

Investigating the Implementation of Business Excellence Models in Federal and Local Public Sector Organizations: A Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT

Business Excellence Models (BEMs) have been recognized in literature as an effective tool for organizations. Most previous studies were examined in the private sector; less studies have targeted public sector organizations. However, there is a lack of knowledge about these models in federal and local levels of public sector organizations. Thus, this study aims to fill this gap by exploring the implementation of BEMs in public sector layers. Qualitative interviewing has been used to collect data from the fourteen specialists in the public sector excellence working in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). They were asked about; 1) Implementation of BEMs in the UAE public sector organizations, 2) Number of BEMs currently implemented in the UAE, in both federal and local public sector organizations, 3) The relationship between national culture and BEMs implementation, and finally 4) Critical Success Factors (CSFs) that influence implementation of BEMs in public sector layers. The semi-structured interviews successfully achieved the studies objectives and addressed the research questions. A thematic analysis was employed to code the collected data. NVivo Software was used to analyze the collected data. The results revealed that all UAE public sector organizations apply BEMs at both federal and local level, where the national culture positively influences the implementation of BEMs in public organizations. The results have identified the following five main Critical Success Factors (CSFs) for implementing BEMs; effective leadership, qualified human resources, financial resources, positive organizational culture of excellence, and focus on customers. The findings contributed to public sector literature and confirmed that UAE public sector organizations apply BEMs to achieve federal, and local level public sector objectives and develop provided services.

Keywords: Business Excellence Models, federal and local government, Critical Success Factors, national culture, The United Arab Emirates.

INTRODUCTION

Numerous Business Excellence Models (BEMs) have been created and developed since the end of the Second World War (Toma & Marinescu, 2018). These BEMs were first adopted in Western countries followed by Asian countries (Mann et al., 2011). Bolboceanu (2025) justified the BEMs implementation in the European public sector as a reaction to the challenges that countries faced due to the demand for better provided services to society.

Implementation of BEMs have been increasingly examined in the private sector organizations (Lasrado, 2017; Taraza et al., 2023). Despite this, according to AlZawati et al., (2020) public sector organizations are gradually employing BEMs to enhance their work processes, to provide services efficiently and to sustain the competitive advantage worldwide with regards to cost and quality.

Public sector includes both federal and local level government (Khalaf Alateyyat et al., 2024). It has been observed that previous limited studies have either focused on implementation of BEMs at federal level (Abuzanj

& Bashir, 2024), or local government level (e.g. Price et al., 2018). There is a lack of studies that have focused on investigating BEMs at different public sector layers such as federal and local levels. However, limited studies examined the importance of a country's national culture to BEMs (Zapata-Cantu et al., 2016).

Laban (2022) stated that diverse CSFs related to BEMs were discussed by several authors, many organizations like to recognize their CSFs to sustain excellence achieved outcome.

The UAE BEMs journey started in 1994 (Lasrado, 2017). Due to the significance of such business practices to improve citizen provided services, Al-Dhaafri and Alosani (2020) clarified that business excellence is mandatory practice in UAE public sector organizations. However, limited BEMs have been examined in the context of the UAE public sector organizations (Laban, 2022) it is remarkable that these few studies have provided a better understanding of some aspects related to the implementation BEMs in the UAE public sector context, such as to identify the 18 major BEMs CSFs (Al Ghufli, 2012), major differences between the European Foundation for Quality Management and the 4th G excellence model (AlZawati et al., 2020), the relationship between BEM and reward system (Fninou & Almuraqab, 2022), evaluate the BEM application in the UAE public sector (Laban, 2022) and the influence of organizational size on BEM implementation (Abuzanjel & Bashir, 2024).

Moreover, the UAE prior public sector studies had targeted examining specific BEMs, such as: Government Excellence Model (Laban, 2022), Dubai Quality Award (Lasrado, 2017), Sheikh Khalifa Government Excellence Program (Al Ghufli, 2012; Kassem, 2016) and Dubai Government Excellence Program (Ahrens, 2013; Fninou & Almuraqab 2022) which does not provide a comprehensive and integrated view of the country's experience in this field.

Based on earlier research, it was found that no empirical study investigated this issue at both federal and local government entities. Therefore, there is a need for additional impartial studies that explore adopting BEMs in the public sector, including in both federal and local levels. Furthermore, according to Laban (2022) there is a lack of the excellence model research in Arab countries, specifically in the UAE, compared to other countries, such as the USA, Europe, and Asia.

Recognizing this gap, the current study aims to answer the following questions: 1) Do UAE public sector organizations implement BEMs? 2) Is only one BEM currently implemented in The UAE in both federal and local public sector organizations? 3) What is the relationship between national culture and BEMs implementation? 4) What are the common Critical Success Factors that influence implementation of BEMs in public sector?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The origin of Main Business Excellence Models (BEMs)

BEMs " Are frameworks which help organizations to align their thoughts and actions in a more systematic and structured way to achieve enhanced performance and results" (Unnikrishnan et al., 2017, p359).

The concept of BEM is based on the principles of Total Quality Management (TQM) (Kassem et al., 2018; Salah & Salah, 2019). According to Escrig and de Menezes (2015) BEM represents both the implementation of a set of widely recognized best practices, and the measurement of performance outcomes relevant to the stakeholders. Therefore, Zapata-Cantu et al., (2016) stated that these models perform as a platform for workplaces to recognize opportunities and capitalize on their development.

The Denim Award model is the first BEM to appear in Japan in 1951 (Daniel et al., 2012). Mann et al., (2011) argued that many models followed in various countries of the world. Such as Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA) in the United States of America in 1987. And the European Foundation for Quality Management Model (EFQM) was introduced throughout Europe in 1991. The authors added that South Korea and the Republic of China are the first Asian countries to implement these models.

Indeed, Talwar (2011) stated that 82 countries used 100 BEMs to implement the highest standards of business performance to achieve better results.

Mann et al., (2011) mentioned that BEMs were first implemented in Western countries, followed by Asian countries, but until today, there has been little insight into the perception, use and success of Asian countries. Showing there is a need for further studies to fill in this gap and examine the implementation of BEMs in new contexts in Asia, such as the UAE.

Both these terms, Business Excellence models (BEMs) and National quality Awards (NQAs), are used interchangeably (Sulistyio et al., 2021; Ubaid & Dweiri, 2023). Thus, both literatures will be used to explore BEMs in this study.

Implementing BEMs in public sector organizations

Khalaf Alateyyat et al., (2024) mentioned that the public sector includes organisations that are controlled by the government and provide necessary goods and services to citizens. French and Emerson (2014) clarified that the public sector consists of federal, state, local governments, public corporations, and other bodies offering extended public services (e.g., education and health care). According to Taraza et al., (2023) all over the world public sector organizations are varied with regards to how they operate in different domains such as governments, municipalities public services and health care sector.

Several authors (e.g. Raharjo & Eriksson 2017; Lasrado, 2017; Al-Dhaafri & Alosani, 2020) argued that many existing BEMs studies concentrated on the private sector, while limited studies focused on public sector. Raharjo and Eriksson (2017) justified that it is due to the better suitability of BEMs to organizations that operate in the private sector, and the lack of incentives and high bureaucracy in public sector organizations, which makes it more difficult to achieve the objectives.

In contrast to the previous statement, AlZawati et al., (2020) clarified that public sector organizations are gradually applying BEMs to develop their processes and services efficiently, and to achieve the competitive advantage worldwide with regards to both cost and quality. Therefore, some public sector organizations have implemented international BEMs, such as European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM)(e.g. Deveci & Canitez, 2018) and some locally designed models, such as Government Excellence Model ((GEM) (Laban, 2022).

Very few public sector literatures discussed BEMs at federal and local levels. For instance, de Moura (2002) mentioned that many BEMs were developed in the United States, focusing on America, were at the Federal and Local Government levels based on MBNQA . Despite this, most of the limited public sector BEMs studies were examined at a specific level in the public sector. Such as federal level in the Greek (Baroutas et al., 2020), local government level in Australia (e.g. Price et al., 2018), public transport operators in Turkey (Deveci & Canitez, 2018) or public sector in general in the Kingdom of Sweden (Raharjo & Eriksson, 2017).

Therefore, there is a need for further studies that examine BEMs journey in leading countries that have experience and maturity in implementing such practice, within different layers of public sector organizations, for example at federal and local levels. To the knowledge of the researcher this is among the first studies that explore this issue and aims to fill in this existing gap.

Critical Success Factors (CSFs) of BEMs

Brown (2013) clarified that CSFs includes a variety of factors leading to organizational success which are vital for BEMs implementation and sustaining quality.

Lasrado and Gomiscek (2017) argued that implementing BEMS requires providing and understanding many necessary relating factors. Wahab et al., (2022) stated that researchers and practitioners have argued that there are numerous factors that organization might take into consideration to attain the excellence at work context.

According to Al Ghufli (2012) the majority of studies that conducted in Western countries have been able to provide a general overview of the major dominant factors, and how they impact organisations.

Few studies (e.g. Al Ghufli, 2012; Laban, 2022; Salih & Dolah, 2023) were conducted in Arabic context to examine BEMs, and critical success factors, however there is inconsistency among these studies. For example, Laban's (2022) study showed that CSFs Factors in UAE public sector includes culture of pioneering, commitment, resources, building people capability, one government, and award custodian. A recent study conducted by Salih and Dolah (2023) in Saudi non-profit organizations specified that five CSFs are data analysis and reporting capabilities, effective organizational communication, implementation strategy and approach, use of benchmarking, and implementation of a clear governance framework.

Indeed those limited studies that have been examined in Arab countries were conducted in different sectors for example public in federal government (Laban, 2022) and local government (Al Ghufli, 2012), non-profit organizations (e.g. Salih & Dolah, 2023). Therefore, there is a need for additional studies in new areas of public sector organizations such as the UAE to generalize the previous findings at federal and local levels.

National culture and BEMs at workplace

House et al., (2004, cited in Zhang & Wu, 2014, p. 92) defined a nation's culture as "*shared motives, values, beliefs, identities, and interpretations or meanings of significant events that result from common experiences of members and collectives that are transmitted across generations*".

Kassem et al., (2018) stated that national culture occurs at the country or state level. According to Zhang and Wu (2014, national culture is a key factor that impacts the success or failure of the management practices. Despite

this, Zapata-Cantu et al., (2016) argued that few empirical studies have investigated impact of national culture on BEMs.

Therefore, to fill this gap, several authors focused on examining the extent to which a country's national culture influences different business practices, for example Total Quality Management (e.g. Zhang & Wu, 2014), and BEMs (e.g. Flynn & Saladin, 2006; Zapata-Cantu et al., 2016).

It was observed that many previous related studies were examined in private sector (e.g. Flynn & Saladin, 2006; Zhang & Wu, 2014), while some business literature suggests that management actions have unlike influence on outcomes in public and private sector organizations (Hvidman & Andersen, 2014).

As Wong et al., (2017) mentioned that variety exists among cultures across nations, due to the differences in the background and stimulus surrounding human resources in different nations. Moreover, several studies (e.g. Hvidman & Andersen, 2014; Raharjo & Eriksson, 2017) confirmed that sectoral differences with respect to different managerial practices can limit the generalizability of the previous studies. Therefore, there is a need for further studies in implementing BMEs as part of their business practices in the public sector of different layers to demonstrate the extent to which the results of the few previous studies can be generalized.

BEMs in the UAE public sector

The UAE consists of seven Emirates (The official portal of the UAE-centennial-2071, 2026). According to Al Ghufli (2012), The UAE includes two formal layers of government including both federal and local. Both layers focus on developing public sector and delivered services. For example, the federal government launched UAE Centennial 2071 in which the first Pillar is Future-focused government (The official portal of the UAE-centennial-2071, 2026).

As a result, the UAE is considered as a pioneer in the Middle East region due to implementing several BEMs (Kassem, 2016). Supporting this argument, The UAE launched several BEMs in the private sector and public sector, including both federal public and local governments, for example, Dubai Quality Award (1994), Dubai Government Excellence Program (1997), Sheikh Khalifa Excellence Award (1999), Sheikh Saqr Program for Government Excellence (2004), Abu Dhabi Awards for Excellence in Government Performance (2006), Ajman Excellence Program (2008), Government Excellence Model (GEM) (2015), Saud bin Rashid Al Mu'alla Distinguished Government Performance Award (2019), and Fujairah Government Excellence Program (2021) (The official portal of the Sheikh Khalifa Government Excellence Program, 2026).

Regardless of implementing various BEMs in the UAE, Laban (2022) argued that there is a lack of empirical studies that examine implemented BEMs in the UAE public sector. Generally, most of the limited studies were empirically tested only in federal organizations (Laban, 2022) or local level organizations (Ahrens, 2013; Fninou & Almuraqab, 2022) therefore there is a shortage in studies targeting the rest of the UAE public sector. This is why there is a need for additional studies that concentrate on public sector organizations, including both federal and local government level, to provide a better understanding of the UAE Excellence journey.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative methodology was used to collect data from the participants. The justification for using qualitative methodology is due to scarcity of BEMs studies in a country which started implementing the models at both federal and local governments for several years, with the aim to fulfill the objective of the study as well as answer the research questions.

Semi-structured interviews were utilized for this study across 14 business excellence experts working for federal and local level organizations, to create a comprehensive summary of the UAE public sector organizations journey relating to ;1) Implementing BEMs in public sector organizations, 2) BEMs at local and federal level in public sector organizations, 3) The relationship between national culture and BEMs implementation 4) CSFs that influence implementation of BEMs in public sector layers.

Participants, and interview guide and procedures

The sample consisted of fourteen BEMs experts working in the UAE public sector organizations, nine participants working for the UAE Federal government, and five working at local governments, all were directly involved with business excellence initiatives, for example BEMs implementations. Ten participants were males and the remaining four were females. Regarding their job titles, four participants were directors, five were head of sections, while the remaining participants held various job titles in the supervisory category. Concerning their nationalities, thirteen participants were UAE nationals, only one of them was expatriate. In terms of the years of experience of the participants, seven have 15 years or more of experience, three have from 10 years to less than 15

years of experience, two participants have experience from 5 years to less than 10 years, while two have experience from one year to less than 5 years.

Guest et al., 2006 (p 59) defined theoretical saturation, as *"the point at which no unique information or themes are observed in the data"*. According to authors 12 interviews is suitable as the saturation point for qualitative studies. Therefore, following Guest et al., 2006, (p 59) recommendations, 14 interviews were conducted to collect the data from participants.

An interview protocol was used to structure the interview to ensure the aims of the research were maintained. The interview protocol drew from the main themes in the literature, for example BEMs in public sector organizations (e.g. Deveci & Canitez, 2018; Laban, 2022). Common issues and major differences between implemented BEMs (AlZawati et al., 2020), the relationship between national culture and BEMs (Flynn & Saladin, 2006; Zapata-Cantu et al., 2016) and CSF of implemented BEMs (Laban, 2022; Salih & Dolah, 2023).

To preserve the identity of the participants, they were distinguished by referring to them with numbers from 1 to 14, as shown in the results discussion in the next section.

Data Analysis Procedure

According to Padgett (2008) data analysis begins directly after starting data collection. As the semi- structured interviews with 14 business excellence experts were completed, the qualitative analysis process started to explore BEMs in the UAE public sector including both federal and local organizations.

Padgett (2008) clarified that both coding and thematic development are frequently employed to analyse qualitative gathered data. Therefore, transcripts were analysed using the series of codes developed during the comprehensive literature review. All text in the 14 interviews were analysed and coded. Each interview that lasted 30–45 minutes was coded separately.

Therefore, thematic analysis was utilized to code the collected data, as prior BEMs research had used predetermined codes to analyse participant's answers. The focus was on the answers that were agreed among participants, who work for both federal and local level public sector organizations.

Following Remler and Ryzin (2015) recommendation that NVivo software is among commonly utilized programs to analyse qualitative data, NVivo software was used to analyse the collected data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings were grouped into the following four major themes.

Implementing BEMs in public sector organizations

Participants were asked: *Do the public sector organizations in the UAE implement BEMs?*

All participants agreed that public sector organizations in the UAE implement BEMs. Participant 3 mentioned *"Yes, public sector in the UAE implements BEMs, because these models are good business practices that help to achieve the objective in government organizations"*.

According to Laban (2022) public sector organizations, like private organizations, aim to develop their provided services and obtain performance outcomes being implemented in BEMs.

The obtained result confirmed that public sector organizations in the UAE using BEMs are consistent with few public sector entities in different regions of the world. For example, Australia (Price et al., 2018), the Kingdom of Sweden (Raharjo & Eriksson, 2017), and the Republic of Turkey (Deveci & Canitez, 2018). Therefore, it is aligned with prior empirical studies conducted in the UAE public context (e.g. Ahrens, 2013; Lasrado, 2017; Laban, 2022; Fninou & Almuraqab, 2022), thus, the findings of the current research support the generalizability of these achieved results.

The information gathered in the interviews shed light on the nature of public sectors in the UAE context which uses best practices, such as BEMs, to fulfill The UAE Centennial Plan 2071. As it is a first pillar, future-focused government and provided services (The official portal of the UAE-centennial-2071, 2026). Indeed, this finding is against Raharjo and Eriksson's (2017) argument that public sector is characterized as lack of incentives and high bureaucracy.

BEMs at federal and local level in public sector organizations

To clarify more details about the implemented BEMs at federal and local governments, participants were asked the following questions:

"Is only one BEM currently implement in both federal and local at the UAE public sector organizations? In case of having more than one type of BEMs, what are common issues and differences among BEMs implemented at federal and local governments?"

All participants answered no. They agreed that two types of BEMs are employed in the UAE public sector.

Nine participants, who worked for the federal government, agreed that their workplaces currently use Government Excellence Model (GEM). Participant 8, who worked for the federal public sector said *"we use GEM which is a model that has been launched in the UAE and customized for federal government such as ministries."*

Five participants, who worked for local governments, mentioned that local governments use other locally developed models, for example, Dubai Government Excellence Program in Dubai, and Abu Dhabi Award for Excellence in Government Performance in Abu Dhabi local government, and the Ajman Excellence Programme is employed in Ajman. Participant 5 worked for the local government and confirmed that they implement a local level created model. participant 5 mentioned *"I work for Dubai Government, and we use Dubai Government Excellence Model which is implemented in the entities of Dubai Government"*.

All participants answered this question. They compared between BEMs implemented at federal and local level government as follows.

Common issues among federal and local level BEMs in the UAE public sector organizations

Eleven participants agreed that all used BEMs are based on the TQM principles. Participant 1 clarified that *"All developed models are based on Total Quality Mangment principles such as enhancing teamwork and continuous improvement"*.

While ten participants mentioned that components of the BEMs are similar, with regards to having concepts, specific criteria lack focus on results, besides having assessment tools. Participant 5 mentioned clarified *"The used models in the UAE public sector are similar - to a large extent—having several concepts which are considered as guidelines to implement the model. Beside criteria such as operation and human resources. All used models include assessment tool to govern the implementation of the models?"*.

Key differnces among federal and local level BEMs in the UAE public sector organizations

Eight participants stated that major differences among implemented BEMs at federal and local level are number of concepts, criteria and the nature of assessment tool. Participant 4 clarified that *"although all used models include elements such as the following: concepts, criteria and assessment tools, the weights of each criterion might deferalso, I noticed that numbers of concepts differ among used models. This diversity in developed models reflects the uniqueness of each government strategy"*.

Research findings have shown that federal and local government in the UAE has designed and implemented their own BEMs, this statement is aligned with existing literature by several authors (Mohammad et al., 2011; Salah & Salah, 2019; Sulistyo et al., 2021) argued that many countries have established their own BEMs to help raise the performance at work context. Also, the results achieved empirically supported de Moura (2002) argument that many BEMs were developed to be used in the federal and local public sector. Therefore, the achieved result extended the current literature and confirmed that establishing BEMs is applicable, even at different layers of public sector organizations.

Concerning type of used BEMs, the result is aligned with previous studies that have been conducted in the UAE context, as federal level organizations employ GEM (Laban, 2022), while local government organizations employ at local level BEM, such as Dubai Government Excellence Program (e.g. Ahrens, 2013; Fninou & Almuraqab 2022) and Abu Dhabi Award for Excellence in Government Performance (e.g. Al Ghufli, 2012). An area that has not been explored in prior studies, the extent the same country could implement several BEMs in different layers of the public sector. Therefore, this study is among the first studies that aimed to categorize the used model and provide justification for having several models in the UAE public sector based on its layers.

With regards to comparison between implemented BEMs, Salah and Salah (2019) argued that although many similarities exist among current used BEMs, there are some dissimilarities among them.

The participants clarified that common issues among used BEMs at federal and local public sector are as follows; Firstly, that the implemented BEMs are based on TQM principles, which are aligned with several authors (e.g. Mann et al., 2011; Brown, 2013; Kassem et. al, 2019; Salah & Salah, 2019) who agreed that BEMs are based on TQM. Secondly, the findings are aligned with some prior studies (e.g. Sampaio et al., 2012; Toma & Marinescu, 2018; Salah & Salah, 2019; Sulistyo et al., 2021 EMs includes criteria such as strategy, workforce and results. Also, those concepts (e.g. Sampaio et al., 2012; Toma & Marinescu, 2018; AlZawati et al. 2020), assessment methodologies (e.g. AlZawati et al. 2020) are among the components of BEMs.

While the participants argued that differences among used BEMs at federal and local government as follows; the participants argued that weights of the BEMs criteria is among the differences between the models, the achieved results are supported with some studies (e.g. Sampaio, Saraiva, and Monteiro, 2012; AlZawati et al., 2020) which resulted in the differences in weight of criteria among the BEMs and the assessment methods (AlZawati et al., 2020; Sulistyo et al., 2021).

There is a scarcity of studies that aim to compare between the used BEMs in the UAE public sector context, as limited studies have compared between used BEMs in the UAE context with international ones, such as the Deming Award, the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, and the European Foundation for Quality Management model (Salah & Salah, 2019) and the European Foundation for Quality Management (AlZawati et al., 2020). This is the first study that aimed to identify the common issues and differences among BEMs that are implemented at federal and local governments, which contribute to the existing BEMs in the public sector field.

The impact of national culture on BEMs implementation

Participants were asked; *"The UAE has begun implementing BEMs for a long time in public sector layers; what is the relationship between the implementation of these models and the national culture in the UAE context?"*

There was an agreement among all participants that the UAE national culture has a direct positive impact on implementation BEM at different layers of public sector organizations. They clarified that The UAE prioritizes importance on promoting a national culture that enhances the application of BEMs and encourages entities – whether at the local or federal level, to implement the same approach to develop the provided services and fulfilled objectives. Participant (14) said: *"The positive national culture of applying business excellence and its models is widespread in the country. We believe in the significance of achieving the UAE's vision to be the best country in the world by 2071; therefore, we must fulfil this strategic direction at public organizations"*.

Flynn and Saladin (2006) argued that national culture is considered as a critical factor in determining the success or failure of applied management practices in the work context. Kassem (2016) stated that the government of the UAE emphasized, in its strategic plan, the importance of achieving institutional excellence.

The results showed that national culture has a direct impact on the implementation of BEMs at government entities. The achieved results are consistent with previous limited studies that have been examined in the private sector (e.g. Flynn & Saladin, 2006; Zapata-Cantu et al., 2016) that showed national culture influenced positively on BEMs implementation in the workplace.

According to Zapata-Cantu et al., (2016) there is a scarcity in impartial studies that examine the impact of national culture on BEMs. Therefore, the findings helped to understand the positive influence of the national culture in the UAE context on the implementation of BEMs in different layers of public sector, where the country had experienced these models since 1994 (Lasrado, 2017). Therefore, the current study is considered as a foundation for future researchers interested in this field, particularly within a new public sector context, such as the UAE.

As a direction for future research, there is a need for further comparative studies that investigate cross-cultural models such, as Hofstede's dimensions of national culture to assess whether the theoretical constructs underlying the used BEMs are relevant across national cultures in the UAE context.

CSFs that influence implementation of BEMs in public sector layers

Participants were asked: *"Which CSFs enhanced the implementation of BEMs in federal and local level public sector organizations?"*

The participants discussed related five main factors as follows;

Effective leadership

All participants argued that effective leadership is a significant success factor in this matter. Participant 10 clarified *"The leaders' influence directly implementing BEMs. They can provide employees all the necessary tools and support them to implement BEMs"*.

Qualified human resources

12 participants emphasized the importance of human resources to execute the requirements for implementing BEMs. Participant 8 stated *"We focus on qualified employees and invest in them, because they would apply successfully BEMS, meaning the organization will achieve a competitive advantage and fulfill the planned goals"*

Availability of sufficient financial resources

11 participants discussed that sufficient financial resources stimulate the application of BEMs, especially at the public organizations that focus on applying best practices, which require a sufficient financial budget. Participant 9 said *"Financial resources are necessary because we need enough budget in order to provide the requirements for implementing BEMs, and this positively affects us, if the allocated budget for continuous improvement in the services and technologies applied in the business is sufficient, this would have positive impact on implementation BEMs"*.

Positive organizational excellence culture

10 participants mentioned that the organizational culture that supports the implication of the models is one of the characteristics of leading public sector entities that seek success and excellence.

Participant 6 stated “*Supportive organizational culture is essential to apply BEMs, as through accepting change management and recognizing the consequences of negative impact of the lack of a culture of excellence on the government sector organizations.*”

Focus on customers

8 participants demonstrated that one of the main factors for successfully implementing BEMs is the focus on the customers’ needs, and identifying what satisfies them while providing them with services that exceed their expectations. Participant 5 explained “*When public sector organizations implement BEMs, they must focus on customers. What do they need from the government organizations? Then how can their desires be fulfilled to satisfy them?*”

There was agreement among participants who work for federal and local government with regards to the significance of CSFs implementing BEMs. They have highlighted the top five factors as follows:

Firstly, effective leadership. The findings confirmed that effective leadership is considered as an enabling criterion for BEMs.

Ubaid and Dweiri (2023) argued that leadership is a vital capability that should be developed to drive the other sub-elements in the BEM element. The results are in line with previous studies (e.g. Zapata-Cantu, et al., 2016; Lasrado & Gomiscek, 2017) that have been examined in the private sector and non-profit organizations (Salih & Dolah, 2023). Moreover, the achieved results provided generalizability to previous limited studies in federal government (e.g. Laban, 2022) and local government (e.g. Al Ghufli, 2012) that have been conducted at the UAE public organizations.

Secondly, qualified Human resources. Hawarna et al. (2020) argued that workplaces which have well trained employees appear closer to quality management, compared to the organizations that do not adequately train their human resources employees. Lasrado and Uzbek (2017) mentioned employees in organizations that implement BEMs can make major changes in the context of work, because BEMs require employees’ contributions to obtain organizational success.

This result is suggested in prior studies that have been examined in the UAE for both federal organizations (e.g. Laban 2022) and local organizations (e.g. Al Ghufli, 2012), that have mentioned human resources is among the CSFs for implementing BEMs, which is partially consistent with some studies (e.g. Lasrado & Gomiscek, 2017; Taraza et al., 2023; Bolboceanu, 2025) showed that there is a positive relationship between training and BEMs.

Thirdly, availability of sufficient financial resources. Laban’s (2022) findings showed that financial resources are amongst CSFs to implement BEMs, as it covers the incentives for both employees and projects, which has positive impact at both organization and government level.

The findings confirmed that adequate financial resources positively enhance the implementation of BEMs at different layers of public organizations. Evidence regarding the impact of financial resources on implementing BEMs is aligned with limited public studies (e.g. Bolboceanu, 2025) and federal government studies (e.g. Laban 2022) which considered financial resources is vital to implement BEMs.

The fourth point shows positive organizational excellence culture. Gimenez Espin Costa and Jiménez (2023) argued that organisations must boost the norms, believes and values among their employees, that are oriented to stability, and must encourage an internal orientation to facilitate the usage BEMs. Also, Al Ghufli (2012) stated that fostering a change culture was among significant factors that support the development and implementation of the BEMs.

This result is supported by findings that have been previously reported in literature. Since some studies (e.g. Gimenez Espin et al., 2023) considered organizational culture foster the implementation of BEMs at work context. Therefore, this study is aligned with few previous studies that focused on both federal organizations (e.g. Laban 2022) and local organizations (e.g. Al Ghufli, 2012) in the UAE public sector context.

The fifth point focuses on customers. Lasrado and Uzbek (2017) clarified that organizations should prioritize customer requirements and fulfil their satisfaction. According to Gimenez Espin et al., (2023) the application of a series of the principles of BEMs, assist the workplace to be more competitive in areas related to customers, human resources, and the reputation of the workplace.

These findings are in concordance with limited previous empirical studies (e.g. Lasrado & Gomiscek, 2017) that focus on customers that have supported the implementation of BEMs.

The findings empirically clarify that public sector layers, such as federal and local governments. do not differ significantly with regards to CSFs to implement BEMs. Therefore, leaders should take into consideration the significance of availability of CSFs to help establish and enhance business practices, for example implementing BEMs to improve the customer provided services and fulfil government goals and strategies.

CONCLUSION

The main objective of this research is to explore the implementation of BEMs in public sector organization layers as an effective tool, with the aim to lead to develop of the public sector. Previous studies have been examined only at federal level (Abuzanjal & Bashir, 2024) or local level (Price et al., 2018).

Recognizing that both federal and local government of the UAE public sector organization employ several BEMs, considering the UAE public sector is the best to conduct this study. Therefore, semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from 14 business excellence experts, working for federal and local public sector organizations in the UAE. The gathered data was analysed by Nvivo software.

The objectives of the study were successfully addressed, and results showed that the UAE public sector organizations implement BEMs. Moreover, the public sector implements different types of customized BEMs at federal and local government. The results confirmed that national culture positively influences the implementation of BEMs in public organizations. Therefore, the findings clarified five CSFs influence the implementation BEMs as follows; effective leadership, qualified human resources, financial resources, positive organizational culture of excellence, and focus on customers.

This research has helped in filling both theoretical and contextual gaps and developed a clear understanding of implementing BEMs at different layers of public sector organizations.

With regards to the theoretical gaps, this research contributed to fulfilling the recommendation of many researchers. Such as Salih and Dolah's (2023) recommendation to conduct further research using qualitative methodology to identify the CSFs of BEMs in other countries. Moreover, Lasrado's (2017) suggestion regarding the need to conduct research involving sectors other than the semi-private sector that apply BEMs. Finally, Raharjo and Eriksson (2017) recommend the need to use more BEMs, specifically designed for certain sectors, whether governmental or private. As the current study focused on BEMs customized for public sector organizations at federal and local level.

The research has also highlighted contextual contributions in the UAE public sector. As this is among the first studies examining the implementation of BEMs at both federal level and local level in the UAE context. It has also filled the gap of limited studies in Asian countries (Mann et al., 2011). Therefore, as a direction for future research, there is a need for additional studies that examine the alignment between federal and local level in public sector, and other business fields, for example, strategic plans and innovation. This study has provided generalizability of previous BEMs studies (e.g. Al Ghufli, 2012; Laban, 2022) in the UAE public sector.

With regards to managerial implications, this study provides an effective starting point into understanding how implementing BEMs could be a useful instrument, to develop the countries and provided services.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

There are several limitations related to this study. Firstly, this research was conducted in both federal and local levels of the public sector in the UAE. Therefore, further additional research in different countries to compare the results and assess the generalizability of the findings achieved in this research. Secondly, this study has focused on CSFs of BEMs, however, several studies (e.g. Salih & Dolah, 2023) also examined barriers for conducting BEMs. A direction for future research shows there is a need for additional studies to investigate these barriers within public sector organizations. Thirdly, this study showed the positive impact of effective leadership on BEMs, as a direction for future research, there is a need for further studies to examine the impact of leadership styles has on implementing BEMs in different layers of public sector organizations.

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