**APPLYING MALCOLM BALDRIGE AWARD MODEL TO**

**VIETNAM HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY MANAGEMENT**

***Abstract.*** Quality management is one of the priority concerns of Vietnamese higher education system in the context of global competitiveness. However, Vietnamese higher education has been facing many challenges in an effort to find and adopt a new, dynamic approach or model to academic and administrative excellence. This paper is aimed at introducing **Malcolm Baldridge Award Model,** a systematic framework for quality improvement, and suggesting way to apply the model to Vietnamese higher education. It has been applied by many countries around the world.

***Key words:*** Malcome Baldrige Award Model, Vietnamese higher education, Quality management

1. **Introduction.**

Since [6th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam](http://openlibrary.org/works/OL1784820W/6th_National_Congress_of_the_Communist_Party_of_Vietnam_15-18_December_1986), 1986, Vietnamese higher education management model has shifted from centrally-planned to a market economy in most aspects. It requires implementation of autonomy and accountability of Vietnamese higher education institutions in order to increase the higher education system’s competitiveness facing many serious challenges of international integration processes. The establishment of quality accreditation for improving quality and performance in Vietnamese higher education is for this purpose. It is time for Vietnamese higher education to pay proper attention on the training quality management alongside the rapid scale expansion, diverse types of universities and training models. In an effort to improve quality and performance as well as quality management of higher education, Vietnamese learn pre-eminence, elite from worldwide education such as USA education system.

The purpose of this paper is **to introduce Malcolm Baldridge Award Model,** a systematic framework for quality improvement. It is an excellent quality model that effectively assesses and measures institutional improvement. It has established a framework of operations for encouraging accountability, transparent decision making, and optimal use of available resources. It can be used by organizations to improve performance.

The construct of the paper is: introduction, what is Malcolm Baldridge Award Model, context of quality management in Vietnamese higher education. Deployment of Malcolm Baldrige Award model in Vietnamese higher education institutions is the conclusion.

1. **What is Malcolm Baldridge Award Model?**

In 1987, Congress created the Malcolm Baldrige National Award to recognize U.S. companies that achieve the highest standard of performance. Business applicants complete a detailed organizational assessment and then they are scored and provided expert feedback (feedback on their “approach”; how well they address the item requirement; “development” the extent to which the applicant’s approach is applied to all of the item requirements; and “results” their outcomes in achieving the purpose of each item (Barth, et al., 2002)) intended to enhance their improvement efforts. The purpose, in addition to recognizing and celebrating world-class companies, is to highlight and communicate their best practices so that other U.S. companies could benefit.

The Malcolm Baldrige criteria for education, first published in 1999, provide a comprehensive structure for educational institutions to align their mission, vision, value, and goals with the resources essential for a long – term improvement effort (Sorensen; Furst – Bowe; Moen; 2005). The Malcolm Baldrige criteria for education use language that is familiar to educators and avoids the offensive language of “customer”, “product”, and “supplier” without diluting the values in the criteria. The education criteria are therefore more accessible to educators and still hold educational institutions to the same standards as business. ***Malcolm Baldrige criteria*** ***for education provide a framework for organizational excellence using quality management principles*** (Moore, 1996).

The Malcolm Baldrige criteria show a framework of values that could be addressed in higher education institutions for improving and management of training quality. These criteria are the fundamental for tertiary institutions to do self-assessment and receive feedback on their progress in promoting quality. In addition, focusing on the interrelationships between approach, deployment, and results – as well as among the seven categories - offers educators at all organizational levels the chance to create and sustain high performance.

The framework is presented in the following figure.



Figure 1. Malcolm Baldrige education criteria for performance excellence framework: A system perspective[[1]](#footnote-2)

This detailed explanation comes from the ***“2011-2012 Education criteria for performance excellence”****.* The Malcolm Baldrige criteria include seven general categories, each containing more detailed items. The seven education categories are: (1) leadership; (2) strategic planning; (3) customer (student and stakeholder) focus; (4) measure, analysis, and knowledge management (information and analysis); (5) workforce (faculty and staff) focus; (6) operations focus (educational and support process management); and (7) results (school performance results).

From top to bottom, the framework has the following three basic elements.

**Organizational Profile**

The first, Organizational Profile, sets the context for the way an organization operates. Organization’s environment, key working relationships, and strategic situation—including competitive environment, strategic challenges and advantages, and performance improvement system—serve as an overarching guide for organizational performance management system.

**Performance System**

Second, the Performance System is composed of the six Baldrige categories in the center of the Figure 1 define processes and the results of organizations. Leadership (category 1), Strategic Planning (category 2), and Customer Focus (category 3) represent the *leadership triad*. These categories are placed together to emphasize the importance of a leadership focus on students, stakeholders, and strategy. Senior leaders set organizational direction and seek future opportunities for organization. Workforce Focus (category 5), Operations Focus (category 6), and Results (category 7) represent the *results triad*. The organization’s faculty and staff and key processes accomplish the work of the organization that yields the overall performance results.

The horizontal arrow in the center of the framework *links the leadership triad to the results triad, a critical linkage to organizational success.* Furthermore, the arrow indicates the central relationship between Leadership (category 1) and Results (category 7). The two-headed arrows indicate the importance of feedback in an effective performance management system.

**System Foundation**

Third, Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management (category 4) are critical to the effective management of organization and to a fact-based, knowledge-driven system for improving performance and competitiveness. Measurement, analysis, and knowledge management serve as a foundation for the performance management system.

Seven criteria will be described as follows:

***Leadership***

This criterion examines how our organization’s senior leaders’ personal actions guide and sustain organization. Likewise, organization’s governance system and how organization fulfills its legal, ethical, and societal responsibilities and supports its key communities are also examined. Considerations include:

* How senior leaders’ actions guide, sustain organization and how they communicate with their workforce and encourage high performance.
* How organization’s governance system is and approach to leadership improvement as well as fulfills its societal responsibilities, and supports its key communities.

***Strategic Planning***

The Strategic Planning category examines how organizations develop strategic objectives and action plans. Furthermore, it also examines how chosen strategic objectives and action plans are implemented and changed if circumstances require, and how progress is measured. Considerations include:

* How organization establishes its strategy to address its strategic challenge and leverage its strategic and advantages.
* How organization converts its strategic objectives into action plans.

***Customer Focus***

The customer focus category examines how organization engages its students and stakeholders for long-term market success. This engagement strategy includes how an organization listens to the voice of its customers (students and stakeholders), builds customer relationships, and uses customer information to improve and identify opportunities for innovation. Considerations include:

* How an organization listens to students and stakeholder and gains satisfaction and dissatisfaction information.
* How an organization determines educational programs and services and communication mechanisms to support students and stakeholder as well as how to builds student and stakeholder relationships.

***Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management***

The measurement, analysis, and knowledge management category examines how an organization selects, gathers, analyzes, manages, and improves its data, information, and knowledge assets and how it manages its information technology. The category also examines how an organization uses reviewed findings to improve its performance. Considerations include:

* How an organization measures, analyzes, reviews, and improves its performance through the use of data and information at all levels and in all parts of organization.
* How an organization builds and manages its knowledge assets, and how it ensures the quality and availability of needed data, information, software, and hardware for workforce, students and stakeholders, suppliers, partners, and collaborators.

***Workforce Focus***

The workforce focus category examines organization’s ability to assess workforce capability and capacity needs and build a workforce environment conducive to high performance. The category also examines how an organization engages, manages, and develops its workforce to utilize its full potential in alignment with an organization’s overall mission, strategy, and action plans. Considerations include:

* How an organization manages workforce capability and capacity to accomplish the work of the organization.
* How an organization maintains a safe, secure, and supportive work climate.
* How an organization engages, compensates, and rewards its workforce to achieve high performance.
* How we assess workforce engagement and use the results to achieve higher performance as well as considering how members of an workforce, including leaders, are developed to achieve high performance.

***Operations Focus***

The operations focus category examines how an organization designs, manages, and improves its work systems and work processes to deliver student and stakeholder value and achieve organizational success and sustainability. Also examined is organization’s readiness for emergencies. Considerations include:

* How an organization designs, manages, and improves its work systems to deliver student and stakeholder value, prepare for potential emergencies, and achieve organizational success and sustainability.
* How an organization designs, manages, and improves its key work processes to deliver student and stakeholder value and achieve organizational success and sustainability.

***Results***

The results category examines an organization’s performance and improvement in all key areas—student learning and process outcomes (student learning results and process effectiveness and efficiency results), customer-focused outcomes (student and stakeholder satisfaction, dissatisfaction, and engagement), workforce-focused outcomes (workforce environment and for workforce engagement), leadership and governance outcomes (fiscal accountability, legal compliance, ethical behavior, societal responsibility, and support of key communities), and budgetary, financial and market outcomes. Performance levels are examined relative to those of competitors and other organizations with similar programs and services.

1. **Context of quality management in Vietnamese higher education**

The quality of education, and especially the quality of higher education, is always a concern for society, since education plays a core role in national development. In higher education, improving quality must be considered an essential task. In these times of poor credibility in the eyes of the public, the consistency of standards across sectors is an important factor. Quality management is the responsibility of all educational organizations, but senior leaders are key figures in implementation. Currently, most universities are concerned about quality improving and assurance. Unfortunately, they are still vague about the quality situation in their own organizations because quality standards for Vietnamese higher education have not been finalized and implemented thoroughly.

One of the main reasons for the low quality of Vietnamese higher education is that they still have not found a quality management model or framework which is appropriate in the current context. Quality management in higher education is essential to overcome weaknesses. Determination of an effective framework for quality management in Vietnamese higher education is not only in the interest of the universities, it is in student interest, and in the national interest.

In fact, higher education quality has not met the requirements of national socio - economic development. Although more than 90% of university graduates go to the labour market, their training still does not meet employer needs. In order to improve its quality management, the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) established the Department of educational testing and quality accreditation in 2004. The goal of the Department is to guide in self-assessment. An accreditation system for higher education and for secondary polytechnic education education has also been proposed for implementation from 2011 – 2020.

MOET

Implement national management system for educational quality

National Council on Educational Accreditation

State sponsored organizations for accreditation

(From 2011 to 2015)

Private sponsored organizations for accreditation

(From 2016 to 2020)

Insitutions

Universities

Research institutes with doctoral training

Three year colleges

Secondary polytechnic schools

Figure 2. Proposed accreditation system for universities and professional schools

Prime Minister, Nguyen Tan Dzung, has emphasized that: higher education development must be coupled with improvements in the quality of education. He has called for an end to education without quality assurance and emphasized the need to create mechanisms that improve educational quality. The Prime Minister has also requested MOET to promote higher education quality evaluation and assurance towards speeding up the self-assessment of tertiary institutions, building quality standards and establishing independent quality accreditation organizations.

Quality accreditation in Vietnam higher education is for assessment and recognition of standard educational institutions or educational programs. Quality assurance process will impact most higher education institutions, as a result, higher education quality will have a strong shift. The scope of tertiary quality accreditation is gradually being expanded. Striving to 2015 has reached 90% of higher education institutions to test at least once and by 2020 to test at least twice.

Vietnam higher education is facing a conflict between diversity training model and quality management. Vietnam higher education cannot continue to develop training scope and be uncontrolled quality management in the past. Therefore, we must reference and apply quality management model to higher education. It means theoretical and practical efficiency to give the fundamental of self-assessment and quality improvement for higher education institutions that may lead closely to the quality standards of the developed countries in the region and the world.

1. **Deployment of Malcolm Baldrige Award Model in Vietnamese higher education institutions**

Malcolm Baldrige has been used by many countries as a conceptual framework for performance excellence in the field of business, municipal administration, health care, and education. When deploying this framework in the Vietnamese higher education context, with many different factors from those of America, it should be just applied appropriate components.

Quality management principles combined with the frameworks of the Baldrige Criteria can successfully address the next set of challenges in standards-based education reform. In combination the two provide a set of organizational beliefs, strategies, tactics, and an organizing framework to initiate and manage the institutional change necessary for high performance and continuous improvement.

It is clear that students and communities have never expected as much from the universities as they today. Nowaday, universities are challenged by the complexity, diversity of contemporary society and by the urgent demands of employers for skilled, self-directed, technological literate employees. In this context, Vietnam’s universities should seek ways to assure effective day – to – day universities administrations as well as long - term planning and leadership for institutional advancement.

How to deploy seven criteria are presented as follows:

**Leadership** is the key driver in Malcolm Baldrige framework. Without the involvement and commitment of senior leaders, the quality management journey becomes difficult and at times impossible (Vora, 2002). In higher education, in order to create efficiency in the operation of the schools, senior leaders set organization’s visions, mission and values and good leader-staff relationship. They are captains of ships who go out in the ocean because competitiveness capacity of university based on their roles that are presented. With their mission, they should find best ways to deploy vision and values to the staff, students and other stakeholders, partners. Besides, they also pay attention on commitment to the organization’s values. Senior leaders should inspire and motivate the entire workforce. All faculty staff needs to be encouraged and required for contributing, developing and learning with innovative, creative thinking and actions. Creating a sustainable organization must be taken into account for senior leaders’ task. That means to create an environment for organizational performance improvement, a workforce culture and to enhance their leadership skills as well as develop of future organizational leaders. Senior leaders set two-way communication throughout the organization and create value for students and other stakeholders in their organizational performance expectations. In general, they demonstrate their roles as organizational leadership (senior leadership direction, organizational governance, organizational performance review); and social responsibility (responsibility to the public, ethical behavior, and support of key communities).

In recent years, the **strategic planning** has not played an essential role in Vietnamese higher education because educational administrators believe that the strategic planning is long-term problems and what they need is to deal with short – term issues. Thus, universities are not able to make strong growth and reach sustainable development. Nowadays, universities must face rapid changes of environment so strategic planning is important in development of universities.

Regarding to keep up with marketing changes and needs, Vietnamese universities emphasize on two phases: strategy development and strategy implementation in strategic planning. Strategy development refers to how organization establishes its strategy to deal with challenges and leverage its strategic advantages. In this process, it needs to determine key process steps, key participants, key weaknesses, core competencies, strategic challenges, and strategic advantages as well as fixed time for the process. For doing this, we should analyze the organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. We conduct objectively assessment the strengths and weaknesses of the school resources, including training programs, management team, faculty, and facilities, while identifying the opportunities and threats that come during the operation of the school. Strategic planning must be based on actual capacity of the organization to meet the goals of the strategic planning. Strategic planners pay more attention on factors that are students, stakeholders and markets when establishing and implementation strategic planning. Competitiveness factor also needs to be taken into account, not only domestic but also foreign universities that have been opened in Vietnam and many cooperated training programs with foreign countries in the field. When performing the action plan needed to calculate the resource factors such as financial support, implementation staff and performance measures. Senior leaders set and communicate organizational direction to make highly consensus in the organization for the implementation of the strategic planning.

With the status quo demand exceeding supply in Vietnamese higher education, the schools do not pay much attention to ensuring mutual benefit and satisfaction of students and stakeholders. Educational programs and services that supply customers have based on "what they are" not directed to "what society needs”. This rule does not match the movement principles of the market economy so it should be adjusted because of benefits to students, stakeholders and other partners.

**Customer and market focus** criterion in Malcolm Baldrige stresses that universities must understand needs of current and future students and stakeholders and realize the markets, with a focus on delighting students and stakeholders, and meeting students’ and stakeholders’ expectations by developing listening and learning skills in responding to customers’ opinions and complaints.

Combining with the testing and accreditation in each university, gathering information from students and stakeholders about their satisfaction on educational programs and services are conducted. In the other hand, universities could design a separate channel to collect information by using social media and web -based technologies. Feedback providers include former students and stakeholders, students and stakeholders and potential students and stakeholders.

Besides obtaining information, schools care about feedback that relate to the satisfaction levels of students and stakeholders of other schools which providing similar educational programs or services. All the meaningful information helps schools understand students, stakeholders, and markets in order to make essential adjustments that could raise the school efficiency. Based on feedback that comes from customers and stakeholders, universities identify requirements for educational programs and services. From that point universities improve educational programs and services to meet the requirements and exceed the expectations of students and stakeholders. For the purpose of raising the efficiency of the feedback and meet the requirements of students and stakeholders, universities build student and stakeholder relationships. The relationship also brings usefulness by increasing students and stakeholders’ engagement with universities. A quite new kind of management to Vietnamese universities is complaint management. They should recognize that it is necessary for establishing a complaint management department to resolve complaints promptly and effectively as well as meeting the needs of students and stakeholders. This activity will help to enhance their satisfaction and engagement.

Vietnamese higher education pays more attention to customer and stakeholder focus to help them prepare the best steps for the competition and survive in the context of Vietnam deeper participation in the provision of GATS.

In this era, information plays a very important role for organizational management and development. Bill Gates stated the role of information as “In the future, how we gather, manage and use information will determine whether we succeed or fail." Decision making must be based on reliable information and data sources. Educational quality management is not out of this principle. Using data and information to measure, analyze, review, and improve Vietnamese higher education's performance has been a concern in recent years.

However, there is still much confusion and lack of skills in this activity, **criteria 4 of Malcolm Baldrige Framework** provides a number of suggestions can be applied in Vietnamese higher education environments. Universities determine how to select, collect, process data and information to serve the organization's activities, including daily operations and strategic objectives and action plans. Collected information and data are used to support the school managerial decision making. Organizational database is used for the purpose of the best response to unexpected situations and changing environment.

Alongside data and information collection, universities must review organizational performance capabilities to assess organizational success, competitive performance, and progress relative to strategic objectives and action plans as well as organization's ability to respond rapidly to changing organizational needs and challenges in operating environments. Based on data sources, schools conduct performance reviews to find solutions for organizational operation in present and future.

Information and knowledge affect organizational growth and competitiveness, so educational organizations should be interested in information and knowledge management. Organizational data, information, and knowledge should ensure the accuracy, integrity and reliability, timeliness, security and confidentiality. Managers make needed data and information useful to staff, students and stakeholders. Appropriate investment in information management systems such as building reliable, secure, and user - friendly software, hardware programs is needed.

People are the central element of development and human resources play an important role in the organizational operation. Therefore, how to promote their ability for organizational development is a key issue in organizational management. Techniques of human resource management are for the purposes of promoting human potential, reducing wasted resources, and increasing efficiency of the organization. **The 5th criteria** of Malcolm Baldridge concentrates on the need for human resource plans to support and help achieve the organization’s goals. Otherwise, it examines organization’s ability to assess workforce capability and capacity needs and build a workforce environment conducive to high performance.

According to this category, universities also examine how they engage, manage, and develop workforce to utilize their full potential in alignment with organization’s overall mission, strategy, and action plans. In addition, workforce needs to be trained skills for adapting to change. It is also important to reduce impacts of personnel changes in organizations. Attention to develop skills of building and sustaining relationships between schools and students, stakeholders for staff is one of the priority tasks of modern schools. A safe, efficient and friendly working environment is created in educational organizations. School leaders accurately identify factors that impact on participation and satisfaction of the labor force. For the purpose of maintaining high performance and contribution of the workforce needs to develop policies that make incentive and support for workforce of organizations. Motivating employees with commitment is a tactic that is worth for considering. Outstanding achievement individuals, including leaders and staff, are rewarded by educational organizations.

**The 6th criterion** mentions that in order to deliver customers the best services and high quality educational programmes, universities concern on organization design, management, and improvement their work systems and work processes. It is also important to examine universities readiness for emergencies in the rapid changing climate. Vietnamese higher education institutions have not paid much attention to the ability to cope with changing environment that has been shown in management and inflexible educational programs. This stems from the Vietnamese higher education mechanism of management and management capacity. How educational programmes and services are designed to meet customer needs and to identify critical customer needs and competitor characteristics are suggestions for Vietnamese higher education. In addition, universities promote the organization's advantages to increase their competitiveness in the training activities based on a determining student needs, stakeholders for work systems. Selecting high effective management method, avoiding loss of money and time caused by errors and rework must be examined.

**Results**, the last criterion, focus all key areas of the educational organizations. However, some critical related subjects are considerate. They are following.

Customer focused outcomes describes student and stakeholder focused performance results in terms of satisfaction, dissatisfaction, and engagement (including relationship building).

Workforce focused outcomes concern workforce focused performance results in terms of workforce capability and capacity, workforce climate, workforce engagement, workforce development.

Leadership outcomes examine senior leadership results. Leadership is measured in aspect senior leader’s communication and engagement with the workforce to deploy vision and values, encourage two-way communication, and create a focus on action. Fulfillment of societal responsibilities is also taken into account. Pointing out current levels and trends in key measures of budgetary and financial performance as well as current levels and trends in key measures of market performance are the last component of results**.**

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1. *Source: 2011-2012 Education criteria for performance excellence* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)