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## **NEW MODEL OF QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION - UPGRADING THE COMMON ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK (CAF)**

Mirna Macur<sup>1</sup>, Bojan Radej<sup>2</sup>

### **Abstract**

In our study, we developed new model of quality assessment in public administration. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is frequently used in continental Europe for this purpose. Its use has many benefits, however we believe its assessment logic is not adequate for public administration. Upgraded version of CAF is conceptually different: instead of analytical and linear CAF we get the instrument that measures organisation as a network of complex processes. Original and upgraded assessment approaches are presented in the paper and compared in the case of self-assessment of selected public administration organisation. The two approaches produced different, sometimes contradictory results. The upgraded model proved to be logically more consistent and it produced higher interpretation capacity.

**Keywords:** self-assessment; CAF; Common Assessment framework; evaluation; EFQM.

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## **Introduction**

The quality of performance in public administration organisations is assessed either externally (the citizens' or users' perspective) or internally, by employees themselves. An internal assessment in public organisation is a systematic review of organisation's processes, which is implemented through its own resources and for its own purposes (Harvey 2009). Internal assessment tools range from relatively simple to complex ones, encompassing questionnaires about employee satisfaction, competence management models, complaints procedures<sup>1</sup>, learning from the best, internal audit, SWOT and PEST analysis, scorecards in achievements and the improvement of business processes (Harrington 1991).

The Common Assessment framework (CAF) was launched in 2000 by the European Public Administration Network as a first European quality management instrument tailored specially for and developed by public sector organisations. CAF is a framework for internal evaluation designed to detect strengths and weaknesses of public organisations and focus on dilemmas of its internal organisation and modes of operation. One of the studies of CAF effectiveness concludes that "CAF works" and further states that the frame "greatly influences changes in public management" in five countries of EU (Staes et al. 2011), including Slovenia. We believe CAF has many advantages and gives an important insight into public administration organisation, but we were not able to locate any external studies of CAF effectiveness to verify this conclusion independently. The EIPA, which represents a resource centre for CAF users, confirmed our observation that, as at the end of 2012, no external evaluation of CAF's effectiveness had been prepared yet. Furthermore, poor external communication is one of the most prominent self reported shortcomings in self-assessments carried out through CAF (Staes et al. 2011).

Motives for this article gave us CAF users themselves. Authors conducted focus group with CAF users and discussion revealed many strengths and weaknesses of the proposed instrument. Although they were highly motivated to score each enabler and result separately, their initial enthusiasm faded away when quantitative scores were summarised in conclusion. Assessment team made its best to gather all relevant data for detailed analysis of CAF criteria, but final synthesis was usually hard to do – it was missing or it was descriptive, without clear

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<sup>1</sup> Complaints usually come from clients, but internal complaint and suggestion procedures can be implemented inside of the organisation to serve employees and give management of the organisation useful information on needed changes.

arguments, and therefore not useful for middle and upper management. Another factor needs to be taken in account is the division of analytical part of self-assessment and its synthesis; synthesis of the results is done by management and not by assessment team. That perhaps explains Staes' (Staes et al., 2011) finding, that almost one fifth of the CAF users are interested primarily in getting some sort of quality award.

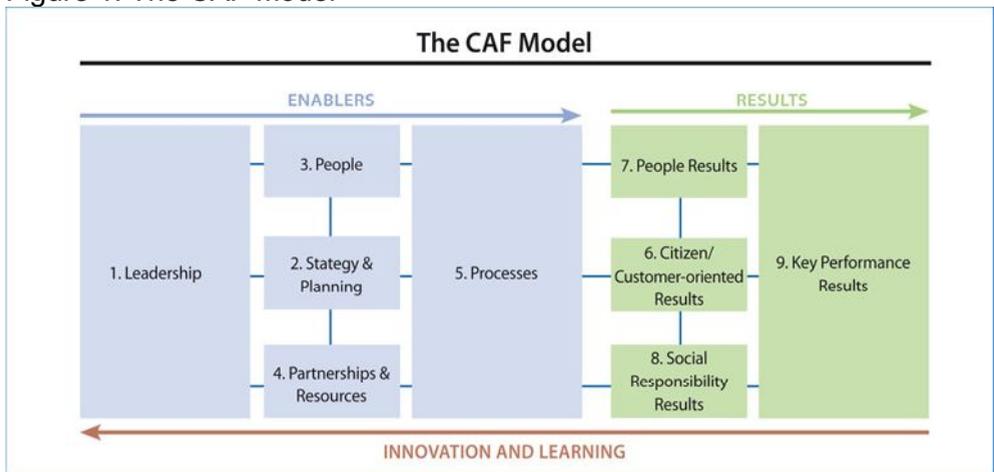
Furthermore, CAF's generic character is also questioned from a purely paradigmatic ground. The CAF is derived from EFQM – European Foundation for Quality Management, which was developed in 1988 to increase competitiveness of private sector organisations. The EIPA adapted the model into CAF to be used for self-assessment in public administrations. Such adaptation could cause a problem since there is a crucial difference between the missions of public and private sector organisations. The latter are simple in their mission to produce homogenous result - profit. Public organisations are complex – they pursue various objectives, which are not homogeneous, they may include more stakeholders than the private ones, and they are less autonomous in their work (they need to work in the public interest and take into account various legislations, strategic plans and impositions). Thus self-assessments in private sector organisations are outcome oriented. Public sector organisations have several main goals, which are incommensurable, i.e. they don't share a common denominator and therefore need to be assessed separately. This brings forward the process - oriented logic in the assessment (Radej, 2011; Radej et al., 2011). Processes have an important role in standard CAF but they represent only one ninth of the model and are placed among Enablers instead of between Enablers and Results. Furthermore, processes in standard CAF are understood in an object, static way instead of process way. Therefore, we believe that process assessment in standard CAF version is not valid and we propose upgraded CAF version that takes into account processes between Enablers and Results. The article compares original and upgraded CAF on the case of evaluation of organisation O, one of the public administration organisations in Slovenia. It is assumed that the upgraded model offers more information to middle and top management because its mission goes beyond the fragmented perspective with a numerous object criteria, which is put forward with the standard CAF.

## The original CAF model

CAF has been proposed as standardised and generic tool for self-assessment of organisational strengths and weaknesses. Its ultimate goal is to contribute to permanent organisational improvements and good governance. The assessment in CAF is based on the premise that excellent results regarding the organisational performance, citizens/clients, people and society are achieved through leadership driving strategy and planning, people, partnership, resources and processes.

The CAF assessment is carried out with scoring of proposed set of criteria. The goal is not to achieve a maximum number of scores, but rather to establish a system of continuous improvements (Dearing et al. 2006). The focus group working on CAF implementation in Slovenia (Radej and Macur, 2011) revealed that attributing points to CAF assessment criteria is not as important as confronting different opinions among those who produced the assessment regarding the most appropriate score of a given criteria. The scoring triggers discussion and coordination of different views. Most CAF users believe this is the most important achievement of the assessment; they find internal communication more important than scoring (Radej and Macur, 2011).

Figure 1: The CAF Model



Source: CAF 2013

The model consists of a set of criteria which relate to key parameters of organisational quality (see Figure 1). Criteria 1–5 deal with the Enablers features of an organisation and its Processes. They determine what the organisation does and how it approaches its tasks to achieve the desired results. Criteria 6-9 are selected to assess

organisational results. Each criterion is further broken down into a list of sub-criteria – 28 in total. The sub-criteria are illustrated by “assessment examples” explaining the context of sub-criteria in detail and suggesting potential areas to be addressed in order to explore how the administration meets the requirements included in the sub-criteria. Conclusions drawn from the assessment of the Enablers and Results Criteria are fed into the managerial practices that constitute the continuous innovation and learning cycle accompanying organisations on their path towards excellence (CAF 2013). CAF's consistency is achieved by establishing a cross-connection between the enablers and their results (logical consistency) as well as providing feedback in terms of results to enablers in a form of an improvements plan in an organisation as a consequence of evaluation findings (management consistency) (Staes and Thijs 2005; CAF 2006).

The PDCA-cycle<sup>1</sup> is applied for scoring of criteria (see the Manual for details). The enablers and the results are not two separate entities in the organisation as they play part in a cause-effect relationship that connects the left and right side of the model shown in Figure 1. The enablers represent causes and results represent effects; feedback from the latter to the former is also part of the process. The assessment conclusions are made according to 9 major CAF criteria into which the scores of sub-criteria are aggregated. At the end of the assessment, the organisation prepares a plan of priority measures in order to reduce its weaknesses and enhance its strengths. These measures are part of the assessment report as well as the new assessment plan. This brings the CAF cycle to an end, integrating it into the process of permanent improvement, which allows the organisation to operate on a higher level of self-reflection.

CAF is designed to raise the importance of organisational processes, which are placed at the centre of the CAF model (Figure 1). However, the standard CAF admits that the consistency of self-assessment is a problem since different causes of changes influence each other and their interconnection is difficult to recognise (CAF 2006). This is serious problem and well known in social research as a problem of equifinality – that there are alternative ways of attaining the same objectives, as a problem of multilinearity – that alternative objectives can be achieved from the same inputs (Cicchetti, Rogosch, 1996) and in theory of evaluation concerning assessment of indirect impacts (Radej et al., 2012; Radej 2011).

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<sup>1</sup> PDCA: Plan, Do, Check, Act.

To accomplish a holistic assessment of an organisation in the public administration, one cannot do it directly by simply assessing 9 criteria. An organisation is not a machine that can be dissembled into major components that need to be maintained in the best possible way in order to work perfectly as a whole. In a complex organisation like one operating in the public administration, independently observed criteria and sub-criteria can suggest excellent performance, but the organisation as a whole can still show poor performance due to conflicts between enabling factors of organisation. Organisation in public administration serves conflicting goals, such as to meet expectations of citizens and to save public money. In comparison with private organisations, they are not autonomous in defining their inputs and goals. However, they are relatively autonomous in making decisions on transforming inputs (enablers) into results. This means that knowing a public organisation mostly means knowing its internal processes, how synergistically it transforms its inputs into outputs. Currently, the CAF models internal processes only as one of nine criteria (measured as outputs), thus not recognising processes as a central focus for internal self-assessment.

### **Upgrading the standard CAF model – research design**

Since processes are central for an organisation in the public administration with complex internal structure, the CAF model should be upgraded accordingly. The idea behind the proposed upgrading is quite simple – if an organisation achieves high scores in the enablers' criteria and low scores in the results criteria, its overall performance is not as successful as in the case of low enablers scores and high end-results scores. A public organisation with excellent enablers and excellent end-results is not very successful in its processes because its only success is not doing anything wrong to spoil the realisation of excellent potentials in its enablers. The total scores in different criteria and sub-criteria do not represent information about the success of the organisation – they first need to be placed in wider conceptual frame of internal relations in which they functionally operate. In the upgraded framework, a successful organisation is the one that manages to achieve positive difference between the end-results scores and the enablers scores. The larger the difference, the more successful is the transformation of organisational enablers into results and greater is the organisation's merit for good results. The underlying assumption here is, of course, that better results are at the same level of enablers' quality possible only through the higher quality of transformation processes. So the upgraded CAF model does not focus merely on the overall scores of a model but also on the distribution of scores among the enablers and the results.

It is therefore sensible to propose assessing the process from the difference between two objects, Enablers scores (e) and the Results scores (r). Such a setting is in line with the CAF original design which requires assessment of a relationship between the Enablers and the Results scores. Comparison of scores at the enablers side (e) with the results side (r) evaluates the change as an added value of organisational processes. This is achieved by grouping original CAF's 9 criteria into three pillars of organisational quality for enablers and for results of the assessment: Employees, Partnerships and the Society.<sup>1</sup> This makes possible to form an assessment matrix of nine sub-processes, each describing its own aspect of transforming (e) into (r).

The logic of upgraded CAF model is presented in Matrix 1. The lines of this matrix belong to three major enablers in the organisation, whereas the columns represent the three groups (employees, partnerships and society) as results. The three pillars have constitutive meaning for the organisation.

Matrix 1: Self-assessment in processes

enablers scores \ results scores	Employees (r <sub>1</sub> )	Partnerships (r <sub>2</sub> )	Society (r <sub>3</sub> )
Employees (e <sub>1</sub> )	Sub-process <sub>11</sub> = r <sub>1</sub> - e <sub>1</sub>	Sub-process <sub>12</sub> = r <sub>2</sub> - e <sub>1</sub>	Sub-process <sub>13</sub> = r <sub>3</sub> - e <sub>1</sub>
Partnerships (e <sub>2</sub> )	Sub-process <sub>21</sub> = r <sub>1</sub> - e <sub>2</sub>	Sub-process <sub>22</sub> = r <sub>2</sub> - e <sub>2</sub>	Sub-process <sub>23</sub> = r <sub>3</sub> - e <sub>2</sub>
Society (e <sub>3</sub> )	Sub-process <sub>31</sub> = r <sub>1</sub> - e <sub>3</sub>	Sub-process <sub>32</sub> = r <sub>2</sub> - e <sub>3</sub>	Sub-process <sub>33</sub> = r <sub>3</sub> - e <sub>3</sub>

The matrix of processes is read from the left to the right side. The sub-process<sub>11</sub> shows by how many scores are results by employees higher or lower than the score of the quality of employees as Enablers; the same is done for every other sub-process. The sub-process<sub>11</sub> evaluates the organisational human resource management. By analogy, the Sub-process<sub>22</sub> represents the evaluation of processes towards clients and citizens – this is a core process for which any public organisation is founded. The sub-process<sub>33</sub> evaluates social responsibility of the public organisation as assessment of its strategic goals and the wider social vision according to general expectations.

<sup>1</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> criteria on the Enablers side (Leadership) is regrouped into other three enablers at the level of sub-criteria (1.1 and 1.2 is added to Society Enablers, 1.3 is added to People Enablers, 1.4 is added to Partnership Enablers). The 9<sup>th</sup> criterion is regrouped at the level of sub-criteria as follows: 9.1 is added to the Partnership Results (i.e. Citizen/Client Results), 9.2 is added to the People Results.

The assessment of sub-process<sub>12</sub> shows how well does a public organisation meet the needs of its clients by using the available resources and how successful it is in adjusting to changeable demands coming from its clients and the citizens. The assessment shows the internal productivity of employees in performing the core process of the organisation due to better work competences or good skills demonstrated in communicating with clients and suppliers or because stronger partnerships are established.

The assessment of sub-process<sub>13</sub> shows how successful is the conversion of people criterion (employees) into the implementation of organisation's vision and mission on the level of society. For example, the impact of adopting a code of ethics to be followed by employees for the improvement of organisational public image in the wider environment can be observed here. Also, the impact of a new strategy in organisation's external communication represents the sub-process<sub>13</sub> as well as the impact of more internally integrated system and a more coherent external presentation of the organisation.

The sub-process<sub>23</sub> assesses how partnerships with clients and citizens affect the implementation of the organisation's vision and mission. Here, we can evaluate, for example, what are the effects of implementing the ecological demand in public procurement or the effects of higher quality standards in a partnership network on social responsibility of the organisation. A positive contribution to sub-process<sub>23</sub> would also bring improvement in the quality of inter-sectorial coordination, provision of cheaper resources and better knowledge management as well as information and technology management.

The assessment of sub-process<sub>21</sub> includes contents related to the interaction among partners (on the side of enablers) and employees (on the side of organisational results). It evaluates the effectiveness of organisation's partnerships for strengthening the executive function of a public organisation. An example of this is the inclusion of partners or specific public groups into the preparation of evaluand's public tasks (having in mind the environment that is at least partially under the influence of the organisation). Also, improving complaints procedures, transparency of organisation is relevant here as well as changes in financial, information and technological resources for conducting primary tasks of the organisation.

The sub-process<sub>31</sub> covers organisation's successes and failures which are concerned with the impact changes in the wider society have on the employees. An example would be an impact of public opinion or civil society on internal operation of the organisation. A concern about

free access to public information is also part of this process. In this segment, the matrix describes the success of the organisation in adjusting to changing demands of external environment – strategic responses with long-term consequences and deep structural interventions are expected here. The adjustment in organisations having high organisational culture (the ones who strive to solve internal conflicts) and reaching consensus about the needed changes will be more successful compared to adjustments in organisations showing low cohesive strength.

The sub-process<sub>32</sub> describes the assessment of effect changes in external conditions, mission and management style have on results in the field of partnerships. It presents success of the organisation in converting the external environment factors into changes in the field of partnerships as well as its success in adjusting its core activity to changes in the global environment.

Every sub-process describes one aspect of converting organisational enablers into results; all of them together reflect the organisational complexity because they are interrelated heterogeneously. We therefore find the assessment of these processes to be of key importance when it comes to self-assessment.

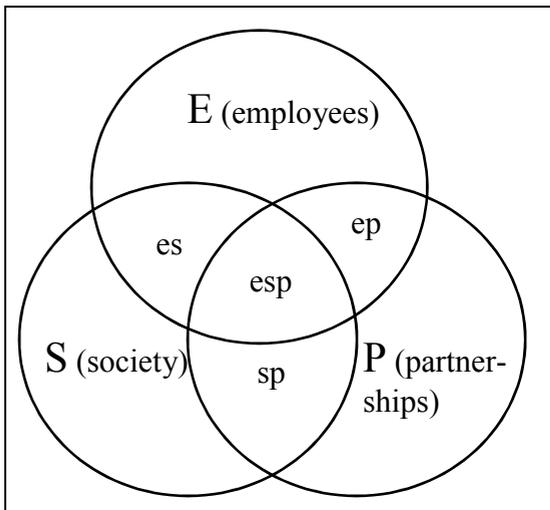
Instead of assessing processes by employing technically unrelated object criteria, which is what the original CAF (2006 and 2013) suggests, one needs to assess processes through a correlation of coterminous sub-processes. For this purpose, Matrix 1 is converted into a correlation matrix (see Matrix 2). It compares the scores of two sub-processes lying symmetrically to the diagonal of the matrix 1 – e.g., the comparisons of scores on the sub-process<sub>12</sub> with scores in the sub-process<sub>21</sub> etc. Matrix 2 gave a holistic insight into the relationship between the pillars of the organisation (in the case of sub-process<sub>12</sub>: between employees and partnerships). The organisational quality is based on three pillars. They have constitutive meaning for the organisation – if one pillar fails, the entire organisation fails. For example – an organisation cannot exist without its employees; it also cannot stop supplying useful impacts to its end users, i.e. directly or indirectly to society in general. Due to their integrity the poor results concerning citizens cannot be neutralised by improved results on the side of employees. Integrity is crucial because the tree pillars are not necessarily mutually supportive – quite the contrary, they are often engaged in a sharp conflict. If organisation, for example, raises salaries paid to employees, this will reduce funds for citizens' services (budget and other conditions remaining the same).

The correlative view of relationships ("es", "ep" and "sp") among the three pillars are presented in Matrix 2 and with Venn's diagram. The correlated results reveal strength of relationship between the pillars of organisational quality: *executive processes* are evident from the intersection between the employees and partnerships (see "ep" in Figure 2); *public adaptability* through intersection between employees and society ("es"); *external relations* in intersection between partnerships and society ("sp"). Synthesis assessment is obtained with the intersection of intersections as shown in the central area of Figure 2 ("esp"). Integrity is result of synergy which means that changes on the side of one pillar (e.g. employees E) are not only positive in terms of results concerning employees (being successful in its narrow sense) but also elaborate and have a positive effect also on the results on the side of the other pillar, (partnerships P) and vice versa. In such a way, the CAF components, especially processes, are methodologically coherent and they provide a holistic evaluation of public organisation.

Matrix 2: Correlation matrix of self-assessment results according to CAF

Results Enablers	E	P	S
E	»E« in Fig 2 = Sub-process <sub>11</sub> from Matrix 1	»ep« in Fig 2 = sub-process <sub>12</sub> according to sub-process <sub>21</sub>	»es« in Fig 2 = sub-process <sub>13</sub> according to sub-process <sub>31</sub>
P	-	»P« in Fig 2 = sub-process <sub>22</sub> from Matrix 1	»ps« in Fig 2 = sub-process <sub>23</sub> according to sub-process <sub>32</sub>
S	-	-	»S« in Fig 2 = sub-process <sub>33</sub> from Matrix 1

Figure 2: Graphical presentation of correlation results



The self-assessment upgraded with the correlation matrix broadens the insight compared to original CAF and provides added value in terms of the following:

1 – How separate pillars of an organisation work for themselves – e.g. how the human resource department achieves its primary goals concerning employees (sub-process<sub>11</sub>). It describes organisational effectiveness concerning three main pillars of organisational quality. Diagonal elements of both matrixes are represented in Venn's diagram as non-overlapping parts of the diagram;

2 – How pillars indirectly affect one another; it elaborates how employees (E), partnerships (P) and the society (S) are connected and integrated into the organisation. It is impossible to draw such an intersectional view in the original CAF. The best is assessed organisation that not only achieves its primary mission (high CAF scores in results) but also the best indirect results where the three main pillars overlap.

### **Organisation O – case study**

The organisation O' has been very generous to offer its CAF study for comparative assessment. The organisation O is a medium-sized institution (for Slovenian circumstances), employing 97 persons

and structured on two-levels with five internal departments. The organisation O is highly positioned within the public administration hierarchy as it is responsible for legal, financial and administrative support to very important Slovenian ministry. Consequently, the organisation O is more directly involved into events taking place in the society at macro level than most comparable organisations in the public administration. Its performance is intensively monitored by the media and it is involved with a wide range of clients, most of them being part of the public administration as well. The organisation O is exposed to influences from the narrow and wider environment, and vice-versa – it has relatively strong capacities to impact the external environment. Such involvement emphasises the importance of strategic management in the organisation O and puts its employees under a great amount of stress.

The organisation O performed a self-assessment with the original CAF in 2009 for the first time in order to learn more about itself and obtain new experiences. Nevertheless, the internal evaluators previously underwent a training course and were also assisted by an experienced and authorised external CAF evaluator. CAF's sub-criteria scores were estimated according to the manual (CAF 2006) by five employees who were members of the assessment group. The Executive Management personnel of organisation O were not involved in the scoring process. The sample study has been presented on the most disaggregated level of scoring of "illustrative cases" that belong to each sub-criterion, together with comments provided by assessors. The sample study is presented here at the most aggregated level – only for criteria scores. So we needed first to aggregate them into the sub-criteria scores for each of the assessors separately. A common score for each sub-criterion was not agreed upon among assessors so we had to calculate the average score from each of them. Sometimes (not frequently) we encountered big differences among individual assessor's scores. These were not eliminated as outliers. At the end, the average scores<sup>1</sup> for 28 sub-criteria were produced. Further aggregation produced 9 major groups of CAF criteria scores as presented in Table 1.

The scores obtained by assessors were double checked and then rearranged from the linear framework (CAF list of criteria and sub-criteria in Table 1) into a relational framework in line with Venn's intersectional diagram showing the three pillars or areas of assessment (employees, partnerships and society; Figure 2). To that end, we had to further rearrange 9 CAF criteria into three pillars on the Enablers side

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<sup>1</sup> If some scores on sub-criterion were not produced by individual assessor, it was left out also from average calculation and was separated from cases that were scored with 0 in some dimensions.

and also on the Results side of the model. The only criterion that can be left out from regrouping is the fifth (Processes) criterion since processes are assessed in the upgraded model relationally. Since the organisation O scored also process criterion as instructed in original CAF, we will be able to compare the process assessment in both the original and upgraded model.

## Results

Two set of result have been obtained. The scores in 9 criteria of original CAF are presented in Table 1. They were obtained through calculating the average values in sub-criteria scores in Appendix. The interpretation of aggregated scoring results in Table 1 was not an easy task as it would have been much easier to interpret the scores for sub-criteria on a lower level of aggregation, because they were more detailed. The aggregation into 9 main criteria diminishes interpretation possibilities in the assessment – which fails to justify the efforts invested into the scoring process.

Table 1: CAF results for organisation O

CAF criteria	Scores
Criterion 1: Enabler – Leadership	46
Criterion 2: Enablers – Strategy & Planning	46
Criterion 3: Enablers – People (employees)	51
Criterion 4: Enablers – Partnerships & Resources	52
Criterion 5: Processes	54
Criterion 6: Results – Citizens/Clients	58
Criterion 7: Results – People (employees)	51
Criterion 8: Results – Society <sup>1</sup>	58
Criterion 9: Key Performance Results	62

Data sources: Organisation O, own calculations

The organisation's enablers generally achieved lower scores than the results (see Table 1). That is true of Partnerships (Criterion 4 and 6) and the Society (Criterion 2 and 8), whereas the Employees show the equal scores in the enablers and the results (Criterion 3 and 7). Among the enablers, the lowest score is found in two criteria (see Appendix): Leadership and Strategy & Planning. Weakness of the first segment lie in sub-criterion 1.2 "Develop and implement a system for the

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<sup>1</sup> Society Results (CAF 2006), Social Responsibility Results (CAF 2013)

management of organisation, performance and change» (32 points out of 100), however the highest score was attributed in item 1.3 “Motivate and support people in the organisation and act as a role model” (57 out of 100). In Criterion 2, the lowest score in is found in sub-criterion 2.4 »Plan, implement and review modernisation and innovation« (25 out of 100) and the highest in sub-criterion 2.3 »Implement strategy and planning in the whole organisation« (59 out of 100). The best scores among enablers can be attributed to Partnerships & Resources, especially to the “Develop and implement partnerships with citizens/clients” item as well as the “Manage technology” segment (57 out of 100), however the “Manage facilities” enabler seems to represent a problem in this case (43 out of 100).

The results show relatively good scores for Partnerships (citizens/clients) and Society (both have 58 points in table 1) as well as for Key Performance Results (62 points) – key performance in external results achieved a higher score (63 points) than in internal results (61 points).

The average score in employees’ results for the organisation O is as low as 51 points. The reasons can be found in lower satisfaction and motivation of employees (54 out of 100) and also in other indicators concerning employees (47 out of 100), like problems with absenteeism, performance, use of IT, skills development, skills development, employee rotation inside the organisation, motivation and involvement (CAF, 2006:21).

To study processes in organisation O further in line with its complex internal composition, we transform Table 1 into three pillars and further into a three-part input-output assessment matrix (matrix with three vertical and horizontal elements (Matrix 1 and 3) of three pillars found in the organisational quality – employees, partnerships and the society (see Table 2).

Table 2: Three pillars of assessment in the public administration

CAF criteria regrouped		Points
Enablers (e <sub>i</sub> )	Employees (E)	53
	Partnerships (P)	52
	Society (S)	43
Results (r <sub>i</sub> )	Employees (E)	54
	Partnerships (P)	59
	Society (S)	58

Data sources: Organisation O, own calculations, a method is presented in research design.

Among the Enablers, three criteria are presented as well as the aiming Results. The criterion called Leadership is regrouped into Enablers' side at the level of sub-criteria, as explained in Footnote 6. Also the criterion Key performance Indicators is regrouped to Partnerships Results and Employees Results. Scores in Table 2 are calculated as average values in sub-criteria involved (Appendix).

The input-output matrix of organisation O's are organised into 9 organisational sub-processes<sup>1</sup> (see Matrix 3), calculated as a difference between the assessment of corresponding Result and the assessment of corresponding Enabler (see Matrix 2) obtained at the first stage of the self-assessment process (according to standard CAF in Table 1). In this manner, points for sub-process<sub>12</sub> (6 points) represent a difference between  $r_2$  (59 points) and  $e_1$  (53 points), etc.

Matrix 3: Input-output matrix for assessing processes in the organisation O

Enablers \ Results	E ( $r_1 = 54$ points)	P ( $r_2 = 59$ points)	S ( $r_3 = 58$ points)
E ( $e_1 = 53$ points)	1	6	5
P ( $e_2 = 52$ points)	2	7	6
S ( $e_3 = 43$ points)	11	16	15

Data sources: Organisation O, own calculations

This matrix is relevant especially for medium- and high-level management in organisation O, since they do not obtain any structured information with original CAF model. Matrix 3 shows the success of sub-processes in transforming the enablers into results. According to the calculations, success in transforming the Enablers of organisation O into Results on the level of employees was minimal, since it did not create any noteworthy added value through its processes (there was only 1 point of positive difference in assessment – which is found in a crossing of the first row and first column in sub-process<sub>11</sub>). Processes relating to employees' results (first column) seem to have the least power – although they show the highest score among the enablers they achieved the lowest score among the results (see table 2). This makes us believe that human resource management of the organisation O is of low quality and sufficient only to maintain the human resource capacities in this area. We find this as typical Slovenian practice, which is also mentioned in the Report on Ex-ante Evaluation in the National Operational

<sup>1</sup> 9 CAF criteria and 9 sub-processes of upgraded model is a coincidence!

Programme of Human Resource Management 2007–2013: employees who are formally not part of the management remain the mere executors of public policies and their competences are not well used (SVLR 2007).

The organisation O appears to be more effective in sub-processes that relate to its environment on the level of transforming its wider social enablers into wider social results, reaching the added value score of 15 points (sub-process<sub>33</sub>). The O's leadership seems to be successful in managing sub-processes that are carried out separately and require no employee support or support from other sub-processes. Top management hence successfully compensates the said weaknesses on the Enabler's side. Processes that relate to partnerships are not as good (7 points scored in the sub-process<sub>22</sub>), but still notable. The organisation O is effective in its routine operations with partners (citizens and clients), especially when they don't need additional support from its employees and leadership. The highest achievement of organisation O is found in sub-process<sub>32</sub> (16 points of difference), which describes the transformation in Society enablers showing the lowest score into Partnership results (serving the citizens and business clients) which are scored relatively high. The organisation O seems to be ineffective in transforming its Partnership Enablers into Employees' Results (2 points of difference; sub-process<sub>21</sub>).

Information on added value of organisational sub-processes cannot be found in standard CAF assessment. We found that the upgraded model offers more comprehensive interpretation capacities. Nevertheless, the information obtained from the input-output matrix (Matrix 3) remains too dispersed to be able to provide an overall assessment of organisation O's processes in relation to the transformation of its Enablers into Results. For synthesis purposes, we transform Matrix 3 into a correlation Matrix 4.

The upgraded results enable additional interpretation of assessed data. Presentation is further simplified with transformation into qualitative outcomes. For standardisation purposes, we used average difference in scores between three main pillars of organisational quality on the level of Results (57 points) and three main pillars on the level of Enablers (49 points) of the organisation O (Table 2). The difference of 8 points represents approximately half of the difference between scorings in pillars. This suggests our decision is well justified since the organisation O achieved approximately half of all points available (in most sub-criteria approximately 50 points out of 100).

**Matrix 4: Correlation matrix for assessing processes in the organisation O**

Results Enablers	E	P	S
E	»E« = = very weak = ☆	»ep« = = very weak : weak = ☆	»es« = medium : weak = ☆☆
P	-	»P« = medium = = ☆☆☆	»ps« = very strong: weak = ☆☆☆
S	-	-	»S« = very strong = = ☆☆☆☆☆

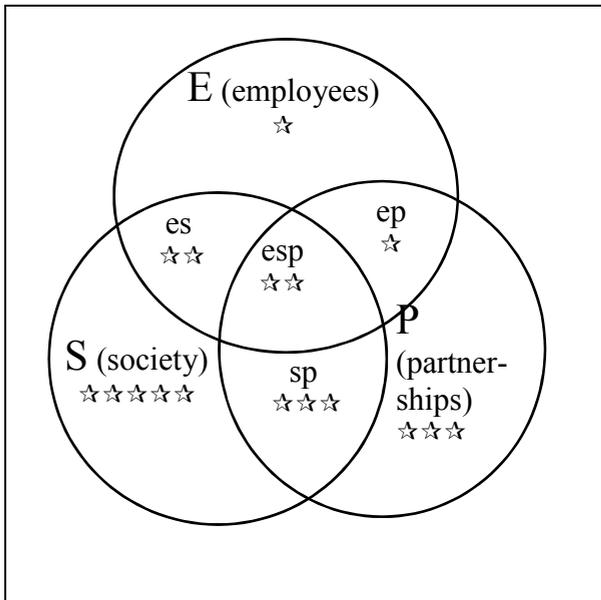
Data sources: Organisation O, own calculations

The key in labels of sub-processes' integration:

- (a) Assessment of causal link (Enabler with Result): very weak = 0 to 0.3 times average difference between Result and Enabler assessment; weak = 0.4 to 0.8; medium = 0.9 to 1.4; strong = 1.5 to 1.9; very strong: more than 1.9 times the difference
- (b) Assessment of intersections' value: ☆ = very weak intersection; ☆☆ = weak intersection; ☆☆☆ = medium intersection; ☆☆☆☆ = strong intersection; ☆☆☆☆☆ = very strong intersection

Excessive details are reduced from Matrix 4 with the help of standardisation and with qualitative transformation of findings. This way, we can concentrate on basic main messages at this high level of generality. The interpretation of diagonal cells in the correlation matrix is equal to the interpretation of the same cells in the input-output matrix. However, the findings in diagonal cells of Matrix 4 are new – they show synergy in the organisation O from the intersectional point of view regarding their correlates: Executive processes (“ep”, in Figure 2), Adaptability to public demands (“es” in Figure 2) and External relationships (“ps” in Figure 2). With the assessment of strength in correlation links, we finally obtained the assessment of intersection fields in Figure 3, which were previously described as indicators of integrity i.e. internal coherence of sub-processes in the organisation O.

Figure 3: Upgraded results: synergy between the processes of organisation O



Data sources: Organisation O, own calculations

“Executive processes”, which include human resource management and managing partnerships scored only one star (☆; “ep” in Figure 3) out of the total of five, which points to their *poor quality*. The organisation O manages to connect results at the level of employees with the partnerships enabler results “very weakly”. The partnership results that go in the opposite direction are better, but still “weak” compared to the starting assessment in the employees enabler (Matrix 3). The internal potentials of this processes used in the organisation O are relatively weakly utilised. But still, the quality of processes that would most require the improvements are under internal control of the organisation O. This means that the organisation O can aspire for future improvements irrespective of external circumstances.

The sub-processes assigned to take care of the “Public adaptability” in the organisation O (“es”) and connecting its employees with the society are a bit stronger than the previous ones (☆☆), especially on the account of the “medium” strength existing between the Society Enabler and the Employees’ Results. The organisation O achieves changes in relation to external demands more easily than those relating to internal demands, which is, of course, typical of a hierarchical system having a rigid structure. On the other hand, this finding maybe also depends on the high position of organisation O in the

public administration hierarchy which puts it under stronger pressure in terms of its socially responsibility<sup>1</sup>.

In organisation O's "*External processes*" – the ones connecting Partnerships with the Society – are the most integrated (☆☆☆). The main credit goes to the "very strong" relationship between the Society Enablers and Partnership Results in the organisation O (see Matrix 3). Weaknesses of this organisation concerning the Leadership and Strategy & Planning (see Appendix) are compensated by the ability of the organisation O to respond to client demands and needs<sup>2</sup>. The organisation O is relatively successful in adjusting its core activity to the changing external conditions on which it has no direct influence. On the contrary, these sub-processes relatively "weakly" compensate for weaknesses in Partnership Enablers shown at the level of Society Results. The organisation O is therefore more successful in responding to external conditions instead of creating its own external conditions especially given its narrow environment – among its direct clients and suppliers on which it could have some direct impact. Part of the reasons for weaknesses in leadership can be increasing demand in public domain – connected with inadequate inclusion of partnerships into matters that exceed the core activity of organisation O and have to do with wider impacts on the society as a result of organisation O's strategy and mission.

The integration assessment of sub-processes in organisation O can be made by taking into account all three intersections defining the *Executive, Adaptability and External processes*. The level of integrity in trilateral intersectional area as shown in Figure 3 can be assessed as the average value of the three bilateral intersections formed by "ep", "es", and "sp" – which is at the level of two stars from the total of five, so we evaluated the level of integrity in the organisation O as "weak" (☆☆).

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that it was an internal assessment and therefore could be biased in terms of the internal and external achievements.

<sup>2</sup> The term *clients* refers to external clients and business partners.

## **Discussion of results**

The upgraded model produced a new insight into the organisational (sub) processes and facts, which are not visible when applying the standard CAF procedure. Findings in the two models are different: the standard CAF model shows that Leadership is the most sensitive spot in the organisation O, although it proved to be very successful in some processes. However, its priorities need to be directed more towards the employees (human resource management), whose transformation of enablers (with relatively high scores) into results is not very successful. The potential of its employees is relatively poorly utilised.

Weaknesses in organisation's processes of the most internal nature (human resource management and processes) make hard to believe that its relative success in external processes makes the organisation stronger on the inside as well. Its "social responsibility" does not seem to be addressed in a sustainable way. However, the spotted weaknesses do not put the organisation O in a disadvantage, because its biggest potential lies in activities that depend on its own internal processes (human resource management and processes). Although there is a doubt whether organisation O's level of excellence in its external processes can be maintained in a sustainable way, it definitely has prerequisites for such an achievement.

We can now compare the Process assessment in standard CAF (54 points in Criterion 5) and calculated value of the processes in the upgraded model. The "esp" process in Figure 3 was estimated by using the two-star symbol (☆☆), which means approximately 40 points out of 100. Our process assessment result is significantly lower than that achieved by the standard CAF. Precise measurements should not produce so diverse results. Standard CAF seems to be weak in understanding causes and consequences for change of the organisational processes, which should and is its priority. Standard CAF results (table 1) suggest that leadership of the organisation is weak, however organisation O shows to be very successful in Society Results, for which Leadership is responsible. The reasons for this can be seen in a process approach – Leadership is successful in leadership processes that don't need support of the employees. Key problems of the organisation O do not lie in the Enablers, that show the least scores in table 1 but in Enablers, that score the most: employees and internal processes of human resource management.

## **Conclusions**

Discrepancies between conclusions of internal assessment (CAF) and external assessment of public administration (public opinion surveys, some international comparable indicators) are significant and give the impression that self-assessment according to CAF serves self-affirmation. Staes et al. therefore argue, that CAF nowadays serves better narrow interests of managers in public administrations than those of employees, and the least to a wider society that public administration serves. Let us not forget that CAF results remain internal and not public information.

Our motives to upgrade standard CAF came from CAF users themselves, who welcome the framework for its analytical purposes, but synthesis of findings is hard to do. CAF users recognise that conclusions presented with summarised quantitative scores are not clear enough and are merely descriptive if not missing.

We also believe that proposed framework is inadequate for public administration since it originates in private sector. CAF does not reflect the complex structure of public administration, it cannot ensure causal integrity of the assessment, and its results reveal nothing about the internal consistency of the organisation.

We upgraded CAF taking into account Burke-Litwin's model and Weisboard's input-output approach. Upgraded model is conceptually different – instead of analytical and linear CAF we get the instrument that measures organisation as a network of complex processes. Different results of the two models can therefore be expected.

In the article both types of self-assessment are presented and calculated in the case of public administration organisation O. Our case study shows that the standard CAF results and upgraded CAF findings essentially contradict each other. The results of conventional assessment are trivial and can lead to inconsistent conclusions. The upgraded version, which was developed as an application of original meso evaluation logic (Radej, 2011; Radej et al., 2012), proved to be more logically consistent in fulfilling the original causal intentions of CAF and also to produce interpretation capacity that is superior to the original CAF.

**APPENDIX: Organisation O – CAF criterion calculations (according to the CAF 2006 manual)**

<b>Criterion 1</b>	<b>Enablers – LEADERSHIP</b>	<b>46</b>
Sub-criterion 1.1.	Provide directions for the organisation by developing its mission, vision and values	39
Sub-criterion 1.2.	Develop and implement a system for the management of organisation, performance and change	32
Sub-criterion 1.3.	Motivate and support people in the organisation and act as a role model	57
Sub-criterion 1.4.	Manage the relations with politicians and other stakeholders in order to ensure shared responsibility	55
<b>Criterion 2</b>	<b>Enablers – STRATEGY AND PLANNING</b>	<b>46</b>
Sub-criterion 2.1.	Gather information relating to the present and future needs of stakeholders	48
Sub-criterion 2.2.	Develop, review and update strategy and planning taking into account the needs of stakeholders and available resources	52
Sub-criterion 2.3.	Implement strategy and planning in the whole organisation	59
Sub-criterion 2.4.	Plan, implement and review modernisation and innovation	25
<b>Criterion 3</b>	<b>Enablers – PEOPLE</b>	<b>51</b>
Sub-criterion 3.1.	Plan, manage and improve human resources transparently with regard to strategy and planning	54
Sub-criterion 3.2.	Identify, develop and use competencies of employees, aligning individual and organisational goals	51
Sub-criterion 3.3.	Involve employees by developing open dialogue and empowerment	48
<b>Criterion 4</b>	<b>Enablers – PARTNERSHIPS AND RESOURCES</b>	<b>52</b>
Sub-criterion 4.1.	Develop and implement key partnership relations	51
Sub-criterion 4.2.	Develop and implement partnerships with citizens/clients	57
Sub-criterion 4.3.	Manage finances	52
Sub-criterion 4.4.	Manage information and knowledge	50
Sub-criterion 4.5.	Manage Technology	57
Sub-criterion 4.6.	Manage facilities	43
<b>Criterion 5</b>	<b>Enablers – PROCESSES</b>	<b>54</b>
Sub-criterion 5.1.	Identify, design and improve processes on an ongoing basis	61
Sub-criterion 5.2.	Develop and deliver citizen/client-oriented services and products	68

Sub-criterion 5.3.	Innovate processes involving citizens/clients	34
<b>Criterion 6</b>	<b>CITIZEN/CLIENT ORIENTED RESULTS</b>	<b>58</b>
Sub-criterion 6.1.	Results of citizen/client satisfaction measurement	58
Sub-criterion 6.2.	Indicators of citizen/client-oriented measurement	57
<b>Criterion 7</b>	<b>PEOPLE RESULTS</b>	<b>51</b>
Sub-criterion 7.1.	Results of people satisfaction and motivation measurement	54
Sub-criterion 7.2.	Indicators of people results	47
<b>Criterion 8</b>	<b>Enablers – PEOPLE</b>	<b>58</b>
Sub-criterion 8.1.	Results of societal measurements perceived by the stakeholders	59
Sub-criterion 8.2.	Indicators of societal performance established by the organisation	57
<b>Criterion 9</b>	<b>KEY PERFORMANCE RESULTS</b>	<b>62</b>
Sub-criterion 9.1.	External Results: outputs and outcomes to goals	63
Sub-criterion 9.2.	Internal results	61
Data sources	Organisation O, 2009; unpublished material & own calculations	

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