE) awareness and understanding and the integration of BE in the organisation's daily work. Examples include training and communication mechanisms and the selection and management of projects and actions. BE assessments, whilst they could be considered a BE process, are considered as a separate component of OEA due to their importance in driving and tracking BE implementation.

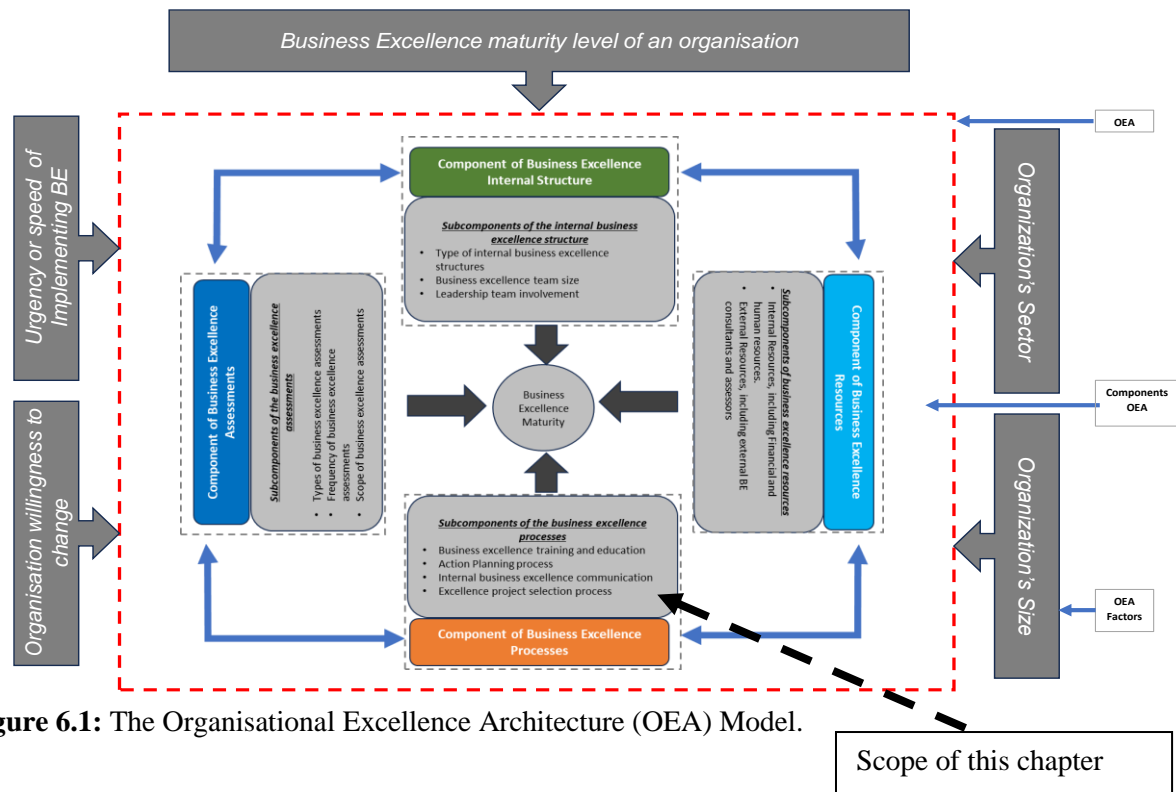


Figure 6.1: The Organisational Excellence Architecture (OEA) Model.

The results of this research should enable BE organisations to reflect, review and improve their existing BE processes. The data for the study was collected from fifty organisations through surveys and interviews across seventeen countries. The paper proceeds with a review of relevant literature on BE processes, followed by the research aims, objectives, methodology, results, discussion, and conclusion.

6.3. Literature review

The literature review is conducted to establish the existing knowledge of BE implementation. It helps identify the actual research gap in extant knowledge and guide the research methodology to be adopted.

A targeted literature search was conducted across the key academic databases, including Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar. Keywords relevant to the topic were used to gather a wide variety of published articles. As a result, 572 peer-reviewed BE journals and books were reviewed. This selection primarily focused on articles published within the last fifteen years, namely, since about 2007. The review that follows is presented in two sections. The first is the key processes for successful BE implementation and the second is the gaps in existing BE

implementation research and, consequently, the need for renewed holistic BE implementation research.

Key processes for successful BE implementation: BEMs serve as effective guides for organisations aiming to achieve world-class performance, institutionalised through well-defined internal processes enabling effective BE implementation. The literature analysis reveals BE processes, such as, *BE training* (Al-Majali (Al-Majali & Almhira, 2018; Hchaichi, 2023; Leonard & McAdam, 2002) for improving organisational performance (Antony et al., 2022; Hchaichi, 2023) and building internal capabilities (Bolboli et al., 2013; Tickle et al., 2016) have been identified. BE training includes the upskilling of improvement tools and specialised technical skills. (Pattison, 2011; Saruta, 2006). Support from country or regional BE Custodians (BECs)⁸ has also been observed to play a pivotal role in facilitating ongoing training for member organisations (Ghafoor et al., 2023). But despite the critical importance of training in BE implementation, the research of BE training and deployment is scarce. Specifically, the literature is largely silent on how organisations actually implement BE training processes necessary to enhance their internal capability.

Internal BE communication has also emerged as a key enabler for successful BE implementation. According to Mosadeghrad (2014) and Mbatha and Garad (2022), internal communication facilitates leadership engagement and promotes two-way communication. Gijo and Rao (2005) and Al-Majali and Almhira (2018) state that organisations may experience poor coordination, cooperation, and teamwork without proper communication, which may derail improvement initiatives. Attri et al. (2017) suggested that it is essential for organisations to communicate their improvement agendas and implementation plans comprehensively. Effective BE communication motivates employees and enhances their engagement in implementing improvement initiatives (Baidoun et al., 2018). While the significance of communication is widely acknowledged, there remains limited research on how BE organisations actually implement their internal communication strategies.

Research has also highlighted the importance of the action planning process emerging from BE assessments. Assessments reports are submitted in the form of written feedback after self- or external assessments. The feedback report provides numerous opportunities for improvement (OFIs) presented for each sub-criteria or items of respective model used for the assessment

⁸ BE Custodians are organisations that are responsible for a variety of activities, such as developing BE models and promoting, facilitating, and awarding BE in their countries (Grigg and Mann, 2008).

process. The feedback report may sometimes be overwhelming in terms of the sheer number of OFIs that are identified. Therefore, a robust prioritisation process is required to identify the priority OFIs upon which to work. Organisations also encourage individual senior management team members to take ownership of specific criteria (Porter & Tanner, 2012). They are then responsible for taking the particular assessment results and develop a set of action plans and leading improvement activities within the organisation. The action plan is expected to include realistic and mutually agreed-upon timeframes for achieving agreed improvement initiatives (Ahmed et al., 2003; Hosseini Ezzabadi et al., 2015). The literature also highlights the importance of the action plan review process in achieving desired outcomes from the action plan (Araújo & Sampaio, 2014; Metaxas et al., 2018; Sampaio et al., 2012).

Gaps in existing BE implementation research:

Despite the limited in-depth research on BE processes, the literature review identified several potentially important BE processes requiring further investigation. Additionally, the review aided in framing the research questionnaire and subsequent interview questions. The aims and objectives for this research are as follows.

6.4. Research aims and objectives

This research aims to identify and analyse the BE implementation processes used by BE organisations. To achieve this aim, two research objectives are set:

Objective 1: Identify and explain the potential BE processes adopted by BE organisations.

Objective 2: Present the best practices in BE processes derived from award-winning BE organisations.

6.5. Methodology

Research scope

The aim of the research is to identify and analyse the BE processes used by a range of BE organisations across different BE maturity levels. An explanatory sequential mixed methods technique is utilised in two phases. In the first phase, a survey is used to identify and confirm BE processes and obtain respondents' feedback on whether any process is missed in the proposed OEA model. The survey includes questions related to BE training, internal BE communication, BE assessments and the action planning process. Because the BE assessment process has received extensive coverage elsewhere and has significant implications for BE

implementation, that topic is addressed in detail in a separate paper. The first phase of the research helped to identify general BE implementation approaches in regards to different BE practices such as BE training and education, internal BE communication and action planning process.

The second phase involves structured interviews with BE managers/leaders from the BE mature organisations surveyed in the first phase. It captures their insights and best practices on the deployment of BE processes and identifies any critical BE processes missed from the first phase of the research and proposed conceptual OEA model.

Data collection

The research uses quantitative data collected from survey respondents and responses to structured interviews on their organisations' BE processes. The first research objective was achieved through the survey, while the second objective was achieved by integrating information from interviews. This sequential approach helped identify best practices in BE process deployment from the award-winning BE respondent organisations. Blending quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell & Creswell, 2017) provides a deeper view of BE processes, effectively meeting the study's objectives and capturing the diverse best practices across different organisational contexts.

Research sample

The sample for this study was drawn from organisations using BEMs recognised by the Global Excellence Models (GEM) Council⁹. The study included 50 respondent organisations at various stages of BE maturity, ranging from 'Leading to World-class' to 'Low BE Mature', across 17 countries. This diverse sample enabled a comparative analysis of BE implementation strategies (including the BE processes used) across different maturity levels and geographical contexts. Out of the 50 organisations, 20 (40%) of these organisations also participated in follow-up interviews. This approach enhanced the validity of the findings and provided a varied perspective on BE maturity, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of BE implementation strategies. The breakdown of research participants by their maturity is presented in Table 6.1.

⁹ The Global Excellence Model (GEM) Council consists of internationally acknowledged organisations that act as guardians of premier Excellence Models and Award schemes, specific to their geographical regions, sectors, or trade blocs.

Table 6.1. Research participants by BE maturity levels.

Maturity Levels	Number of Organisations participated in the survey	A number of Organisations also participated in structured interviews
Leading to World-class Organisations	28	13
Progressing to BE Mature Organisations	15	7
Low BE Mature Organisations	7	0
Total (<i>n</i>)	50	20

BE maturity continuum and categorisation of the respondents

Respondents classified themselves using the seven-stage BE maturity presented by Mann et al. (2011) and Tickle et al. (2016). The seven BE maturity levels are depicted in Figure 6.2. Following their self-selection, the respondent organisations were then clustered into three subcategories for subsequent statistical analysis and reporting. These three clusters include the seven-stage maturing steps as follows:

Awareness to Adoption (referred to as Low BE Mature, n=7): This category comprises organisations that selected the 'Awareness,' 'Initiation,' or 'Adoption' stages of the BE maturity model.

Progressing to BE Mature (n=15): This category comprises organisations that selected the 'Progressing' or 'Maturity' stages of the model.

Leading to World-class (n=28): This category comprises organisations that selected the 'Leading' or 'Sustaining (world-class)' stages of the model.

The quantitative results are presented in accordance with these three categories.

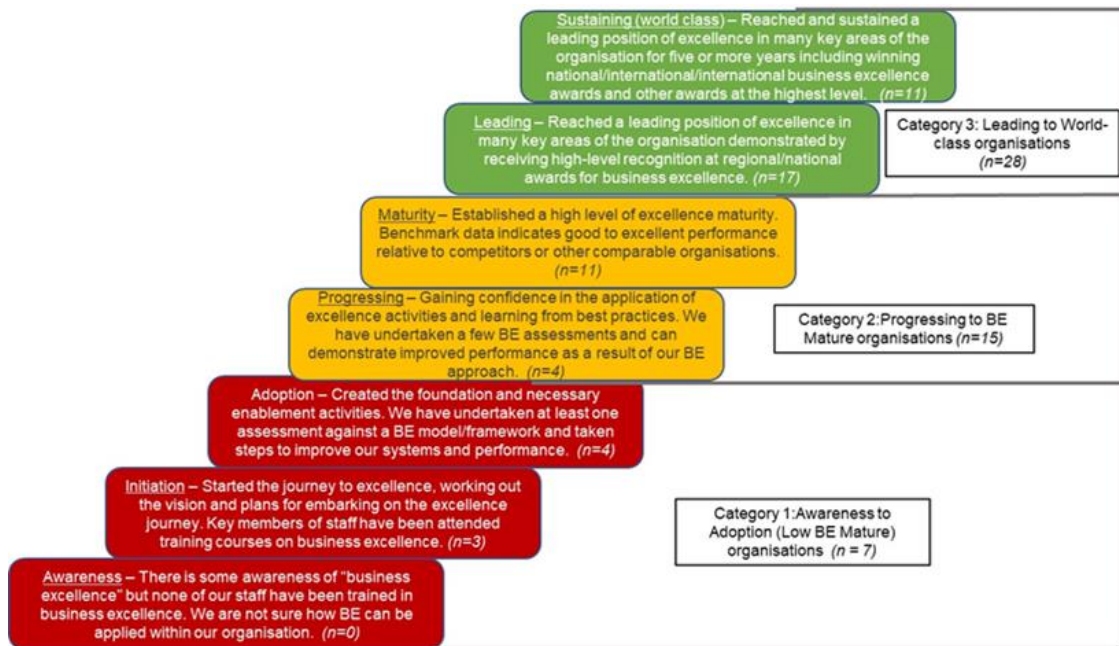


Figure 6.2. Levels of BE maturity.

Data analysis

The survey data was analysed using SPSS and Microsoft Excel. The data was categorised into two types: independent variables, including BE processes; and, dependent variables, which represented the BE maturity levels of the participating organisations. Descriptive statistics were represented using bar graphs. Multinomial regression analysis was used to identify significant differences ($p < 0.05$) in approaches across different BE maturity stages.

A systematic examination of the qualitative data was then conducted. The interviews were conducted in English using Zoom/MS Teams to which the participants offered to contribute. In particular, contributions were received from mature and award-winning organisations. The interviews were recorded with consent, transcribed verbatim, and qualitatively analysed using thematic analysis. The iterative process involved grouping similar responses, condensing overlapping themes, and refining discrepancies to extract details of BE processes implementation across various contexts. The approach ensured a detailed exploration of commonalities and unique strategies in BE processes, adhering to ethical confidentiality and participant consent standards. It was from this phase in the research that the best practices of BE mature organisations. The key themes and best practices that emerged from the interviews are present in Tables 6.2 - 6.5.

6.6. Results

The results are presented in two sections. Each of the sections are aligned to the research objectives: The first section and Objective 1 and, the section with Objective 2.

6.6.1. Objective 1: To identify and explain the BE processes adopted by BE organisations

The findings in this section identify and define the BE processes that respondent organisations at different BE maturity levels adopt. Results are presented as three key processes integral to BE implementation: 1) BE training; 2) action planning; and, 3) internal BE communication, as presented in Figure 6.3. This section also includes verbatim responses (select qualitative data) gathered during the interviews.



Figure 6.3: Use of BE approaches for BE processes at different BE maturity levels (n= 50).

BE training

BE training refers to an organisation’s educational programmes that enhance knowledge and skills that then create internal capabilities critical for a robust and deliberate OEA. The data reveals the distinctive strategies that Leading to World-class organisations employ in the BE education and training process. A substantial number (82%) of these organisations ensure basic BE understanding among all their staff, contrasting with just 43% ($p=0.04$) in Low BE Mature; and, 40% ($p=0.007$) in Progressing to BE Mature organisations. Furthermore, high BE mature

organisations exhibit regular (once every six months) ongoing BE training and education programmes for their employees. The regular training and education programmes ensure continuous learning, maintains alignment with evolving best practices, and reinforces a culture of continuous improvement and excellence. This training and development aims to keep all employees well-informed of the latest methodologies and tools in quality management and operational efficiency. Consequently, the workforce is able to contribute effectively to the organisation's excellence goals.

Senior management's involvement in BE promotion was found to be crucial: A majority (79%) of Leading to World-class organisations have their senior management engaged in BE events, compared to only 33% ($p=0.05$) and 43% ($p=0.07$) in Progressing to BE Mature and Low BE Mature organisations, respectively. BE mature organisations not only give due importance to the BE training and education process, but ensure that this encompasses people throughout the organisation which, in turn, enhances the development of internal capabilities for sustained BE.

Action Planning

Action planning refers to the formal planning process following a BE assessment. An effective action planning process is central to leveraging the opportunities revealed for improvement (OFIs) identified from an assessment. The results show that BE mature organisations take recommendations/OFIs from BE assessments and use action planning to materialise associated benefits. The results suggest that 89% of Leading to World-class and 93% of Progressing to High BE mature organisations confirmed having a formal action planning process compared to 43% of Low BE Mature organisations. Similarly, 64% of Leading to World-class organisations allocate people to be category/criterion leaders to lead improvement initiatives within specific BE category/criterion. Whereas only 53% and 43% of Progressing to High BE mature organisations and Low BE Mature organisations, respectively, follow the same process. Keeping with the same focus on BE implementation, 71% of Leading to World-class organisations establish improvement teams to work on improvement initiatives. While only 40% of Progressing to BE Mature organisations establish improvement to work on improvement initiatives. In contrast, a mere 14% ($p=0.01$) of the Low BE Mature organisations surveyed deploy dedicated improvement teams to work on different OFIs. Similarly, 93% of the Leading to World-class and 67% of the Progressing to High BE Mature respondents have formal and regular follow-up meetings to monitor progress on improvement initiatives. Most importantly 86% of directors and senior managers at the Leading to World-class organisations

fully involved into BE initiatives compared to 40% of Progressing to High BE Mature organisations and 29% of Low BE Mature organisations.

These results demonstrate the importance of the action planning process in establishing a clear plan and setting the necessary steps to achieve these aims within an organisation pursuing high BE maturity.

Internal BE Communication

Internal BE communication refers to the dissemination of information, knowledge, and practices related to BE initiatives within an organisation. The results show that effective BE communication is another common trait among BE organisations. The majority (82%) of Leading to World-class organisations have formal processes for disseminating BE updates compared to 47% ($p=0.02$) of Progressing to BE Mature ($p=0.02$); and 71% of Low BE Mature organisations. It was also noted that the CEO and other leadership team members within BE the mature organisations take the lead in communicating BE-related updates. As per the results, 75% of Leading to World-class and 87% of Progressing to High BE Mature organisations report sharing of BE information by their CEOs and senior management. A contrast to only 43% of the Low BE mature organisations surveyed. Internal BE communication also emerged as a critical BE process that organisations use to strengthen their OEA that then lead to a sustained BE culture. Beyond the quantitative data are the responses to and insights from the open-ended questions and interviews. One theme to emerge is: *Work alignment to excellence criteria* in their responses. The following paragraph explains this finding.

Work alignment to excellence criteria

The alignment to excellence criteria process refers to how organisations align their activities with the BE criteria. The interviews and open-ended responses emphasised the importance of aligning projects and initiatives within an organisation effective excellence selection process in line with to excellence criteria and overarching organisational purposes. Therefore, if projects/initiatives were not aligned they were unlikely to be approved.

Alignment to excellence criteria involves ensuring that every aspect of an organisation is in harmony with BE standards to achieve holistic BE objectives. This includes aligning individual job profiles and descriptions with BE criteria, enabling employees to understand how their roles contribute to overall BE objectives. The employee onboarding process should also reflect this alignment through incorporating BE principles into induction training and ongoing

development programs. Additionally, all strategic initiatives must be designed and executed in accordance with BE criteria, ensuring a cohesive approach across the organisation. By embedding BE standards into job roles, training, and strategic initiatives, the organisation can direct all efforts to embed a culture of excellence requires for a sustained performance.

Various BE award-winning organisations shared this view and were supported by BE experts. Following the respondents' feedback and experts' validation, the work alignment to excellence criteria was further investigated in the second phase of the research.

6.6.2. Objective 2: To identify and explain the best practices in BE processes derived from award-winning BE organisations.

While Objective 1 identified the understanding of '*what*' constitutes BE processes, Objective 2 explained '*how*' BE-mature organisations deploy these processes. The results of the thematic analysis are presented in four tables. These results are divided into the themes of BE training, internal BE communication, action planning, and excellence project selection process. Table 6.2 presents findings from the BE training process and is subdivided into more granular themes, such as, *BE as part of the employee induction training program*, *approaches of BE Training*, *Using the assessment process as a training opportunity* and *Leadership training on BE assessment*.

Table 6.1. Best practices for BE training.

Themes	Best practices
BE Training	<p><i>BE as part of employee induction training programme:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- BE is included in the organisational onboarding process. Each new hire goes through the mandatory onboarding process, which BE is part of. This aspect of organisational onboarding ensures that every individual receives a comprehensive introduction to the principles, categories, and terminologies of BE, regardless of their position. This approach underscores the commitment to embedding a culture of excellence across all levels of the organisation, from lateral recruits to new hires. <p><i>Approaches of BE Training:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- BE Organisations deploy different training approaches, including direct training, which involves employees attending scheduled sessions on specific excellence topics. Direct training allows employees to request monthly sessions on excellence conducted by internal trainers from the relevant department responsible for promoting and coordinating BE activities within an organisation.- Furthermore, annual BE refresher programmes are part of BE training initiatives.- Organisations also deploy online BE training modules, and all employees are required to go through this training once a year. <p><i>Using the assessment process as a training opportunity:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- BE organisations also use the assessment process to reinforce and expand their employees' understanding of BE principles. This approach involves proactive outreach from the BE team, which initiates BE training through various organisational functions before each BE assessment cycle. <p><i>Leadership training on BE assessment:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Adopting a strategic approach to organisational development, a best practice that stands out is the comprehensive training (such as four-day assessors' certification workshop) of the leadership teams in the BEM, alongside their active participation in BE assessments.

The results for best practices that emerged on the internal BE communication process are presented in Table 6.3. Key themes that emerged from this component include *integration of the BE language in organisational practices, enhancement of internal communication through collaborative teams, and different communication strategies* BE organisations deploy to disseminate excellence across the organisation.

Table 6.2. Best practices for BE internal communication.

Themes	Best practices
BE Internal Communication	<p><i>Integration of the BE language in Organisational Practices:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- BE organisations integrate BE terminology into meeting agendas, strategic planning documents, and daily interactions, using carefully structured agendas that infuse BE language into staff and executive meetings to foster familiarity with BE concepts. The consistent use of BE terminology in strategic documentation ensures that BE principles remain a focal point in organisational strategy. Employees assimilate this language through regular exposure, deepening their engagement with BE values. Strategic communication acts as an educational tool, seamlessly weaving BE principles into the DNA of an organisation's culture and operations, steering all efforts towards a unified vision of excellence. <p><i>Enhancing Internal Communication through Collaborative Teams:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Enhancing internal communication involves assembling cross-functional teams from various departments around key organisational criteria, such as, human capital, finance, and innovation. Regular and frequent meetings are scheduled to provide a platform for these interdisciplinary teams to engage in in-depth discussions. These sessions are designed to cover a range of topics, including reviewing criteria requirements, exchanging best practices, and celebrating achievements. The meetings also aim to identify quick wins/opportunities for improvements and establish measurable outcomes. <p><i>Communication strategies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Visual aids such as posters and branded items are utilised, constantly reminding people of the BE values in workspaces. Interactive methods, including competitions and digital displays on employee computer screens, further maintain visibility and awareness of BE principles.- Regular leadership talks, highlighted by communication from senior leaders, contributes to a culture of continuous learning and reinforcement of business excellence values. This effort is part of a well-planned annual communication strategy that embraces various methods to optimise the message's reach and impact. Targeted communications, such as, emails, videos, and social media posts are employed to share successes and updates for specific achievements or accreditation milestones.

The results of the excellence project selection process are presented in Table 6.4. The best practice emerging from the respondents is presented as *Business Excellence as a guiding framework for excellence project selection* theme.

Table 6.3. Best practices for work alignment to excellence criteria.

Themes	Best practices
Work alignment to excellence	<p><i>Business Excellence as a guiding framework for excellence project selection</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The adoption of BEMs encourages a broader perspective, focusing on continuous improvement through a long-term strategy. Business excellence is not a set of criteria to be met but a mindset that has been part of organisational culture for years. This mindset encourages thorough planning, strategic resource allocation, and monitoring, leading to a more structured project initiation and execution process.- While an indirect relationship exists between the project selection process and the BEM's criteria, the direct application of these criteria to the selection process is considered more theoretical than practical. The operational implementation of projects is influenced by various tactical factors, including the organisation's capacity, the complexity of the tools employed, and the level of commitment from the personnel involved. In some instances, projects may require transformational efforts, necessitating dedicated involvement from senior members to drive specific initiatives over a given timeframe.

Results for best practices that emerged in the action planning process are presented in Table 6.5. These practices are presented in three themes: *assessment reports as the centre point of the action planning process*; *prioritisation of improvement initiatives/actions*; and, *action plan follow-up process*.

Table 6.4. Best practices for the action planning process.

Themes	Best practices
Action Planning	<p><i>Assessments report as a centre point of the action planning process:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The action planning process is linked to the insights gained from assessments and benchmarking reports. By thoroughly analysing BE assessment recommendations, organisations identify and prioritise initiatives based on urgency and expected impact. This prioritisation informs the allocation of additional budget and resources—less time-sensitive initiatives incorporated into the following year's business planning cycle. <p><i>Prioritisation of improvement initiatives/actions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Following the initial analysis, an independent internal team of trained assessors evaluates the identified improvement opportunities. This team explores the root causes of the issues and devises actions to mitigate similar future occurrences. Responsibility for action planning rests with this internal team. Their findings and proposed actions are then presented to the internal forum established for deliberation and input on such matters. The final step involves escalating the action plan to the steering committee level to secure buy-in from the leadership team, marking a critical phase in the action planning process where strategic decisions are made to implement the necessary improvements. <p><i>Action plan follow-up:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- A robust follow-up process is crucial for achieving the desired objectives of BE. Organisations implement a comprehensive process to monitor progress on agreed action plans. Central to this process, the leadership team regularly meet to review specific projects, ensuring that each step taken aligns with the overarching goals and contributes effectively to the continuous improvement journey. These meetings are essential for examining current statuses and progress, ensuring a continuous alignment with organisational goals and objectives. <p><i>Assigning category leaders responsible for implementing/tracking improvement actions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- BE mature organisations designates category leaders who are responsible for implementing and tracking the identified improvement actions. These leaders are usually selected based on their expertise and experience in relevant excellence category. They are tasked with coordinating the implementation efforts, including the allocation of resources, setting timelines, and assigning tasks to relevant team members. The category leaders work closely with the internal BE forums such as BE Councils to receive input and feedback, ensuring that the planned actions are on track. The category leaders present their progress reports to the steering committee, highlighting achievements, addressing any obstacles encountered, proposing adjustments and support required.

6.7. Discussion and Recommendations

Objective 1: To identify and explain the BE processes adopted by BE organisations

The survey data confirmed that organisations committed to BE frequently adopt specific processes, such as, BE training, action planning and BE communication to implement and sustain BE initiatives. However, the approach to BE implementation appears to vary significantly with that of the organisation's level of BE maturity.

Organisations with high BE maturity prioritise BE education and training far more so than their less mature counterparts, highlighting the critical role of BE education in achieving advanced BE maturity and overall success in sustaining and implementing BE. The formal action planning process also emerged as a distinguishing approach of BE mature organisations. It was observed that organisations with high BE maturity tend to adopt a more structured approach by assigning dedicated senior leaders to oversee specific categories or criteria within the action plan. The establishment of dedicated teams and a formal follow-up process further emphasise the strategic importance placed on collaborative and structured efforts towards achieving BE goals (Porter & Tanner, 2012).

Additionally, the results support the role of effective internal communication processes in enhancing BE awareness and the involvement of the CEO. This finding is consistent with existing literature that emphasises the fundamental roles of internal communication and leadership in driving BE initiatives (Araújo & Sampaio, 2014; Baidoun et al., 2018; Brown, 2014; Talib et al., 2011). The best practices that emerged from the research are now discussed. These practices were common to the BE mature organisations and are expected to help other organisations improve their existing BE processes.

Objective 2: To identify and explain the best practices in BE processes derived from award-winning BE organisations.

BE training

This research identifies the critical role of BE training in embedding a culture of excellence within organisations. BE mature organisations approach BE training through different processes and procedures. These training strategies produce a comprehensive BE

understanding to employees and embed the BE culture within the organisation. Some best practices highlighted in the training space are as follows:

Include BE in the employee induction programme: It was identified that BE mature organisations integrate basic BE training within their induction programs to instil a culture of excellence from the onset of an employee's journey. The early introduction to BE principles to new employees helps new employees understand how BE helps an organisation achieve its purpose and objectives; how BE principles and tools will help individual employees contribute to overall organisational purpose; and, to understand basic BE terminologies used in the organisations (common language). One of the participants from an award-winning organisation explained the importance of BE in the induction programme as follows, "*BE training is part of our induction, so when new employees start as part of their induction, we give them an overview of BE, why we use it and what value it brings, and an overview. We do not expect them to understand the deeper concepts but at least have to recognise the framework and some of the terminology, the categories, and the principles. So, they have a superficial understanding of it*".

Diversify training approaches: Adopting various training methodologies, including direct sessions, online BE modules and refresher programmes can ensure comprehensive coverage of BE principles. BE mature organisations exemplify this by employing a broad approach to training from initial induction sessions to monthly training and annual refresher courses. These organisations leverage a blend of internal and external resources, utilising the expertise of in-house trainers and the specialised knowledge of external BE consultants. Training systems accommodate varied employee learning styles and ensure the thorough assimilation of BE principles, reinforcing the organisation's commitment to continuous quality improvement and excellence.

Leverage assessments as learning opportunities: BE assessments help organisations reinforce and expand their BE knowledge. It was noted that BE mature organisations use the BE assessment process to measure organisational BE maturity and to train a wider employee base on BE principles and model criteria. However, the respondent organisations use a different approach to assessment as a training opportunity. One respondent mentioned that, "our training efforts are specific to preparing for assessments, like an award-level assessment. When an assessment is approaching, we start to align everyone's understanding of business excellence in terms of a model". Another participant from Singapore mentioned that "we usually brief our

teams shortly before an actual assessment to ensure everyone is aligned, and we've even started creating videos for better dissemination. However, the core components of business excellence, such as quality, productivity, and workflow, are already integrated into our daily operations. Department heads design their programs, ensuring continuous improvement. While these efforts might not explicitly carry the 'business excellence' label, they embody its principles". While another participant from UAE stated that "it's [BE training] is a constant process, and almost all staff gain a basic understanding of Business Excellence. Furthermore, when assessments take place, there is an outreach from the Business Excellence team. This outreach involves a training cascade to the functions, which then disseminate it further".

Leadership training: A further practice that emerged from the BE mature organisations is their leadership teams' active involvement in the excellence deployment process. One of the award-winning organisations mentioned that their top two layers of leadership teams are fully trained in the BE assessment process. Another mentioned that their leadership team actively participates in the assessment process and helps implement different BE improvement projects and initiatives.

Internal BE communication

Effective BE communication was found to be crucial for deeply integrating excellence into an organisation's culture. Mature organisations use different communication approaches to engage with employees for BE-related communication. The following practices were identified as being used by BE mature organisations:

Systematic integration of BE language: The success of BE implementation appears to depend on being deeply embedded into the organisational culture. Therefore, it should reflect on each touchpoint of an organisation. BE mature organisations integrate BE terminologies into daily organisational communications, such as, staff and executive level meetings, strategic documentation and other internal communication mediums. This rich and reinforcing communication helps organisations standardise excellence language, leading to a long-term culture of excellence. While highlighting the importance of integrated communication, one research respondent mentioned that, "our staff meeting agenda is structured using the language from the [BE] framework. Our executive leadership team meets weekly; that agenda is also structured using language from the [BE] framework. BE is embedded in pretty much everything we do here. Individuals become accustomed to the framework's language and terminology, often without direct reference to the framework itself".

Internal communication through collaborative teams: Forming cross-functional collaborative teams was also found helpful in improving BE communication across an organisation. One of the best practices found in BE mature organisations is the frequent use of cross-functional teams to foster excellence. These teams are structured around specific criteria, such as, human capital, finance, and innovation. Hybrid teams were found to meet monthly to discuss criteria requirements, best practices, and discussions focusing on identifying quick wins, improvement opportunities and expected outcomes.

Internal BE communication strategies: While conventional communication methods, such as, emails and the organisation's intranet were used to disseminate BE-related communication, as noted by all BE practicing organisations, some best practices emerged from the BE mature organisations surveyed. Practices, such as, using visual aids, including posters and branded items reminding employees of BE values at individual workplaces were found to be practical tools to communicate BE-related information. It was also noted that some BE mature organisations deploy interactive methods, including digital displays of BE values on individual computer screens to improve excellence principles' visibility and awareness across the organisation. Regular leadership presentations on BE practices/values are also identified as being best practices. These talks are regularly delivered through 'town hall' meetings and video messages from the respective CEO and senior leadership team members.

Business Excellence as a guiding framework for excellence project selection

It emerged that BE mature organisations do not explicitly link their project selection processes with excellence criteria. Instead, owing to their advanced BE maturity, every process aligns with their excellence aspirations. Consequently, selecting projects for excellence is approached as a tactical task, influenced by factors, such as, the organisation's capacity, the complexity of the tools used, and the commitment level of the involved personnel. The approach recognises that while aligning projects with strategic goals is crucial, the practical execution of improvement projects is also shaped by the unique contexts and constraints of the organisation. These projects might then demand transformational effort, requiring significant involvement from senior members to shepherd these initiatives within a defined timeframe.

Action planning process

The action planning process serves as a strategic milestone for organisations to systematically identify, prioritise, and implement their BE initiatives. BE mature organisations deploy

deliberate effects to ensure action plans are aligned with overarching organisational objectives and to drive a culture of continuous improvement. Some of the best practices include leveraging BE assessment feedback and performance reviews. The action planning process is fundamentally linked to insights from assessments and other reports, such as, benchmarking or annual audit reports. BE mature organisations were found to leverage these assessment outcomes for their action planning, enabling them to identify and prioritise improvement initiatives that promise the most significant impact. This approach ensures that adequate resources are allocated and these initiatives aligned with the organisation's strategic goals. While high-impact recommendations from assessment reports deal with formal improvement initiatives and projects, less urgent initiatives are analysed and considered for subsequent business planning cycles. This process underscores the importance of a forward-looking perspective, ensuring that continuous improvement is ingrained in the organisation's culture.

Work alignment to excellence

Alignment to excellence criteria involves ensuring that every aspect of an organisation is in harmony with BE standards to achieve holistic BE objectives. This includes aligning individual job profiles and descriptions with BE criteria, enabling employees to understand how their roles contribute to overall BE objectives. The employee onboarding process should also reflect this alignment through incorporating BE principles into induction training and ongoing development programs. Additionally, all strategic initiatives must be designed and executed in accordance with BE criteria, ensuring a cohesive approach across the organisation.

Robust follow-up process: It was also noted that BE mature organisations deploy robust action follow-up processes to ensure the timely implementation of improvement projects. They were observed to implement a process where the senior leadership team regularly review progress on their action plans. In a few cases, this review allocated formal time in senior leadership regular meetings. In others, digital dashboards and online systems are being used to improve improvement initiatives and progress monitoring.

6.8. Conclusion

This research successfully achieved its two primary objectives, providing valuable insights into the OEA processes utilised by organisations. The first objective was to present a comprehensive view of the key processes implemented by BE organisations to foster their BE practices. These included BE training, internal BE communication, action planning, and the

work alignment to excellence. This objective offered a broad perspective on the OEA process, illustrating the foundational elements critical to fostering a sustainable BE culture.

The second objective was achieved by identifying a series of best practices that facilitate the successful adoption and integration of BE principles with BE mature organisations. Several key best practices were identified that are essential for successfully implementing BE. In BE training, integrating BE principles into employee induction programs is crucial, complemented by the adoption of diverse training methods such as direct, online, and refresher courses. Additionally, the use of assessment processes as educational tools is pivotal. Leadership training in BE assessment also emerged as a crucial practice, ensuring executive involvement in BE initiatives.

In terms of internal communication, effective communication is highlighted as vital for embedding excellence within the organisational culture. Best practices in this area include the routine use of BE terminologies in organisational communications to foster familiarity and engagement, the formation of cross-functional teams to enhance interdepartmental collaboration, and employing visual aids and interactive methods to reinforce BE values consistently across the organisation.

The action planning process plays a critical role in identifying and prioritising BE improvement initiatives. Using BE assessments as the basis for strategic action planning, involving an independent internal team for detailed analysis, and structured follow-ups on action plans ensure ongoing alignment with organisational goals.

Furthermore, ensuring that all organisational elements align with BE criteria is essential for achieving holistic BE objectives. This involves aligning job profiles with BE standards, incorporating BE principles into the employee onboarding process, and ensuring that all strategic initiatives are designed and executed in accordance with BE criteria.

This study delivers crucial insights for organisations, BE practitioners, and TQM and BE researchers. For BE practitioners, this research identifies the practical best practices for improving current BE processes. For researchers, this study contributes to the existing BE and TQM research landscape while suggesting future research directions in exploring OEA processes. Nonetheless, the study's scope was limited by not including award recipients from other programs like the MBNQA and the Australian Business Excellence Award. That outcome was entirely unplanned and emerged as a function of the sampling frame. Future research

incorporating these award winners may provide a broader understanding of BE assessment practices, increasing the findings' applicability if the distinctiveness between these programmes is genuinely significant. A major limitation of this study is its broad scope, as it tries to explore a novel concept of OEA that includes many components and factors. This broad focus limited the depth of exploration into each individual component, resulting in a less comprehensive understanding of each element. Future research could address this limitation by focusing more narrowly on individual components of OEA, which could lead to clearer definitions of processes, identification of additional processes, and a deeper exploration of the relationships between these processes and various influencing factors. Furthermore, certain factors such as the BE maturity level of an organisation, organisation size, industry type, and urgency to implement BE were not addressed in this study. Including these factors in the discussion could enhance the understanding of how different contexts affect the application and effectiveness of OEA processes. This limitation suggests a valuable direction for subsequent research to expand on the findings presented here.

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Chapter 7. Organisational Excellence Architecture – The BE support structure of BE organisations and their resource deployment

7.1. Abstract

Purpose: The aim of the study was to identify how organisations structure themselves to implement and sustain business excellence (BE) and how they resource BE.

Design/methodology/approach: This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed methods approach, collecting data from 50 organisations across 17 countries with diverse levels of BE maturity. Initially, quantitative data were gathered, followed by qualitative insights from structured interviews with 20 organisations, constituting 40% of the sample. These interviews provided a deeper exploration of various BE practices.

Findings: The study revealed that effective business excellence (BE) implementation relies on dedicated resources, structured BE teams with category leaders, and active BE councils or committees. Strong leadership from senior management also emerged as a critical factor for BE success. Additionally, the research found that an organisation's BE support structure is influenced by both organisational size and the stage of BE maturity. Two distinct approaches to creating an effective BE support structure were identified: centralised and decentralised. Centralised BE support structures offer consistency and oversight, proving more beneficial for large and diverse organisations. In contrast, decentralised BE support structures encourage innovation and agility by granting greater autonomy to individual departments. Furthermore, the strategic use of external resources, such as, consultants and government input is observed to enhance internal BE capabilities.

7.2. Introduction

The business excellence (BE) philosophy has emerged in the last three decades as a structured approach to facilitate change and produce world-class performance. BE is commonly operationalised through the pursuit of BE models (BEMs), such as, the Baldrige Excellence Framework (NIST, 2024) and the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Model (EFQM, 2024; Gómez et al., 2017). Emerging from the Total Quality Management (TQM) philosophy, BEMs offer a structured framework for increasing organisational

performance through regular assessments and improvement of core processes (Adebanjo & Mann, 2008; Zapletalová, 2023). BEMs enable benchmarking against industry best practices, providing an opportunity for organisations to learn from others that have been through assessment processes (Mohammad et al., 2011; Salih & Dolah, 2023). BEMs also enhance stakeholder engagement by providing a structured approach to systematically identify, understand and prioritise stakeholder needs and expectations (Brown, 2014; Muhammad Din et al., 2021).

Embarking on a BE journey through the implementation of BEMs is a strategic decision requiring a corresponding BE support structure and competent resources to support business excellence activities (Tickle et al., 2016). But while the existing literature underscores the significance of some form of robust internal structure, good integration and coordination and equally capable financial resources (Aladwan & Forrester, 2016), it lacks up to date practical guidance for organisations on how these two outcomes can be implemented. In response to this knowledge gap in the existing BE landscape Baig et al., (2024) proposed the Organisational Excellence Architecture (OEA) model (Figure 1). The model provides a unified view of BE implementation through a dedicated architecture of components and factors. OEA refers to the *formal support structure, resources, processes, and assessment tools used to assist the implementation of BE within an organisation*. The OEA model comprises four BE components: resources, internal structure, assessments and processes. This paper now focuses on the components of *internal BE structure* and *BE resources*.

BE support structure refers to the organisational arrangements and mechanisms to manage change and drive continuous improvement with the BE model. It includes individuals' roles in taking responsibility for the various BE categories/criteria¹⁰ and the role of the senior executive team. It also includes the dedicated departments, committees or improvement teams and leadership team role in driving BE activities to achieve organisational excellence.

BE resources refer to both the internal and external resources dedicated to BE activities. Internal resources include the human, financial and IT resources an organisation uses to implement BE activities. Internal human resources include competent BE-trained employees and teams dedicated to BE activities. Financial resources are categorised as dedicated budgetary allocations to support BE activities, such as, BE training and BE internal or award

¹⁰ In a BE organisation, the category/criterion refers to different categories/criteria of BE models. For example, The EFQM 2020 model has seven criteria EFQM (2020). *EFQM 2020 Model - EFQM*. Retrieved August 30,

assessment preparation among others. IT resources refer to the deployment of specific digital technology to implement BE. The IT resources may include performance monitoring systems, online assessment tools and others. External resources refer to those that are not operating within an organisation but can be employed on an as-needed basis. These external resources are likely to include BE experts and consultants available to assist organisations with specific BE activities, such as, BE training and assessments. Collectively, these resources contribute to the implementation of BEMs and continuous improvement processes. They play a pivotal role in achieving sustained high performance and a culture of excellence. The OEA model is presented in Figure 7.1 and explained in and four. This paper is focussing on two of the main components of OEA, BE support structure and BE resources.

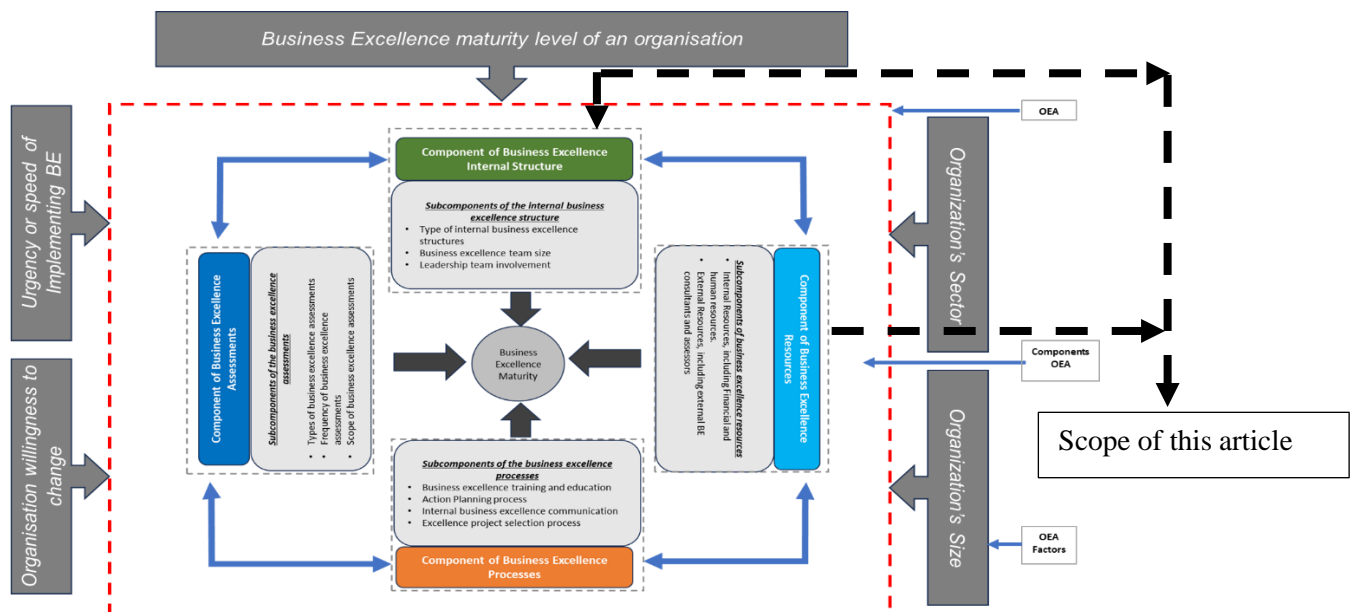


Figure 7.1:Organisational Excellence Architecture (OEA) Model (this chapter focuses on two components: Business Excellence Structure and Business Excellence Resources).

This research has two objectives. The first is to identify the types of BE support structure and resources used by organisations at various BE maturity levels. The second objective is identifying the approaches that BE mature organisations adopt for the effective implementation of their BE support structure and resources. This research encourages BE organisations to review and improve their existing approaches for internal support structure and resources. The data for the study was collected from fifty organisations from seventeen countries through an online survey followed by a series of in-depth interviews with select respondents in those organisations.

The paper is structured as follows. It begins with a review of the literature on BE implementation, specifically examining previous research related to BE support structures and resources. The research aims and objectives are presented, the methodology discussed, key results included, and a discussion undertaken. The paper concludes with practical recommendations for respective organisations to learn, improve, and accelerate their BE journey.

7.3. Literature review

The literature review in this paper focuses specifically on research related to BE support structures and resource to implement and sustain BE within an organisation. Key gaps in the existing BE knowledge are then identified that then guide the research methodology adopted for this research. The means through which each of these knowledge gaps are then to be addressed is discussed. The breadth and scope of research on BE structure and resources is reviewed.

A systematic literature search was conducted across the key academic databases, including Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar. Relevant keywords were used to collect past research related to the topic. In total, 288 peer-reviewed BE journals and books were analysed. The focus of the review was on articles published within the last twenty years to establish the more recent developments in the field. The search process was developed to identify the state of BE implementation with a focus on BE support structure and resource deployment. The review that follows is divided into three sections: One, BE support structure; Two, BE resources; and, Three, the analysis of BE implementation cases.

7.3.1. BE support structure

The importance of designing structures to support BE has previously been discussed by both Gijo and Rao (2005) and Talib et al. (2011). They identified the importance of a robust BE support structure for improving coordination between different the various department/functions in their pursuit of BE. Many ways have been found to organise BE support structures to effectively implement and sustain BE as highlighted in the BE literature. For example, Angell and Corbett (2009) identified that cross-functional improvement teams are instrumental in enhancing BE communication and supporting BE operations. Evans (2016) discussed how dedicated BE departments or teams are used by some organisations to facilitate BE activities. Similarly, Lasrado and Uzbeck (2017), in referring to the winners of the Dubai

Quality Award (DQA) recommended a clear, transparent structure that organisations create to accelerate their BE maturity. In BE organisational settings, the BE support structure consists of operational and strategic activities. Those at an operational level refer to the day-to-day activities that are essential for maintaining the ongoing functioning of an organisation.

At a strategic level the focus shifts to higher-level planning and decision-making processes that shape the organisation's long-term BE objectives and policies. BE steering committees or councils are found to provide a platform for leadership to get involved in BE activities (Brown, 2013; Garza-Reyes, 2018). Steering committees/councils are typically composed of senior leaders, including the CEO, who provides strategic direction, support, and oversight on BE initiatives, facilitating high-level change management decisions (Lasrado, 2018; Tickle et al., 2016). The BE implementation literature identifies the different aspects and importance of an adequate internal BE support structure. However, no scholarly effort was found to guide organisations in *establishing* their own effective and robust BE support structure.

7.3.2. Resources for BE

Adequate and competent resources are central to helping organisations achieve their strategic objectives. Internal BE resources may include human and IT resources and a dedicated budget for BE activities. Whereas external BE resources may include access to professional networks related to BE, best practice portals and access to BE experts and consultants. The availability of internal and external resources improves organisational capabilities to manage change and drive excellence (Baidoun et al., 2018; Mann et al., 2011). Each of which are anticipated to interface with the organisation by way of its BE support structure. Trained in BE methodology, models, and tools, competent employees facilitate internal engagements and commitment towards BE objectives. Similarly, a dedicated BE budget (Aladwan & Forrester, 2016) helps build internal capabilities, such as, BE training and other technological support that the organisation requires to implement an excellence culture. A dedicated BE budget may also be utilised to contract external consultants for assistance in external assessments, and the preparation of award applications (Adeyemi et al., 2014; Jabnoun & Khalifah, 2015; Mann et al., 2012). BE consultants bring specialised knowledge and experience and offer insights and benchmarks from industry best practices, understood to significantly accelerate the BEM implementation process (Ghafoor, 2021; Hoskote, 2015). Collectively, these BE resources support an organisation's excellence journey. No comprehensive scholarly effort was found

that provides guidance to BE organisations on specific resource deployment for the pursuit of their BE journey.

7.3.3. Analysis of BE implementation case studies

Both researchers and consultants have presented case studies on overall BE implementation. However, their contributions often rely on dated examples or lack comprehensive, actionable guidance on organising the BE support structure and resources. Pattison (2011) compiled a report including eight local government case studies following the Australian Business Excellence Framework (ABEF). The report was limited to a few local municipalities and unfortunately did not provide detailed information on their BE implementation with respect to BE support structure and resource deployment. Oakland and Morris (2013) also attempted to provide a practical guide to quality managers on holistic quality programme implementation. However, their effort too lacked depth and detail with few practical examples and guidelines.

While Kendall and Bodinson (2017) explored the BE implementation strategies among Malcolm Baldrige Award winners from 1998 to 2015 they did not provide detail on effective BE support structure. Nor did they provide a description of BE resources that would lead to successful BE implementation.

Lasrado (2018) offered a practical guide on implementing BEMs that consolidates best practices and empirical evidence collected from Dubai Quality award winners. However, it could have benefitted from a critical analysis of how these models are actually deployed across various organisational contexts. The lack of recent empirical data and modern cases creates the opportunity to explore new approaches for designing and implementing BE support structures that meets the complex demands of organisations implementing BE.

Despite these limitations, several conclusions are drawn. Firstly, various approaches are used by BE organisations to organise an effective support structure and associated resources utilised to support their BE implementation. Secondly, a notable gap emerges regarding real-life examples or best practices to guide BE organisations in optimising their BE support structures and resource allocation. Third, the literature review informed the development of the research questionnaire and interview questions used in this study. The research aims and objectives now follow.

7.4. Research aims and objectives

The aim of this study is to identify and analyse how BE organisations organise their BE support structure and associated resources to implement an effective OEA. To achieve this aim, two objectives have been established:

Objective 1: To identify the types of BE support structure and resources used by organisations at various BE maturity levels.

Objective 2: To identify the approaches that BE mature organisations adopt for the effective implementation of their BE support structure and resources.

7.5. Methodology

Research scope

Explanatory sequential mixed methods are utilised to produce two phases of study. In the first phase, a survey is used to identify and confirm BE approaches to the BE support structure and resources that organisations deploy to implement and sustain excellence. The survey includes questions related to BE support structure, such as, questions on BE dedicated departments and the use of teams in BE deployment. The survey also includes questions related to resources, including BE team size, allocation of dedicated budget for BE activities and external BE consultants used to facilitate different BE activities within an organisation. In the second phase, structured interviews are conducted to identify how select BE mature and award-winners organise their internal BE support structure and resources. The interviews are anticipated to play a central role in identifying the best practices presented in the paper.

Data collection

BE support structure and resource-specific data was collected from surveys and structured interviews. The data from the survey is used for quantitative analysis to achieve the first objective of the research. Whereas the qualitative data was collected from interviews with a select group of respondents. This approach, blending quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell & Creswell, 2017), is expected to provide a more comprehensive view of BE implementation than either one alone. In doing so it is expected to meet the study's dual objectives, capturing the diverse approaches used for BE implementation across different contexts.

Research sample

The sample for this study was selected from organisations using BEMs recognised by the Global Excellence Models (GEM) Council¹¹. The respondents included 50 organisations at various stages of BE maturity, ranging from 'Leading to World-class' to 'Low BE Mature', across 17 countries. This diverse sample enabled a comparative analysis of BE implementation strategies across different maturity levels and geographical contexts. Of the 50 organisations, 20 (40%) also participated in the follow-up and in-depth interviews. This sequential mixed methods approach was used to validate the findings and provided a more varied perspective on BE maturity, contributing to a deeper understanding of the BE implementation strategies. The breakdown of research participants by their maturity is presented in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1: Research participants by maturity levels.

Maturity levels	Number of organisations participated in the survey	The number of organisations also participated in structured interviews
Leading to World-class Organisations	28	13
Progressing to BE Mature Organisations	15	7
Low BE Mature Organisations	7	0
Total (<i>n</i>)	50	20
The table is wonky		

BE maturity continuum and categorisation of the respondents

Survey respondents were requested to classify their organisation's stage of BE maturity, choosing from one of the seven BE maturity levels depicted in Figure 7.1. Following their selection, respondents were grouped into three subcategories for statistical analysis and reporting. The quantitative results are presented in accordance with these three categories.

¹¹ The Global Excellence Model (GEM) Council consists of internationally acknowledged organisations that act as guardians of premier excellence models and award schemes, specific to their respective geographical regions, business, sectors, or trade blocs.

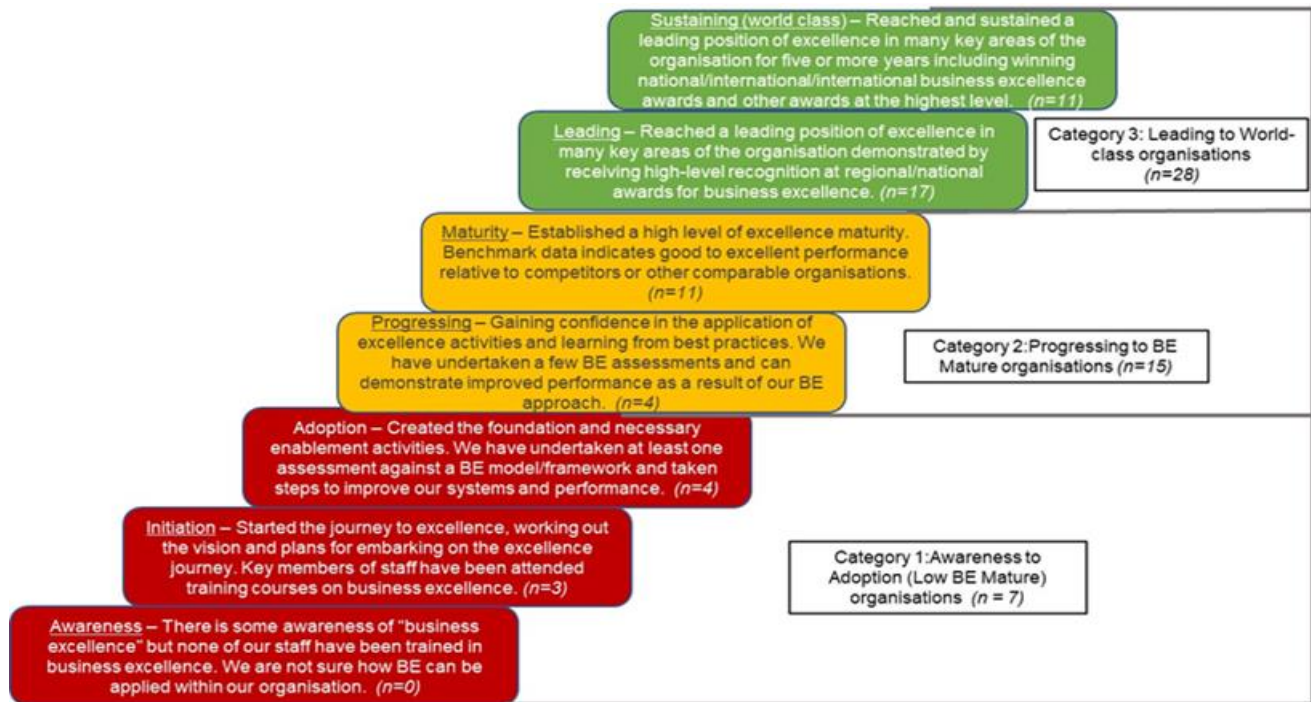


Figure 7.2: Respondent levels of BE maturity.

These subcategories are explained and showed in Table 7.2 below:

Table 7.2: BE maturity continuum and sub-categorisation

BE Maturity (Subcategories)	Description	Sample Size (n)
<i>Awareness to Adoption (referred to as Low BE Mature)</i>	This category comprises organisations that selected the 'Awareness,' 'Initiation,' or 'Adoption' stages in response to the survey question.	7
<i>Progressing to BE Mature</i>	This category comprises organisations that selected the 'Progressing' or 'Maturity' stages in response to the survey question.	15
<i>Leading to World-class</i>	This category comprises organisations that selected the 'Leading' or 'Sustaining (world-class)' stages in response to the survey question.	28

7.6. Data Analysis

Data was analysed using a combination of both SPSS and Microsoft Excel. Descriptive statistics were produced in Excel, while simple regression and tests of significance were produced in SPSS. Data was categorised into independent variables, including the numerous approaches for BE support structure and resource deployment; and, dependent variables, which represented the BE maturity levels of the participating organisations. Descriptive statistics were represented using bar graphs. A detailed and systematic examination of the qualitative data was conducted, all of which was directly collected from in-depth interviews with the BE practitioners. Interviews were conducted in English via Zoom/MS Teams with participants from a diverse range of BE mature and award-winning organisations. They were recorded with consent, transcribed verbatim, and analysed using thematic analysis. The process consisted of grouping similar responses, condensing overlapping themes, and refining discrepancies to gain a deeper understanding of the implementation of the OEA across a variety of contexts. The approach ensured that a detailed exploration of both common and unique strategies in the deployment of BE structure and resources emerged. In doing so the best practices in BE mature organisations were identified. These were then confirmed with each of the respondents responsible for each practice. The interview findings from which the best practices emerged and present exemplary quotes from the research participants are presented in Table 7.3.

7.7. Results and discussion

7.7.1. Quantitative findings – analysis and discussion

Objective 1: To identify the types of BE support structure and resources used by organisations at various BE maturity levels.

This section shares the quantitative findings for Objective One. The following subsections present findings on BE approaches organisations use to organise their BE support structure and types of resources deployed to facilitate BE implementation. The survey provided respondents with a list of BE approaches regarding BE support structure and resources. These results are presented separately in Figures 3 and 4 for BE internal structure and resources.

BE support structure

The presence of a distinct internal BE support structure emerged from the findings (Figure 7.3). The findings indicate a differentiated approach to BE implementation among Leading to

World-class organisations compared to then Progressing and Low BE mature organisations. Significantly, 93% of these organisations recognised their CEOs as key drivers in steering BE activities. This contrasts with only 60% in Progressing to BE Mature ($p = 0.01$) and 29% of Low BE Mature organisations ($p = 0.02$), where CEO involvement was notably less. Similarly, 86% of Leading to World-class organisations reported the full involvement of their directors and senior managers in BE activities, contrasting with 40% ($p = 0.004$) and 29% ($p = 0.007$) in the other two categories. Different BE support structures also emerged as differentiating factors. Such as, 43% of Leading to World-class organisations have a BE Council/Committee overseeing BE-related activities, compared to 33 and 29% in the other two categories. Results show that 64% of Leading to World-class organisations allocate dedicated leaders to be category/criterion leaders compared to 53% and 43% of Progressing to High BE Mature organisations and Low BE Mature organisations, respectively. Similarly, 54% of Leading to World-class organisations stated that these category/criterion leaders are part of a BE Team to ensure that the implementation of actions is coordinated and aligned. Whereas only 13% of Progressing to High BE Mature and 29% of Low BE Mature organisations mentioned this approach. Furthermore, 43% of Leading World-class organisations revealed that they have a BE Council/Committee sitting above a BE Team that oversees and governs all BE-related activities compared to 29% of Low BE mature. These results suggest that effective leadership and organisational structure, coupled with adequate team size, are prevalent approaches among Leading to World-class organisations.

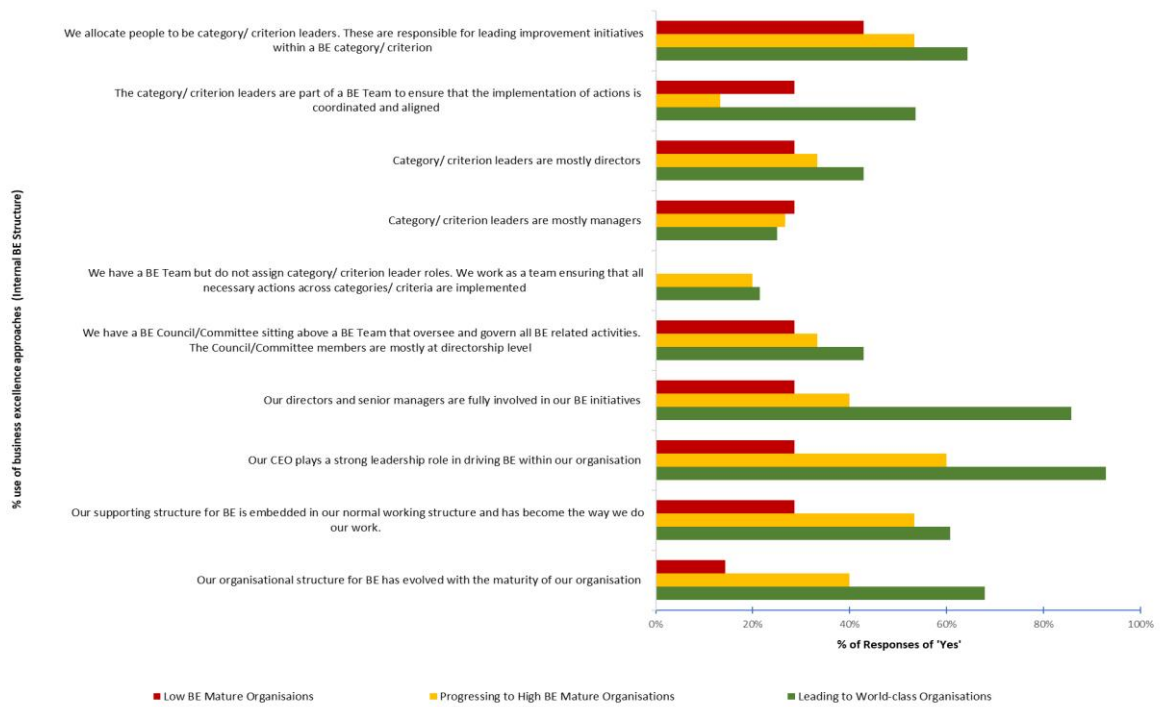


Figure 7.3: Use of BE approaches for BE support structure at different BE maturity levels.

Objective One findings indicate that Leading to World-class demonstrate higher levels of commitment and coordination in BE support structure compared to Progressing to High BE Mature and Low BE Mature. Specifically, Leading to World-class organisations are more likely to allocate dedicated BE resources, incorporate category/criterion leaders into BE Teams for coordinated implementation, and establish BE Councils/Committees to oversee activities. Active leadership from CEOs and engagement of directors and senior managers are prominent factors contributing to BE success in Leading to World-class organisations. These findings underscore the importance of strategic leadership and organisational alignment in achieving business excellence.

Resources for BE

The findings reveal distinct patterns in resource deployment among organisations at different stages of BE maturity, as shown in Figure 7.4.

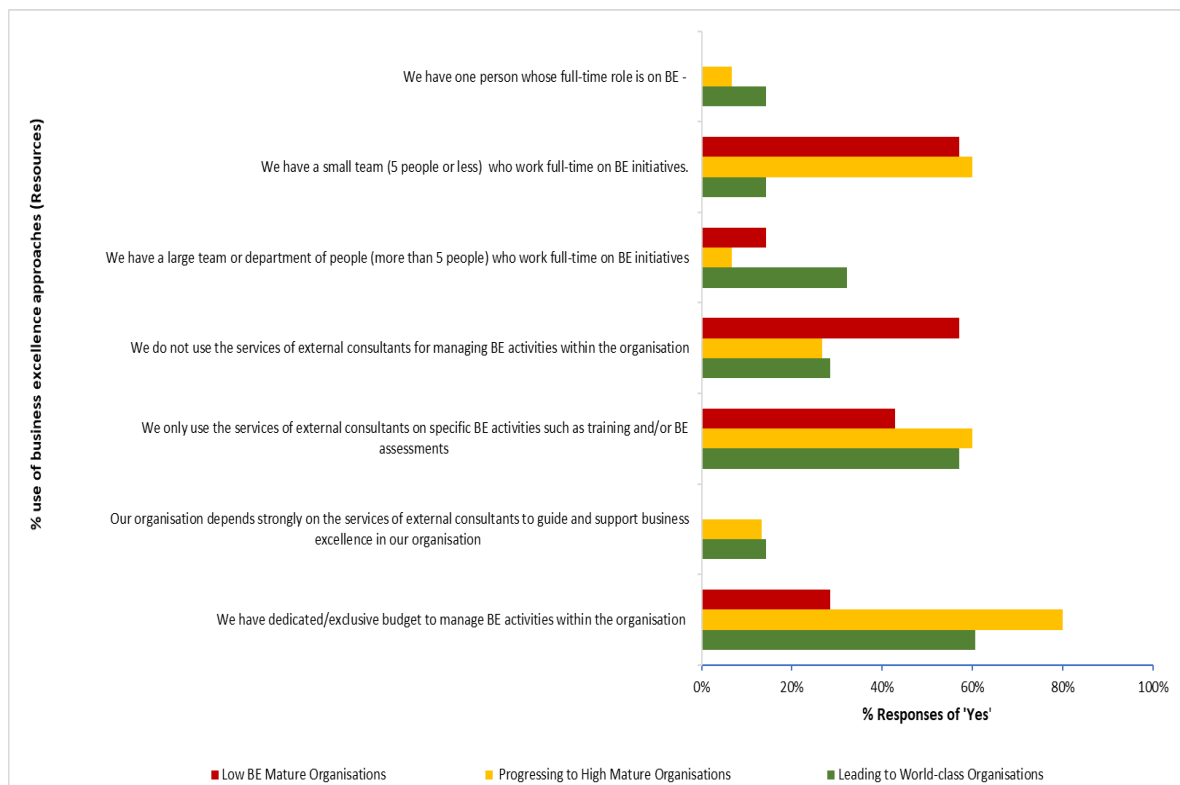


Figure 7.4: Use of BE approaches for BE resources at different BE maturity levels.

As per the results above, team size again emerged as a critical distinction; 57% ($p=0.02$) of Low BE mature organisations reported smaller teams (comprising five or fewer full-time members) dedicated to BE projects. On the other hand, 32% of the Leading to World-class organisations reported having larger teams (more than five full-time members), unlike the 7% ($p=0.08$) and 14% in the other two categories. Regarding leveraging external expertise, the findings suggest a predominant reliance on internal resources for BE activities across all BE maturity levels. Responding to a relevant question in the survey, only 14% of Leading to World-class and 13% of Progressing to BE Mature organisations mentioned dependence on external BE consultants for their guidance and support in BE implementation. Notably, none of the Low BE Mature organisations reported reliance on external consultancies.

Nonetheless, the engagement of external consultants is apparent in training and/or assessment activities, with 57% of Leading to World-class, 60% of Progressing to BE Mature, and 43% of Low BE Mature organisations indicating the use of consultants for specified BE activities. Furthermore, 61% of Leading to World-class organisations and 80% of Progressing to BE Mature organisations allocate dedicated financial resources to manage BE initiatives. In

contrast, only 29% of Low BE Mature organisations allocate financial resources to BE-related activities.

The results suggest that Leading to World-class and Progressing to BE Mature organisations are more likely to have large teams to work on BE initiatives; use external consultants for specific activities; and, allocate dedicated financial resources for their BE initiatives.

The survey responses related to Objective One were instrumental in identifying common approaches to BE support structure and the types of BE resources. Building on these findings, Objective Two explores the best practices concerning BE support structure and utilising BE resources. The following subsection presents the findings related to Objective Two.

7.7.2. Qualitative findings – analysis and discussion

Objective 2: To identify the approaches that BE mature organisations adopt for the effective implementation of their BE support structure and resources.

Research respondents were asked to explain their internal BE support structure and resource deployment practices/approaches to facilitate and implement BE activities. In response, two main approaches were identified. These include: 1) *Centralised internal BE support structures*; and, 2) *decentralised internal BE support structures*. However, these structures are referred as best practices and as examples only. The precise BE activities and the structure of the BE department may vary from one organisation to the next.

In addition to centralised and decentralised BE support structure, *the use of Leadership teams through steering committees* and *the targeted use of external BE consultants* also emerged as a regular practice in BE mature organisations. Examples of quotes on BE support structure are on” are shown in Table 7.3.

Table 7.2 Internal BE support structure and resources – exemplary quotes from interviews.

Approaches for BE support structure and resources deployment	Exemplary quote
Dedicated department facilitating and supporting BE activities (Centralised approach)	<p>"Our structure is divided into different subdivisions reporting to a Director Corporate Excellence. Benchmarking, Process improvement, Quality management, and Knowledge Management are part of one department and divided into teams, reporting to the Director of Corporate Excellence..."(Progressing to BE mature, UAE); "We strive to integrate Business Excellence as comprehensively as possible within the organisation, enabling us in the main BE department to primarily act as facilitators. We train business unit owners, who are directly responsible for operational activities. Our role in the department resembles that of a trainer and consultant; we guide other teams towards best practices, assess their progress, and provide technical support. However, our aim is to encourage each team to take ownership of their BE processes..." (Leading to world-class, UAE); "We have implemented a new structure, informally referred to as the "BE SPOC" (Single Point of Contact). Across 15 departments, we have appointed one individual to act as the SPOC. These individuals facilitate traction within their respective functions for various initiatives, including BE and operational excellence, which are coordinated from my [Main BE department] office. We have structured our organisation in a way that combines Business Excellence and knowledge management, which is a unique approach. We have a Chief Innovation Officer (CIO) who oversees the integration of Business Excellence and knowledge management. This alignment enables us to synergies these two areas and leverage their strengths effectively..." (Leading to World-class, India); "We have BE champions in each of our seven main departments. These champions are BE experts. We meet with them once a month to review the performance of each department focusing on the follow-up of action plans and improvement projects...." (Leading to world-class, UAE).</p>
Embedding BE support roles across departments. (Decentralised approach)	<p>"The main department is Corporate Excellence. Corporate Excellence involves managing the award process itself, including defining requirements, coordinating streamlining efforts, and establishing criteria. Each division has its people responsible for ensuring fulfilment and implementation. Corporate Excellence department provides direction, like the conductor in an orchestra, and others streamline it into their businesses..." (Leading to World-class, UAE); "Business excellence is not my full-time job. We don't have anybody here in the 30 staff whose full-time job is dedicated to BE. Instead, it's part of everybody's job. BE is mentioned in everybody's job description. It's part of every staff meeting. It's part of every executive meeting. It's part of our planning processes..." (Leading to worldclass, Australia); "...And honestly I use my team and get support from other departments because we are a small team, and we depend on others to work with us. So they are part of the extended culture, extended teams. Other department work closely with us for BE related subjects. So, this makes them part of our team and facilitates the implementation..." (Progressing to BE mature, UAE); "We have a separate/exclusive BE budget to manage BE activities within our organisation. Every year we do planning, and get our budget approved, and then we use it accordingly. Leading to worldclass, Singapore. "Our internal structure facilitated a holistic integration of excellence into daily operations rather than adhering to a strict, framework-oriented approach. The Quality and Service Excellence team coordinate with over 80 stakeholders across the organisation and support in achieving excellence objectives of the bank. At the moment, there is a team of 12 FTEs Full time employees) in the division who coordinate different areas of excellence" Leading to world-class, Singapore.</p>

The use of leadership teams through steering committees	“Our leadership team actively participate in BE activities such as BE assessments...” (Leading to world-class, Austria); “We have BE Council, a team which look after progress on improvement initiatives, they meet twice a month...” (Leading to world-class, UAE); “All action agreed from the [action] planning process are monitored at Steering Committee, this bring accountability and management support in BE activities...” (Leading to World-class, India); “Head of BE is permanent member of Steering committee, which help close interaction with the senior leadership and BE team...” (Leading to world-class, Singapore).
The targeted use of external BE consultants	“Our organisation does not rely heavily on external consultants as we have internal capabilities. We occasionally use external consultants, particularly when we need a third party for assessment or specific training...” (Leading to World-class, UAE). “We conduct mock [external] assessment before actual award assessments, the mock assessment is conducted by external assessors and their feedback report help us to improve our score in actual award assessment...” (Leading to world-class, UAE). “In our experience, our internal team learn while engaging with external assessors, this is another form of training for us...”, (Leading to world-class, Sweden). “Despite strong internal capabilities, we invite external assessors to lead our internal assessment teams, this process has brought unbiased review and on the job training for our internal team and an opportunity for internal knowledge sharing on BE...” Leading to world-call, Latvia.

Centralised approach: A dedicated department facilitating and supporting BE activities:

It was noted that many award-winning large organisations use a dedicated BE department to manage their BE operations. In the centralised approach, the dedicated centralised department operates as the strategic hub for developing, executing, and monitoring BE strategy and progress. The scope of the centralised BE department is to look after BE activities, such as, process improvement, innovation, quality management and BE assessments. The centralised department provides consistent, organisation-wide support and training, ensuring the integration of excellence practices into every department. Figure 7.5 depicts the centralised model.

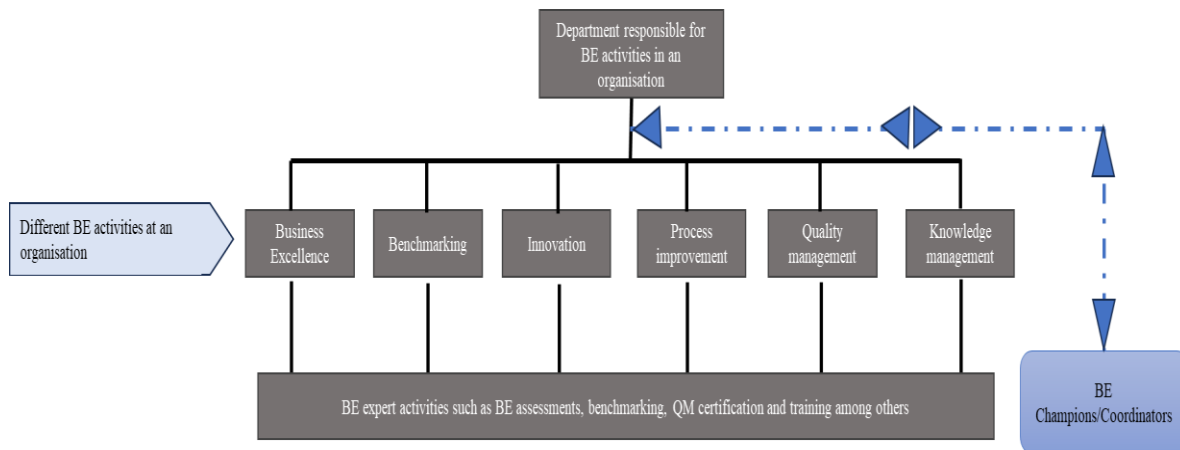


Figure 7.5: Centralised approach: A dedicated department facilitating and supporting BE activities.

In a centralised BE support structure, all BE activities are managed by a dedicated department and operationalised through BE champions or coordinators across the organisation. These champions typically report using a matrix system, where they report to both the head of the BE department and their respective departmental heads. This dual reporting structure ensures effective guidance, implementation, and coordination of BE initiatives. With their significant technical expertise and deep understanding of BEMs and tools, BE champions are crucial for facilitating BE implementation across the organisation.

The BE champions then ensure that action plan-assigned projects, improvement initiatives and BE policies are effectively integrated into daily operations, maintaining consistency and alignment with the organisation's broader objectives. In BE mature organisations, champions are key to managing BE activities cost-effectively with a small, centralised department. For example, one respondent from an award-winning BE organisation stated that, *“we have a team of seven supporting over 2000 people across 12 departments. It is not feasible to manage such a huge operation with a small team. However, with the assistance of 12 champions (one in each department) we efficiently manage our BE implementation across the organisation”*. This underscores the critical role of BE champions in extending the reach and effectiveness of limited central resources. The centralised model supported by BE champions fosters increased engagement and buy-in by leveraging respected and influential individuals and strengthens sustained change through continuous engagement and advocacy. The financial budget and decision for funds allocation to different BE activities sit with the centralised department in this model.

Decentralised approach: Embedding BE support roles across departments

A decentralised BE support structure is also increasingly adopted – why increasingly adopted – are more organisations using this approach year by year, what data do you have to support this? by mature, award-winning organisations, enabling them to embed business excellence deeply within their culture (Figure 7.6). As per the decentralised BE structure, the core BE activities, such as, benchmarking, innovation, process improvement and quality management are delegated to departments to undertake these activities themselves. This approach was witnessed in BE organisations where BE is adequately embedded in organisational culture. Less expertise and ‘handholding’ are required at the individual department level. In this organisational structure, each unit embeds BE roles and activities within its existing structure, promoting a culture of continuous improvement and operational excellence at all levels. Each department manages its own BE initiatives and budgets and tailors’ strategies to its specific BE targets. The approach potentially increases BE adaptability, encourages a culture of innovation, and ensures that BE activities are closely aligned with specific departmental objectives, thus speeding up the organisation’s overall journey towards excellence.

While departments handle the execution of BE initiatives, the centralisation aspect is retained for aspects that benefit from consistency and coordination. BE training, technical support and coordination of external assessments or awards remain with a centralised BE team. This structure aims to balance the autonomy and adaptability of decentralisation with the unity and standardisation of centralisation, aiming to leverage the strengths of both approaches. But while this approach encourages autonomy and innovation, it typically requires a robust overarching strategy and communication to align with the organisation's objectives.

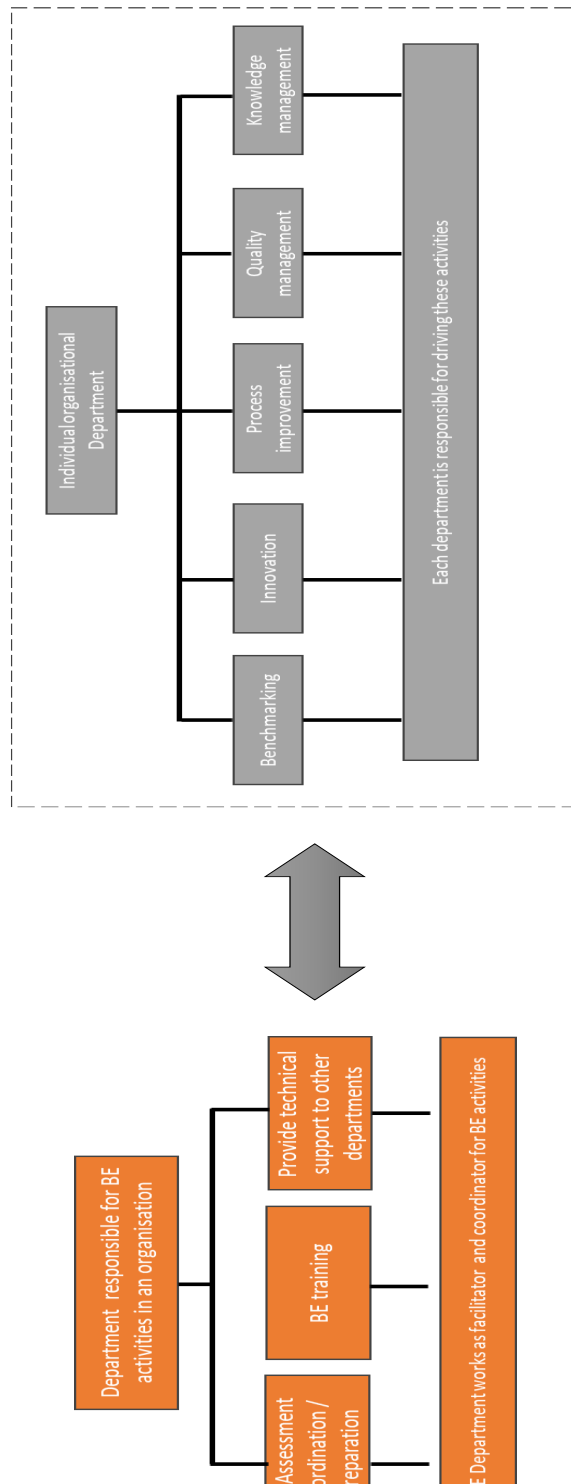


Figure 7.6: Decentralised approach: Embedding BE support roles across departments.

The targeted use of external BE consultants

BE consultants, who are typically BE expert practitioners and/or academics, were reported to advise and guide the respondent organisations on managing BE tasks and building organisational capabilities. These external consultants bring a wealth of BE expertise, fresh

perspectives, and up-to-date industry practices that are crucial for enhancing specialised BE activities such as benchmarking, training, and assessments (Hoskote, 2015; Mann et al., 2011).

While the quantitative research identified the use of BE consultants for specific BE activities, the qualitative findings explain the strategic aspect of the external resource deployment. One of the respondents from an award-winning organisation in the UAE explained how they had access to free external resources on benchmarking provided by the Dubai Government Excellence Programme - including training on benchmarking and facilitation support for a benchmarking project. Similarly, an organisation from Austria presented a best practice where external BE consultants join their internal BE assessment teams and offer a valuable external perspective for accurately assessing organisational practices. The engagement of external consultants provides expert guidelines on BE assessments, and their presence and engagement with other cross-functional teams facilitates BE knowledge dissemination to employees throughout the organisation.

The use of leadership teams through steering committees

BE Steering committees and their role emerged as a significant leadership forum to oversee BE activities in high BE mature and award-winning organisations. The steering committee is responsible for planning and monitoring the implementation of BE initiatives within an organisation. Improvement teams carry out the improvements and report. In one of the award-winning organisations studied, each improvement team was supported by a senior manager serving as a sponsor, providing essential guidance and oversight. This linkage assures senior management commitment and ownership to the improvement teams. The BE steering committee commonly consists of 6-8 senior leadership team members and a representative from the BE department/team. The steering committees are responsible for steering BE activities within an organisation and provide support where required. It is found to meet frequently to provide management review and support to ongoing improvement projects.

7.8. Recommendations

Three recommendations emerge from the research for setting up a robust and effective BE structure and deploying BE resources:

Setting BE support structure as per the organisation's BE objectives and maturity level

The evidence suggests that there is no “*one size fits all*” approach to an optimal BE support structure. Rather, selecting an appropriate support structure depends on the organisation's BE objectives and maturity level. Both centralised and decentralised approaches offer unique advantages and challenges, allowing organisations to tailor their BE support structures to their specific needs and contexts. However, of importance is the deliberate decision based on intent, capability and organisational culture.

For organisations aiming to establish a centralised BE support structure, a dedicated department can act as the strategic hub for managing all BE activities. This approach is particularly beneficial for large organisations with diverse operations, as it ensures consistency, organisation-wide support, and centralised oversight of BE initiatives. However, smaller organisations may lack the resource capacity to implement a fully centralised BE department. Instead, they often rely on streamlined processes or smaller, cross-functional teams to address BE needs across departments, adapting the approach to fit their operational scale and resources.

On the other hand, a decentralised approach involves embedding BE support roles and responsibilities within individual departments - presumably more training would be required to ensure each department has the skills to do this. This approach empowers departments to take ownership of BE initiatives, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and innovation at the grassroots level. While it promotes autonomy and adaptability, it may also result in fragmentation and lack of consistency across the organisation if not properly coordinated.

A balanced approach that combines elements of both centralisation and decentralisation *may* be suitable for organisations seeking to leverage the strengths of each approach. By centralising certain aspects, such as, BE training and coordination, organisations can strike a balance between consistency and autonomy while allowing departments to manage their own initiatives.

The choice of BE support structure should align with the organisation's strategic goals, culture, and maturity level. Organisations must carefully evaluate their objectives, resources, and capabilities to determine the most suitable approach for fostering a culture of excellence and driving continuous improvement. Organisations can enhance their competitiveness, achieve sustainable growth, and ultimately excel in today's dynamic business landscape by selecting the right approach.

Effective use of leadership teams through establishing a steering committee

Effective leadership involvement in the BE implementation process is pivotal in driving organisational excellence and fostering a culture of continuous improvement. One of the fundamental control mechanisms identified through which leadership teams can facilitate this process is establishing steering committees dedicated to overseeing and supporting BE initiatives. BE organisations should consider forming a dedicated steering committee comprising 6-8 senior leadership team members. However, some operational aspects discussed with the respondents should be considered while implementing:

Regular meetings and reviews: Steering committees should meet frequently to review the progress of BE initiatives and provide necessary support and guidance. Regular meetings will enable timely decision-making, alignment of activities with organisational goals, and proactive identification of challenges or bottlenecks. Organisations can ensure accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement in their BE practices by maintaining a consistent review mechanism.

Empowering steering committee members: A steering committee's true effectiveness lies in the authority and influence it exercises for decision-making. Therefore, steering committee members with unique areas of expertise should be empowered to drive BE initiatives. Their valuable insights, expertise and perspectives contribute to well-informed decision-making and effective implementation of BE strategies. Organisations can tap into diverse expertise and experiences by empowering committee members and fostering a culture of collaboration and innovation.

Appointing Category Leaders: In addition to the steering committee, appointing category leaders to oversee specific areas of excellence can ensure steady progress across all BE categories. These leaders serve as focal points, responsible for monitoring the advancement of BE initiatives within their respective domains. By actively coordinating efforts and addressing category-specific challenges, category leaders help to maintain momentum and ensure that BE objectives are met across the organisation. Their role complements the steering committee by providing deeper operational oversight and driving focused improvements in each excellence area

Clear communication channels: The committee and other stakeholders should establish effective communication channels. Transparent communication will ensure that BE objectives,

progress updates, and critical decisions are effectively communicated to all relevant parties. Additionally, feedback mechanisms should be in place to solicit input from stakeholders and address any concerns or suggestions promptly.

Effective use of external resources such as BE consultants, accessing government assistance, membership associations related to BE, BE networks

Effective use of external resources, such as BE consultants, government-supported initiatives, industry associations, and BE-focused networks, can significantly enhance an organisation's BE journey by providing valuable knowledge, support, and networking opportunities. While BE mature organisations are often self-sufficient in managing BE related activities, this research found that selectively deploying external BE consultants for specific activities adds considerable value. These consultants bring specialised expertise and fresh perspectives that can drive BE initiatives (Adeyemi et al., 2014). Key reasons for engaging BE consultants include their expertise in conducting comprehensive BE training, facilitating BE assessments and mock assessments, assisting with BE award submissions and report writing, and developing detailed action plans based on assessment outcomes.

In addition to consultants, organisations may also benefit from support offered by government excellence programs and initiatives, which aim to elevate business performance through BE frameworks. These government-supported programs, where available, may provide resources for training, assessments, and benchmarking projects to foster national competitiveness and organisational excellence (BPIR, 2024). However, government support is not universally available and often varies based on country and industry, thus requiring organisations to explore additional resources to support their BE initiatives.

Another valuable resource lies in BE-focused membership organisations, industry groups, and professional bodies. These associations, which include both national and international networks, offer access to a community of BE professionals and other organisations committed to excellence. Membership in these organisations provides a wealth of resources, including industry standards, benchmarking data, specialised training programs, and access to conferences and seminars that keep members informed on the latest trends and developments in BE. Furthermore, these associations create platforms for sharing knowledge, best practices, and innovative strategies, helping organisations continuously improve and adapt to evolving business landscapes.

7.9. Conclusion

This research has achieved two objectives. The first objective was accomplished through a review of the types of BE support structure and resources used by survey respondent organisations. It provided an explanation of types of BE support structure and types of resources BE mature organisations adopt to deploy an effective OEA. The survey revealed that BE mature organisations likely to allocate dedicated BE resources, incorporate category/criterion leaders into BE Teams for coordinated implementation, and establish BE Councils to oversee activities. The active leadership from CEOs, directors and senior managers emerged as a prominent factor contributing to BE success. Furthermore, It was noted that BE mature organisations are more likely to have large teams to work on BE initiatives, use external consultants for specific activities; and, allocate dedicated financial resources for their BE initiatives.

The second objective, while built on the first, effectively validated these findings. The qualitative findings indicated that there is no universally optimal approach to structuring BE support structure. Instead, the selection of either centralised or decentralised BE structures largely depends on the organisation's specific BE objectives, maturity level, and cultural context. Centralised structures are often beneficial for large, diverse organisations by providing consistency and centralised oversight, which are crucial for aligning dispersed activities and maintaining consistency. However, they may lack the flexibility to adapt to rapid market or environmental changes quickly. Conversely, decentralised structures offer greater autonomy to individual departments, fostering a culture of innovation and responsiveness at individual departmental/unit level. Yet, without careful coordination, this autonomy can lead to fragmentation and inconsistencies in BE practices across the organisation.

Leadership is pivotal in the successful implementation of BE strategies. The significant impact of steering committees composed of senior leadership on guiding and sustaining BE efforts is clear. However, regular and structured meetings of such committees/councils, clear communication channels, and fully mandated leadership are crucial for the success of this leadership forum. These leadership practices ensure that BE activities are closely aligned with organisational goals and are adaptable to changing organisational needs. In addition, the BE steering committee provide critical support for ongoing BE/improvement projects and facilitate a culture of continuous improvement within an organisation. Furthermore, the strategic use of external BE resources, such as, BE consultants, seeking government assistance for BE activities, BE related associations and networks can complement internal capabilities by

bringing specialised expertise and fresh perspectives into BE initiatives. Nevertheless, to optimise the contributions of external resources, organisations should ensure that their engagement is closely aligned with strategic objectives and integrated into the organisational culture. These findings are the first to validate the central nature of Internal BE support structure and resources and provide actionable strategies for organisations aiming to strengthen their OEA through more refined BE implementation approaches.

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Chapter 8. Summary and Conclusion

8.1. Introduction

This research explored the Organisational Excellence Architecture (OEA) required to support award-winning business excellence maturity. To do this, the following objectives were achieved:

A literature review on how organisations implement business excellence was conducted to identify any research gaps.

- (i) A conceptual/theoretical OEA model, including its definition and core elements was developed.
- (ii) The OEA model was then validated based on research respondents' feedback.
- (iii) A final OEA model with a supporting prototype OEA design toolkit was presented.

A review of this research is presented in Section 8.2. The research gaps and their association with the research objectives and research questions are highlighted in Section 8.3 and a summary of the main research findings presented in Section 8.5. The key contribution of this research knowledge and practise of BE is explored in Section 8.5. A conclusion is provided, the limitations discussed and opportunities for future research proposed in Section 8.6.

8.2. Brief overview of this doctorate

A sequential mixed method technique was used to explore the OEA required supporting award-winning BE journeys. Data as collected from 50 BE organisations, across 17 countries. BE organisations following the GEM Council's recognised model were invited to participate in this research. Participant organisations were required to have undertaken at least one BE model-driven assessment in the last five years. These conditions helped the maintenance of consistency and validity of data collected from the participants. Quantitative data helped the identification of BE implementation approaches for BE organisations. Qualitative data, collected through optional structured interviews was used to confirm the actual BE implementation approaches identified through the online survey and identify the best practices

BE mature organisations employ to support their respective award-winning BE journeys. These findings were presented in four chapters, chapter four through to chapter seven.

8.3. Knowledge gaps and their association with the research questions and research objectives

The literature review on BE implementation highlighted a scholarly focus on exploring the design of BEMs, their impact on organisational performance, and the identification of key elements crucial for successful BE implementation. Past research establishes a consensus on the positive impact of BEMs improving organisational performance. But it also points out the non-prescriptive nature of BEMs as being a potential limitation in guiding organisations through the details of BE implementation. Furthermore, despite extensive research into the different enablers of BE implementation, the existing literature lacks a unified view of BE implementation. Recognising these gaps, this research introduced the novel concept of OEA aimed at providing a unified, comprehensive perspective on BE implementation. One that could meet the needs of practitioners, consultants and academics in terms of BE implementations. Four objectives were identified and each investigated through specific research questions (RQs). For the reader's convenience, the research aim, objectives, corresponding research questions, and where, in this thesis, the research questions were resolved are presented in Table 8.1 below.

Table 8.1: Research aim, objectives, research questions and corresponding thesis chapters.

Research aim: To explore the organisational excellence architecture required to support a BE journey towards award-winning excellence maturity		
Research Objectives	Research Questions	Corresponding Chapters
Objective 1: To undertake a literature review on how organisations implement business excellence and identify any research gaps.	RQ 1. What approaches are employed by organisations to implement business excellence, and what is the current state of research on BE implementation?	Chapter 2
Objective 2: To develop a conceptual/theoretical OEA model, including its definition and core elements.	RQ 2: How can an OEA model be theoretically conceptualised to support BE journey towards award-winning excellence maturity?	Chapter 3

Objective 3: To refine the OEA model based on research respondents	RQ3: What are BE implementation approaches in internal BE structure, BE resources, BE processes, and BE assessment deployment among BE award-winning organisations?	Chapter 4
		Chapter 5
	RQ4: What are the best practices in internal BE structure, BE resources, BE processes, and BE assessment deployment among BE award-winning organisations?	Chapter 6
		Chapter 7
Objective 4: To present the final OEA model with a supporting prototype OEA design toolkit.	RQ5: How can the refined OEA model be effectively presented and communicated to ensure its practical applicability?	Chapter 8

8.4. Summary of the research findings

A summary and implications of the findings by each objective is presented in the following sections. A consolidation of the research and the final OEA assessment model with supporting OEA design toolkit is presented in Section 8.4 (Objective four).

8.5. Brief research findings and implications

Objective 1: To undertake a literature review on how organisations implement business excellence and identify any research gaps

The first objective was achieved by pursuing RQ1 (refer to Table 8.1), and a task largely based on a review of the existing research landscape. There was no recent, multi-country research on BE implementation, nor was there substantial evidence of how BE organisations implement and sustain their BE culture. The lack of comprehensive literature on BE implementation contributes to the practical challenges faced by organisations, as identified by Sinha et al. (2013), Mohammad et al. (2009) and Pfeifer et al. (2005). The literature review did reveal some dated research on some of the individual BE implementation components. The synthesis of the individual components, such as, internal structure, resources, BE processes and BE assessments, were found to be critical to successful BE implementation. BE Factors, such as an organisation's BE maturity level, size and sector, and the speed at which an organisation wants to implement change, were also found to be important to BE deployment (Chapter Two). These attributes (components and factors) of BE implementation identified in the literature were then captured in the OEA model (presented in Chapter Three). The OEA model was

subsequently reproduced as a framework. The research question and literature review also provided guidance to the development of the subsequent survey of practitioners and interview questions that followed.

Objective 2: To develop a conceptual/theoretical OEA model, including its definition and core elements

The second research objective was achieved by addressing RQ2. Findings from the literature review and BE experts' feedback guided the development of the OEA model and the initial definition of the OEA presented in Chapter Three. The model depicts the components and factors of BE implementation in a unified and holistic view. The OEA model first presented as Figure 3.3, consolidates the key attributes found critical for BE implementation. This research employed quantitative and qualitative methods to identify BE implementation approaches and best practices. As a result of the discussions with the respondents the OEA model was then refined and presented together with a supporting OEA design toolkit. The refined OEA model and design toolkit is discussed in detail in Objective 4. Work alignment to excellence criteria (previously referred as excellence project selection criteria) included as a new subcomponent to OEA processes component. A new factor, organisational willingness to change added as new factor could potentially impact OEA implementation.

While Objectives 1 and 2 helped to conceptualise the OEA model and the development of the research tools for data collection. Objective 3 was set to refine the OEA conceptual model using quantitative and qualitative findings.

Objective 3: To refine the OEA model based on research respondents

The third objective was achieved by answering RQ3 and RQ4 (Table 8.1). RQ3 navigated the investigation regarding BE implementation approaches, and RQ4 explored BE implementation best practices that award-winning organisations use to organise internal BE structures, BE resources, BE processes, and BE assessments. In this research, BE approaches are general practices deployed by BE organisations to implement BE. Whereas best practices refer to unique implementation practices used by BE mature or award-winning BE organisations to embed excellence within an organisational culture. A total of 50 organisations from different parts of the world participated in this research. The research respondents (BE practitioners and senior managers of participating BE organisations) provided valuable feedback and assisted in the development of the refined OEA model and design toolkit.

This research is premised on the fact that there is no unified and holistic view of BE implementation available in recent discourse. Thus, obtaining the respondents' views on the importance of OEA research was an imperative. Especially given that the OEA offers a unified view of BE implementation. The findings emphasised the significance of conducting research on BE implementation to guide organisations in structuring their architecture to expedite their own journey toward BE maturity. This finding reassures the need for BE implementation research and is consistent with past research from Asif et al. (2009), Talapatra and Uddin (2019) and Conti (2011). The results of the study contributed to refinements to the OEA model with two additional subcomponents: 'Excellence project selection process' and in the 'BE Processes' component of OEA. As the research progressed, the 'Excellence project selection process' was renamed to the 'Work alignment to excellence criteria' to rightfully reflect the spirit of the finding. Additionally, the research found a new factor, 'organisational willingness to change', that could potentially affect OEA implementation. The refined Model is presented as Objective four which provided an avenue to explore how BE organisations deploy OEA toward their award-winning BE journey.

The OEA implementation approach for each BE component, including the BE assessments, BE processes, internal BE structure and resources, is now presented. The research investigated assessment approaches concerning the types, frequency, and scope of BE assessments. According to the results presented in Chapter Five, self-assessments emerged as a common practice of BE organisations. BE mature organisations are found to conduct regular BE assessments, which shows a commitment to continuous improvement. Furthermore, BE mature organisations conduct assessments covering the entire organisation, while low BE mature organisations are more likely to focus on smaller assessments covering select departments. The assessment approaches that emerged from this research offer beneficial insights for BE mature organisations to evaluate and improve their existing assessment approaches.

Further advances to this research emerged in Chapter Five, notably the three exemplars (case studies) (see Baig et al., 2024b). These exemplars reveal several novel best practices. Such as one exemplar involving their main customer in their annual assessment. This customer-centric strategy potentially enhances customer satisfaction and strengthens relationships. Involving customers provides actionable insights from customers' perspectives and demonstrates the organisation's commitment to transparency and collaboration. Another exemplar uses a strategic assessment approach by integrating multiple award criteria and core business

objectives into a unified, theme-based approach for internal and external assessments. This holistic view seems to minimise the effort and complexity of separate assessments. Another interesting assessment approach was identified through conducting mock assessments. These mock assessments, conducted by external assessors, provide detailed feedback to refine strategies and improve readiness for actual award assessments. Although this practice appears beneficial, it could well be time and resource-intensive. As might be expected, it was found that BE award-winning organisations use assessments to develop internal capabilities and promote knowledge sharing. These organisations promote knowledge by forming cross-functional assessment teams and rotating team members for each assessment cycle. This approach seems to be effective in cultivating BE knowledge across different teams and departments.

The BE implementation approaches of BE training, internal BE communication, and action planning processes (Chapter Six) were explored in detail. The results suggest that BE mature organisations provide regular BE training and robust internal BE communication processes to increase BE awareness. It was also found that BE mature organisations have formal action planning process to manage projects. A likely explanation of these approaches could be that BE mature organisations have realised the importance of these processes in their excellence journey. Consequently, they place considerable importance on the fundamental BE processes that embed the culture of excellence within an organisation. Multiple best practices were identified, each of which are now discussed.

It appears that the BE training process in high BE mature organisations goes well beyond standard training processes. Best practices for BE training include integrating BE principles in employee induction, diverse training methods (in-person sessions, online modules, refresher programs), using assessments as learning opportunities, and leadership training in BE assessment. BE mature organisations approach BE communication as a critical knowledge-sharing medium for successful BE implementation. Best practices include using visual and interactive communication tools, embedding BE terminologies in routine communication, forming cross-functional assessment teams, and encouraging interdepartmental collaboration on improvement initiatives. Findings on action planning and work alignment with excellence criteria reveal that BE mature organisations establish robust approaches for each of these critical processes. Best practices for action planning include using BE assessment results to develop comprehensive action plans and forming independent teams to evaluate projects. Work

alignment to excellence criteria involves ensuring that every aspect of an organisation is in harmony with BE standards to achieve holistic BE objectives. This includes aligning individual job profiles and descriptions with BE criteria, enabling employees to understand how their roles contribute to overall BE objectives. These practices seem effective in integrating BE principles into the daily operations of the organisation, producing an outcome deeply embedded, one to which people don't deliberately subscribe. It is simply how things are done.

The findings underscore diverse approaches in forming internal BE structures. The results indicate active involvement of the CEO and leadership team in BE implementation facilitates BE promotion, ensures adequate resource allocation, and sends a strong message to the wider organisation on BE importance. Both centralised and decentralised internal BE structures emerged as practised internal structure among mature BE organisations. The findings reveal that many award-winning large organisations use a dedicated BE department to manage their BE operations. In this *centralised internal structure approach*, the named department operates as the strategic hub for developing, executing, and monitoring BE strategy and progress. Upon further investigation into the centralised model, the role of BE champions or coordinators was highlighted as critical to making the centralised model a success. These champions, who often operate in a matrix, reporting to the head of the BE department and their assigned department heads, possess significant technical expertise essential for guiding, implementing, and coordinating BE initiatives effectively. A possible explanation of the centralised BE structure could be the organisation size and complex internal hierarchical structure. The central role of BE champions in the success of this structure seems evident and, therefore, it perhaps requires an ongoing focus on BE champions' training and development.

A decentralised internal BE structure also appeared to be adopted by mature, award-winning organisations. Unlike the centralised internal structure approach, the core BE activities, such as, benchmarking, innovation, process improvement, and quality management, are delegated to the individual departments operating in an organisation. This approach is found in practice where excellence philosophy is adequately embedded in organisational culture, and therefore, less expertise and operational support is required for the individual department level.

However, choosing between centralised and decentralised structures depends on an organisation's specific BE objectives, maturity level, and cultural context. Centralised structures provide consistency and centralised oversight, which may benefit large organisations but lack flexibility and agility. Conversely, decentralised structures seem to offer greater

autonomy to individual departments, though they could lead to fragmentation without careful coordination, refer to Chapter Seven for more details.

Objective 4: To present the final OEA model with a supporting prototype OEA design toolkit:

The refinement of the OEA model was achieved by accomplishing Objective 3. The model refinement involved integrating BE implementation approaches and best practices collected throughout this research, as detailed in Chapters Four to Seven. This process resulted in the final OEA model and a prototype of the OEA design toolkit (Figure 8.1). The final OEA model is comprised of four components, including *internal BE structure, BE processes, BE resources and BE assessments*. OEA factors that could influence OEA deployment include *BE maturity of an organisation, organisational willingness to change, size and sector of an organisation and speed or urgency to implement BE*.

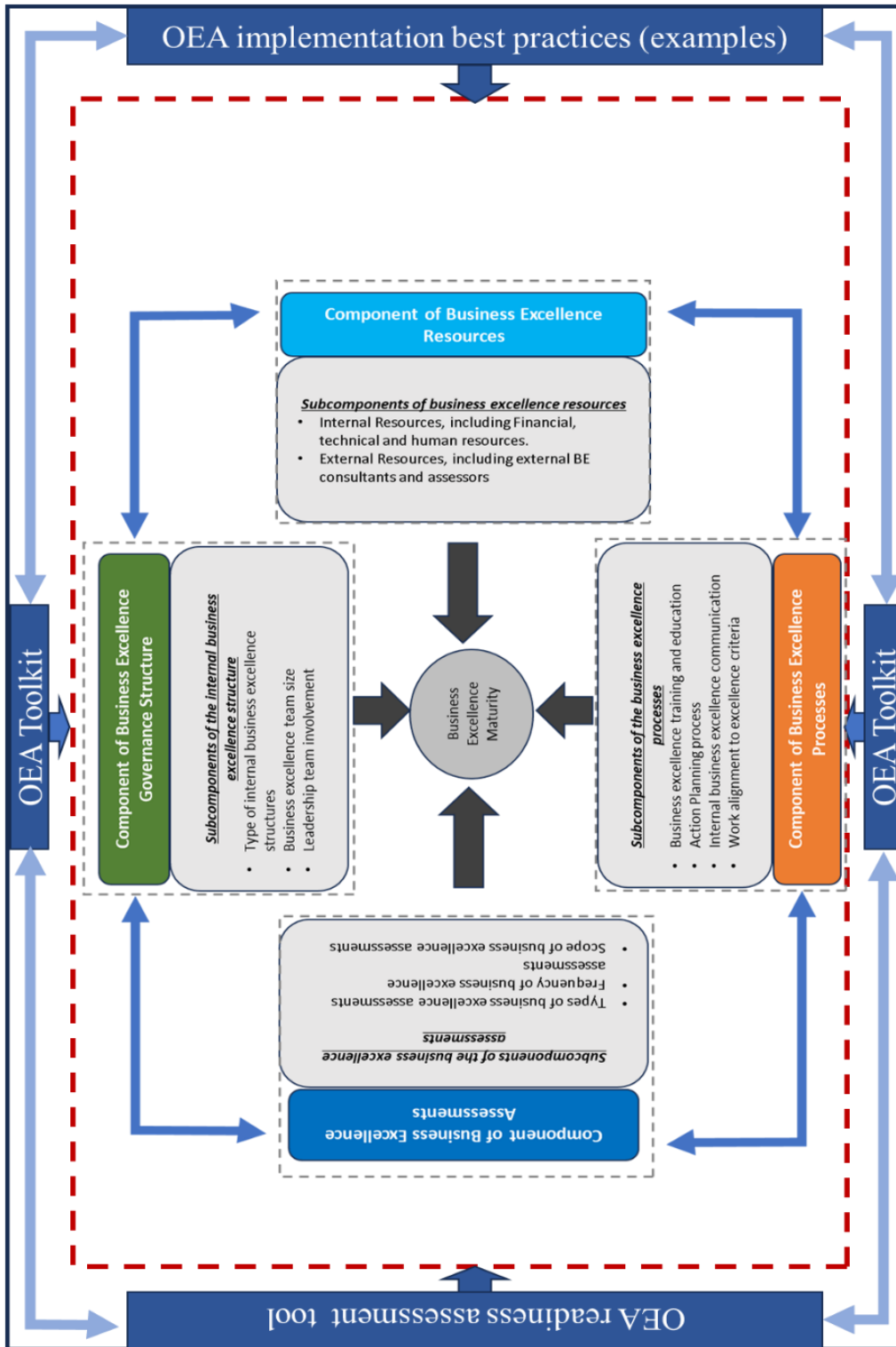


Figure 8.1: The final OEA model.

Prototype OEA design toolkit

The OEA design toolkit included in Appendix G is still in development and referred to as a 'prototype.' The prototype OEA design toolkit has been developed to facilitate the practical application of the OEA design tool, enabling organisations to implement and sustain BE. The OEA design toolkit consists of OEA design tool guidelines; the OEA design assessment tool; examples of best practice reports; and, a collection of OEA research articles. Each element of the OEA design toolkit is now introduced.

OEA design tool guidelines: The OEA design tool guidelines provide a ten-step guide for effectively using the OEA design toolkit. BE departments, teams, and individuals can follow these steps to integrate the OEA design process into the current scope of the BE implementation journey (see Appendix G).

OEA design assessment tool: The design assessment is developed to help organisations evaluate their current OEA design using a structured list of questions. These questions are designed to prompt management actions on specific OEA items, facilitating targeted OEA improvements (Appendix G). The design assessment tool is an MS Excel-based checklist with a score, where organisations can rate their performance on a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 indicating complete disagreement and 10 indicating full agreement with specific statements related to BE practices. For example, one of the statements in the BE assessment Tab in the OEA design assessment tool says, "*In our organisation, a cross-functional team is involved in the internal BE assessment to ensure a comprehensive evaluation from multiple perspectives. (Please rate the following statements on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 signifies complete disagreement and 10 signifies full agreement)*". The BE team at the organisation could rate this statement according to their internal assessment practices.

Examples of best practice reports: These examples illustrate how BE mature organisations deploy their OEA. These best practices provide a quick reference for organisations to refer, learn, and emulate these best practices. For example, if the organisation rates, "In our organisation, a cross-functional team is involved in the internal BE assessment to ensure a comprehensive evaluation from multiple perspectives." as 4 (Somewhat Disagree), they could refer to the best practice report from VAMED-KMB to read how VAMED used cross-functional teams for internal assessments.

Collection of OEA research articles: The toolkit includes four research articles produced through this research. These articles present best practices collected from BE mature organisations, offering a quick reference to a collection of best practices. These articles provide in-depth insights and practical examples for organisations to enhance their BE efforts. In the same example of the assessment question, " In our organisation, a cross-functional team is involved in the internal BE assessment to ensure a comprehensive evaluation from multiple perspectives." Organisations could read the research article “Business Excellence Assessments – learning from award-winning organisations“, to further improve assessment-related best practices from other organisations presented in this article.

The OEA design toolkit represents another novel contribution from this research. These resources were developed to assist BE organisations in assessing their existing OEA, providing them with practical tools to enhance their OEA deployment strategies. For BE mature organisations, the OEA design tool acts as a diagnostic instrument and a practical *'how-to guide'* to ensure their OEA is robust and capable of supporting sustained excellence. BE mature organisations could learn from other BE mature organisations and continuously improve their OEA. For less mature BE organisations, the OEA design toolkit offers foundational guidance and a structured approach to embark on their journey towards an award-winning BE journey. It provides step-by-step instructions and practical examples, helping them to establish a solid OEA foundation. These organisations can leverage the toolkit to identify gaps, build necessary competencies, and progressively align their BE practices with mature BE organisations for sustained BE implementation.

However, the OEA design toolkit is only an indicative tool designed to help organisations reflect on, review, and improve their existing OEAs. Each organisation is designed uniquely, and therefore, modifications will be required when adopting any best practices from the OEA design toolkit.

8.6. Key contributions of this research

This is one of the largest global studies on BE implementation conducted to date. The research involved 50 respondent organisations of different BE maturity levels from 17 countries. The research investigated holistic BE implementation and introduced the novel concept of OEA. The intent of OEA is to offer a unified view of BE implementation. In addition, the OEA model is supported by a OEA design toolkit. These guidelines (in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven) cover a range of best practices that BE organisations can adopt.

This research also broadened the theoretical base of BE literature, which was previously dominated by studying the design, composition, and impact of BEMs. It was limited to a few scholarly investigations on critical elements of BE implementation. Integrating OEA components - internal BE structures, BE resources, BE processes, and BE assessments — into a unified framework provides a holistic perspective on BE implementation. The research also identifies factors including organisation size, sector, level of BE maturity, organisational willingness to change, and the speed at which the organisation wishes to implement BE. The OEA design toolkit enriches the research landscape by providing up-to-date insights from multiple countries and industries. This research provides future researchers with more avenues to explore within the OEA model. The OEA design toolkit also invites further empirical validation and adaptation, encouraging researchers to explore its effectiveness in various real-world scenarios.

The research provided a practical guide and reference for BE practitioners and organisations to reflect, review, and improve their existing OEA for sustained BE culture. It also provides a range of best practices collected from BE award-winning organisations to replicate in other BE organisations to implement BE. Furthermore, BE custodians could also leverage this research to guide their member organisations in implementing the right OEA.

8.7. Limitations and outlook to future research opportunities

One of the key motivations for this study was the absence of prior research on BE implementation to guide organisations in improving their OEA for sustained excellence within an organisation. However, this same issue serves as a limitation. The lack of earlier studies meant that the selection of methods and frameworks for this research was not necessarily informed by established best practices. This limitation may have impacted the study's design and execution by potentially influencing the robustness and applicability of the findings. Without prior research, it was challenging to benchmark the study against existing standards or to draw on proven methodologies, which may have resulted in gaps or biases in the data collection and analysis processes. Future research should build on this study by refining the methods and approaches based on emerging insights and feedback and to a more robust and reliable contribution to BE implementation literature.

The aim of the study was to conceive and refine an OEA model to help organisations implement and sustain BE. The OEA was developed through a detailed literature review and empirically refined with the help of participating BE organisations. However, the core findings only

focused on OEA components and factors, such as, organisational maturity level, size, sector, willingness to change, and the speed or urgency of BE implementation were not explored in detail. These factors could significantly influence the effectiveness of the OEA components and should be explored in future studies. Understanding how these factors impact BE processes and outcomes could lead to more tailored and effective implementation strategies.

The OEA design toolkit summarises the best practices collected from the research respondents. However, this tool could be improved further with a more sophisticated and wider research focus. Future research should work on further improving the OEA design toolkit.

Data was collected from 50 organisations from 17 countries, out of which 20 organisations also participated in structured interviews. Future research efforts could include incorporating a larger sample size from more countries and conducting more structured interviews to delve deeper into the survey responses. The proposed large and diverse sample size would validate the existing research and provide more comprehensive insights for the future development of OEA. Furthermore, this research had limited participation from recipients of awards such as the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Awards (MBNQA), Australian Business Excellence Award, Canadian Business Excellence Award, and Japan Quality Award. The participation of more award winners from these countries would enrich the understanding of BE implementation in different cultural and national contexts. Future research should focus on large sample sizes and better participation from other leading BE awards.

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Zhang, M., Long, R., Wei, K., Tan, Q., & Zhang, W. (2022). China quality award and the market value of the firm. *Total Quality Management & Business Excellence*, 33(11-12), 1387-1402. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14783363.2021.1960157>

Appendix A: Ethics approval



28/08/2020

Dear: Atif Baig

Re: Low Risk Notification - 4000023193 - An exploration of the organisational excellence architecture required to support an award-winning business excellence journey

Thank you for submitting a low risk notification for your research/teaching/evaluation.

This email is to acknowledge receipt of the low risk notification and to inform you that the details of your project have been recorded in our database for inclusion in the annual reports to the Health Research Council Ethics Committee (HRCEC) and the Massey University Research Committee (URC).

You may proceed with your research, though it is advisable to provide a couple of weeks before commencing, as all low risk notifications are checked for completeness and clarity by a Research Ethics Advisor. You may be contacted if your application is incomplete and/or further clarification is required.

The low risk notification for this project is valid for a maximum of three years.

Please notify me if situations subsequently occur which cause you to reconsider your initial ethical analysis.

If a sponsoring organisation, funding authority (e.g., the Health Research Council) or a journal require evidence of ethical approval from a Human Ethics Committee (with an approval number), you need to complete a full Massey University Human Ethics application to be reviewed and approved by one of our Human Ethics Committees. Applications must be submitted and approved prior to the commencement of the research.

Please note that travel undertaken by students must be approved by the supervisor and the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor and be in accordance with the Policy and Procedures for Course-Related Student Travel Overseas. In addition, the supervisor must advise the University's Insurance Officer.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the Research Ethics Office, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz.

Please include the following statement on all public documents (e.g., information sheet, consent form) related to your project:

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Massey University Human Ethics by email: humanethics@massey.ac.nz.

I wish you all the best in your research, teaching or evaluation activities and appreciate your thoughtful consideration of ethics principles and practices.

Ngā mihi nui,

Professor Craig Johnson
Chair, Human Ethics Chairs' Committee and Director (Research Ethics)

Research Ethics Office, Research and Enterprise
Massey University, Private Bag 11 222, Palmerston North, 4442, New Zealand T 06 951 6841; 06 951 6840
E humanethics@massey.ac.nz; animalethics@massey.ac.nz; gtc@massey.ac.nz

Appendix B: Research survey



Dear Sir/ Madam

This research by the Centre for Organisational Excellence Research (COER), Massey University, New Zealand investigates the organisational excellence architecture (OEA) used by Business Excellence (BE) award winners, applicants and BE model users to embed and sustain a BE culture.

OEA refers to the formal support structure, resources, processes and assessment tools used to assist the implementation of BE within an organisation.

This study will help BE orientated organisations share their experience and expertise in setting up a robust and successful BE approach and support structure. The research builds on the largest study to date of BE, called Excellence Without Borders and is supported by the Global Excellence Model Council and Global Benchmarking Network.

Reason to Participate

- 1- Answering the survey questions will help you reflect on your existing BE approach and assess the effectiveness of your BE structure.
- 2- Your response will help the BE community understand how to develop an effective and robust organisational excellence architecture to support all stages of a BE journey.
- 3- You will receive a report of the survey findings enabling you to learn from the best practices on how to introduce and sustain BE.

Eligibility

Your organisation has undertaken at least one assessment (either internal self-assessment or external assessment) of its performance using a BE model/ framework in the last five years.

Instructions

It is important that the person who completes this survey can accurately reflect the views of your organisation. If your organisation has independent business units, each of these may complete a separate survey. The survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete, please dedicate some free to complete it. When you click the Next or Back arrow button in the survey, your response is saved. You can exit the survey and come back at your convenience time by clicking the same survey link that was shared with you earlier.

Confidentiality

This project follows Massey University's guidelines for ethics and confidentiality. All data collected from this survey will remain confidential and anonymous. Published work will only show aggregated data across all organisations surveyed and not identify the names of the people or organisations completing the survey unless permission is sought and given by the survey respondent. Participants will be sent a copy of the survey findings to the email address that is recorded on the survey.

Agreement to participate in this research

Yes, I agree to participate in this research

No, I do not want to participate in this research



0% 100%
Survey Completion

Your Full Name:

Your Position / Designation:

Organisation Name:

In which country do you currently reside?

Your email address:

Which sector does your organisation operate in?

Public Sector

Private Sector

Not for Profit



What is your organisation's major business activity?

Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing

Mining

Manufacturing

Electricity, Gas and Water Supply

Construction

Wholesale Trade

Retail Trade

Accommodation, Cafes and Restaurants

Transport and Storage

Communication Services

Finance and Insurance

Property and Business Services

Government Administration and Defence

Education

Health and Community Services

Cultural and Recreational Services

Personal and Other Services

Other - Please specify:

Please provide number of employees:



Which BE model/ framework does your organisation use? (for example, Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence, EFQM Model, Australian Business Excellence Framework, Dubai Government Excellence Model, Singapore Business Excellence Framework etc...)

Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence

EFQM Model

Australian Business Excellence Framework

Dubai Government Excellence Model

Singapore Business Excellence Framework

Tata Business Excellence Model (TBEM)

Others, please specify

How long has your organisation been using a BE model / framework in your organisation?

1 year to < 3 years

≥ 3 years to < 6 years

≥6 years to < 9 years

≥9 years to < 12 years

≥ 12 years and above

Which of these was the main reason for your organisation to implement BE?

Select a maximum of five from the list below.

To counter local competition

BE is a contractual requirement for our organisation

BE is a government mandate in the country where our organisation operate

It was a decision by the CEO

We were facing a crisis and needed a change in direction

We liked its focus on continuous improvement

To drive the UN Sustainability Development Goals (UN SDGs).

To improve productivity

To improve quality

To become world class

To win an award

We wanted a holistic framework which our other initiatives could fit within

To educate staff on the characteristics of successful organizations

Research showed it would be beneficial

To benchmark our business excellence scores within and across industries

To have an external/independent measure of our performance

To copy a competitor that was already using a business excellence approach

We were encouraged by our customers

We were encouraged by our suppliers

We were encouraged by our government

Other – please specify:

Which year was your last BE assessment by **external assessors** (it could have been for an award or for BE certification/levels of excellence or just to assess your BE maturity)?

Approximately what score did you achieve in the **external assessment** if known?

Which year was your last BE assessment by **internal assessors**?

Approximately what score did you achieve in the **internal assessment** if known?

Did your organisation receive any recognition / Award for business excellence?

If yes, please provide the name of the award, year and level of recognition? Please list the last three awards you received so far.

	Name of Award	Year of recognition (e.g. 2018)	Level of recognition
Award 1	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Award 2	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Award 3	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

How would you describe your organisation's level of BE maturity? Please select the one that applies.

Note: "BE maturity" in this context is assessing your organisation's understanding of BE and/or how your organisation applies BE concepts or principles to improve organisational performance.

Awareness – There is some awareness of "business excellence" but none of our staff have been trained in business excellence. We are not sure how BE can be applied within our organisation.

Initiation – Started the journey to excellence, working out the vision and plans for embarking on the excellence journey. Key members of staff have attended training courses on business excellence.

Adoption - Created the foundation and necessary enablement activities. We have undertaken at least one assessment against a BE model/ framework and taken steps to improve our systems and performance. Many of our staff have attended training courses on business excellence.

Progressing - Gaining confidence in the application of excellence activities and learning from best practices. We have undertaken a few BE assessments and can demonstrate improved performance as a result of our BE approach.

Maturity- Established a high level of excellence maturity. Benchmark data indicates good to excellent performance relative to competitors or other comparable organisations. The BE concepts and principles on which the models/ frameworks are based are largely embedded and we have best practice processes and systems in several areas. We have undertaken many assessments, refined our assessment approach, and can demonstrate improved performance year on year.

Leading - Reached a leading position of excellence in many key areas of the organisation demonstrated by receiving high-level recognition at regional/national awards for business excellence and other business awards, and shown through our benchmarked performance. We have established a strong reputation for excellence and we are frequently approached by other organisations that wish to learn from our success. All of our staff are aware of the BE model/ framework and follow BE principles in their daily work.

Sustaining (World Class) – Reached and sustained a leading position of excellence in many key areas of the organisation for five or more years including winning /national/international business excellence awards and other awards at the highest level. We are leaders for many performance metrics at both a national and international level and many of our practices are pioneering and considered as best practice. We have developed a sustainable BE culture.

How many full equivalents spend their time specifically on the activities below? (for some roles it may be half of a person's job and in which case this would account for 0.5 of a full-time role). You can choose more than one option from the list below if applicable.

Business Excellence	<input type="text"/>
Benchmarking	<input type="text"/>
Innovation	<input type="text"/>
Process improvement	<input type="text"/>
Quality management	<input type="text"/>
Knowledge management	<input type="text"/>

Please select if your organisation has the following structure in place to manage the following activities? Please select more than one option if applicable.

	A Steering Council, or Committee or Team consisting of people from different departments to manage the activity Select your answer	A department or business unit set up to manage this activity Select your answer
Business Excellence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Benchmarking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Innovation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Process improvement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Knowledge management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please provide the name of the department or business unit that manages the following activities?

	Name of the department/business unit
Business Excellence	<input type="text"/>
Benchmarking	<input type="text"/>
Innovation	<input type="text"/>
Process improvement	<input type="text"/>
Quality management	<input type="text"/>
Knowledge management	<input type="text"/>

Please provide the name of the department or business unit that manages the following activities?

	Name of the department/business unit
Business Excellence	<input type="text"/>
Benchmarking	<input type="text"/>
Innovation	<input type="text"/>
Process improvement	<input type="text"/>
Quality management	<input type="text"/>
Knowledge management	<input type="text"/>

What is the job title of the person with overall responsibility for coordinating the following activities? Please select more than one option if applicable.

Business Excellence	<input type="checkbox"/>
Benchmarking	<input type="checkbox"/>
Innovation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Process improvement	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality management	<input type="checkbox"/>
Knowledge management	<input type="checkbox"/>

Do you have an allocated budget and funds for running BE activities within your organization?

<input type="checkbox"/> We have a separate/exclusive BE budget to manage BE activities within our organisation.
<input type="checkbox"/> We do not have an allocated budget for BE activities in our organisation.

Do you have any comments to share on this section?

What does your organisation's BE approach of:

1- Education and training. Please select more than one option if applicable.

All of our staff will have at least a basic understanding of BE and how it relates to their job

Education and training programs/events on BE are provided frequently, at least once every six months, with the majority of our staff participating in one or two programs/events per year

Members of our senior management team are usually present at our BE education and training programs/events to emphasise its importance by giving a speech and/or presenting certificates

2- Types of BE assessments. Please select more than one option if applicable.

We undertake BE self-assessments (internal assessments)

We hire outside consultants who undertake BE assessments on our organisation (external assessments)

We are assessed when we apply for BE certification/levels of excellence recognition (external assessment)

We are assessed when we apply for our national/ regional BE award (external assessment)

3- Frequency of BE assessments. Please select more than one option if applicable.

We have a real-time BE assessment system in place in our organisation

We assess our BE performance every year

We assess our BE performance every two years

We assess our BE performance every three years

We do not undertake regular BE assessments

4- Scope of BE assessment (select the one that applies)

We undertake one BE assessment that covers the whole organisation

We undertake many BE assessments that cover our business units and departments

5- Action Planning Process. Please select more than one option if applicable.

We have formal action planning process where we address opportunities for improvement from assessments (incorporating names of responsible executives or teams and target dates to complete actions in detail)

We set up a number of Improvement Teams to address our opportunities for improvement from assessments

We have formal and regular follow-up meetings to monitor the progress of each item agreed during the action planning meetings

Major actions resulting from the assessment are directly linked into our strategic planning process

We do not have a formal action planning process in place in our organisation

6- Use of external consultants on BE guidance and support (Please choose one that applies)

Our organisation depends strongly on the services of external consultants to guide and support business excellence in our organisation

We only use the services of external consultants on specific BE activities such as training and/or BE assessments

We do not use the services of external consultants for BE

7- Organisation structure for BE. Please select more than one option if applicable.

We have one person whose full-time role is on BE

We have a small team (5 people or less) who work full-time on BE initiatives

We have a large team or department of people (more than 5 people) who work full-time on BE initiatives

We allocate people to be category/ criterion leaders. These are responsible for leading improvement initiatives within a BE category/ criterion

The category/ criterion leaders are part of a BE Team to ensure that the implementation of actions is coordinated and aligned

Category/ criterion leaders are mostly directors

Category/ criterion leaders are mostly managers

We have a BE Team but do not assign category/ criterion leader roles. We work as a team ensuring that all necessary actions across categories/ criteria are implemented

We have a BE Council/Committee sitting above a BE Team that oversee and govern all BE related activities. The Council/Committee members are mostly at directorship level

Our directors and senior managers are fully involved in our BE initiatives

Our CEO plays a strong leadership role in driving BE within our organisation

Our supporting structure for BE is embedded in our normal working structure and has become the way we do our work

Our organisational structure for BE has evolved with the maturity of our organisation

8- Internal communications. Please select more than one option if applicable.

- Our CEO and other senior management team take the lead in communicating BE activities with employees through town hall meetings, newsletters, social media and group emails
- We have a formal internal communication process to share regular updates on BE activities and progress with all employees of the organisation
- There is no formal communication process in place to share BE information

How do you align your organisations' strategic and technical projects to the excellence criteria?

Please select the option that applies for each response

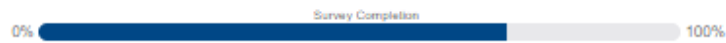
	Not at all	Partly	Fully
Excellence criteria are included in project selection criteria to ensure that all projects are aligned to achieving excellence.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Excellence requirements are included in the project scope document.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Performance measures / key performance indicators (KPIs) that are set up for monitoring projects are aligned to excellence criteria.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Excellence assessment tools (such as RADAR (Results, Approach, Deploy, Assess and Refine), ADLI (Approach, Deployment, Learning, and Integration)) are used to evaluate how projects are managed regularly?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Projects once implemented are reviewed for their impact on excellence criteria.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have formal training session(s) to ensure awareness and understanding of excellence requirements within the project/technical teams.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How satisfied are you with your organisation's existing OEA that support and facilitate BE implementation?

OEA refers to the formal support structure, resources, processes and assessment tools used to assist the implementation of BE within an organisation.

Yes, I am satisfied with my organisation's existing OEA to support and facilitate BE implementation in the organisation

No, I am not satisfied with my organisation's existing OEA to support and facilitate BE implementation in the organisation.



Please comment on your current OEA. How do you measure the success and robustness of your existing OEA?

OEA refers to the formal support structure, resources, processes and assessment tools used to assist the implementation of BE within an organisation.

Through regular BE assessments and scores achieved

Through performance matrices such as financial report, customer satisfaction, employee satisfaction, sustainability report etc...

Others (please provide details in the box below)

In your opinion, do you think that the OEA should be different within organisations dependent on the following factors?

OEA refers to the formal support structure, resources, processes and assessment tools used to assist the implementation of BE within an organisation.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
Level of BE Maturity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Size of the organisation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Industry type	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The speed with which the organisation wants to implement BE and/or achieve improved results	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Any other factor? Please explain here	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Do you agree with the definition of OEA?

Definition of the OEA: OEA refers to the formal support structure, resources, processes and assessment tools used to assist the implementation of BE within an organisation.

Yes, I agree with the proposed definition of the OEA

No, I do not agree with the proposed definition of the OEA



In your opinion, how important is to undertake research into OEA? Therefore, would our research findings be useful to you and other organisations?

Unimportant	Slightly Important	Moderately Important	Important	Very Important
-------------	--------------------	----------------------	-----------	----------------

Do you have any comments to share on this section?

Permission to show your organisation's name as a participant in the research.

We are seeking your permission to be able to include your organisation's name in a list of approximately 50 organisations that have participated in this research. Your organisation's name would only be shown in a list of participants and not related to any data in the research. All data in the research and publications will be aggregated data and not identifiable to individual organisations. Publishing your organisation's name and other award winners in a list will help to elevate the importance of the research and raise the profile of business excellence globally. Please select your option from the given choices below and press the arrow key to move to the survey's final section.

Yes, you can use the name of our organisation to promote this specific research.
No, please don't use our organisation's name for any promotion and communication.



Would you be willing to discuss your responses in more detail in pre-scheduled interviews with our research team?

I agree to participate in a research interview

I will not be able to participate in research interview

Not sure now, please reach us later for interview appointment



Appendix C: GEM Council approval

+

RE: GEM Council Support Requested for a Follow-on Excellence Without Borders project

 Ravi Fernando <ravif@thriveplus.com.au>
To: Mann, Robin
Cc: Russell Longmuir, Fangmeyer, Robert G. (Fed), Baig, Atif
Follow up: Start by Sunday, 9 June 2024. Due by Sunday, 9 June 2024.
You replied to this message on 10/08/2020 10:10 am.
Click here to download pictures. To help protect your privacy, Outlook prevented automatic download of some pictures in this message.

 Reply  Reply All  Forward 
Thu 20/08/2020 12:37 pm

Hi Robin,

I am pleased to let you know that the Board of Business Excellence Australia yesterday resolved to support this request and participate in this research. We will review the draft survey and provide feedback by 5 September. The collated feedback will come from me, David or Rob.

The request has also been circulated to other members of the GEC. I will let you know if and when I receive feedback.

Cheers, Ravi

+61 414933387

Connect: [LinkedIn](#) - [Twitter](#) - [Facebook](#) - [Book a Meeting](#)

From: Mann, Robin <R.S.Mann@massey.ac.nz>

Sent: Thursday, 13 August 2020 12:29 PM

To: Ravi Fernando <ravif@thriveplus.com.au>

Cc: Russell Longmuir <Russell.Longmuir@efqm.org>; Fangmeyer, Robert G. (Fed) <robert.fangmeyer@nist.gov>; Baig, Atif <A.Baig@massey.ac.nz>

Subject: RE: GEM Council Support Requested for a Follow-on Excellence Without Borders project

Hi Ravi

Thanks for the quick response.

We can adjust as below.. as shown in the schedule.. in **yellow**? Is this ok? This gives the GEM Council up to 5 Sept and includes the time for survey feedback. Please adjust if necessary. You could circulate our request informally now, as you already have the draft survey, and/or wait to receive the communication material by 18th August.

All the best

Robin

Appendix D: Examples of BE experts feedback on the research survey

Feedback on Draft Business Excellence Survey

 Mann, Robin
To: Jorge Roman
Cc: Baig, Atif

 BE Survey DRAFT.docx
141 KB

 Reply  Reply All  Forward 
Thu 3/29/2020 11:05 pm

Hi Jorge

Can you help?

My PhD student, Atif Baig, is investigating the organisational excellence architecture (OEA) required to support and accelerate an organisation's BE journey. *Therefore, the best way to implement and sustain BE.*

Atif has developed a draft survey and would welcome any feedback on the survey questions. Do you have time to review the questions to see if they are relevant and/or are we missing something? **If you have any feedback please we can have it by Tuesday 8th Sept.**

The final survey will be an electronic survey that we hope to launch in October and hope that Dubai Police will complete.

All the best

Robin

Re: RE: RE: Feedback on Draft Business Excellence Survey

 Hamek Singh <hamek@asia.com>
To: Baig, Atif
Cc: Mann, Robin

Robin

From: Hamek Singh <hamek@asia.com>
Sent: Monday, 7 September 2020 2:44 am
To: Mann, Robin <R.S.Mann@massey.ac.nz>
Subject: Re: RE: Feedback on Draft Business Excellence Survey

Good day Robin

Sorry for delay, generally the survey is comprehensive and should provide good information / insights

Some suggestions to make it clearer are

Section 3.2

Consider incorporating /adding

C) We incorporate cost for BE activities as part of annual budget allocation for the organisation.

Section 4.1 - to consider including

C) "involvement of senior management - e.g. by giving a speech , presenting certificates etc"

K) amend to read - three years or a specified period e.g. 5 years as determined by agency administrating the BE initiative in Country

Section 5

Architecture - to consider – including Roles /TOR, Structure, Link to Reward and Recognition

Yes I will reach out and am confident that 5 or more returns are possible. Perhaps the word DOC version of completed survey forms and sent by email. Hope OK.

All the best and wating for "teh tarek" When is Shiekh visitng SGP

with best regards

Appendix E: Examples of communication with BE custodians on the research promotion

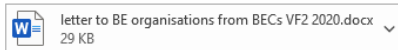
FW: Invitation to participate in leading-edge Business Excellence (BE) research - an opportunity to access finding re...



Baig, Atif
To Iosune Aguirre
Cc Mann, Robin

Reply Reply All Forward

Wed 13/01/2021 7:30 pm



Hi Losune,

Reference to the email below, we are requesting your assistance to reach out BE Award winners/mature organisations to participate in our research through completing the online survey.

In terms of the EFQM promoting it you could do it in a number of ways:

- a) Emailing award winners and mature organisations (over 500 points) with strong encouragement to participate... (and ideally we would have a few EFQM award winners – the more the better). You can use the letter (attached) for this purpose. Please set the deadline for survey completion to fit in with your plans. We set initial date until end of Jan 2021, but you can change it if required.
- b) You could have a feature on EFQM website with a link to the [online survey](#).
- c) You could just encourage EFQM members/winners to go the BPIR website [Calling all Business Excellence Award Winners and Applicants – An Opportunity to Participate in Leading-Edge Research on Achieving & Sustaining Performance Excellence – SURVEY NOW LIVE \(bpir.com\)](#).

Please let us know if you need any support. We look forward to seeing active participation from EFQM.

Regards,
Atif Baig
PhD candidate and Research Associate
COER / Massey University
New Zealand

RE: Invitation to participate in leading-edge Business Excellence (BE) research - an opportunity to access finding re...



Baig, Atif
To Russell Longmuir
Cc Mann, Robin; Iosune Aguirre

Reply Reply All Forward

Wed 13/01/2021 7:11 pm

From: Russell Longmuir <Russell.Longmuir@efqm.org>
Sent: Wednesday, 13 January 2021 6:15 am
To: Baig, Atif <A.Baig@massey.ac.nz>
Cc: Mann, Robin <R.S.Mann@massey.ac.nz>; Iosune Aguirre <Iosune.Aguirre.ext.adv@efqm.org>
Subject: RE: Invitation to participate in leading-edge Business Excellence (BE) research - an opportunity to access finding report and practical tools that organisations require to accelerate their BE journey

Hi
I suggest you liaise with Iosune who runs our assessing and awards
She will write to most of the applicants over the last few years and ask on your behalf
We look forward to seeing the feedback
Regards
Russell

Russell Longmuir
Chief Executive Officer

EFQM
russell.longmuir@efqm.org
www.efqm.org
Avenue des Olympiades 2, 1140 Brussels, Belgium - t: +32 470 641 575
Connect: [LinkedIn](#) - [Twitter](#) - [Facebook](#)
Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10

From: Dr. Zeyad Mohamed ElKahlout <Zeyad.ElKahlout@tec.gov.ae>

Sent: Monday, 14 December 2020 10:50 pm

To: Baig, Atif <A.Baig@massey.ac.nz>

Cc: Mann, Robin <R.S.Mann@massey.ac.nz>

Subject: RE: Reminder 2 : Invitation to participate in leading-edge Business Excellence (BE) research - an opportunity to access finding report and practical tools that your client organisations require to accelerate their BE journey

Yes

Dr. Zeyad Mohamed ElKahlout

Senior Advisor - Quality & Excellence

Dubai Government Excellence Program

المجلس التنفيذي
THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

دبي للتميز الحكومي
Dubai Government Excellence

د. زياد محمد الكحلوت

مستشار أول - الجودة والتميز

برنامج دبي للتميز الحكومي

+971 (4) 4399 592 <https://dgep.gov.ae/> @DubaiExcellence

سرية المعلومات:

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Appendix F: Examples of feedback from the EFQM on draft research report

RE: Business Excellence Research - Draft Report

 Robin Mann
To: Atif Baig
Cc: James Lockhart; Wayne Macpherson

UNCLASSIFIED

You replied to this message on 28/01/2022 11:59 am.

[Reply](#) [Reply All](#) [Forward](#) [...](#)
Fri 28/01/2022 9:58 pm

You should collect the feedback you are getting in emails like this, these comments could be shown in your final thesis to demonstrate the usefulness and impact of your research. Well done!

Robin

From: Iosune Aguirre <iosune.Aguirre@efqm.org>
Sent: Friday, 28 January 2022 8:20 pm
To: Atif Baig <A.Baig@massey.ac.nz>
Cc: Robin Mann <R.S.Mann@massey.ac.nz>; Russell Longmuir <Russell.Longmuir@efqm.org>
Subject: RE: Business Excellence Research - Draft Report

Hi Atif,

Thank you very much for your email and sharing the draft of your report. It is great to see the result of your hard work and congratulations for producing this report! I went through it, and it is interesting and clear. We would be delighted to receive the final version once you have heard from the different organisations.

Kind Regards,

Iosune Aguirre
Global Head of Assessment and Recognition
iosune.aguirre@efqm.org

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Appendix G: Prototype OEA design toolkit

The OEA Design Tool Guidelines

Preparation

1. Develop the Terms of Reference (TOR) outlining the purpose, scope, frequency, objectives, roles, and responsibilities of the team overseeing the OEA design review process.
2. Obtain formal sign-off on the TOR from relevant stakeholders, ideally facilitated by a representative from business excellence department/team.

Gather and Analyse existing OEA design

3. Collect relevant data, such as, past BE assessments, implementation reports, stakeholder surveys and any other documentation relating to your organisation's OEA.
4. Conduct the OEA Design Assessment using the provided tool (Re: OEA Design Assessment Tool) to evaluate the current OEA design and identify opportunities for improvement (OFI) in structure, resources, processes, and assessment approaches.
5. Convene the OEA design review team to discuss the assessment findings in detail and prioritise the identified OFIs.
6. Consult OEA best practices and relevant OEA academic research to inform your OEA improvement strategies. These resources are developed with the help of BE award-winning organisations to help other organisations toward an award-winning BE journey.

Implement and Improve

7. Develop a detailed action plan for each prioritised OFI, including specific actions, timelines, measurable targets, and assigned responsibilities.
8. Present the OEA action plans to relevant leadership forums (e.g., BE Council/Committee) and secure their approval and support.

Sustain a robust OEA

9. Establish a system for tracking progress against planned action items, such as, monthly OEA review team meetings and communicate updates to stakeholders regularly.
10. Schedule periodic re-evaluations using the OEA design tool (e.g., at least annually) to assess progress, identify new areas for improvement, and continuously improve your OEA for sustained BE.

The OEA Design Tool – Assessments

		1 (10%)	2 (20%)	3 (30%)	4 (40%)	5 (50%)	6 (60%)	7 (70%)	8 (80%)	9 (90%)	10 (100%)
		Completely Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Mostly Agree	Strongly Agree	Fully Agree
Internal BE assessment	Please rate the following statements on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 signifies complete disagreement and 10 signifies full agreement.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	In our organisation, a cross-functional team is involved in the internal BE assessment to ensure a comprehensive evaluation from multiple perspectives. (Please rate the following statements on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 signifies complete disagreement and 10 signifies full agreement)										
	1 Our organisation conducts regular internal BE assessments to measure our performance against established Business Excellence criteria.										
	2 The internal BE assessment process is clearly documented, including methodologies, tools, and frequency of assessments.										
	3										
	4 Feedback from internal BE assessments is systematically analysed to identify key areas for improvement and potential innovations.										
	4.7 Results from internal BE assessments are benchmarked against industry standards or best practices to gauge our competitive standing.										
	5.4 Action plans are developed based on the outcomes of internal BE assessments, with clear targets, responsibilities, and timelines for improvement.										
	6.1 Leadership actively participates in and supports the internal BE assessment process, demonstrating commitment to continuous improvement.										
	6.8 The organisation has mechanisms to ensure the objectivity and integrity of the internal BE assessment process.										
	7.5 Findings from internal BE assessments are communicated transparently across the organisation to foster a culture of openness and continuous learning.										
	8.2 Training is provided to those conducting internal BE assessments to ensure they have the necessary skills and knowledge.										
	8.9 Opportunities for improvement identified through internal BE assessments are prioritised based on their potential impact and feasibility										
External BE Assessments	Please rate the following statements on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 signifies complete disagreement and 10 signifies full agreement.										
	1 Our organisation actively engages with external BE assessors to gain an unbiased perspective on our BE practices and performance.										
	2 The selection of external BE assessors is based on their expertise, experience, and alignment with our industry standards.										
	3 A structured process is in place for incorporating external BE assessment findings into our strategic planning and improvement activities.										
	4 Our organisation ensures that all relevant stakeholders are prepared and involved in the external BE assessment process.										
	5 The outcomes of external BE assessments are benchmarked against best-in-class organisations to identify competitive gaps and opportunities.										
	6 Leadership is actively involved in the external assessment process, demonstrating commitment to excellence and continuous improvement										
	7 Outcomes of external assessments are communicated across the organisation to share successes and highlight areas for improvement.										

The OEA Design Tool – BE processes

		1 (10%)	2 (20%)	3 (30%)	4 (40%)	5 (50%)	6 (60%)	7 (70%)	8 (80%)	9 (90%)	10 (100%)	
		Completely Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Mostly Agree	Strongly Agree	Fully Agree	
Internal BE Communication Process C15	Please rate the following statements on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 signifies complete disagreement and 10 signifies full agreement.		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	1 Our organisation has a clearly defined communication strategy that support/promote BE initiatives.											
	2 Departmental Communication Meetings – This approach is to keep all colleagues informed about relevant information pertaining to their departmental performance and updates.											
	3 Regular updates on BE initiatives and progress are communicated effectively across all levels of the organisation.											
	4 There are dedicated channels and platforms in place for disseminating BE-related information and updates.											
	5 Feedback mechanisms are established, allowing employees to contribute ideas and feedback on BE activities.											
	6 Success stories and internal best practices are shared organisation-wide to inspire and educate.											
	7 The leadership team actively communicates the importance and benefits of BE to all employees.											
	8 Cross-departmental communication is facilitated to ensure a cohesive approach to BE initiatives.											
	9 Communication about BE initiatives is tailored to meet the needs of different audiences within the organisation.											
	10 Interactive forums or workshops are organised regularly to discuss BE progress, challenges, and future plans, fostering a culture of open dialogue.											
	11 Employees have access to a central knowledge repository of BE resources and documentation to support their understanding and involvement in BE activities.											
	12 Information about BE goals and progress is effectively communicated across all levels of the organisation.											
	13 There are effective mechanisms in our organisation for sharing BE knowledge and best practices across different departments.											
14 Cross-functional collaboration is encouraged and facilitated for BE activities in our organisation.												
15 Our organisation ensures that all BE communications are aligned with our overall mission, vision, and values.												
Total Score												
Action planning process	Please rate the following statements on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 signifies complete disagreement and 10 signifies full agreement.											
	1 Our organisation has a formal action planning process for setting and prioritising BE activities											
	2 Clear timelines and milestones for BE initiatives are established and communicated across the organisation											
	3 Responsibilities and accountabilities for executing BE action plans are clearly defined and assigned.											
	4 There is a structured process for monitoring the progress of BE initiatives against the action plan.											
	5 Our senior leadership team actively support and mentor improvement teams working on action plan initiatives											
	6 Regular follow-up meetings are scheduled to review the progress of BE activities and address any challenges.											
	7 Adjustments to BE action plans are made based on feedback and performance data to ensure continuous improvement.											
	8 Success criteria for BE initiatives are defined upfront, allowing for effective measurement and evaluation of outcomes.											
	9 Our organisation utilises a centralised system or tool for tracking and managing BE action plans and follow-ups.											
	10 Lessons learned from completed BE initiatives are documented and shared to inform future action planning and follow-up processes.											
	11 Stakeholder feedback is actively sought and integrated into the BE action planning and follow-up processes.											
12 Cross-functional collaboration is emphasised in the action planning process to ensure holistic and inclusive BE initiatives.												
BE training	Please rate the following statements on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 signifies complete disagreement and 10 signifies full agreement.											
	1 Our organisation has a clearly defined BE training strategy that aligns with our overall Business Excellence objectives.											
	2 BE training programs are regularly updated to reflect current best practices and emerging trends in Business Excellence.											
	3 All employees have access to BE training relevant to their roles and responsibilities within the organisation.											
	4 The effectiveness of BE training programs is evaluated through post-training assessments and feedback mechanisms.											
	5 BE training includes both theoretical knowledge and practical application exercises to ensure comprehensive learning.											
	6 Leaders and managers receive specialised BE training to effectively guide their teams in BE activities.											
	7 New employees undergo BE orientation programs to quickly align with the organisation's culture of excellence.											
	8 External BE experts or consultants are occasionally engaged to provide advanced training or specialised knowledge.											
	9 Success stories and case studies from within/outside the organisation are incorporated into BE training to illustrate real-world applications.											
	10 Continuous learning opportunities in BE are provided to our staff, including workshops, seminars, and online courses, to support ongoing development.											
	11 Cross-functional training sessions are organised to promote understanding and collaboration across different departments in BE initiatives.											
	12 Training outcomes are linked to performance metrics to assess the impact of BE training on individual and organisational performance.											
	13 A feedback loop is established to continually refine BE training programs based on participant suggestions and evolving organisational needs.											
	14 Mentorship and coaching programs are in place, pairing experienced BE practitioners with less experienced staff to facilitate hands-on learning.											
	15 Our organisation has a centralised knowledge management system to store and share BE-related documents, tools, and best practices.											
	16 Regular knowledge-sharing sessions, such as workshops or webinars, are held to disseminate BE insights and learnings across the organisation.											
	17 Cross-departmental teams are encouraged to share BE experiences and solutions, fostering a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement.											
	18 Success stories/best practices and case studies of BE initiatives are systematically documented and made accessible to all employees.											
	19 There is a formal process for capturing and sharing lessons learned from BE projects, ensuring continuous learning and development.											
	20 Internal forums or platforms are available for employees to ask questions, share ideas, and discuss BE-related topics.											
	21 External BE experts are occasionally invited to share their knowledge and experiences, providing fresh perspectives and specialised expertise.											
	Project Selection Process	Please rate the following statements on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 signifies complete disagreement and 10 signifies full agreement.										
1 Our organisation has a formalised process for selecting projects based on strategic alignment with excellence criteria.												
2 Criteria for BE project selection are clearly defined, including expected outcomes, resource requirements, and impact on key performance indicators.												
3 Stakeholder input, including feedback from employees, customers, and partners, is considered in the BE project selection process.												
4 There is a mechanism for evaluating the potential risks and benefits of proposed projects before selection.												
5 Feedback from previous projects is integrated into the selection process to learn from past successes and challenges.												

The OEA Design Tool – BE resources

		1 (10%)	2 (20%)	3 (30%)	4 (40%)	5 (50%)	6 (60%)	7 (70%)	8 (80%)	9 (90%)	10 (100%)
		Completely Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Mostly Agree	Strongly Agree	Fully Agree
Internal Resources	Please rate the following statements on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 signifies complete disagreement and 10 signifies full agreement.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	We have a process for future BE resource forecast of future needs (human resources planning). This process allow us to ensure timely recruitment, relocation, retention, and continuously updating job profiles										
	Job profiles are used in the recruitment process so as to define the performance levels required for each BE position within the business. All job profiles are updated prior to posting a new BE position										
	Our compensation and recognition program include BE deliverables.										
	There is a formal recognition program for employees who make significant contributions to BE activities.										
	The performance management system in our organisation effectively supports and recognises contributions to BE/improvement projects.										
	We have ongoing BE training and development programs for employees.										
	Ongoing training programs are available in our organisation to enhance employees' skills and competencies related to BE										
	We have an accredited in-house BE training centre and Learning and Development Academy to tailor training that responds to our needs and the needs of our multicultural workforce (three main languages, visual aids).										
	We have range of BE training programs to address training needs of different expertise levels										
	We have ongoing BE training and development programs for employees										
	Our organisation regularly identifies and addresses competency gaps related to BE.										
	Leaders provide regular feedback and coaching to employees on their involvement in BE activities.										
	Technology and digital tools are utilised to support and enhance BE activities in our organisation.										
	Our organisation maintains an up-to-date inventory of employee skills specifically relevant to BE.										
	Leaders at all levels in our organisation are committed to and actively involved in BE efforts, providing the necessary support and resources.										
	Adequate resources, including time and budget, are allocated in our organisation to support the human resource needs of BE activities.										
We have a succession plan for critical BE roles in our organisation to ensure the continuity of BE efforts.											
External Resources	Please rate the following statements on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 signifies complete disagreement and 10 signifies full agreement.										
	BE consultants in our organisation are considered key partners in driving BE efforts forward										
	Our organisation strategically engages BE consultants to complement our internal capabilities in executing BE initiatives										
	BE consultants are utilised in our organisation for their expertise in specific areas of BE such as training and assessments.										
	There is a clear process in place for integrating BE consultants into our teams to ensure effective collaboration.										
	Feedback from BE consultants is systematically collected and used to improve BE activities in our organisation.										
	The selection process for BE consultants in our organisation is rigorous and aligns with our BE goals and needs.										
	Our organisation evaluates the impact of BE consultants on achieving BE objectives and overall improvement.										
	Our organisation has established mechanisms for knowledge transfer from BE consultants to internal staff.										
	Our organisation ensures that BE consultants have access to the necessary information and resources to effectively contribute to BE initiatives.										
	Regular communication between our organisation and BE consultants ensures alignment and effective progress on BE initiatives.										
	BE consultants are viewed as a valuable addition to our organisation's resources for achieving BE maturity.										
	The performance of BE consultants is regularly reviewed against predefined metrics to ensure alignment with our BE objectives.										
	Our organisation promotes a culture of openness and learning from the external expertise brought in by BE consultants.										
	Contracts with BE consultants clearly define expectations, deliverables, and timelines to align with our BE goals.										
	We actively seek BE consultants with diverse expertise and backgrounds to address the comprehensive needs of our BE initiatives										
	Collaboration between internal teams and BE consultants is facilitated by designated liaison personnel within our organisation.										
Feedback and insights from BE consultants are systematically integrated into the continuous improvement process for BE activities.											

The OEA Design Tool – Internal BE structure

		1 (10%)	2 (20%)	3 (30%)	4 (40%)	5 (50%)	6 (60%)	7 (70%)	8 (80%)	9 (90%)	10 (100%)
		Completely Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Mostly Agree	Strongly Agree	Fully Agree
Internal BE Structure	Please rate the following statements on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 signifies complete disagreement and 10 signifies full agreement.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Our internal BE structure is explicitly designed to align with our organisational goals and BE objectives										
	Clear roles and responsibilities within the BE structure are defined to ensure accountability and effectiveness.										
	A dedicated leadership team or committee oversees BE initiatives, ensuring strategic alignment and focus.										
	Cross-functional BE teams collaborate effectively to implement and manage BE-related activities.										
	We train the business unit owners who actually run the business to be champions to run business excellence activities.										
	We have BE SPOC (Single Point of Contact)/champions responsible for coordinating BE activities across our organisation.										
	Communication channels within the BE structure facilitate timely and transparent information flow.										
	The internal BE structure supports and promotes a culture of continuous improvement and innovation.										
	The internal BE structure is reviewed periodically to assess its effectiveness and make necessary adjustments for improvement.										
	Our BE structure provides clear guidance on resource allocation for BE initiatives, ensuring they are adequately funded and supported.										
	There is a well-defined process within the BE structure for scaling successful BE initiatives organisation-wide.										
	The internal BE structure allows for flexible and agile response to challenges and opportunities in BE implementation										
	Succession planning within the BE structure ensures the sustainability of BE efforts and leadership continuity.										
	Change management is an integral part of the BE structure, facilitating smooth transitions and adaptations.										
	Our internal BE structure has right mandate and leadership support to drive BE within an organisation										
	We have considered a centralised/decentralised BE governance structure to manage our BE activities.										
The internal structure provides a clear framework for initiating, tracking, and evaluating innovation and process improvement projects.											

The OEA Design Tool – OEA factors

		1 (10%)	2 (20%)	3 (30%)	4 (40%)	5 (50%)	6 (60%)	7 (70%)	8 (80%)	9 (90%)	10 (100%)
		Completely Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Mostly Agree	Strongly Agree	Fully Agree
BE Maturity of an organisation	Please rate the following statements on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 signifies complete disagreement and 10 signifies full agreement.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	We have reviewed our OEA design to align it with our BE maturity plan and roadmap strategically.										
	Our BE progression/maturity plan agreed with key stakeholders										
	BE maturity plan is adequately reflected in resources planning process										
	As our organisation matures in its BE journey, we progressively introduce more complex and integrated practices, building on foundational improvements to enhance overall effectiveness.										
	The maturity level of our organisation dictates the pace at which we implement BE changes, with more mature organisations capable of adopting advanced techniques and technologies more rapidly.										
	Understanding our BE maturity allows us to effectively prioritise resource allocation, focusing on areas that require the most immediate attention and have the potential for the greatest impact on performance.										

		1 (10%)	2 (20%)	3 (30%)	4 (40%)	5 (50%)	6 (60%)	7 (70%)	8 (80%)	9 (90%)	10 (100%)
		Completely Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Mostly Agree	Strongly Agree	Fully Agree
Sector	Please rate the following statements on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 signifies complete disagreement and 10 signifies full agreement.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	We have reviewed our OEA as per our sector (public, private or not for profit) requirements										
	We are aware of any sector-specific issue that could impact our BE implementation plans										
	"We recognise the unique regulatory environments related to the sector, ensuring our BE implementation plans are compliant and tailored to meet specific industry standards										
	Our BE strategies are designed with a deep understanding of sector-specific operational challenges, enabling us to adapt processes and practices that align with industry-specific needs.										
	We proactively address the differences in workforce skills and needs across sectors, developing BE training programs that are customised to the professional standards and practices of each industry.										

		1 (10%)	2 (20%)	3 (30%)	4 (40%)	5 (50%)	6 (60%)	7 (70%)	8 (80%)	9 (90%)	10 (100%)
		Completely Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Mostly Agree	Strongly Agree	Fully Agree
Size	Please rate the following statements on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 signifies complete disagreement and 10 signifies full agreement.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	We align our BE strategies with our growth plans, ensuring that as our organisation expands, our BE practices scale effectively to support and enhance this development.										
	As we grow, our BE implementation evolves to match our changing size and structure, allowing us to maintain operational excellence and competitive advantage at each stage of our expansion.										

		1 (10%)	2 (20%)	3 (30%)	4 (40%)	5 (50%)	6 (60%)	7 (70%)	8 (80%)	9 (90%)	10 (100%)
		Completely Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Mostly Agree	Strongly Agree	Fully Agree
Speed or urgency to implement BE	Please rate the following statements on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 signifies complete disagreement and 10 signifies full agreement.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Our strategic plan reflects what we want to achieve in next 5 years.										
	The strategic plan is also linked with short-term plans / activities to support strategic plan.										
	Our strategic plan includes specific timelines for each phase of BE implementation to ensure a swift and efficient transition.										
	To accelerate our BE journey, we've established a dedicated task force responsible for fast-tracking critical BE processes and initiatives										

		1 (10%)	2 (20%)	3 (30%)	4 (40%)	5 (50%)	6 (60%)	7 (70%)	8 (80%)	9 (90%)	10 (100%)
		Completely Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Mostly Agree	Strongly Agree	Fully Agree
Organisational Willingness to Change	Please rate the following statements on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 signifies complete disagreement and 10 signifies full agreement.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	We have invested in adequately on BE training for all levels to improve employee acceptance for change										
	Our leadership team promote BE across the organisation to engage employees on different BE initiatives.										
	We ensure continuous learning opportunities are available to all employees to foster a culture that embraces change and innovation.										
	We have formal channels to engage employees on BE activities										
	Our leadership actively participates in BE training alongside employees to demonstrate commitment to change and continuous improvement.										
	We have integrated BE principles into our core training modules to align employee development with organisational change goals.										
	Regular feedback sessions are embedded in our training programs to address employee concerns and adapt our approach to change management.										
	We have tailored our training programs to include case studies and real-world examples that highlight the successful implementation of changes, boosting employee confidence and willingness to adopt new practices.										

The OEA Design Tool – Example best practices report

Introduction:

This report outlines the best practices in business excellence (BE) implementation at VAMED-KMB. It begins with an overview of the organisation's profile, followed by a detailed description of VAMEDKMB's assessment approach, which includes both internal (self) and external assessment approaches. Subsequent sections delve into the report writing, training, and communication processes. The report concludes by highlighting the strength of VAMED-KMB's Organisational Excellence Architecture (OEA) in driving a culture of continuous improvement.

Organisational Excellence Architecture refers to the formal support structure, resources, processes, and assessment tools used to assist the implementation of BE within an organisation.

Company Profile:

VAMED is a global provider of services for hospitals and other facilities in the healthcare sector. The VAMED portfolio ranges from project development, planning and turnkey construction via maintenance, technical, commercial and infrastructure services to total facility management of healthcare facilities. With its range of services, VAMED covers all areas of healthcare, from prevention and wellness to acute care, rehabilitation, and nursing. VAMED is also the leading private provider of rehabilitation services and, in health tourism, with VAMED Vitality World, the largest operator of thermal spas and health resorts in Austria. Figure 1 below shows the brief history of VAMED and VAMED-KMB.

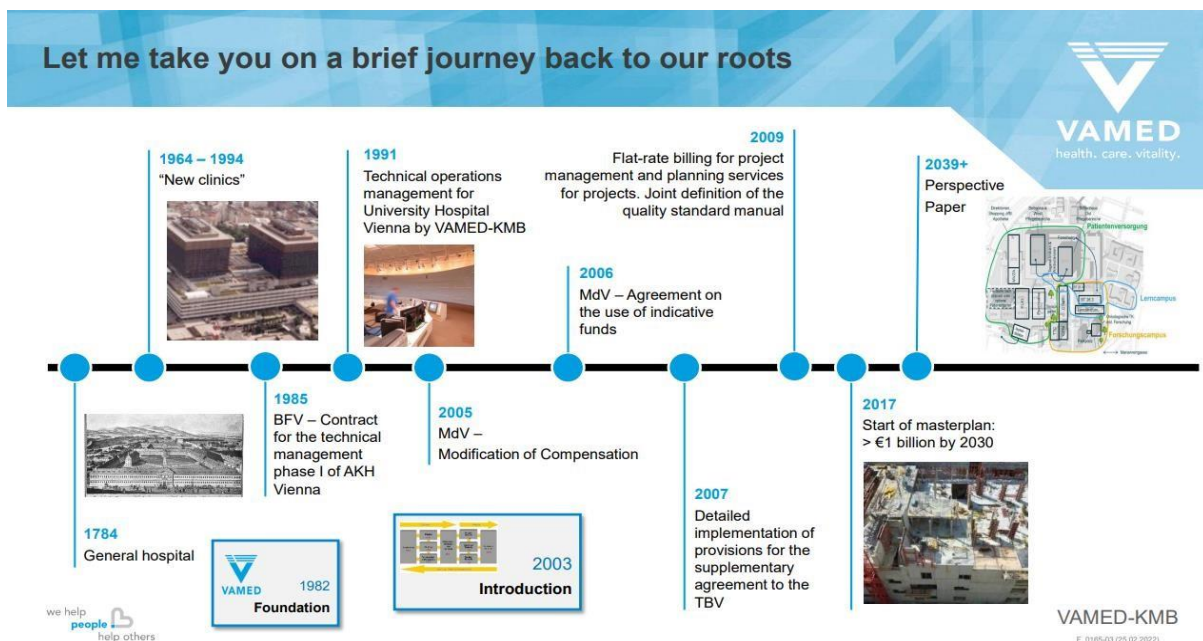


Figure 1 – VAMED-KMB history, Business Excellence Journey started in 2003 with the EFQM model introduction

(Source: EFQM, (2023), VAMED-KMB - EFQM Winners Webinar. [Video], 2023, [EFQM Winners Webinar: Global Award Winners VAMED-KMB Best Practice Improvement Resource \(bpir.com\)](#))

VAMED-KMB, a business unit of VAMED, has been using the EFQM model since 2003. VAMED-KMB reports that their use of the EFQM model aligns with their objective of transforming Vienna's healthcare system into a benchmark of excellence. The EFQM model effectively bridges the divide between for-profit and not-for-profit entities. Figure 2 below shows the VAMED-KMB Excellence journey and key milestones achieved until 2022.

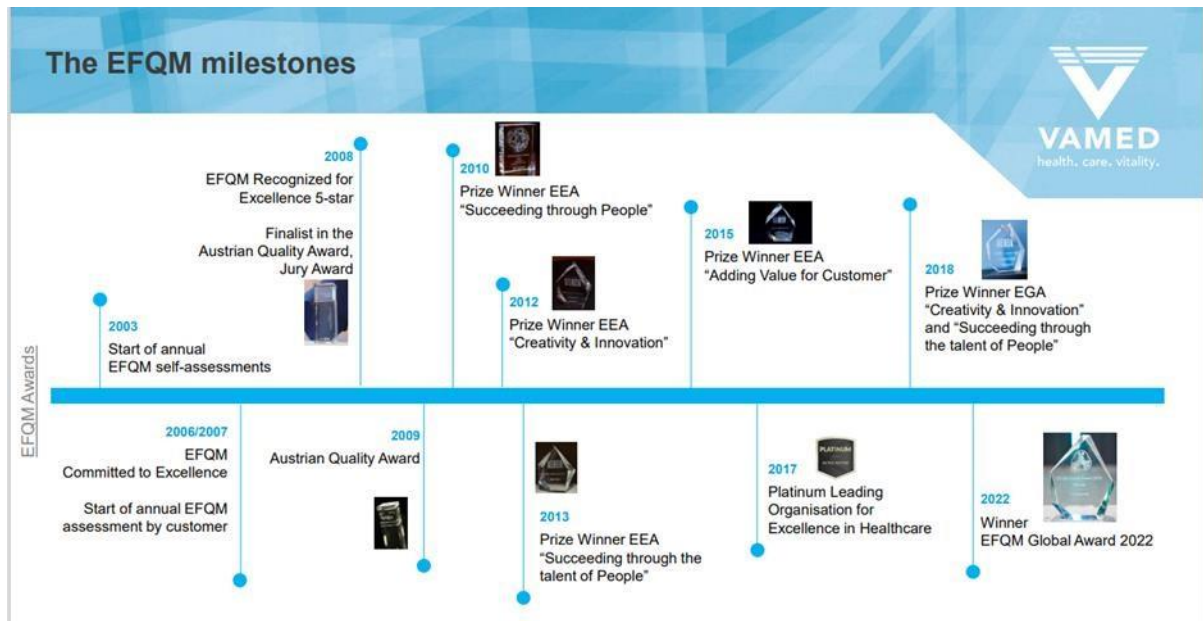


Figure 2 – VAMED-KMB Business Excellence Journey

(Source: EFQM, (2023), VAMED-KMB - EFQM Winners Webinar. [Video], 2023, [EFQM Winners Webinar: Global Award Winners VAMED-KMB](#))

VAMED-KMB Assessment approach:

VAMED-KMB's business excellence assessment process encompasses a full self-assessment, a short self-assessment, and external assessments from their key customer as well as award assessments (Figure 3). Each of these approaches has a distinct purpose and supports the cultivation of a continuous improvement culture within the organisation.

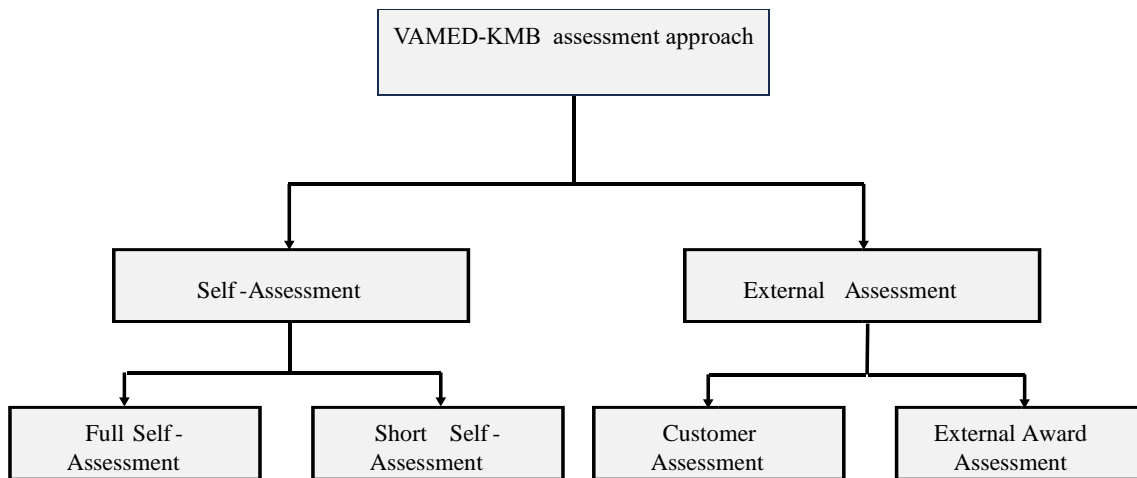


Figure 3 – VAMED-KMB business excellence assessment approach

Assessment approach in detail:

Table 1 offers a detailed look at the assessment methods employed by VAMED-KMB, detailing their specific scopes, resource allocations, and how often they are conducted. Whether it is a Full Self Assessment, a Short Self-Assessment, or an External Assessment, each has its distinct purpose, ensuring a thorough evaluation of the organisation's performance.

Table 1: VAMED-KMB Assessment Approach

Assessment	Full Self-Assessment	Short Self-Assessment	Customer External Assessment	External Award Assessment
Scope of the assessment	The assessment team evaluates the entire organisation including submission documents.	Progress review for the entire organisation considering excellence projects and measures initiated as the outcome of the previous year's full or external/award assessments.	The assessment team from the main customer evaluates the entire organisation including a one day site Visit.	The assessment team from the EFQM evaluates the entire organisation. The external assessment team evaluates submission documents and conducts site visits/interviews as per the award criteria. <i>Duration of site visit: 35 days.</i>

Resource allocation	<p>Performed by the internal assessment team. It consists of up to four teams of 8 people from different departments to form cross-functional teams and it is supported by an external lead assessor. A CEO participates in the assessment process as one of the members.</p> <p>Constitute a new assessment or modified team for each assessment cycle to use the assessment process also as a means to build up the capability of staff.</p>	<p>Performed by the management team and the internal business excellence team supported by an external lead assessor.</p>	<p>Performed by VAMED-KMB Customer as per their contractual agreement. The team from the customer is fully trained on the EFQM assessments.</p>	<p>Performed by an external lead assessor and a team of external award assessors to get an independent view of VAMED-KMB's excellence performance.</p>
Frequency	<p>Every other year, or in response to internal or external changes (such as changes in the model)</p>	<p>Each alternate year</p>	<p>Each year</p>	<p>Award assessments: On a regular basis (3-4 years)</p>

Full Self-Assessment: VAMED-KMB has adopted a comprehensive approach to its self-assessment process (Figure 4) as it embarks on its journey toward business excellence. To ensure thorough coverage, VAMED-KMB established four internal business excellence assessment teams at the beginning of its excellence journey, each comprised of eight members who worked in different departments, all with the support of an external assessor. These teams were tasked with evaluating the entire organisation in accordance with the EFQM excellence criteria. A few years after the teams were formed, they were reduced from four to one due to a high level of consistency.

As part of its commitment to excellence education and training, VAMED-KMB assigns new or modified assessment teams for each self-assessment cycle.

After the assessment process is completed, each team submits its findings to the Business Excellence Department. Subsequently, the Business Excellence Department organises a consensus preparation meeting where common findings are identified and utilized to formalize the outcome. Results are analysed including the organisation's strengths and recommendations for improvement opportunities. All findings are then presented and discussed with the management team, excellence projects are jointly prioritized based on the recommendations. The management team appoints a project mentor,

chosen from one of the four CEOs, and a project owner. The mentor and owner work collaboratively to select a team responsible for implementing the necessary changes.

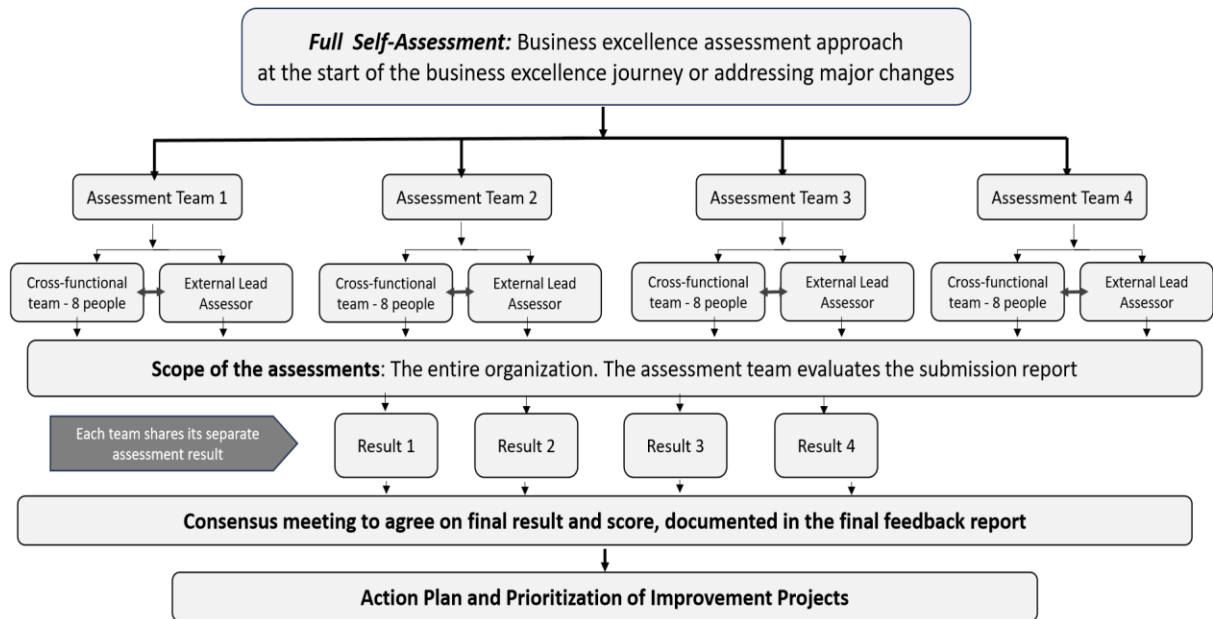


Figure 4 – VAMED-KMB Full Self-assessment approach

Short Self-Assessment:

The primary objective of the short assessment process is to review what has been achieved from the previous assessment. For a short assessment (Figure 5), the management team together with the Business Excellence Department and an external business excellence consultant assess progress against the achievements and results of the recent business year as well as action plans and improvement measures derived from the previous year's assessment process. The business excellence team prepares a summary that outlines key approaches, results, and major changes for this assessment process. Then the team rescores the organisation again based on the progress achieved since the last time. Therefore, the team is not just reviewing action plan progress but also undertaking a review of assessment scores based on actions implemented.

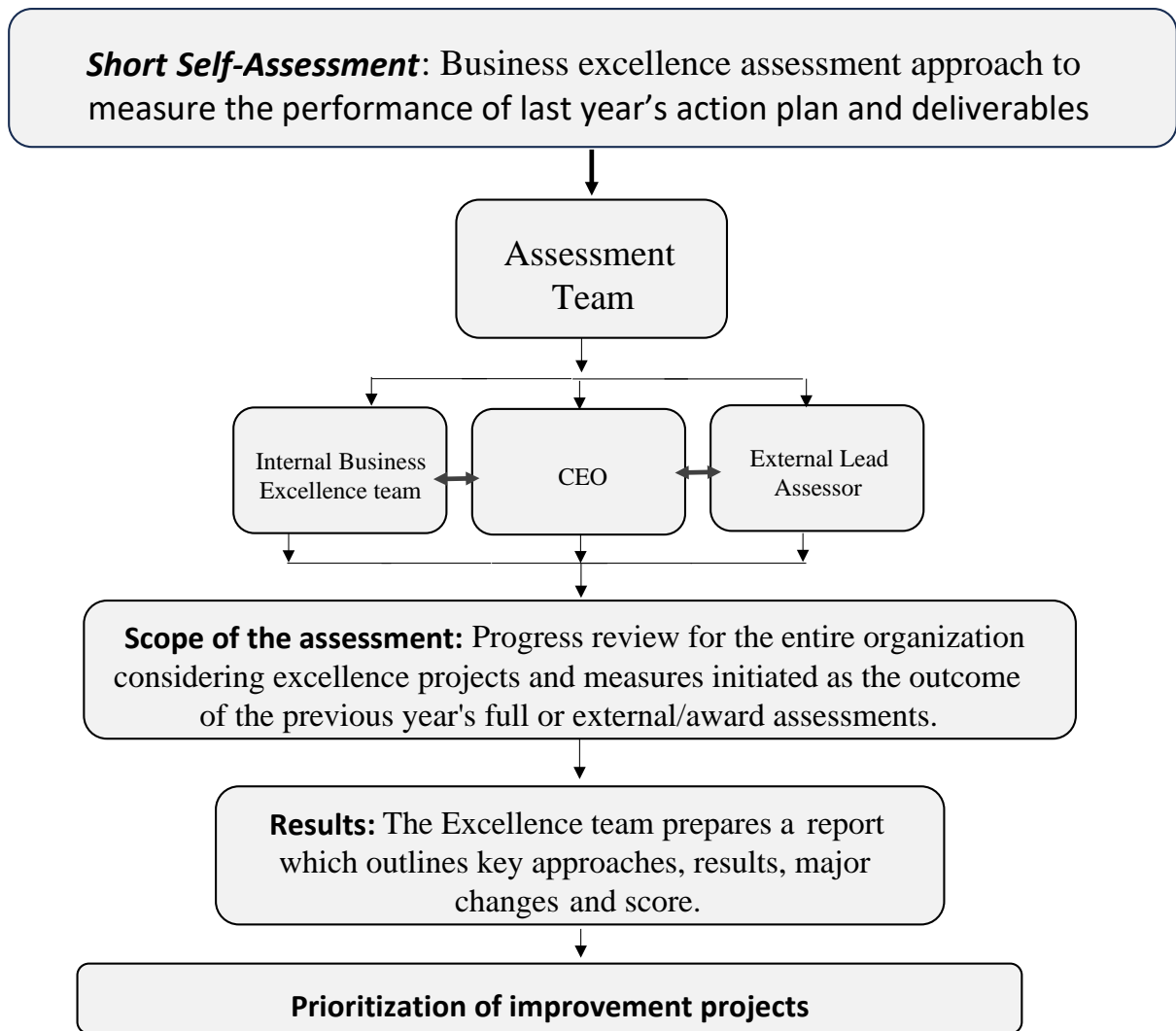


Figure 5 – VAMED-KMB Short self- assessment approach

External Assessments:

Customer Assessments:

VAMED-KMB has extended its pursuit of excellence by contractually anchoring the EFQM Model as a pillar of its partnership with its key customer. An annual assessment of the organisation by the main customer (the University Hospital Vienna) provides VAMED-KMB with valuable feedback. Since 2007, a dedicated team from the hospital's Technical Directorate has been conducting regular assessments on VAMED-KMB.

The customer assessment follows several steps. Initially, the Business Excellence team at VAMED-KMB prepares a full submission report that covers all aspects of the organisation's operations as per the EFQM award application format. The University Hospital Vienna's team thoroughly reviews this application and then conducts a site visit. Due to their over 15 years of familiarity with VAMED-KMB's internal processes, a single day is sufficient for a thorough evaluation on site. The assessment

process concludes with the University Hospital providing VAMED-KMB with a detailed feedback report and score, based on the EFQM feedback report format.

External Award Assessments:

To avoid self-bias, VAMED-KMB also engages regularly in an external award assessments. Unlike full or short self-assessments, external assessments (Figure 6) are conducted by an independent external team of EFQM or a national partner of EFQM. The external award assessment comprised a group of external assessors and a lead assessor to provide an independent perspective and offer valuable insights. Due to the regular self-assessments, the assessment results and feedback are largely consistent with the self-assessments.

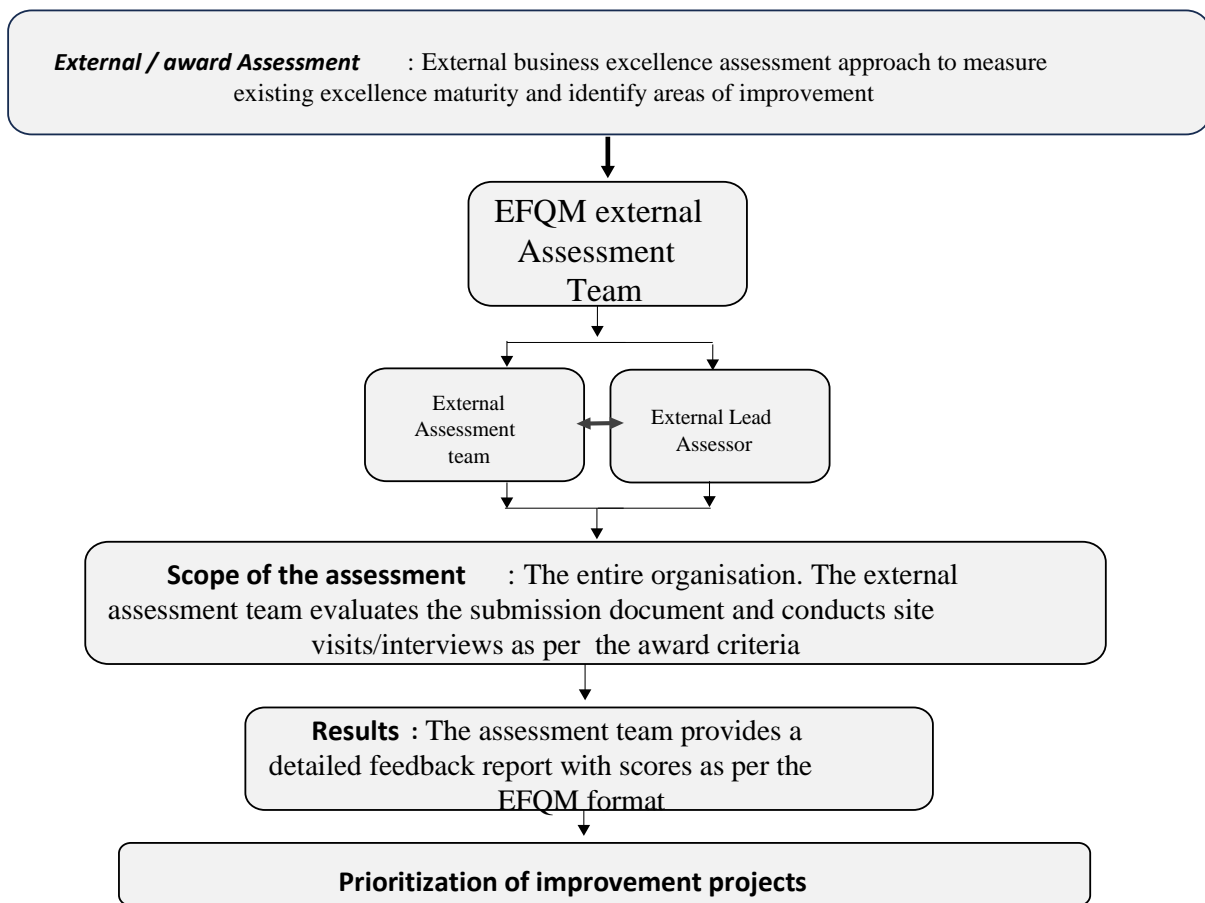


Figure 6 – VAMED-KMB Award/External Assessment approach

An EFQM Report writing process:

At VAMED-KMB, the EFQM report writing process is viewed as an 'opportunity for reflection'. The EFQM report is consolidated and drafted by the Business Excellence team with the input of all organisational units to ensure language consistency. This report is structured and formatted as per the EFQM report structure.

Excellence Training:

VAMED-KMB's first and second levels of leadership, along with all managers, are fully trained on the EFQM model either through a comprehensive full assessors training Programme from EFQM or the national partner or through a comprehensive internal assessor training Programme. VAMED-KMB conducts a complete EFQM training session for new inductees and those seeking a refresher course on the model every 1-2 years. Additionally, VAMED has established an e-learning platform, enabling employees to access excellence/model training materials online.

Communication and Continuous Improvement:

VAMED-KMB places a strong emphasis on maintaining high-performance levels even after receiving any award or recognition. To ensure this sustained excellence, VAMED-KMB engages in post assessment discussions immediately after receiving recognition, which leads to the planning of further improvement actions. This process is linked to the introduction of a motivational motto, symbolizing the organisation's commitment to ongoing excellence. The use of visual communication tools and videos reinforces this commitment and showcases a collective dedication to continuous improvement. Moreover, the organisation follows a clear strategic direction, characterized by ongoing excellence projects and a well-defined roadmap for future achievements, ensuring that the recognition is not just a milestone but a stepping stone to further success.

Successful Implementation of EFQM 2020 Model: Showcasing VAMED-KMB's Robust OEA:

VAMED-KMB's Organisational Excellence Architecture (OEA) is robust and well-prepared to facilitate the organisation in adapting to new changes or challenges, thanks to strong leadership commitment and business excellence implementation strategies. This robustness of the OEA was demonstrated during the implementation of the new EFQM model 2020, which was realized seamlessly and effectively, embodying the true spirit of the model without any issues or disturbances.

This best practice report was published on the [BPIR.Com](https://www.bpir.com) in March 2024.

For further information on this research, contact: Atif Baig, a.baig@massey.ac.nz

or Dr Robin Mann, r.s.mann@massey.ac.nz

Appendix H: Statements of Contribution



MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNINGA KI PŪREHUORA
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

GRADUATE RESEARCH SCHOOL

STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTION DOCTORATE WITH PUBLICATIONS/MANUSCRIPTS

We, the student and the student's main supervisor, certify that all co-authors have consented to their work being included in the thesis and they have accepted the student's contribution as indicated below in the Statement of Originality.			
Student name:	Mirza Atif Baig		
Name and title of main supervisor:	Dr James Lockhart		
In which chapter is the manuscript/published work?	4		
Describe the contribution that the student and members of the supervisory team have made to the manuscript/published work: ¹			
<p>This paper is based on qualitative and quantitative data collected from the research respondents. The findings helped to refine and improve the organisational excellence architecture (OEA) model presented throughout this research. I was solely responsible for the data collection and analysis process. My supervisors ensured the accuracy of the survey design and data analyses. I drafted the paper and submitted it to the Quality Management Journal in September 2023. However, the manuscript was returned with major revisions, primarily concerning the word count. My supervisors helped and guided me in restructuring the paper. Following the reviewers' suggestions, I revised the draft and submitted it to the TQM Journal in November, 2023 due to the right fit for this manuscript as per the TQM Journal scope. After successfully addressing the reviewers' concerns, the paper was accepted in March, 2024. Dr Robin Mann provided technical guidance, Dr James Lockhart offered editorial advice, and Dr Wayne Macpherson supervised the data analysis and results for this paper.</p>			
Please select one of the following three options:			
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	The manuscript/published work is published or in press Please provide the full reference of the research output: Baig, A., Mann, R., Lockhart, J. and Macpherson, W. (2024), "The development of an organizational excellence architecture model to support the implementation of business excellence", The TQM Journal, Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print. https://doi.org/10.1108/TQM-11-2023-0375		
<input type="radio"/>	The manuscript is currently under review for publication Please provide the name of the journal: <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; height: 20px; width: 100%; margin-top: 5px;"></div>		
<input type="radio"/>	It is intended that the manuscript will be published, but it has not yet been submitted to a journal		
Student's signature:	Atif Baig	Main supervisor's signature:	
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¹ Refer to the Massey University Publishing and Authorship guidelines ([OneMassey for staff](#), [Stream for students](#)) and/ or [Contributor Roles Taxonomy \(CRediT\) guidelines](#) for guidance.

STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTION DOCTORATE WITH PUBLICATIONS/MANUSCRIPTS

We, the student and the student's main supervisor, certify that all co-authors have consented to their work being included in the thesis and they have accepted the student's contribution as indicated below in the Statement of Originality.			
Student name:	Mirza Atif Baig		
Name and title of main supervisor:	Dr James Lockhart		
In which chapter is the manuscript/published work?	5		
Describe the contribution that the student and members of the supervisory team have made to the manuscript/published work: ¹ This paper is based on qualitative and quantitative data collected from the research respondents to identify business excellence (BE) assessment approaches and best practices from BE award-winning organisations. I was again solely responsible for the data collection and analysis process. I drafted this paper and submitted it to the TQM Journal in March, 2024. The reviewers raised comments regarding the research methodology. My supervisors guided me in improving the manuscript as per the reviewers' feedback. Dr Robin Mann provided BE technical guidance and Dr James Lockhart guided the qualitative analysis and refining of the paper as per the journal guidelines. Dr Wayne Macpherson provided editorial support.			
Please select one of the following three options:			
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	The manuscript/published work is published or in press Please provide the full reference of the research output: Baig, A., Mann, R., Lockhart, J. and Macpherson, W. (2024), "Business excellence assessments – learning from award-winning organizations", The TQM Journal, Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print. https://doi.org/10.1108/TQM-03-2024-0098		
<input type="radio"/>	The manuscript is currently under review for publication Please provide the name of the journal:		
<input type="radio"/>	It is intended that the manuscript will be published, but it has not yet been submitted to a journal		
Student's signature:	Atif Baig	Main supervisor's signature:	Lockhart, James Digitally signed by Lockhart, James Date: 2024.06.28 06:01:43 +12'00'
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<p>We, the student and the student's main supervisor, certify that all co-authors have consented to their work being included in the thesis and they have accepted the student's contribution as indicated below in the Statement of Originality.</p>		
Student name:	Mirza Atif Baig	
Name and title of main supervisor:	Dr James Lockhart	
In which chapter is the manuscript/published work?	7	
<p>Describe the contribution that the student and members of the supervisory team have made to the manuscript/published work:¹</p> <p>This paper is based on qualitative and quantitative data collected from the research respondents to identify business excellence (BE) implementation approaches regarding governance structure and resources. I was solely responsible for the data collection and, analysis and writing of the manuscript. My supervisors have provided their initial feedback, which has been incorporated in the revised draft. This paper is prepared for submission to The Total Quality Management & Business Excellence Journal or any other similar ranking journal. Dr Robin Mann provided BE subject expert guidance, and Dr James Lockhart and Dr Wayne Macpherson offered editorial advice.</p>		
Please select one of the following three options:		
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<input checked="" type="radio"/>	It is intended that the manuscript will be published, but it has not yet been submitted to a journal	
Student's signature:	Atif Baig	Main supervisor's signature: Lockhart, James <small>Digitally signed by Lockhart, James Date: 2024.06.28 06:03:06 +12'00'</small>
<p><i>This form should be placed at the beginning of each relevant thesis chapter.</i></p>		

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STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTION DOCTORATE WITH PUBLICATIONS/MANUSCRIPTS

We, the student and the student's main supervisor, certify that all co-authors have consented to their work being included in the thesis and they have accepted the student's contribution as indicated below in the Statement of Originality.			
Student name:	Mirza Atif Baig		
Name and title of main supervisor:	Dr James Lockhart		
In which chapter is the manuscript/published work?	6		
Describe the contribution that the student and members of the supervisory team have made to the manuscript/published work: ¹ This paper is based on qualitative and quantitative data from the research respondents to identify business excellence (BE) processes and best practices from BE organisations. I was solely responsible for the data collection and, analysis and writing of the manuscript. This paper is prepared for submission to The Total Quality Management & Business Excellence Journal. Dr Robin Mann provided BE subject expert guidance, and Dr James Lockhart and Dr Wayne Macpherson offered editorial advice.			
Please select one of the following three options:			
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<input type="radio"/>	The manuscript is currently under review for publication Please provide the name of the journal:		
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	It is intended that the manuscript will be published, but it has not yet been submitted to a journal		
Student's signature:	Atif Baig	Main supervisor's signature:	Lockhart, James Digitally signed by Lockhart, James Date: 2024.06.28 06:02:21 +12'00'
<i>This form should be placed at the beginning of each relevant thesis chapter.</i>			

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