Developing a Framework for Integration of Flexibility in Business Excellence Models

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ABSTRACT

Today, flexibility is considered a prerequisite for success in every business enterprise. Flexibility implies sustainable advantage and capabilities that may evolve over time. It is a dynamic concept and multi-dimensional in nature. Flexibility means Responsiveness, Freedom, Autonomy, Balance, Agility and Adaptiveness. Business excellence models were created to help and guide the businesses on the path of excellence. Due to the dynamic business environment, BE models too, are constantly in the evolution stage. The literature review highlighted that flexibility dimension is not seemingly well integrated in the existing BE models, thus providing motivation to carry out research work in this area.

The main objective of this research is to develop and validate an enhanced Business excellence model integrating the flexibility dimensions. The research sub-objectives are: To identify flexibility constructs and factors in each criteria of an existing BE model; To develop and validate hierarchical relationships among flexibility factors in Enablers criteria and Results criteria independently; To validate interrelationships of Enabler flexibility constructs/factors with Results flexibility constructs/factors and synthesize the enhanced Business excellence model.

The existing EFQM excellence model, current version 2013 has been adopted as the base for this research study because it has been adopted in India by CII and an award called “CII-EXIM Bank Award for Business Excellence” has been instituted.
This study has been conducted in six phases. Phase one deals about defining research problem and objectives of the study. Phase two is about doing study of evolution of BE concept and BE models, evolution of flexibility concept and study of flexibility dimensions as explicitly represented in the select BE models. Phase three is about exploratory study. Here flexibility constructs and micro flexibility factors have been identified through grounded theory approach. TISM models for Enablers and Results flexibility variables have been developed. Phase four deals with the empirical validation of the conceptual flexibility integrated BE framework. Opinion survey has been conducted. Factor analysis, reliability analysis, and uni-variate analysis, cluster and discriminant analysis have been done in this phase. Regression analysis has been done at both macro and micro level on the identified flexibility factors and their interrelationships have been established. Phase five is about cross-validation of the empirically validated model through a case study. The data collected through case study has been analyzed and the values of result parameters have been compared with the values predicted by the validated empirically validated model. Discussion has been done with the senior managers of the case organization to understand any significant differences between the two sets of values. Phase six deals with the synthesis of the results and learning from each phase. Major recommendations are listed and limitations of the study have also been presented. An attempt has been made to present a synthesized model which can be used by practitioners as the flexibility integrated BE model.

The significant contributions of this study are: (a) A comprehensive validated BE framework integrating the flexibility dimensions covering all the criteria of EFQM excellence model has been presented, (b) Identifying the flexibility dimensions in each criterion of the two BE models is a significant contribution to the existing body of knowledge, (c) The validated TISM model for Enablers & Results criteria presents the linkages between the identified flexibility factors thus providing the BE managers and BE assessors more insight into the relationships and interplay of the flexibility factors to apply them to their work.