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Summary

The relationship between government excellence awards and organizational performance remains a topic of debate among decision-makers and researchers. In this policy paper, we discuss the key differences between treating these awards as an end in itself or as a means to an end. We also question the relationship between the implementation of government excellence awards and the effectiveness and efficiency of the public sector.

We also discuss the Qatar Government Excellence Award and highlight its key objectives and points out the major benefits that countries gain from implementing such awards. Finally, we present the main challenges encountered and argues that there is no shortcut to administrative reform. Finally, we conclude with a set of policy recommendations.

Government Excellence Awards

Tools for Administrative Reform and Productivity Enhancement, or a Standardization Mechanisms?

Developing and enhancing institutional and organizational performance in the public sector is a crucial aspect of administrative reform, as it enhances the quality of government services through optimal resource allocation, cost reduction, improves efficiency and effectiveness. Moreover, it promotes transparency, accountability, and resilience to crises. It also fosters innovation and strengthens cooperation and coordination among various government sectors, contributing to better decision-making processes and laying the foundation for long-term sustainable economic development.

Previous experiences have demonstrated that government excellence awards are a vital tool for policymakers to enhance public institution performance. Initially, these awards were proposed to improve the technical quality in large-scale industries, particularly in Japan following World War II. Previous studies and past experiences indicate also that public sector organizations, by engaging in the government excellence awards process, promote continuous improvements and a culture of excellence, which

Consequently, through their participation in these awards, these institutions can receive an assessment of their internal situation from neutral entities, allowing them to review their internal processes and procedures, and compare them with peer organizations. Moreover, winning government excellence awards gives organizations certain competitive advantages, as well as a sense of appreciation and achievement among their staff, thereby creating competition among public sector organizations. Many studies have demonstrated the positive impact of excellence awards on the organizational performance and the extent to which reward system tools generally motivate employees, as such recognition shows the organizations' ability to manage their resources effectively.

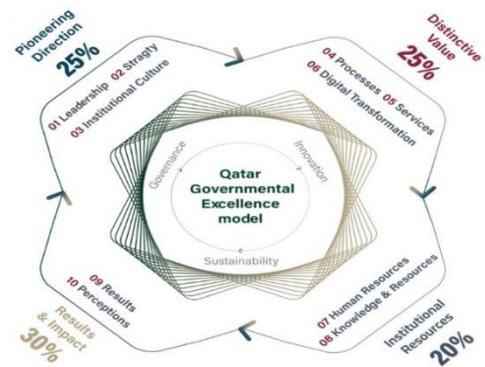
A key challenge for countries introducing these awards is their reliance on standards shaped by the unique traits of certain societies. This raises questions about the applicability of such standards in GCC countries, which have distinct social and economic features. A second challenging question pertains to the issue of adopting criteria based on private sector organizations, which significantly differ from the public sector in aspects such as nature, objectives, and stakeholders.

Moreover, it is also important to highlight that this approach overlooks other institutional forms or experiences that remain underexplored. It also disregards the environmental and societal dimensions in the selection of organizational and institutional structures.

Consequently, it is important to address this issue of standardization mechanism and ensure that its negative impact does not escalate.

The Qatar Government Excellence Award

The Qatar Government Excellence Award was established by Emiri Decision No. 63 of 2023. It aims to elevate the quality of government performance and encourages all government entities to compete through applying quality, development, and excellence in performance. The aim is to honor outstanding achievements and efforts contributing to the realization of Qatar National Vision 2030. The 'Qatar Model for Government Excellence' is given in Figure 1 below.



The Qatar Government Excellence Award aims to achieve a set of objectives (see the Exhibit). For this end, it is important to conduct a comprehensive review of the first cycle experience to setup the basis for a continuous improvement and development for the future cycles.

Exhibit: Objectives of the Qatar Governmental Excellence Model

The Qatar Governmental Excellence model aims to: (1) elevate the level of government services in the country to align with the needs of the Qatari society and increase the consistency in the customer experience, (2) enhance the flexibility of the government sector and improve the quality of outputs, (3) develop the capabilities of human resources to meet future needs and possess appropriate skills and capacities, (4) manage innovation and transition towards smart services, ensuring data accuracy and integrating technology in the country, (5) ensure efficient and effective management of operations to achieve strategic objectives, (6) recognize outstanding efforts and motivate employees of the public sector.

It is also important to rely on the feedback obtained from the different stakeholders, especially those from the public sector. Emphasis should be placed on the necessity of conducting scientific research aimed to analyze the first cycle experience of the award to understand the challenges and assess the extent to which it has achieved

its objectives. The outcomes of the first cycle contributed to assessing and determining the nature of the current level of organizational and institutional performance in Qatar's public sector. In addition, the developmental recommendations that accompanied the process were utilized, which will help in reviewing standards and



mechanisms before announcing the second cycle of the award. This underscores the value of examining the experiences and challenges encountered by various countries, along with the pivotal lessons gleaned. Table 1 below presents certain economic indicators for a selected group of countries:

Country	No. of Minis	Population	Public Sector Employees	Award name	Launch year	No. of main criteria	No. of award categories
Singapore	16	5,640,000	143,000	Digital Services Awards	2021	8	3
Sweden	11	10,520,000	274,081	Swedish Quality Award	1992	12	NA
United Arab Emirates	19	9,560,000	100,000	MBR Government Excellence Award	2009	11	26
Qatar	18	2,830,000	90,000	Qatar Government Excellence Award	2023	10	7

Table 1: Government Excellence Awards and economic indicators for a select group of countries
(Note. MBR denotes Mohammed Bin Rashid).

Policy Recommendations

The effectiveness of government excellence awards is completely related to the clarity of their objectives at the strategic, political, and executive levels of the state. Moreover, announcing the reasons for the excellence of the winning entities and clarifying the main dimensions that contributed to this success is crucial for the future cycles, as this will spread a culture of excellence among other institutions in the country, ensuring the beneficial use of the best local practices.

It is also highly recommended that the responsible entities for the government excellence awards should understand the factors and reasons for winning, exploring the possibility of generalizing these success stories, or come up with new applicable ideas for the public institutions. Moreover, several previous government excellent awards experiences highlighted the need to create awards at the employee level. Others have recommended the necessity to dedicate an archival website space containing all the details of the award and the best local practices.

In addition, by analyzing the experiences of various government excellence awards worldwide, we find that these

awards become a symbol of institutional excellence only, without any proven impact on the performance of public institutions. Countries fall into this trap if they fail to differentiate between the nature of goals and means and mechanisms for dealing with each concept separately.

The lack of differentiation has led many countries to treat government excellence awards as a magical solution for improving organizational and institutional performance in public institutions, overlooking the reality that the positive outcomes of excellence awards are linked to the institutions' prior ability to develop themselves. This policy paper confirms the importance of considering the contextual determinants of each country, along with focusing on the societal culture when shaping the criteria of government awards and excellence models for each country. Such an approach will help to ensure a positive relationship between the effectiveness of public sector institutions and the implementation of government excellence awards. It also affirms the reality that there are no shortcuts to administrative reform, and highlights the necessity of caution against the strategic goals being hindered by the pursuit of quick short-term results.

