

BANNER HEADING: QUALITY AND OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE WITH DANIEL ADJEONG

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TOWARDS AN EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF A NATIONAL QUALITY POLICY (NQP)- PART ONE

The 13-May Daily Graphic feature captioned “Cabinet approves National Quality Policy...” has sent a wave of excitement through the Quality community. I have been following this conversation over the past seven years since it has been up on the plates. So, I believe these are exciting times for all those advocates who have sought to see the pursuit of quality and excellence becoming a part of national psyche; and even as far as seeing quality and its best practices as a much needed but a gravely missing part of our national development recipe.

Background to the Legislation

Ghana’s National Quality Policy derives from the Directive Principles of State Policy and in particular Chapter Six of the 1992 Constitution articles 36 (1) and (3) which state as follows:

- 36(1) The State shall take all necessary action to ensure that the national economy is managed in such a manner as to maximize the rate of economic development and to ensure the maximum welfare, freedom and happiness of every person in Ghana and to provide adequate means of livelihood and suitable employment and public assistance to the needy.
- 36(3) The State shall take appropriate measures to promote the development of agriculture and industry”.

This piece of legislation gives approval to the NQP to operationalise a National Quality Infrastructure (NQI). A Quality Infrastructure (see Fig. 1) is the totality of the institutional framework (public or private) required to establish and implement Standardization, Metrology (scientific, industrial and legal), Accreditation and Conformity Assessment Services (inspection, testing and product- and system certification) necessary to provide acceptable evidence that product and services meet defined requirements, be it demanded by regulatory authorities (technical regulation) or the market place (contractually or inferred). The National Quality Infrastructure is an important architectural framework and tool that can be utilized to improve competitiveness and facilitate global trade. This should be complemented by the development of quality institutions which embody the principles of transparency, openness and good governance.

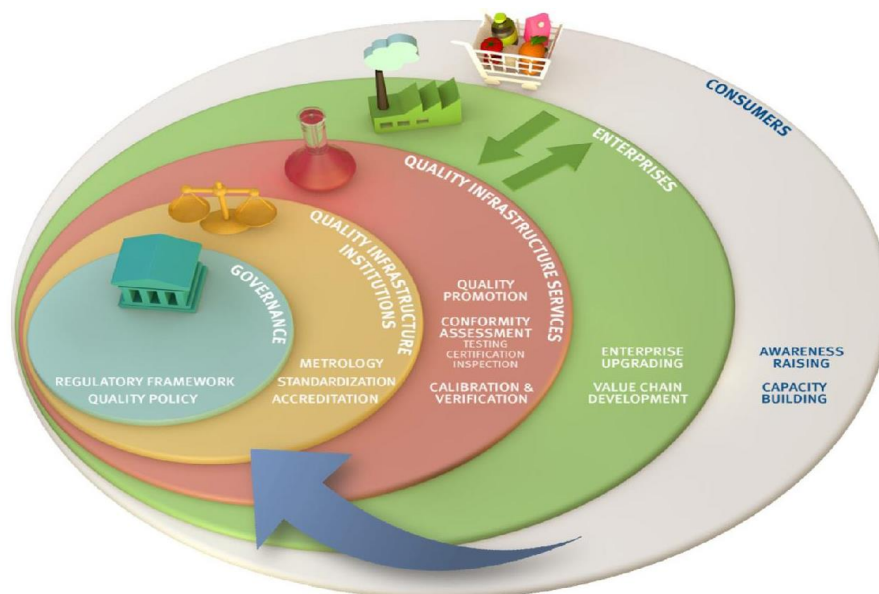


Figure 1 National Quality Infrastructure (Source: UNIDO, 2015)

The Crux of the Matter

So, why all the buzz? Well, for those of us in the Quality space, this is such a long-awaited but greatly welcomed piece of legislation. It would mean a whole lot of good things for the people of Ghana. It would mean for instance that:

- Export products going out of Ghana meet the highest level of international conformance requirements- thereby making us export-competitive.
- Imports coming into Ghana are not of inferior quality- thereby giving the greatest of value to the Ghanaian consumer
- Public Service Organisations are more citizen-focused and customer-centric in the delivery of their mandates.
- Tourists visiting Ghana can expect to receive service quality at hotels and other tourism destinations comparable to service they would receive anywhere in the world.
- Manufactured products are of the highest quality

A Visionary Programme-led Approach- The UAE Story

At the maiden launch of the Ghana Quality Organisation in Aug-2017, I shared excerpts of Sunil Thawani's paper titled *"20 Years of Quality Milestones Mark United Arab Emirates' Journey to Excellence"*. The UAE's NQP/NQI programme is still a good story to reiterate here. Fast forward to 2021, Dubai drew in 7.28 million visitors- and is still the holiday destination of choice for millions around the world. While there is no scientific evidence or credible research study to prove it, many quality professionals and indeed many proponents believe that quality and excellence initiatives launched by UAE leaders have made positive contributions in improving the competitiveness of the UAE and making it a happier place in which to live and prosper. Thawani, an American Society of Quality (ASQ) Fellow and member of the ASQ Global Advisory Committee captures the United Arab Emirates (UAE)'s quality journey in these regards:

*"Given the context that the UAE was gradually becoming a service- and knowledge-based economy, UAE's leaders realized the need for organizations to improve quality and customer service to become competitive. Within this context, Dubai's "Drive for Quality" ... was born in the mid-1990s. **Government became the key driver of quality excellence in the UAE, and Organizations started adopting best practices, international standards on quality, business excellence frameworks, and investing in people development.**"*

The key message is this: **Government became the key driver of quality and excellence... and then organisations followed suit.** The UAE's government excellence system has become a global model for governments in achieving the highest levels of quality performance, establishing modernisation programmes, improving performance and productivity, and assessing organisational performance with a focus on outcomes. Excellence has been a strategic option of the UAE Government's work, based on ensuring sustainability, foreseeing the future, developing the capacities of human resources, and employing advanced technologies and future tools.

Key Milestones in the UAE Drive for Quality Programme

It will be insightful to share a few of the key milestones in the UAE **Drive for Quality** programme:

- ❑ **1994. Dubai Quality Award:** Dubai's "Drive for Quality" began with a vision of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the ruler of Dubai, and the vice president and prime minister of UAE, with establishment of the Dubai Quality Award (DQA). The DQA was introduced to improve the business standards of those operating in Dubai, and thus boosting external and internal trade.
- ❑ **1994. Establishment of the Dubai Quality Group (DQG):** DQG is a not-for-profit business organization to develop and promote quality and business excellence practices in UAE. The DQG has made positive contributions in raising the voice of quality and enhancing competencies.
- ❑ **1995. ISO 9000:** Around the same time, organizations started implementing international quality management systems standards, including ISO 9000. In 1995, 104 certifications were issued in UAE. The figure has increased to more than 3,620 according to the 2020 ISO Survey Report.

- ❑ **1996. Master of Quality Management (MQM):** The University of Wollongong in Dubai started MQM. To date, hundreds of students have acquired formal education in quality and excellence leading to huge capacities in the quality domain. These professionals are working in all types and sizes of organizations to improve business performance and create a culture of quality and excellence.
- ❑ **1998. Dubai Government Excellence Program (DGEP):** To improve delivery of government services to citizens, visitors, and businesses, the Dubai government established the DGEP in 1998 to improve the performance of Dubai's government, and to simplify governmental procedures and improve services. DGEP recognizes and rewards exceptional government employees, departments, and initiatives/projects.
- ❑ **1998. ASQ:** ASQ, the world's largest not-for-profit association of quality professionals, appointed Sunil Thawani the country counsellor for UAE. In 1998–1999, ASQ had a mere 15 members in UAE—a figure that has since grown to about 450 members in 2013. In November 2013, ASQ opened its Middle East North Africa (MENA) office in Dubai. Hundreds of quality professionals have attained ASQ certification in several quality-related programs such as Certified Manager of Quality/ Organizational Excellence (CMQ/OE), Certified Process Analyst (CPA), Certified Six Sigma Green Belt (CSSGB), and more.
- ❑ **2002. Dubai Human Development Award (DHDA):** To develop employees' abilities and emphasize their role in the future of the UAE, the Dubai government launched DHDA in 2002. DHDA recognizes and rewards the HR initiatives undertaken by organizations toward achieving the Dubai human development goal.
- ❑ **2002. Dubai Service Excellence Scheme (DSES):** To promote excellence in customer service standards in the private sector, and to make the experience of shopping in Dubai a pleasurable one, DQA office launched the DSES in 2002. It is a membership-based program wherein member organizations, primarily retail businesses, must commit to customer service excellence standards and code of business ethics and comply. Compliance and commitment is monitored through a robust mystery-shopping program.
- ❑ **2002. Hamdan Bin Mohammed e-University** (formerly e-TQM College)- the world's first online school for the field of Total Quality Management (TQM), and the first "virtual" university in the Middle East. The college was founded in 2002 by the Dubai Police, and by 2004 had 50,000 students.
- ❑ **2013.** H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, UAE Vice President and Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, gave his direction to establish **Emirates Government Excellence Council** (running with a vision to become the leading global reference of government excellence and innovation). The Council includes all federal and local **excellence programs** in the UAE under one umbrella to highlight the leading role of the UAE government in the field of excellence, represent the country regionally and globally, and coordinate efforts and exchange of knowledge and experiences and work as a team to establish excellence as a national culture.

These are the visionary interventions which are driving, consolidating and sustaining UAE's position as a global centre of excellence and a shining example of what a concerted national quality programme ought to look like. In the sequel to this article, I will be sharing ideas on pointers and opportunities for a successful implementation of Ghana's National Quality Policy and Infrastructure.