The Evolution of Quality Management in DOKPY, Magnesia - Greece:

from Basic Quality Initiatives to EFQM

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Abstract

Quality of services has recently attracted the attention of customers and companies. ISO 9001 (2000) and, lately, EFQM Excellence Model (EFQM) contribute significantly to its improvement. Our paper presents the course of an Organisation offering social services (DOKPY) in the “world of quality”. DOKPY has been initially introduced to quality issues through the use of basic quality techniques and tools, according to the spirit of ISO 9001 (2000). Then, the Organisation has decided to follow the procedure of conformance to the 1st level of Excellence of EFQM, mainly by improving three areas of the Organisation’s operation according to the criteria of EFQM. We illustrate both the actions taken and the manipulations that have been necessary to overcome the difficulties that came up. It is our belief that the experience of this process can be pilot for any similar effort in the service sector.

Key Words: Quality Management System; Quality Tool; EFQM; Services; Social Services

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1. **Introduction**

   Indisputably, there has been a long time since product quality started to constitute a crucial factor that influences customer preferences. When manufacturing began, and then competition accompanied manufacturing, consumers started to compare similar products and choose the most attractive of them. As a result, any time a manufacturer discovered that his competitor’s profits increased, he tried to improve his offers, and one way to do this would be to improve the quality of his output.

   Reasonably, this has led to the intensive study, design and application of plenty of techniques concerning the Statistical Quality Control (SQC) of products, whose usefulness has been proved to be unlimited throughout the years. The first to apply statistical methods in process control was Shewhart who introduced the “control chart” in 1924 and set the tone for subsequent applications of Statistical Process Control (SPC) methods. Since then there have been plenty of influential books on Statistical Quality Control such as those by Western Electric (1956), Grant and Leavenworth (1980) and Montgomery (2001), and well-known publications such as the frequently cited ones by Duncan (1956), Montgomery (1980) and Ho and Case (1994). The importance of product quality has also led to the development and implementation of quality management systems (QMSs), supported by various standards such as ISO 9001 (1994; 2000), ISO 14001 (1996, 2004), EFQM Excellence Model (1999; 2003), etc., which, however, are meant to certify the processes and the system of a company and not the product itself.
In the last few years, the interest in quality has extended much further in order to include the quality of services offered by various companies and organisations. Therefore, the practice of implementing QMSs in manufacturing companies has also started to appear in service sector; it has become obvious that QMSs can be used efficiently and can affect positively the operation of companies providing services. Nevertheless, developing and implementing a QMS in this type of companies faces many problems, most of which are completely different from those met in manufacturing companies; this happens primarily because this procedure is much more immature in service sector, presenting a delay in progress compared to the equivalent procedure in manufacturing companies, which have been long familiarised with QMSs. In addition, implementing a QMS in service sector and measuring its results is quite blurred compared to the corresponding, clear, easily understandable process in a manufacturing company. On top of all, the personnel of a company providing services, especially social ones as in our case, is much more sceptical and cautious concerning the standardisation of its duties.

This paper is about the Municipal Organisation of Social Welfare and Health (DOKPY) which was founded in 1995 by the Municipality of Nea Ionia, in Magnesia - Greece (www.dokpy.gr). It is a non-profit, municipal organisation that aims at building social welfare structures in the Prefecture of Magnesia and at enhancing primary health care in the city. In addition, DOKPY studies and makes proposals regarding issues of social policy. The population groups for which DOKPY caters are all the citizens of the Municipality that ask for counselling and in particular the vulnerable ones, like the single-parent families, people with disabilities, the elderly, the poor, the immigrants, etc.

First, we briefly present the initial effort of DOKPY to implement selected techniques, procedures and tools of quality, mainly according to the philosophy of the popular ISO 9001 (2000) standard. Then, we refer extensively to the implementation of the EFQM Excellence Model (EFQM) in this, already experienced in quality issues, Organisation, towards the 1st level of EFQM - “Committed to Excellence”, that followed. We analyse the progress of DOKPY in quality issues until its conformance, the drawbacks and the solutions to overcome them during this two-stage quality process, as well as its outcome and beneficial results to the operation of DOKPY.
Even if in literature there are many case studies of ISO 9001 (2000) and EFQM implementation, including cases in service companies and governmental organisations, the contribution of this paper can be attributed to the fact that the experience of this continuous quality process can be quite useful for any similar effort, in view of the particular characteristics of DOKPY and the special kind of services, i.e. social ones, that it provides.

In the following section there is a brief review of the related literature, while Section 3 describes the most important special characteristics of DOKPY as well as its introduction to quality issues through the use of selected quality tools. Section 4 presents the main points of the EFQM framework and Section 5 provides useful information about the implementation of EFQM in DOKPY. Finally, the conclusions are summarised in Section 6.

2. Related Literature

In recent literature, there are various case studies regarding the differences in the implementation of QMSs between the manufacturing and the service sector. More specifically, Shadur (1995) identifies two different quality management approaches: the standards-based and the culture-based ones. Their operation is reviewed in a manufacturing and in a service organisation. He discovers that standards-based approaches are more easily applied to manufacturing companies than to service sector. To the latter the culture-based approaches, i.e., the ones that envisage the development of a social environment in which employees are pushed to provide high service quality, are preferred. A few years later, Beaumont et al. (1997) identify and explain the differences in quality management practices between Australian manufacturing and service organisations, based on two surveys.

Concerning the design, development and implementation of QMSs - whichever these might be - in service sector, Singh and Deshmukh (1999) study the introduction of quality to an educational institute and, specifically, to a consultancy and technology transfer department. Once they recognise the need for quality initiatives, they determine the initial status of the organisation and make suggestions about the implementation of these initiatives. Brah et al. (2000) do a survey in order to examine the relationship between TQM and business performance in the Singaporean service sector.
Van Harten et al. (2002) discuss the introduction of a QMS to healthcare and, specifically, in a rehabilitation hospital. In order to evaluate the development of their QMS, they use the Dutch version of EFQM. In addition, in one of the most recent case studies, Sánchez et al. (2006) describe the implementation of EFQM in a regional healthcare service, in the Basque Country and present the results of their effort.

Hides et al. (2004) study the implementation of EFQM in the Higher Education sector in the UK. Particularly, they focus on the choice of the “self-assessment” methodology, while they compare and contrast “self-assessment” issues in UK universities, with those in the wider public sector. They conclude that EFQM can help to produce a more customer-orientated culture in UK institutions. A few years later, Tari (2006) studies a relevant subject: the implementation of EFQM in five services offered by a public university in Spain. His findings show not only the steps that a university should take in order to follow this practice in a successful manner, but also its benefits, obstacles and key factors.

Heras-Saizarbitoria et al. (2006) analyse the motivation of companies for implementing two of the most important and popular models for quality management nowadays, namely ISO 9000 and EFQM. They provide a qualitative survey carried out in Spain as well as the opinion of managers, consultants, academic specialists and members of institutions.

The forerunner of the present paper is some earlier work by Nikolaidis (2006), who presents the effort of DOKPY to get into the “world of quality” and, specifically, to implement selected quality techniques and tools. In his paper, Nikolaidis shows the difficulties, as well as the remarkable effectiveness of such an undertaking. In addition, he draws some useful conclusions for any relevant effort.

3. Main Points of the Introduction of DOKPY to Quality Issues

Having the supervision and help of an external quality consultant, DOKPY decided, in 2003, to adopt in its operation specific quality tools, mainly according to the principles and the spirit of the popular ISO 9001 (2000) standard. The most important tools that were implemented are the following: a) indicative forms of data and information recording, b) realistic organisational chart, c) indicative job
descriptions and d) indicative procedures for accomplishing tasks or performing activities. However, it was decided that a certification of the QMS of DOKPY should not be the primary objective of the effort, since there were a lot of preliminary steps to be taken before a potential application for certification.

According to Nikolaidis (2006), it was easily discovered that the most important reason for the operational problems of DOKPY was that the increasing growth of the Organisation had not been followed by a proper organisational structure. Thus, with an initial poor quality level of operation DOKPY had to face a number of problems also occurring in almost every developing company that has not decided to enhance its operation through a QMS. Specifically, DOKPY was encountering overlaps or gaps in the allocation of duties, existence of overloaded staff or staff not efficiently utilised, overlooking important tasks or placing emphasis on unimportant ones, etc. Regarding the quality of the offered services, it depended a lot on the staff’s inspirations and good will, which, of course, could not guarantee the stable, if not continuously improved, quality of provided services. All these motivated DOKPY to get involved with quality issues.

At first, the identification of the special characteristics of DOKPY was critical; it was very likely that their existence could render many initiatives of the QMS implementation ineffective, in contrast to what might happen in a more “typical”, manufacturing company. The most important special characteristics of DOKPY at that time are briefly the following (for more details see Nikolaidis, 2006):

- The strategic management of DOKPY was irregular, carried out by two bodies
- Only two members of the staff had actual administrative authority, acting as a “double” director of the remaining personnel (administrative team)
- Only four people - from a staff of 40 members at that time - actually worked to signed contracts of indefinite time; the lack of job security was affecting negatively all the rest
- The operation of DOKPY depended a lot on the existence and the demands of the funding programmes that the Organisation was undertaking
- As a result, there was a continuous - and without any particular evaluation - effort of the staff to find new funding programmes, aggravating the problem of lack of organisation.
It should be considered that although some of the aforementioned special characteristics of DOKPY might seem odd and excessive, they can be met in many companies - organisations, at least in Greece, which have the same organisational structure (e.g. “double” administration etc.) and the same problems (e.g. personnel working on fixed-term contracts, uncertain funding, underlying political manipulation etc.). An indicative list of Greek organisations, focusing on social and health services and operating in such ways, is the following:

- Municipal Organisation of Health & Social Affairs in Volos, Magnesia¹
- Municipal Organisation of Social Affairs & Health in Mouresi, Magnesia²
- Municipal Organisation of Health & Welfare in Patra, Achaea³
- Municipal Welfare Organisation in Chios, Chios⁴
- Municipal Welfare Organisation in Rhodes, Dodecanese⁵

as well as the

- Municipal Health Service “Gelderland Midden”, in Arnhem, the Netherlands⁶.

We have already pointed out that the case study described in this paper could be a guide for any similar company - organisation, which intends to improve the quality of the provided services.

Nikolaidis (2006) mentions that in order to improve the operation of DOKPY, except from the aforementioned quality tools that were embedded into DOKPY’s routine, the following activities also took place:

- An introductory meeting (lecture) between the quality consultant and all DOKPY personnel
- Periodic meetings between the quality consultant and the administrative team of DOKPY
- The filling in of a specially developed questionnaire by all DOKPY personnel, private meetings between the quality consultant and the latter, development and evaluation of their profiles
- A seminar entitled “Basic Concepts of Quality - Principles, Requirements, Ways of Implementation and Advantages of a QMS”

¹ www.doyk.gr
² www.dimosmouresiou.gr/organ_details.asp?id=6
³ www.patras.gr/el/c6/c6s5/default.asp
⁴ www.chioscity.gr/kapi/social.htm
⁵ http://www.rhodes.gr/portal_gr/modules.php?pa=showpage&pid=351&name=Content
⁶ www.ggd.amsterdam.nl
• Implementation of the new operational way for a test period

• Writing a final report (as well as an intermediate one) with the results of the whole effort.

Table 1 summarises which quality initiatives/tools have been used in order to tackle the operational problems/special characteristics of DOKPY.

**Table 1 about here**

Despite the intense initial scepticism of the staff of DOKPY about the undertaken effort, the implementation of basic quality techniques and tools was proven successful in the end. Everybody was finally persuaded about their usefulness and started to exploit them. After the completion of the effort, the majority of the personnel became more “quality sensitive”, after having been familiarised with quality issues for a whole year. In addition, most of the staff became more qualified and, consequently, more effective in terms of the quality of the services they offered.

The upgraded operation of DOKPY at that period of time, along with its decision to improve further the quality of offered services according to the criteria of the 1st level of EFQM, proves not only that QMSs can be successfully applied into companies providing services, but also that they can greatly affect their overall performance.

4. The EFQM framework

On 15 September 1988 the chairmen of 14 European multinational companies came together to create the EFQM foundation, in order to improve quality management in Western Europe. Today it brings together over 7000 members around Europe. EFQM foundation, among other activities, encourages the design and implementation of quality systems in companies providing services, offering a three-level conformance recognition according to its fundamental concepts of “Business Excellence”\(^7\). EFQM foundation maintains a national representative in each European country, which is referred to as National Partner Organisation (NPO). The NPO of Greece is the Hellenic Management Association (HMA).

As far as EFQM is concerned, it was introduced at the beginning of 1992 and is used to measure and improve the overall quality of a company. It constitutes a framework designed to assist companies

\(^7\) More information can be found in the official website of EFQM Foundation: [www.efqm.org](http://www.efqm.org)
in achieving “Business Excellence” through continuous improvement of management and deployment of processes. Specifically, EFQM considers the relative performance of a company in the areas of Enablers and Results. The Enablers criteria, i.e. Leadership, People, Policy & Strategy, Partnerships & Resources and Processes, cover what a company does, while the Results criteria, i.e. People, Customer, Society and Key Performance Results, cover what a company achieves. Results are caused by Enablers, while Enablers are improved using feedback from Results. Figure 1 represents the relationships between the Enablers and the Results criteria and constitutes the so-called in literature “EFQM framework” (more information about the latter can be found in Ahmed and Rafiq, 1998).

Figure 1 about here

The evaluation of the relative performance of a company is usually done annually, either on the basis of internal “self-assessment” or with the assistance of external consultants/evaluators. It is facilitated by the calculation of scores across the nine Enablers and Results criteria and/or by checking the company’s alignment against a total of 32 subpoints - questions. The used scoring method is usually based on RADAR (from Results, Approach, Deployment, Assessment & Review) Scoring Matrix and treats all types of companies alike, i.e. no adjustments are made for size or type of company. RADAR Scoring Matrix does not take into consideration only the results of the “improvement action plans” (see below for more information) that are selected from a company that strives to achieve “Business Excellence”. It also measures the extent to which the choice of the plans has been correct, the way they have been implemented in practice and the existence of future plans for further improvement.

The scores against the aforementioned criteria can be used for either internal or external “benchmark” comparisons, namely for benchmarking a company’s score against those from previous evaluations or against scores of other companies. The results of these comparisons offer an opportunity and should always lead to the improvement of the performance of key processes. The improvement of the latter is an excellent means for a company to achieve “Business Excellence”. It should be noted that the wider introduction of QMSs tends to improve the scores of a company, but in general EFQM does not provide information on how low scores can be improved.
In order for EFQM Foundation to award the conformance of companies to the fundamental concepts of “Business Excellence”, it has created three levels of Excellence. These levels aim to motivate and encourage systematic improvement of companies, not only including an evaluation procedure, but also constituting a recognisable conformance award. The EFQM levels of Excellence are applicable to all companies regardless of their size, sector or maturity. Companies may apply to whichever of the three levels they think is most appropriate for their ambition. The main information about the EFQM levels of Excellence is presented briefly in Table 2.

**Table 2 about here**

The explicit procedure of conformance to the 1st level of Excellence, on which we focus in this paper, involves two stages which are presented schematically in Figure 2. The first one is the “self-assessment” of the interested company against the nine criteria of EFQM mentioned previously, so that the involved personnel understands its current performance. No matter what the level of Excellence is, the “self-assessment” procedure needs to be applied rigorously in order to be effective. A graduated approach is recommended; it might start with the use of simple questionnaires and progressively move through detailed questionnaires to workshops, as the company becomes more familiar with the approach. Moreover, a company may choose to take the steps of the first stage by itself, i.e. without any external help. However, both the relative complexity of the RADAR scoring method - every time it is used - and the need for various evaluations to be comparable in order to allow benchmarking, make it wiser for the company to have the process conducted by suitably trained and experienced personnel. Consequently, applicants usually request to have this process facilitated by experts trained by the EFQM Foundation or the respective NPO. Finally, the choice of “working groups” to run the “self-assessment” procedure rather than individual managers is strongly encouraged.

**Figure 2 about here**

The outcome of the “self-assessment” procedure should be used for prioritising and forming action plans to address the identified opportunities for improvement. Then, in order for the company to have its conformance recognised, an application has to be submitted either directly to the EFQM foundation or, alternatively, to the respective NPO.
The second stage of the procedure of conformance consists mainly of the realisation of “improvement action plans”, but also of the “site visit”, during which the interested company is required to demonstrate the successful deployment of at least three “improvement action plans”. The “site visit” usually lasts for one or two days and is carried out by an independent evaluator. It takes place approximately six to nine months after the “improvement action plans” have been initiated, during the first stage. A company is recognised as “Committed to Excellence” if the selected “improvement action plans” have been successfully implemented and have contributed to its quality improvement.

To summarise, EFQM is an ideal choice for a company when it is necessary to initiate a programme of continuous improvement of its processes, to enable benchmarking of the latter and to perform regular checks of all processes, identifying strengths and weaknesses.

5. Implementation of EFQM in DOKPY

After the familiarisation of the personnel with quality issues through the ordinary use of quality tools, the administrative team of DOKPY chooses EFQM to be the QMS that would enhance further the quality of the offered services as well as of the Organisation’s operation. Particularly, it decides to follow the procedure of conformance to the 1st level of Excellence - “Committed to Excellence”. The choice of EFQM is made by DOKPY mainly because of its easy implementation in companies providing services, but also because of the surprising belief of the personnel of DOKPY that ISO 9001 (2000) consists a very restrictive standard for an organisation that provides social services, like DOKPY. More specifically, according to the opinion of the staff the requirements of ISO 9001 (2000) are excessive and do not allow scientists like those working at DOKPY (social workers, psychiatrists, children animators, nurses etc.) to take initiatives, during their work.

At first (April 2004) DOKPY makes the necessary contacts and submits an application to HMA in order to start the procedure of implementing EFQM. Shortly after that, the administrative team of DOKPY gets in touch for the first time with the Greek quality experts of EFQM foundation in order to arrange the first in-person meeting. This meeting lasts for two days and the following take place:

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8 The two quality experts have been determined by HMA.
• Acquaintance of the EFQM quality experts with the administrative team of DOKPY and the group of employees that has been chosen to be involved in the implementation of EFQM; approximately 10 persons take part in this meeting on behalf of DOKPY. It should be noted that the group of employees consists of all the properly qualified - for this task - employees of the Organisation, namely all those who have previous knowledge of QMSs and have been persuaded about the advisability of such an effort. Naturally, most of them are executives in DOKPY.

• Description of the special administrative structure of DOKPY, as well as of its characteristics, operation and activities to the EFQM quality experts.

• “Self-assessment” of DOKPY’s operation, activities and, generally, performance, which is conducted by the 10 persons representing DOKPY, with the assistance of the EFQM quality experts. Through the assisted “self-assessment” procedure the employees of the Organisation get in touch for the first time with the specific quality process, namely the procedure of conformance to the 1st level of Excellence, which is about to begin. The outcome of this procedure is the determination of approximately 11 weak areas of the operation of DOKPY which could be substantially improved.

• Selection of three of the aforementioned 11 areas\(^9\) to be improved immediately; bear in mind that one of the most important requirements of the 1st level of Excellence is the full deployment of at least three plans within the company that is interested in EFQM. After ranking all plans through a scoring process, the specific three are proved to be the most important ones and are considered capable of improving the operation of the Organisation in all nine Enablers and Results criteria of EFQM. The scoring process has been approximately the following: every employee participating in the meeting has given a score from 1 to 5 (worst and best score respectively) to all 11 areas of improvement, depending on the weakness of the area. Then, the average score of every area has been weighted according to the importance of the aforementioned areas for the operation of DOKPY.

• Formation of three “working groups”, whose responsibility is to work on and accomplish the

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\(^9\) The three areas are actually the “improvement action plans” mentioned in Section 4. In what follows we refer to them, for brevity, as plans.
respective plans.

During the “self-assessment” procedure, which has been a fundamental activity of the in-person meeting, no particular difficulties are met, while the participants agree unanimously on the importance and, consequently, on the weights of the areas of DOKPY’s operation that demand improvement. Undoubtedly, this successful development takes place mainly because DOKPY chooses to proceed with the assisted “self-assessment”; the EFQM quality experts indicate to the administrative team and the involved employees which steps to follow during the whole procedure. It is doubtful whether the personnel of an Organisation slightly experienced in quality issues, at that time, and rather inexperienced in evaluation techniques would know what to do in order to carry out successfully the “self-assessment” procedure.

The selected plans are outlined in brief, subsequently. The objective of the first one has been to draw up a clear strategy for the Organisation, which should be based on the vision, the mission and the values of DOKPY, as well as the philosophy of the Organisation’s strategic management. To do this, the working group in charge becomes familiar with SWOT analysis in order to exploit it every time it is necessary to draw conclusions over the Organisation’s strengths and weaknesses.

The second plan that has been selected during the in-person meeting is about the satisfaction of the employees of DOKPY and intends to measure and then to improve it. At first, a random sample of employees is interviewed so as to determine the fields of satisfaction or dissatisfaction in the working environment of DOKPY. Based on those interviews, a questionnaire is drafted, distributed and completed by all members of the staff. The collected information goes through statistical analysis that leads to the determination of all those points in the operation and the working environment of the Organisation that require improvement, according to the employees. In particular, the latter focus on the following points: a) the need for additional education - training, b) the problems in the employees’ relationships and c) the fact that the staff does not take the credit of the activities it accomplishes and, generally, of the effort it makes. In order to overcome those weaknesses the responsible working group decides on a number of measures. Regarding the demand of the personnel for additional education, the working group asks from the staff for clarifications and a list of specific subjects of education, then determines the most favourite ones, searches for funding programmes and, finally,
determines a schedule of internal education. Regarding the problems in the employees’ relationships it
draws up a mandatory behaviour code as well as a regulation about labour relations, and develops job
descriptions for several working positions. Finally, as regards the recognition of the employees’ effort,
the working group develops an evaluation procedure, decides on annual events where the results of all
accomplished activities will be announced and, finally, sets up a list of bonuses, e.g. day-offs, for
rewarding the best employees.

The third plan involves the satisfaction of DOKPY’s customers - beneficiaries and, again, the
effort to measure and improve it. Initially, the working group that is responsible for this particular plan
classifies the services offered to the beneficiaries of the Organisation according to their type. Five
categories emerge: Promotion in Employment, Health Education & Prevention, Creative Activity &
Care for Children, Information, and, finally, Support of Associations. Then, specially designed
questionnaires for each category are prepared and distributed to DOKPY’s beneficiaries. The working
group elaborates the collected data, evaluates the results and draws conclusions about the quality of
services provided to the beneficiaries. After this procedure, DOKPY takes the corrective actions called
for; for example it standardises the services offered to the elderly by the employees that take care of
them.

During the realisation of the plans, there are frequent visits of the EFQM quality experts to
DOKPY, whilst by the end of August 2004 an informal evaluation takes place. The final evaluation -
mentioned as “site visit” in EFQM terminology - is conducted soon after that, by one evaluator and is
particularly thorough; it includes interviews not only with the employees of DOKPY, but with its
beneficiaries too, inspection of the Organisation’s operation, review of documentation (mainly job
descriptions, forms of data and procedures), interviews with the working groups and, finally,
presentations by the latter of the work they have done during the procedure of conformance of
DOKPY to “Business Excellence”. Throughout all these phases, the evaluator is continuously keeping
notes about the performance of the plans. However, he does not provide DOKPY either with scores
against the various criteria or with analytical feedback report. What he does send after a while is a
report with comments on the three plans as well as the (positive) result of their assessment.
The timetable of the complete procedure of conformance as to the 1st level of Excellence is presented in Table 3. The total cost that DOKPY has faced is about 20,000 €. Specifically, the remuneration package for the EFQM quality experts is about 2,500 €, while the cost of the final evaluator has been covered by HMA.

Table 3 about here

During the procedure of conformance to the 1st level of Excellence DOKPY begins and, after its completion, continues to implement several “best practices” in order to keep the quality spirit of employees vivid. According to one of them the Organisation develops and establishes a procedure of non-stop recording of information about its beneficiaries, called “Documentation and Quality”; a number of newly designed forms are filled in at different stages of the operation of DOKPY by its beneficiaries, with the personnel of DOKPY assisting them at this procedure; one of the aims of the specific best practice is to collect information about a) the beneficiaries’ registration to DOKPY, b) the offered services regarding their observation, treatment, potential post-observation etc., c) the involvement of a third party etc. Through them, the continuous evaluation of the quality of offered services can be conducted, while other objectives of this practice are also

- the collection of demographic data, which reveals important information about DOKPY’s beneficiaries and
- the boost of the employees of DOKPY to adopt evaluation practices, as much as possible.

It is obvious that DOPKY begins to consider seriously the importance of evaluating every aspect of its operation, as the starting point of every improvement effort.

Another best practice starts just after the conformance recognition of DOKPY, when the so-called “cohesion team” is formed. Its assignment is to persuade all DOKPY personnel to adopt the approach of “common targets, common methods and respect for procedures”, during a difficult period for the Organisation, when its funding is reduced dramatically and the staff is upset about this. The “cohesion team” meets twice a month and uses the SWOT analysis in order not only to design the strategy of the Organisation, i.e. to set goals to be achieved within a definite period of time, but also to extricate DOKPY from the unpleasant situation it is. Although this best practice constitutes a desperate attempt
of the personnel to keep DOKPY alive during that period, they still manage to make use of scientific knowledge and techniques.

Finally, a type of database for the economic management of all funding programmes in progress is developed by the employees of DOKPY, with the assistance of a PC expert. The exploitation of the database leads progressively to the improved operation of the Accounting Office of the Organisation, as it permits an overall view of the economic data of all funding programmes of DOKPY. Their proper management and control, as well as the timely and dependable forwarding of economic (and not only) data to the competent authorities are from now on ensured.

6. Conclusions

The implementation of useful quality tools and, then, EFQM in DOKPY has had remarkably positive results on the operation and the public image of the Organisation, as well as on the communication and relationships between employees and beneficiaries. Through this two-stage quality process, but mainly through its conformance recognition to the 1st level of Excellence, DOKPY has primarily managed to find the way to designate its operational problems. This is always the first step for solving any problems and upcoming difficulties. By conforming to the basic principles of “Business Excellence”, DOKPY can keep on improving its operation.

In addition, DOKPY has taken advantage of the EFQM conformance recognition in order to promote its need for additional funding at the Municipal Council of Nea Ionia; even though DOKPY is a municipal organisation, its current funding comes mainly through EU programmes, which the Organisation undertakes owing to the high quality services it offers. It is worth mentioning that in the past there was a period when DOKPY was obliged to survive economically having only 20% of its needs funded by the Municipality of Nea Ionia. Due to the EFQM conformance recognition, it has lately managed to undertake more EU funding programmes. The majority of its employees consider this to be the most important outcome of the advanced quality management of the Organisation.

Furthermore, since the implementation of EFQM the complaints expressed by the beneficiaries of DOKPY have seriously decreased. Now, both employees and beneficiaries know better what to offer and what to expect respectively; neither the former neglect specific duties nor the latter ask for more
than the personnel of DOKPY can provide. Note that according to a recently established procedure a large percentage of DOKPY’s beneficiaries fill in twice a year a specially designed questionnaire, so that the quality of the offered services can be further improved.

However, the Organisation could and should exploit in a more systematic way the information gathered by the questionnaires, in order to measure its performance. Even if the administrative team of DOKPY takes into serious consideration whatever the beneficiaries and the personnel have to say about the quality of services or the working conditions respectively, it has not developed helpful indexes - means of measurement of DOKPY’s performance. The only indexes that can be found in DOKPY are those demanded by the funding programmes, which of course are not enough for a thorough monitoring of DOKPY’s output.

Even though the personnel has been sceptical and cautious at first concerning the standardisation of its duties, this has gradually changed; everybody has begun to contribute to the improvement not only of the results of the three undertaken plans, but also of the rest areas of DOKPY’s operation which could be improved. Besides, the personnel has begun to develop best practices based on the knowledge that it has gained through the two-stage quality process. Finally, today SWOT analysis is used continuously by the employees of DOKPY in order to overcome any arising difficulties as well as plan its future strategy.

The establishment of the internal “self-assessment” procedure and the “cohesion team”, as well as the better organisation of the Accounting Office of DOKPY are indicative of the Organisation’s continuous will for improvement; its administrative team has revealed that the Organisation intends to advance to the procedure of conformance to the 2nd level of Excellence, but at the moment the cost is prohibitive.

DOKPY constitutes an excellent example of a company that has successfully implemented a QMS and can rightfully be concerned as a leader in this matter, at least in Greece. Its example also sends a message to manufacturing companies, as it has clearly proved that quality and the continuous effort to improve it do not have to be measured through statistical processes - like SQC or, specifically, SPC etc. - as many times happens in practice in manufacturing companies, in order to be beneficial for an organisation.
Acknowledgment

The authors are grateful to the anonymous reviewers for their constructive and helpful comments.

References


Electric Corporation.
Table 1: Combinations of operational problems/special characteristics of DOKPY and the quality initiatives/tools that have been used in order to tackle the former

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operational problem/special characteristic</th>
<th>Combined with</th>
<th>Quality initiative/tool</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>o Non-existence of a proper organisational structure</td>
<td>➔ All</td>
<td>1. Indicative forms of data and information recording</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Overlaps/gaps in the allocation of duties</td>
<td>➔ 2-4, 7-10</td>
<td>2. Realistic organisational chart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Overloaded staff/staff not efficiently utilised</td>
<td>➔ 1-4, 7-10</td>
<td>3. Indicative job descriptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Overlooking important tasks/placing emphasis on unimportant ones</td>
<td>➔ 1, 3, 4, 7-10</td>
<td>4. Indicative procedures for accomplishing tasks or performing activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Two bodies carry out the strategic management of DOKPY</td>
<td>➔ 2, 3, 9, 10</td>
<td>5. Introductory meeting/lecture between the quality consultant and the personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Two members of the staff had actual administrative authority, acting as a “double” director of the remaining personnel</td>
<td>➔ 2, 3, 6, 9, 10</td>
<td>6. Periodic meetings between the quality consultant and the administrative team of DOKPY</td>
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<td>o Lack of job security for the majority of the personnel</td>
<td>➔ 5, 7-10</td>
<td>7. Filling in a special questionnaire by DOKPY personnel, private meetings between the quality consultant and the latter, development and evaluation of their profiles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o The operation of DOKPY depends on the existence and the demands of various funding programmes</td>
<td>➔ 6, 8-10</td>
<td>8. Seminar entitled “Basic Concepts of Quality - Principles, Requirements, Ways of Implementation and Advantages of a QMS”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Continuous and without any particular evaluation effort to find funding programmes</td>
<td>➔ 6, 8-10</td>
<td>9. Implementation of the new operational way for a test period</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10. Writing final/intermediate report</td>
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Table 2: Main information about EFQM levels of Excellence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Excellence</th>
<th>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; level - Committed to Excellence</th>
<th>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; level - Recognised for Excellence</th>
<th>3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; level - European Quality Award</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Type</strong></td>
<td>Conformance</td>
<td>Conformance</td>
<td>Competition</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fees</strong></td>
<td>- For EFQM members: 5,200 €</td>
<td>- For EFQM members: 11,000 €</td>
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<td>- For non members: 6,500 €</td>
<td>- For non members: 14,300 €</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- For assisted “self-assessment”: discussable</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Information</strong></td>
<td>- Full assessment against the nine criteria of EFQM</td>
<td>- Full assessment against the nine criteria and the 32 sub points of EFQM</td>
<td>- Open competition for world-class companies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Full deployment of at least three “improvement action plans” within the company</td>
<td>- Opportunity for three alternative assessment cycles</td>
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<td>- No feedback report is sent to the applicant</td>
<td>- Requirement for achieving more than 300 points in the EFQM scoreboard</td>
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<td>- Graduated conformance recognition depending on the outcome of the assessment</td>
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<td>- Feedback report is sent to the applicant</td>
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### Table 3: Timetable of actions of the procedure of conformance to the 1st level of Excellence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2004</th>
<th><strong>Contacts - Submission of application to HMA</strong></th>
<th><strong>First in-person meeting</strong></th>
<th><strong>Realisation of plans</strong></th>
<th><strong>Informal evaluation</strong></th>
<th><strong>Site visit</strong></th>
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<td>April</td>
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<td>September</td>
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<td>October</td>
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Figure 1: The EFQM framework
**Figure 2:** The two-stage procedure of conformance to the 1st level of Excellence

1. **Stage 1**
   - Contact EFQM/NPO
   - Receive Information Package
   - Purchase Applicant's Package
   - Assisted Internal Assessment
     - Perform Assisted Assessment
     - Prioritise & Plan Improvement Actions
   - Complete & Return for Submission Documents

2. **Stage 2**
   - Implement & Review Improvement Action Plans
   - Send Updated Improvement Action Plans
   - Undertake Site Visit
     - Prerequisites met
     - Applicant Certified
     - Improve & Reapply