Reflection on the Baldridge Principles

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# Introduction

Malcolm Baldrige was a businessman who served as the Secretary of Commerce of the United States. He introduced many reforms to the quality management systems implemented in the corporations of the country. His contributions are considered to be invaluable by many critiques. He felt the need that the organizations must be focusing on quality and process improvement systems to maintain the country’s leading position globally. He believed that businesses can thrive the most if they focus on customers’ needs and changing trends of the market. He described principles of quality assurance that should be followed by organizations to excel in the industry. These principles include: “visionary leadership, customer-driven excellence, organizational and personal learning, valuing the workforce, agility, focus on the future, managing for innovation, management by fact, corporate responsibility, result-oriented approach to work, creating value, systems perspective.” These principles of quality have evolved into the beliefs and behaviors that are essentially considered in the implementation of quality management systems by the high performing firms. These quality principles provide the basis for activities to enhance performance and other operational requirements. Malcolm Baldrige applied these principles first to the firm he was managing that time being its CEO. The results were very successful as the poor-performing brass mill transformed into a well-performing manufacturer of goods for diverse industries. Baldrige’s principles were incorporated into the “Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Improvement Act of 1987,” and have been resonating in articles, reviews, and organizational charters to date. Baldrige’s criteria for performance excellence relate to seven areas of an organization: “leadership, strategy, customers, data management, workforce, operations, and results.”

# Reflection of the Baldridge Principles (of Quality)

Baldrige’s principles of quality are meant to maximize an organization’s performance and value. These principles address the gaps in practices of low-performing organizations and enable them to succeed in the market. The baldrige’s principles or core values and concepts relate to all the elements of an organization, which have been given above as the seven criteria for performance excellence. The core values and principles provide the basis for building the seven criteria for performance evaluation. Out of the seven criteria, six are integrated into the systematic process, whereas the seventh comprises the results of entire organizational processes and activities (DeJong, 2009).

The Baldrige’s principles start from addressing the leadership of an organization. Baldrige asserts that the leadership should be visionary, that is, the leadership must define the vision of a company. It should establish values of an organization that must be adopted by the management, employees, and stakeholders. A visionary leadership creates strategies that ensure the progress of the organization. It plans and implements systems, processes, and methods that ensure excellence and success. It strives for creating innovation that result in building the organizational reputation across the industry. The visionary leadership makes policies and regulations to guarantee organizational sustainability (Calhoun, Griffith, & Sinioris, 2007). Further, Bladrige’s believes that an organization's focus of efforts should be creating a customer-driven excellence in the products or services. The excellence should be measured by customers' satisfaction and feedback. The products or services have to be designed given customers' needs and expectations. The organization that succeeds in surpassing customers' expectations should be considered to be par excellence. According to Baldrige, the highest levels of organizational performance can be achieved organizational and personal learning. These can be accomplished by sharing knowledge through the use of systematic processes.

The workforce members and partners must be given due value so that they can deliver value in return. Organizations hold workforce responsible for results and measure their performance periodically. They must also amend the organizational strategies that encourage and facilitate workers to be committed, loyal, and honest to the company. To this end, the organization must have to provide job satisfaction, a favorable environment, and fair compensation. The organization should show a concern to the issues of employees. Their well-being and development must be given high priority. The leaders should be committed to the workforce. The employees must be given due recognition regarding their performance. The organizational knowledge has to be shared with the workforce so that they can be able to understand the organization's vision and strategy in a better way, ultimately contributing to increased output. Moreover, the world is changing and so are the trends and needs of the time. Organizations have to be agile in responding to changes that occur in the business world. To respond quickly and efficiently to these changes, the organizations must be flexible in carrying out the operations and modifying the processes. A strong focus on the future will enlighten the organization to be proactive in providing the customers what they need.

The future success is related to the provision of innovation in products and services. The key processes have to be improved, technology needs to be applied in the developmental processes, and employees should be empowered in a way that encourages and motivates them to come up with new ideas of product and development. The organizations need to work by using figures and facts so that every evaluation is accurate and contributing to the overall progress. The company has to develop strategies that ensure implementation of effective measurement of customer, product or service, processes, competition, market, workforce, supplier, financial situation, and achievement of goals. Further, the company has to demonstrate responsible behavior toward the society. It should make strategies, initiatives, and efforts that ensure the safety and well-being of the community. The Baldrige’s principles also entail focus on results and delivering value to customers. An organization that is not profitable cannot survive in the long run. The customers cannot be satisfied until they find value in products and services. Finally, Baldrige gives a systems perspective that involves synthesis, alignment, and integration to successfully manage a company’s overall performance.

# Overview of Organizational Issues

Baldrige has discussed the organizational issues with remarkable observation, judgment, and expertise. The most important organizational issues that need to be addressed to the full extent to ensure performance excellence are leadership, strategy, customer, workforce, measurement analysis, and other related issues. The leadership should be defining vision, objectives, strategies, systems, approaches, and all important strategic issues for directing the whole organization to achieving the desired goals (Kartha, 2004). Customers define organizational success, excellence, and performance in terms of their satisfaction. The organizations cannot ignore their targeted customers in developing, designing, and delivering new products. A customer-focused approach is essential to be applied in making strategies and processes. Customers are the stakeholders of the company, as their needs are associated with the company's operations and output. Another major issue to be considered in organizations with specialized focus is to measure all the activities of all departments to ensure transparent working and precise estimation of inputs, outputs, and evaluations. Being agile in every area of work in a company is pivotal to success. The company must design processes and develop procedures to ensure quick adaptability to the changing market trends. Giving value to the workforce, partners, and stakeholders is essential for creating loyalty among them toward the company. Finally, the organization has to focus on results and make policies that guarantee profitability, goodwill, and contribution to the community.

# Review of Personal and Organizational Learning

Learning holds key importance in Baldrige’s principles of excellence. He postulates that organizations can thrive only on the learning process. The employees need to learn as well as the organizations need to learn. Individuals learn so that they get informed of the new practices, methods, and technologies of work. Organizations learn so that they can behave as a productive, innovative, and responsible entity in the society.

Learning should be at all levels, a regular part of everyday work, and problem-solving. Learning is enhanced by giving opportunities, and is meant for bringing a meaningful change or innovation. The workforce should be given opportunities to build their skills and increase their productivity (Macpherson, 2001). The organizational learning can be very productive as it can result in well-developed products and services tailored to the needs of customers. It can bring new opportunities of business for more progress. The processes and business models can be improved as a result of organizational learning. It can be more cost-effective by reducing wastes, errors, and costs.

# Corporate Responsibility

The organizations need to make strategies that ensure the safety of the environment and a good contribution to society. The products must not be harmful or addictive in any aspect. The policies and procedures should be developed given the societal responsibility of the company (Stephens, Evans, & Matthews, 2005). The company’s operations – production, distribution, transportation, and others – must be developed in a way to ensure the safety and well-being of the communities.

# Conclusion

Baldrige’s principles of quality and process improvements have served as the building blocks of organizational strategic design and development. Organizations have achieved success by following these values and practices. These principles address the issues related to leadership, customer, workforce, data management, strategic management, operations, and results. The quality principles ensure performance excellence in terms of customer satisfaction by providing valuable products. The organizations have to focus on customers' expectations, trends of the market, and workforce's fulfillment by demonstrating ample sense of corporate responsibility.

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