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QUALITY MANAGEMENT MODELS IN EDUCATION AT THE LOCAL SPECIALIZED AUTHORITY IN THE DOMAIN OF EDUCATION: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS AND PROPOSAL OF AN INTEGRATED MODEL FOR THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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The article comparatively analyzes the main international models and frameworks of quality management in education, with a focus on their relevance and applicability at the level of the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education in the Republic of Moldova. Normative standards (ISO 21001), organizational excellence models (EFQM, Baldrige), the European framework for self-assessment in the public sector (CAF), the Total Quality Management (TQM) philosophy, as well as international comparative assessment tools (PISA and TALIS) are examined. The analysis highlights the conceptual convergences and structural differences between these frameworks and argues for the need for an integrated approach, adapted to the national administrative and educational context. The conclusions support the adoption of a hybrid model, with a strategic foundation in EFQM, complemented by elements from ISO 21001 and CAF, and supported by the use of data provided by PISA and TALIS to substantiate decisions at the local systemic level.

Keywords: *Quality Management, Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education, EFQM, ISO 21001, CAF, Baldrige, PISA, TALIS, Educational Management.*

MODELE DE MANAGEMENT AL CALITĂȚII ÎN EDUCAȚIE LA NIVELUL ORGANULUI LOCAL DE SPECIALITATE ÎN DOMENIUL ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTULUI: ANALIZĂ COMPARATIVĂ ȘI PROPUNERE DE MODEL INTEGRAT PENTRU REPUBLICA MOLDOVA

Articolul analizează comparativ principalele modele și cadre internaționale de management al calității în educație, cu accent pe relevanța și aplicabilitatea acestora la nivelul Organului Local de Specialitate în Domeniul Învățământului (OLSDÎ) din Republica Moldova. Sunt examinate standarde normative (ISO 21001), modele de excelență organizațională (EFQM, Baldrige), cadrul european de autoevaluare în sectorul public (CAF), filozofia Total Quality Management (TQM), precum și instrumentele internaționale de evaluare comparativă (PISA și TALIS). Analiza evidențiază convergențele conceptuale și diferențele structurale dintre aceste cadre și argumentează necesitatea unei abordări integrate, adaptate contextului administrativ și educațional național. Concluziile susțin adoptarea unui model hibrid, cu fundament strategic în EFQM, completat de elemente din ISO 21001 și CAF, și susținut prin utilizarea datelor furnizate de PISA și TALIS pentru fundamentarea deciziilor la nivel sistemic local.

Cuvinte-cheie: *managementul calității, OLSDÎ, EFQM, ISO 21001, CAF, Baldrige, PISA, TALIS, management educațional.*

Introduction

Quality in education is a complex and multidimensional concept that can be interpreted from several perspectives, including excellence, fitness for purpose, transformation, and public accountability, as described by Harvey and Green [5].

More recent approaches also emphasize continuous improvement and the principles associated with Total Quality Management [1,7].

Although international literature has examined a wide range of quality management models, most studies focus on the institutional or national level. As a result, the applicability of these models to intermediate governance structures remains less explored. In the Republic of Moldova, existing research primarily ad-

dresses quality assurance within educational institutions, while the role of quality management at the level of the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education has received comparatively limited attention.

To address this gap, the present study undertakes a comparative analysis of several widely recognized international frameworks, including EFQM, ISO 21001, CAF, and Baldrige [6,7,9], alongside benchmarking tools such as PISA and TALIS [8]. Based on this analysis, the study proposes an integrated hybrid model adapted to the administrative and educational context of Moldova.

Research methodology

The research is of a theoretical-analytical nature and uses a methodology based on documentary analysis and comparative analysis, frequently used in studies in the field of public management and educational policies. The choice of comparative analysis is justified by the diversity of international quality management frameworks and the need to identify an appropriate model for the level of local governance represented by the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education. In educational policy studies, comparative analysis is used to examine the convergences and differences between institutional models, as well as to assess their transferability in different administrative contexts.

The documentary corpus included relevant international standards and frameworks for quality management in education (ISO 21001, EFQM, CAF, Baldrige), as well as documents of international organizations on the comparative assessment of educational systems (PISA, TALIS), developed by the OECD [8, 9]. The ISO 21001 standard was analyzed as a normative reference for educational management systems [6].

The analysis was carried out by:

a. examining the conceptual structure of each framework;

b. identifying the operating logic (normative, reflexive or results-oriented), in correlation with the principles of total quality management;

c. assessing the applicability at the local level (Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education), in relation to the specifics of decentralized public management.

The models were compared based on the following analytical criteria:

1. degree of standardization and prescriptiveness;
2. dominant orientation (processes/results/organizational culture);
3. suitability for the public sector;
4. feasibility of implementation under conditions of limited institutional resources;
5. potential to support continuous improvement and organizational learning;
6. compatibility with the district/municipal administrative structure of the Republic of Moldova.

The dimension of continuous improvement and systemic change was analyzed in relation to theories of educational change [4], in order to assess the sustainability of the proposed model.

In the final stage, the results of the comparative analysis substantiated the proposal of an integrated quality management model for Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education, in which EFQM is used as a strategic framework for organizational excellence, complemented by the normative and self-assessment tools provided by ISO 21001 and CAF. PISA and TALIS data are used as support for evidence-based decisions, in the logic of empirically grounded educational policies [8].

The comparative interpretation was carried out by triangulating the analytical criteria with the targeted management level (Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education), using official documents of the issuing organizations and reporting the analysis to the European standards on quality assurance in education [2].

Analysis of international quality management models

ISO 21001 – normative and process approach

ISO 21001 is the first international standard developed specifically for educational organizations, applying quality management principles from the industrial sector to education. It is based on the PDCA (Plan–Do–Check–Act) cycle, promoting continuous improvement within educational processes and respecting the social responsibilities of educational institutions.

The standard adopts a process-oriented approach, emphasizing that quality outcomes arise from well-defined, documented, and monitored processes. This aligns with total quality management principles, which focus on standardization and performance measurement.

ISO 21001 provides a framework for documenting educational processes, establishing performance indicators, and supporting evidence-based decision-making, ultimately reducing ambiguity and enhancing standardization within institutions like the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education.

However, excessive emphasis on compliance and documentation may lead to bureaucratic formalism if not coupled with a genuine quality culture. Therefore, while ISO 21001 is valuable for structuring organizational processes, it should be integrated into a broader framework that fosters organizational excellence and a quality-oriented culture.

TQM – organizational culture of quality

Total Quality Management (TQM) is an integrative management philosophy that conceives quality as the result of the involvement of all members of the organization and the coherent functioning of internal processes [7]. Unlike normative standards, TQM does not establish formal requirements, but promotes an organizational culture based on collective responsibility and continuous improvement, based on principles such as values-oriented leadership, staff involvement, a systemic approach to processes, data-based decisions, customer orientation and continuous improvement [1,7].

Applied in education, TQM supports the development of an institutional culture of quality, in which teachers, managers and administrative staff assume joint responsibility for organizational performance, in line with the paradigm of the learning organization and the perspective that sustainable educational change depends on the internalization of quality values at the organizational level [4, 10].

However, its predominantly philosophical character also represents a limitation. The lack of a standardized operational structure makes it difficult to implement TQM at a systemic level without complementary tools. In the absence of clear evaluation and monitoring mechanisms, TQM principles may remain at the declarative level, without producing measurable structural changes.

Consequently, TQM provides the cultural foundation of quality management, but requires integration into a more structured strategic and operational framework to produce effects at the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education level.

EFQM – organizational excellence model

The EFQM model is a leading framework for organizational excellence in Europe, highlighting the interplay between enablers and results in performance management [7].

Enablers include leadership, strategy, people, partnerships, resources, and processes, while results focus on performance indicators related to students, staff, society, and the organization.

Figure 1 below illustrates this systemic structure, showing how determinants such as leadership, strategy, people, resources, and processes create conditions for achieving organizational results.

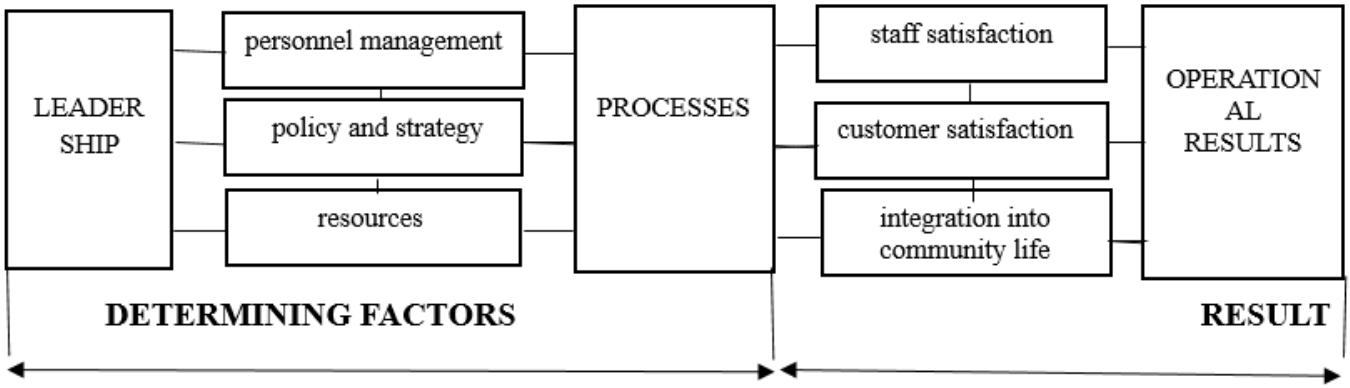

Figure 1. EFQM Model – Systemic Structure of Organizational Excellence

Evaluating these results allows for continuous adjustments, highlighting the model's cyclical nature and the interdependence between leadership and performance outcomes. This correlation is particularly vital in

education, as student performance is influenced by leadership, resources, and pedagogical approaches, as noted in literature on sustainable educational change [4].

The EFQM model enables the Local Specialized Authority in Education to be viewed as an integrated system, facilitating the analysis of the relationship between district strategy and educational outcomes.

It promotes a holistic approach focused on sustainable performance and societal impact rather than just internal efficiency, aligning with contemporary public sector reforms.

However, implementation can be challenging due to its complexity and the need for advanced assessment skills. Despite these challenges, the model's flexibility allows for gradual adoption in the Moldovan context, integrating various quality management tools.

CAF – participatory self-assessment in the public sector

The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is a European model for public administration, designed as an organizational self-assessment tool in the context of public sector modernization (3). Inspired by EFQM, but methodologically simplified, CAF promotes participatory performance analysis and identification of areas for improvement [3]. Structured on nine criteria, the model integrates the determinants and performance results, maintaining the logic of the relationship between processes and results. The participatory dimension favors the consolidation of organizational culture and institutional learning.

In the context of Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education, CAF supports self-assessment and improvement planning. However, its effectiveness depends on the existence of solid data collection and analysis mechanisms; in their absence, the process can become formal and insufficiently results-oriented, contrary to the principles of evidence-based management.

Baldrige – orientation towards measurable performance

The Baldrige Excellence Framework is an American model of organizational excellence characterized by a strong orientation towards measurable results and data-driven management [7]. Structured in seven categories – leadership, strategy, learners, measurements and analysis, workforce, processes and results – the model emphasizes performance quantification and public accountability, in the logic of modern public management reforms.

Applied in education, Baldrige supports the development of a culture of performance and evidence-based decisions, convergent with the use of international assessments such as PISA [9] and with the principles of continuous improvement [1]. At the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education level, the model can strengthen mechanisms for monitoring educational outcomes. However, the predominant emphasis on quantifiable indicators can diminish the attention paid to the qualitative dimensions of the educational process, and effective implementation requires the existence of a solid data infrastructure and institutional analytical capacity.

PISA and TALIS – systemic diagnostic tools

PISA and TALIS are international assessment tools developed for the comparative analysis of the performance of education systems and the teaching-learning environment [8, 9].

PISA provides data on students' functional competencies and provides information on equity, resource use and school management efficiency [9]. TALIS analyzes teachers' working conditions, educational leadership and teaching practices, contributing to the understanding of the organizational climate and internal processes [8]. Although they do not constitute quality management models, these tools have a major strategic value for substantiating decisions at the systemic level, being the expression of the evidence-based educational policy paradigm [8].

In the context of the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education, the integrated use of PISA and TALIS data can support self-assessment and strategic planning. However, their effectiveness depends on the existence of local capacity to analyze and interpret data, an essential condition for transforming information into relevant interventions.

Critical comparative synthesis of quality management models

The analysis of international quality management models highlights the existence of distinct paradigms, which reflect different ways of conceptualizing organizational performance and educational management. Beyond structural differences, these models can be grouped according to their epistemological orientation and the relationship they establish between processes, results and organizational culture.

Fundamental epistemological distinctions

From a theoretical perspective, the analyzed models can be positioned on three main conceptual axes:

1. Normative dimension in relation to the reflective dimension:

- ISO 21001 is predominantly located on the normative axis, being focused on establishing minimum requirements and demonstrating conformity.
- CAF and TQM are rather reflexively oriented, emphasizing self-assessment and organizational learning.
- EFQM and Baldrige occupy an intermediate position, combining systemic analysis with performance evaluation.

2. Process dimension versus results-oriented dimension:

- ISO 21001 privileges process stability.
- Baldrige prioritizes measurable results and demonstrable impact.
- EFQM makes an explicit integration between processes and results.
- TQM emphasizes processes as the cultural foundation of performance.

3. Structural dimension versus cultural dimension:

- Normative (ISO) and performance-oriented (Baldrige) models have a strong structural dimension.
- TQM and CAF value organizational culture and participation.
- EFQM explicitly integrates the cultural dimension into its strategic architecture.

Conceptual convergences and structural limits of the models analyzed

Despite differences in structure and methodological orientation, the models analyzed converge on a common core of fundamental principles of contemporary quality management. These include the importance of leadership as a catalyst for performance, the need to use data to substantiate decisions, beneficiary orientation, commitment to continuous improvement and public accountability. The convergence of these principles indicates that quality management in education goes beyond the strictly procedural paradigm and is part of a systemic logic of sustainable performance, in which processes, organizational culture and results are interdependent.

However, critical analysis highlights that this conceptual convergence does not eliminate the structural limits of the isolated application of each model, especially at the local level, the intermediate educational management level. ISO 21001 offers procedural rigor and operational clarity, but does not sufficiently integrate the strategic and cultural dimension of performance. TQM strengthens organizational culture and collective responsibility, but does not provide clear operational tools for systemic coordination. CAF is appropriate to the specifics of public administration and stimulates participatory self-assessment, but remains predominantly an internal diagnostic tool. The Baldrige model provides a robust framework for performance assessment, but assumes a developed data infrastructure and an organizational culture oriented towards their systematic use. Finally, PISA and TALIS provide relevant comparative data for decision-making, but do not constitute in themselves a quality management architecture.

Consequently, the isolated use of any model risks leading either to procedural formalism, or to strategic fragmentation, or to the unilateral emphasis on some dimensions of performance to the detriment of others.

Justification for the selection of the EFQM model

Regarding the context of the Republic of Moldova, the EFQM model presents a series of structural and epistemological advantages that justify its selection as a reference model for the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education level.

1. *Systemic integration.* EFQM explicitly correlates leadership and strategy, resource management, educational processes, outcomes for students and society. This interdependence allows the district to be treated as an integrated educational system, not as a sum of individual institutions.

2. *Flexibility and gradual implementation.* Unlike certifiable standards, EFQM does not require mandatory external auditing, which allows gradual adaptation depending on organizational maturity.

3. *European compatibility.* As a European model of excellence, EFQM is aligned with the strategic guidelines of European educational policies and facilitates systemic convergence.

The model proves to be appropriate for intermediate management, as it facilitates strategic coordination at the district level under conditions of normative flexibility and conceptualizes performance as an expression of organizational capacity for learning, innovation and adaptation, not exclusively as a quantifiable result.

Substantiating an integrated model

The critical analysis leads to the conclusion that the optimal solution for OLSDÎ is not the exclusive adoption of a model, but the development of an integrated architecture, in which EFQM functions as a strategic core, ISO 21001 provides procedural support, CAF supports participatory self-assessment, PISA and TALIS provide data to substantiate decisions.

This integrated approach allows overcoming the limits of each framework and creates the premises for the development of local management oriented towards sustainable performance and societal impact.

From an epistemological and operational perspective, EFQM represents the model that achieves the most coherent articulation between: strategic dimension, process dimension, cultural dimension, results dimension.

Therefore, its selection as a reference model for quality management at the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education level is justified both theoretically and pragmatically.

The proposed integrated model for Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education

Based on the comparative analysis and critical synthesis previously developed, an integrated quality management model is proposed at the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education level, which combines the advantages of a strategic framework for excellence (EFQM) with the procedural rigor of a normative standard (ISO 21001), the participatory support of a self-assessment tool (CAF) and the use of international data (PISA/TALIS) to substantiate evidence-based decisions.

The model is designed as an intermediate-level quality management architecture, in which Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education acts as a mediator between national policies and the autonomy of educational institutions, ensuring strategic coherence, analytical capacity and continuous improvement at the local scale.

Design principles of the integrated model

The proposed integrated model is based on four design principles, derived from the conceptual convergences of the analyzed frameworks and adapted to the feasibility requirements of the administrative context in the Republic of Moldova.

1. *Systemic approach.* The district/municipality is treated as an integrated educational system, in which performance results from the interdependence between leadership, strategy, resources, processes and results.

2. *Student orientation and equity*. Quality is defined by the impact on students and the community, with an emphasis on reducing disparities and creating public value.

3. *Balance between procedural rigor and organizational reflection.* ISO 21001 ensures process standardization, and EFQM and CAF support the strategic dimension and culture of continuous improvement.

4. *Data-based decision for improvement.* Educational data, including those from national and international assessments, are used for diagnosis and strategic adjustment, in a logic of development, not of sanction.

Architecture of the integrated model

The proposed model has EFQM as its strategic core, providing the framework for organizational excellence and the orientation towards sustainable performance. This core is functionally complemented by ISO 21001, which ensures the standardization of educational and administrative processes, by CAF, which supports participatory self-assessment specific to the public sector, and by the PISA and TALIS instruments, which provide comparative data for evidence-based decisions.

Figure 2 illustrates the integrated architecture of the quality management model proposed for Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education, highlighting the central role of the EFQM model and the functional relationships between the other instruments used.

As seen in Figure 2, EFQM functions as an integrative strategic structure, guiding leadership, strategy and performance assessment at the level of the local education system. Around this core, ISO 21001 contributes to the discipline and standardization of organizational processes, especially administrative and quality assurance processes, ensuring procedural coherence and traceability.

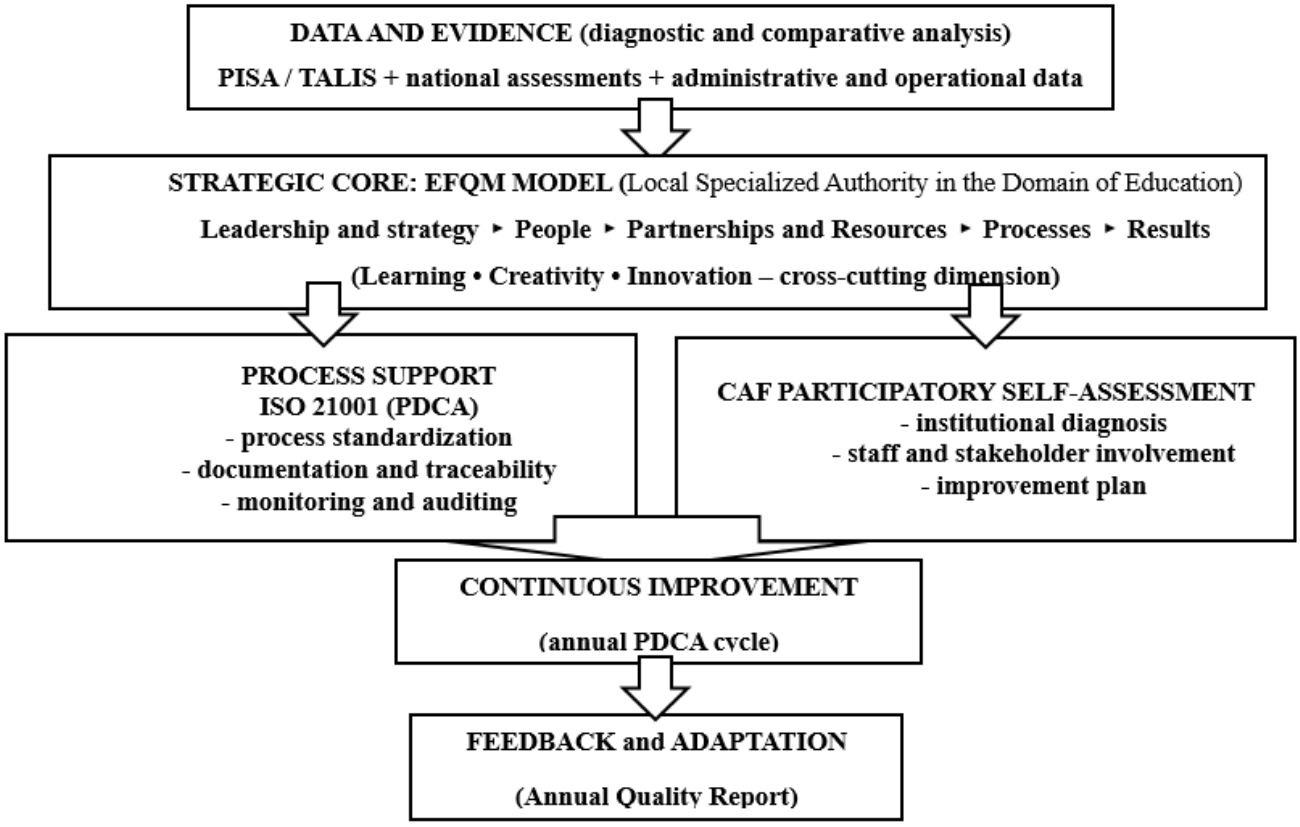

Figure 2. Integrated quality management model for Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education

At the same time, CAF supports the reflective and participatory dimension of public management, facilitating institutional self-evaluation processes and identifying areas for improvement. The international instruments PISA and TALIS do not substitute quality management, but provide relevant comparative data on the performance of the education system and teaching-learning conditions. The integration of this data into the model allows for the substantiation of strategic decisions and the prioritization of educational interventions at the local level.

Through this architecture, the proposed model combines the strategic, procedural, participatory and analytical dimensions of quality management, providing the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education with a coherent framework for coordinating and improving the performance of the local education system.

Implementation stages at district/municipal level

The implementation is proposed as a phased process, integrated into the annual planning cycle of the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education. A 6-stage sequence is recommended, compatible with the PDCA logic and with the EFQM/CAF self-assessment:

Stage 1. *Establishment of the quality management framework*

- designation of the district/municipal quality team (Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education + directors + methodical representatives);
- definition of roles (quality coordinator, data manager, partnership manager, etc.);
- establishment of the annual calendar.

Stage 2. *Initial diagnosis and systemic self-assessment*

- self-assessment based on EFQM criteria at the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education level (maturity, leadership, resources, processes, results);
- CAF self-assessment for the public administration component (participatory, non-punitive);
- data analysis: internal/national assessments, local indicators, PISA/TALIS benchmarks (where applicable).

Stage 3. *Strategic planning of quality at district/municipal level*
- definition of strategic objectives (e.g.: equity, key competencies, professional development, leadership);
- formulation of target indicators and monitoring mechanisms;
- correlation of objectives with national policies and local realities.

Stage 4. *Standardization of key processes and operationalization (ISO 21001)*
- mapping of Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education processes (monitoring, methodological support, training, relationship with schools, communication);
- minimum procedures and documentary flows (reports, feedback, monitoring);
- definition of data collection tools.

Stage 5. *Implementation of interventions and support of institutions*
- differentiated methodological support (depending on results and needs);
- professional development and leadership (mentoring, communities of practice);
- community partnerships for resources and inclusion.

Stage 6. *Monitoring, evaluation and annual feedback*
- annual quality report at district/municipal level;
- review of objectives and processes (PDCA);
- dissemination of good practices and inter-district comparative analyses (in the logic of learning, not sanctioning).

Minimum indicators for quality monitoring at the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education level

To operationalize the proposed integrated model, it is necessary to define a set of indicators that allow for the systematic monitoring of quality at the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education level. In this regard, a minimal set of operationalizable and feasible indicators is proposed, organized according to the logic of the EFQM model, which distinguishes between performance determinants and results generated by the education system. Table 1.1 presents an example of minimal indicators that can be used to monitor quality management at the district or municipal level. The indicators are structured according to dimensions corresponding to the EFQM model (leadership, strategy, people, processes, resources and results) and include, for each category, an operational definition, data sources and recommended collection frequency.

Table 1. Minimum indicators for quality management at the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education (LSADE) level

Dimension (EFQM)	Minimum indicator	Operational definition (example)	Data source	Frequency
Leadership	Quality team functionality	team existence + documented meetings + implemented decisions	LSADE (minutes)	quarterly
Strategy	Quality district plan	approved plan with objectives, indicators, deadlines, responsibilities	LSADE	annual
People	Participation in training	% of teachers participating in relevant	school/ LSADE	month
Processes	Monitoring and feedback	% of schools with written feedback after monitoring and improvement plan	LSADE	month
Partnerships Resources	Active partnerships	no. of functional partnerships (LPA, NGOs, economic agents) + activities carried out	LSADE	annual
Processes (ISO)	Compliance with minimum procedures	existence and application of procedures (reporting, communication, evaluation)	internal audit	annual

Student results	Progress / performance	evolution of results in national/internal assessments (trend)	school /MER*	annual
Equity	Disparities between schools	urban–rural differences / socio-economic quintiles (where possible)	LSADE / school	annual
Personal results	Organizational climate	climate average score from internal questionnaires (satisfaction, collaboration)	school / LSADE	annual
Societal outcomes	Community participation	level of parent/community involvement (participation, consultations)	school / LSADE	annual
Data management	Data quality	completeness/update of educational databases	LSADE	quarterly
Continuous improvement	Implementation of actions	% of actions from the plan completed / ongoing / not started	LSADE	quarterly

** MER -Ministry of Education and Research-depending on the access of the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education to official data and national reporting mechanisms.*

As can be seen in Table 1.1, the indicators combine organizational dimensions and educational outcomes, reflecting the systemic logic of the EFQM model. For example, the indicators on leadership and strategy target the institutional capacity for coordination and planning, while the indicators on processes and resources track the functioning of monitoring mechanisms and methodological support. The outcome indicators (student progress, organizational climate or community participation) allow the assessment of the impact of these processes on the performance of the education system.

The set of indicators is indicative and can be adapted according to the local capacity for data collection and analysis. The use of a small number of relevant indicators facilitates the gradual implementation of the quality management model and reduces the risk of administrative overload of the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education structures.

Methodological note: indicators should be used in the logic of continuous improvement (quality enhancement), not as punitive mechanisms. Annual reporting should include contextual interpretation and qualitative analysis, not just the presentation of numerical values.

The proposed integrated model thus provides a coherent architecture for quality management at the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education level, compatible with educational management at the local, district or municipal level and with the need to balance the strategic, process and participatory dimensions of educational governance. EFQM functions as a strategic and systemic benchmark, ISO 21001 disciplines processes, CAF strengthens participatory self-assessment, and PISA and TALIS support evidence-based decision-making. Phased implementation and the use of minimal indicators can contribute to the development of an institutional culture oriented towards quality and continuous improvement at the local level.

Recommendations for operationalizing the integrated model at the *Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education* level

The implementation of the integrated quality management model at the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education level requires the transposition of the conceptual framework into a coherent set of organizational mechanisms, functional procedures and managerial practices. Operationalization must be carried out gradually, with attention to the local institutional capacity and the need to build a quality culture.

Institutionalization and integration of quality management into the governance of the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education

To avoid the declarative nature of the integrated model, quality management must be formally institutionalized at the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education level and integrated into the annual planning and reporting cycle, becoming a permanent mechanism of educational management at the local level.

It is recommended to establish a district/municipal quality team, with a strategic and analytical role, clearly define responsibilities for coordination, data analysis and monitoring, as well as explicitly include quality management in job descriptions and the Annual Activity Plan. The self-evaluation and reporting process must be regulated by a formalized internal framework.

The model must be correlated with existing administrative processes (planning, reporting, institutional evaluation), by integrating quality objectives in annual documents and developing an Annual Report on the quality of education at the district/municipal level, focused on analysis and interpretation. Effective operationalization requires aligning the model with existing administrative structures, not creating parallel mechanisms.

Developing the capacity to analyze educational data

A critical element for the functioning of the model is the capacity of the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education to use data systematically and interpretively. It is recommended: appointing a person responsible for analyzing educational data; using standardized collection and interpretation tools (analysis sheets, comparative matrices); training staff in basic skills regarding statistical analysis and interpretation of indicators; using PISA/TALIS data and national assessments to identify local strategic priorities. Data-based decision-making must be oriented towards support and development, not punishment.

Process standardization and participatory self-evaluation

The implementation of the integrated model involves correlating the process dimension (ISO 21001) with the reflective dimension (CAF), so that procedural rigor is supported by organizational learning. It is necessary to map the key processes of the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education and develop minimal standardized procedures, accompanied by periodic review and simplified internal audit, in a proportional logic that avoids excessive bureaucracy.

In addition, it is recommended to institutionalize an annual participatory self-evaluation, based on collective reflection and organizational diagnosis, finalized by a clearly structured improvement plan. Self-evaluation must be oriented towards continuous development and adaptation, not towards administrative formalism.

Differentiated support for educational institutions

The operationalization of the model involves adapting interventions to the level of performance and the needs of each institution. It is recommended: classify schools according to relevant indicators (performance, equity, resources); provide differentiated methodological support (mentoring, counseling, training); facilitate the exchange of good practices between schools; monitor progress in the logic of continuous improvement. The Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education should act as a facilitator of development, not exclusively as a control body.

Inter-district comparative analysis and management of implementation risks

To stimulate systemic learning, it is recommended to establish a voluntary mechanism for comparative analysis between districts/municipalities, based on the exchange of annual reports, thematic meetings between quality managers, the use of common indicators and the dissemination of good practices. Comparative analysis should be oriented towards cooperation and mutual learning, not towards competitive ranking.

The implementation of the model may encounter risks such as resistance to change, excessive bureaucratization, reduced capacity for data analysis or the perception of evaluation as a punitive mechanism. To reduce them, transparent communication regarding the purpose of the model, gradual application, simplification of procedures, and strengthening of skills through training and continuous methodological support are required.

Conclusions

The comparative analysis shows that contemporary quality management models in education go beyond the logic of procedural compliance and emphasize sustainable performance, leadership and organizational learning. ISO 21001 provides process rigor and traceability, TQM supports quality culture, and EFQM and Baldrige integrate performance in a systemic framework, with different orientations (holistic vs. measurable results). CAF complements these frameworks through participatory self-assessment adapted to the public sector, and PISA/TALIS contributes as diagnostic and comparative analysis tools, without providing

an educational management architecture. For the context of the Republic of Moldova, the Local Specialized Authority in the Domain of Education level requires an integrated solution, since the isolated application of a single model risks procedural formalism or strategic fragmentation. The study proposes a hybrid model with an EFQM strategic core, complemented by ISO 21001 (processes) and CAF (self-assessment), supported by the systematic use of data (including PISA/TALIS) for improvement-oriented decisions. Operationalization through the annual PDCA cycle and a minimal set of indicators creates the premises for coherent local management, oriented towards equity and impact. The limitation of the study remains the conceptual nature of the proposal, which justifies pilot testing in districts / municipalities and empirical evaluation of the effects on educational performance and equity.

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