

Влияние на модела на EFQM и иновациите върху висшето образование Цветелин Георгиев, Цанка Златева-Петкова

Impact of the EFQM Model and Innovations on Higher Education Tzvetelin Gueorguiev, Tsanka Zlateva-Petkova

Abstract:

The European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) model is an established quality standard for organisations across sectors. Its implementation in the domains of innovations and education deserves attention that is even more important considering the digitalization in higher education.

This paper presents the main elements of the EFQM model and aligns them to widely accepted international standards from the ISO 9000 series for quality management, ISO 21001 for educational organizations, and the ISO 56000 series for innovation management systems.

The paper outlines current trends and expected directions for the development of quality and innovation management systems in higher education.

Keywords: EFQM model, quality, innovation, higher education, ISO standards.

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INTRODUCTION

The EFQM excellence model dates back to 1989, when the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) was founded. Its 2012 version had 9 criteria that focused on 5 enablers (leadership, people, strategy, partnerships and resources, processes, products and services) and 4 results (people results, customer results, society results, business results/key results in the 2010 version) [1]. The excellence feedback loop is completed by learning, creativity and innovation.

This excellence model was updated in 2020 and became known as the EFQM model. Its structure is shaped around three domains (Direction, Execution, and Results) based on three key questions:

- Why does the organization exist?,
- How does it intend to deliver on its purpose and its strategy?, and
- What has it actually achieved to date? [2].

A revised, second edition of the EFQM Model was published in 2021. It contained additional information on use cases, RADAR (Results, Approach, Deploy, Assess, and Refine) guidelines and scoring profiles.

The 2025 edition of the EFQM model preserved the structure of 2020, but adds aspects such as sustainable value (long-term viability of an organization and continuing high performance) and technology leadership (such as artificial intelligence, AI) [3]. When the EFQM Model focuses on a specific management topic, custom best practices, questionnaires and maturity levels are provided in the EQFM Lens series and the EFQM AssessBase associated with it. The currently available EFQM Lens topics are:

- Education [4];
- Net Zero [5];
- Circular Economy [6];
- UN Sustainable Development Goals [7];

- Innovation [8].

The purpose of this paper is to compare the EFQM Model to the ISO standards for quality management and innovation management in educational organizations.

DISCUSSION

The EFQM Model is an excellence model that originally was based on the TQM (Total Quality Management) principles. The ISO standards for management systems are also based on global best practices in various domains. Table 1 presents a comparison between the EFQM Lens Series and ISO standards.

Table 1.

Comparison of EFQM and ISO standards

EFQM Lens Series	ISO Standards
The EFQM – Handan Education Model	ISO 21001:2025 “Educational organizations — Management systems for educational organizations — Requirements with guidance for use” <i>Other standards by ISO/TC 232 “Education and learning services”</i>
The EFQM Net Zero Lens	IWA 42:2022 “Net zero guidelines” <i>Other standards of the ISO 14000 series by ISO/TC 207/SC 7 “Greenhouse gas and climate change management and related activities”</i>
The EFQM Circular Economy Lens	ISO/TR 59031:2026 “Circular economy — Performance-based approach — Analysis of case studies” <i>Other standards of the ISO 59000 series by ISO/TC 323 “Circular economy”</i>
The EFQM UN SDG Lens	ISO/UNDP PAS 53002:2024 “Guidelines for contributing to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)” <i>Other standards by ISO/PC 343 “Sustainable development goals management”</i>
The EFQM Innovation Lens	ISO 56001:2024 “Innovation management system — Requirements” <i>Other standards of the ISO 56000 series by ISO/TC 279 “Innovation management”</i>

The EFQM Model refers to quality in its “Results” section when aligning organizational quality to the delivery of products and services to customers (quality on time and within budget), and suppliers and partners (quality and performance). The guiding principles that shaped the EFQM model and their relation to the quality management principles (QMP) of ISO 9000 are listed below:

- The primacy of the customer: QMP #1 “Customer focus”;
- The need to take a long-term, stakeholder-centric view: QMP #7 “Relationship management”;
- Understanding the cause-and-effect linkages between why an organization does something, how it does it and what it achieves as a consequence of its actions: QMP #6 “Evidence-based decision making”, QMP 4 “Process approach”, and QMP 5 “Improvement”.

The foundation for the majority of ISO management system standards is the chronological development, evolution and updates of ISO 9001 [9]. The EFQM Model criteria can be aligned to ISO 9001 clauses as follows:

- Criterion 1 “Purpose, Vision & Strategy”: 5.2 “Policy”.
- Criterion 2 “Organisational Culture & Leadership”: 4.1 “Understanding the organization and its context”, 5 “Leadership”, and ISO 10010:2022 “Quality management — Guidance to understand, evaluate and improve organizational quality culture” [10];
- Criterion 3 “Engaging Stakeholders”: 4.2 “Understanding the needs and expectations of interested parties”;
- Criterion 4 “Creating Sustainable Value”: ISO 9004:2018 “Quality management — Quality of an organization — Guidance to achieve sustained success” [11];
- Criterion 5 “Driving Performance & Transformation”: 9 “Performance evaluation” and ISO/TS 10020:2022 “Quality management systems — Organizational change management — Processes” [12];
- Criterion 6 “Stakeholder Perceptions”: 4.2 “Understanding the needs and expectations of interested parties” and 9.1.2 “Customer satisfaction”;
- Criterion 7 “Strategic & Operational Performances”: 9 “Performance evaluation”.

The EFQM Model enables innovations and creativity in all three core elements-direction, execution and results [3]. The EFQM Innovation Lens focuses on ‘illustrating the activities, processes and culture that combine to stimulate innovation and encourage it to flourish’ [8]. The 7 criteria in the Innovation Lens Framework are aligned to the clauses of the ISO 56001 standard [13]:

- Criterion 1 “Vision & Leadership”: 5 “Leadership” and 5.2 “Innovation policy”;
- Criterion 2 “Strategy & Innovation Culture”: 5.3 “Innovation strategy” and 5.4 “Innovation culture”
- Criterion 3 “Engaging Stakeholders”: 4.2 “Understanding the needs and expectations of interested parties”;
- Criterion 4 “Creating Sustainable Value”: 4.3.1 “Innovation intent”, 5.1.2 “Focus on value realization”
- Criterion 5 “Processes and Resources”: 8.3 “Innovation processes” and 7.1 “Resources”;
- Criterion 6 “Business & Market Impact”: 4.1 “Understanding the organization and its context” and 9.1.2 “Analysis and evaluation”;
- Criterion 7 “Stakeholder Impact”: 4.2 “Understanding the needs and expectations of interested parties” and 9.1.2 “Analysis and evaluation”.1

The EFQM Hamdan Education Model [4] expands the core EFQM Model [3] with a special focus on educational organizations. The 7 criteria are nominally the same as those listed for alignment with ISO 9001 clauses. But the detailed content is much more appropriate for universities and schools. For example, the interested parties are not merely customers, but also include other stakeholder groups such as students, parents,

academic and non-academic staff, business and governing stakeholders, society, partners and suppliers.

The ISO 21001 standard deals with the management system of educational organizations [14]. The clauses of this standard are aligned to the EFQM Hamdan Educational Model criteria as presented below:

- Criterion 1 “Purpose, Vision & Strategy”: 0.6 “Educational organization mission, vision and strategy”.
- Criterion 2 “Organisational Culture & Leadership”: 4.1 “Understanding the organization and its context” and 5 “Leadership”;
- Criterion 3 “Engaging Stakeholders”: 4.2 “Understanding the needs and expectations of interested parties”, Annex B “Principles for an educational organization management system” and Annex C “Classification of interested parties in educational organizations”;
- Criterion 4 “Creating Sustainable Value”: Annex B “Principles for an educational organization management system”, B.8 “Social responsibility”;
- Criterion 5 “Driving Performance & Transformation”: 9 “Performance evaluation”;
- Criterion 6 “Stakeholders’ Perceptions”: 9.1.2 “Satisfaction of learners, other beneficiaries and staff”;
- Criterion 7 “Strategic & Operational Performance”: 0.6 “Educational organization mission, vision and strategy” and 9 “Performance evaluation”.

The latest editions of ISO 21001 and ISO 56001 are quite recent, and no major changes are expected in these two standards. From a broader perspective, the managers of integrated management systems in educational organizations (such as universities) that have implemented and certified management systems need to monitor the upcoming editions and updates to the following standards:

- ISO 9001:2015 “Quality management systems — Requirements” – the sixth edition of this standard is expected to be published in September 2026;
- ISO 19011:2018 “Guidelines for auditing management systems” – the fourth edition of this standard is expected to be published in May 2026;
- ISO/IEC 17021-3:2017 “Conformity assessment — Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems — Part 3: Competence requirements for auditing and certification of quality management systems”;
- ISO/TS 21030:2023 “Educational organizations — Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of educational organizations' management systems”;
- ISO/IEC DTS 17021-16 (2026-05-04) “Conformity assessment requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems — Part 16: Competence requirements for auditing and certification of innovation management systems”.

CONCLUSION

This paper has presented a roadmap that aligns the EFQM Model (2025) with ISO standards for quality management (the ISO 9000 series) and innovation management (the ISO 56000 series) in educational organizations (ISO 21001).

The structural analysis enables integration of the EFQM excellence model with the best practices of ISO standards for management systems.

The latest updates of ISO 9001, ISO 21001, ISO 56001 and related standards provide opportunities for improvement of existing university management systems.

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