

## **The Impact of the King Abdullah (II) Award for Excellence in Government Performance and Transparency in Enhancing the Service Delivery of Public Sector in Jordan**

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**Abstract:** This study is aimed at investigating the impact of the King Abdullah (II) Award for Excellence in Government Performance and Transparency in enhancing the service delivery of public sector in Jordan. To achieve the study aim, a questionnaire was conducted and distributed to 10 top level senior officials and 10 employees to each of the winning government organizations. The questionnaire is designed to investigate the extent of change occurred on a five-point scale as a result of participation in the award's competition and to assess the framework of spreading the culture of quality as a prerequisite for the preparation phase of this award. Additionally, in-depth interviews were conducted with key individuals in charge of the transformation of public sector organizations who won the award where the preparation, change and the results phases were discussed thoroughly. The results of the in-depth interviews commonly shared the composition of a team specifically for the application of the award's criteria and all involved bodies either set a strategic plan or reviewed and updated the already existing one. The questionnaires showed that 66.2, 67.5, 64.3 and 70.5% of the respondents in the Ministry of trade and industry, Jordan Industrial Estate Corporation, The Jordan Institution for Standards and Metrology (JISM). The Customs Department Ministry of Finance, respectively believe that a dramatic change has occurred. The award created a great impact on the governmental organizations yet more efforts are required such intensive awareness sessions intensive training programs for the assessors in order to be fully knowledgeable about the award detailed criteria and how to apply it for each institution as well as thorough studies of the particular organizations to be assessed.

**Key words:** Excellence awards, quality, change, performance, training

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Knowing is not enough. We must apply. Willing is not enough. We must do. Goethe governments around the world are currently swept into a worldwide transformational change due to the fact that government bodies are not responsive to the citizens needs and expectations and while those issues continue to rise, citizens polls show that trust in government is declining rapidly.

Although, a research carried out for the Middle East and North Africa Governance Reports shows that Jordan's public administration quality ranks well in relation with other countries in the MENA region (World Bank, 2003) some problem areas persist. A recent poll conducted by the University of Jordan's Center for Strategic Studies, shows that the public confidence in the government's performance has dropped over the past year and a half due to its inability to tackle unemployment, poverty, declining living standards and the rising cost of living. The 14% of citizens believe that the government

has failed to shoulder its responsibilities compared to the 7% in the same poll conducted upon the government's formation (Al Masri, 2007). The poll is the latest in a series that seeks to measure the national and public opinion leaders initial expectations from the government, following their assessment after a set time in office.

Fueled by such perception of mistrust, government's quest for reform through innovations. Where restoring trust in government will require a committed and assertive leadership which focuses on tangible, continuous, sustainable improvement and development. Along with full transparent involvement of citizens and other sectors in the government's policy making which will reflect better performance service delivery. There is more to change than speed. Ghandi it has been said that change is the constant and to cope with change strategies for excellence are needed. Organizations and people need to adapt if they want to stay part of the competitive globe.

Nowadays excellence awards became an integral part of organizations that seek innovation in their system one which would turn at a later step into a best practice.

Its also utilized as a tool to assess and measure the intended outcomes and achievements of the organization through its standards and criteria. In this case, benchmarking would help in conducting initial self assessment.

As a result some governments in the Arab region initiated the excellence awards, based on the European Quality Award (EFQM) as well as other models. The first excellence award in the Arab region was the Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashed Excellence Award in Dubai during 1997. Other countries followed in their step and initiated their own based on similar modality of excellence while weaking it to meet the national context (Dubai Government Excellence Programme, 2006).

The Jordanian government introduced the excellence culture in 1999 when King Abdullah II initiated the first excellence award aimed at the private sector (KAAP, 1999). In 2003, he took the initiative for creating an award for government performance and transparency where its impact on the change management in the public sector in general and on the government organizations who won the award will be the subject of this study.

**Background:** In October 2003, Abdullah (II), king of Jordan stated in his designation letter to the government. We look forward to a government that establishes a framework for the evaluation of its performance, progress towards its goals, techniques and methodology. It should also set methods for self-correction. We want a government whose action speaks for it, one that couples words with deeds (Royal Hashemite Court, 2003).

In response the government developed a national strategy for administrative reform which focuses mainly on decentralizing the decision-making process and eliminating red tape. This continuous process aims at improving the quality of civil servants through training and education in addition to enhancing the efficiency of the system through the introduction of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) into every facet of government work as well as transparent and effective tax system and improved tax collection mechanisms (Royal Hashemite Court, 2004). This in turn resulted with the development of certain strategic plans. Namely:

- Public sector reform 2004 to 2009. Better government, delivering better results
- National agenda (2005 to 2015)
- Regionalization program 2005
- Judicial reform program 2004

All these programs are built according to the concept of good governance towards democracy (Ministry of Public Sector Reform, 2007).

**Public sector reform initiatives in Jordan:** The latest public sector reform running between 2004 and 2009 is based on prior initiatives that are summarized chronologically:

- 1984 Royal committee for administrative reform
- 1989 to 1992 Management development of the public sector in Jordan (UNDP project)
- 1989 to 1996 Royal committee for modernization and reform
- 1994 to 1999 Ministry of Administrative Development MoAD
- 1999 Public sector reform committee (phase I) 2002 Public sector reform committee (phase II)
- 2004 to 2006 Public Sector Development Project
- 2006 present prime ministry-public Sector Development Administration PSDA

The public sector reform is based on certain main principles including:

- Results oriented based where the achievement of results is the essential measure in the process of policy development, institutions development and procedure identification
- Transparency where effective mechanisms (Royal Hashemite Court, 2004) for public accountability assurance on the government policies and performance must be provided
- Decentralization where a transfer of authorities for results achievement to lower executing levels as much as possible must be done with a condition of full empowerment and provision of needed administrative authorities to employ the required resources effectively
- Optional utilization of financial resources where all governments practices and processes must be based on the optional utilization of financial resources based on results achievement that reflect the best value possible for taxpayers
- The aim of the public sector reform is to develop and enhance governmental performance in order to go in line with the national agenda's policies and programs through the following five dimensions:
  - Enhancement of policy making and decision taking dimension
  - Restructuring of government organizations dimension
  - Performance management and service delivery development dimension
  - Human resources management dimension
  - Financial resources management dimension

The Public Sector Development Administration (PSDA) will be responsible for providing all the necessary methodologies and tools and the support to promote better service delivery. Objectives of the PSR program are as follows:

- Lead implementation of PSR program and ensure sustainability in collaboration with relevant stakeholders
- Develop capacity of the public sector, performance and productivity and improve service delivery and streamline procedures
- Develop human resources policies and implementation
- Provides incentives to change cultural behavior in the public sector

Parallel to that the King of Jordan initiated in 2002 an award for public sector and designated a royal committee for this purpose. To demonstrate his government's focus on increased openness to the public and to be attached to the reform goals, objectives, principles and aims, the term transparency was included in the award's title which is clearly reflected in the finance criteria.

King Abdullah (II) award for excellence in government performance and transparency emphasizes innovation as it is believed that a commitment to innovation can restore citizens trust. It is the government's philosophy that innovations should be geared towards consistent sustained reform where each innovation becomes a best practice.

**King Abdullah (II) award for excellence in government performance and transparency:** This award was not only initiated by the King in 2002 but he also appointed the board of trustees assigning Prince Faisal to chair it aiming to enrich the credit and value of the award which now finished its 3rd round and became under the umbrella of King Abdullah II Center for Excellence (KACE).

The award's vision reads towards rooting culture of excellence among Jordanian government organizations where organizations and individuals focus their efforts and research to excel in their performances in order to reach the best international practices. The aim of the award is to enhance the role of the public sector in serving the Jordanian society in large through awareness, dissemination of TQM and performance excellence and transparency knowledge where the main focus will be in certain issues including customers, results and transparency (KAA, 2006). Figure 1 the main criteria:

- Leadership
- People

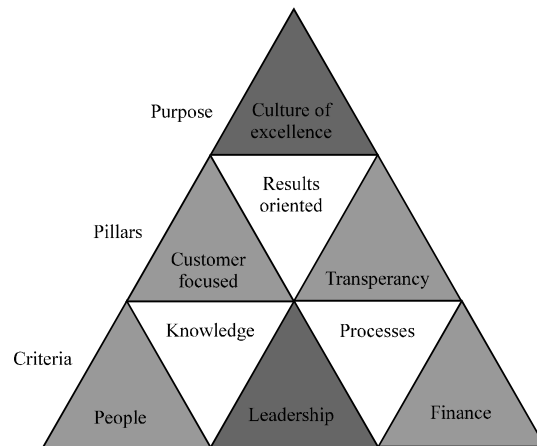


Fig. 1: The main criteria (KAA, 2007a)

- Process
- Knowledge
- Finance (KAA, 2007a, b)

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Literature review of The King Abdullah II Award for Excellence in Government Performance and Transparency and relevant documents. In-depth interviews with key individuals in charge of the transformation of public sector organizations who won the award where three phases had been discussed thoroughly, namely the preparation, change and the results phase. Those organizations are:

- Ministry of industry and trade (best ministries)
- Jordan industrial estate corporation (best ministry/public institution participating for the first time)
- Jordan's customs department-ministry of finance (best accomplishment)
- The Jordan institute for standards and metrology (JRSN) (best public institution/department)

A questionnaire was conducted and distributed to 10 top level senior officials and 10 employees in each of the above mentioned government organizations. The questionnaire designed to investigate the extent of change occurred, on a five-point scale as a result of participation in the award's competition and to assess the framework of spreading the culture of quality as a prerequisite for the preparation phase of this award. Data gathering and analysis was conducted. Findings were derived and recommendations reported.

**Case studies:** All cases share common features which are:

- A committed enthusiastic leadership
- They are either setting a strategic plan or reviewing and updating the existing one
- A team was composed to deal with the award

**Ministry of trade and industry:** It's their third winning participation. The ministry had utilized an external professional TQM team for the transformational era from the 1st year which supported the ministry in devising, articulating and formulating the processes for the purpose of adoption and implementation with an internal counter team in order to empower them to continue the process in the future.

In the preparation phase, the ministry formed a committee composed of senior officials who met on weekly basis to institutionalize the criteria of the award as an innovation tool to turn to a best practices. Also, the ministry introduced and disseminated the culture of excellence as a main priority.

In the change phase, the committee modified the processes and procedures in order to go in line with the award criteria. The committee also usually fixed the deficiencies in the process, in order to maintain better performance to satisfy the strategic customers.

In the result phase, a new culture of excellence was created on continuous and sustained basis through an institutionalization processes. The ministry introduced suggestions and complaints as well as an evaluation of the minister and top leaders by their subordinates. Employees' satisfaction surveys were conducted on continuous basis. Noting that the ministry got the highest score for the customers satisfaction criteria which is 40% of the whole score. Also, all laws and bylaws and procedures were modified and upgraded for example, the incentive system was changed to be conducted on monthly instead of annual basis in order to stimulate better innovation and excellence. The ministry also modified the importers card to be renewed every 3 years instead of 1 year. Additionally, the ministry developed regulations and instructions for the financial matters and displayed them on the website.

**Jordan Industrial Estate Corporation JIEC (first time participation):** In the preparation phase, the Jordan Industrial Estate Corporation who participated in the award for the first time, conducted an awareness and training sessions for their employees. Upon which they organized and redesigned the corporation processes according to the award criteria. Furthermore, they made a self-assessment using the template of the award to figure out the deficiencies.

In the change phase, JIEC recomposed the board council to go in line with good governance principles. Then, they redesigned the questionnaire for the investors satisfaction to include certain measurable indicators as a result, a change in the process had been introduced in order to give specific results according to the measurable indicators. Also, there were certain administrative changes including displaying the organizational structure as well as the names of the divisions. It also created a method to conduct deals electronically.

In the result phase, JIEC empowered their employees with communication skills and authority in order to help and serve customers in a better manner. In addition, all information needed for clients were displayed on the corporation's website where it was partially presented before. Furthermore, a planning and follow up committees were established in order to study and analyze the outcome of the customers needs and expectations. The same committee is in charge of studying the findings of the employees satisfaction surveys. Each supervisor discussed the findings, thoroughly with his subordinates to have further feedback regarding the customers satisfaction surveys. One more result was the preparation of documentation for many activities within the corporation where the management can provide stakeholders with the needed information.

**The Jordan Institution for Standards and Metrology (JISM):** Participated for the third time where it won the first time but failed to win the 2nd year and won again the 3rd year. Preparation phase: JISM are familiar with the award requirements and procedures given its their third participation and the nature of its research based on quality standards. Thus, continuous training and awareness regarding technical and managerial issues were conducted. In addition, JISM conducted awareness for the external customers and partners that include the universities, research centers, labs, industrial and commercial sector and consumers. Taking that into consideration JISM had a quality system since, 1995.

As for the change phase, in order to go in line with the preparation for the award certain actions were added in the change phase. Including forming a team including a champion for each criterion, modification of procedures as well as the vision and the mission statement. Also, JISM modified the questionnaire for customers satisfaction in order to fit the award criteria. They allowed their strategic partners and customers to participate in the development of the strategic plan. Moreover, they developed many questionnaires for customers' satisfaction as well as for their employees. Procedures and standards were unified and became equitable.

Streamlining was developed and prices and fees were announced through the internet. In fact the award fastened the process of e-government in the JISM.

The result phase for the JISM included creation of performance department in order to monitor all activities relevant to the award. Also, they established a Knowledge Management Department to go in line with the award requirement. JISM activated the website to include all activities, services and prices. In addition, JISM introduced the express service for customers with extra fees and they intend to develop a national accreditation system through adopting international guidelines and template which go beyond the award requirements.

**The customs department Ministry of Finance:** Third participation and first win, ranked eighteen the 1st, thirteen the 2nd year. In the preparation phase: The department was familiar with the award and knew about their weakness from the feedback report of their previous participation, thus they conducted workshops and training sessions parallel to that conducted by the award center for the human resources.

In the change phase, they focused on the human resources satisfaction, performance, incentives, transparency and equity as well as empowering them through training and authority. They developed the vision and mission statement in a collective manner where all employees were involved in the process. They also allowed all stakeholders including their employees to participate in developing the strategic plan which is based on customer-satisfaction. Furthermore, the department conducted a SWOT analysis in order to develop the comprehensive plan. The award provoked the department to design a job description and to update the customs form (Asycoda) according to the national system and they develop it to be Asycoda word document. The award stimulated the department to get the ISO certification for two centers. They introduced a new HR electronic system called Mena-Me for employees leave, to start with where they will expand its utilization for other HR functions. They introduced a flash card through the intranet regarding communication skills and they connected the incentives with individual performance as well as the division's performance. The department contracted with external company for the purpose of the mystery shopper to assess their service delivery. They also conducted external and internal surveys regarding satisfaction in order to be studied and analyzed twice a year.

In the result phase, a change in attitude and behavior of employees towards customers occurred as a result of the intensive training, the focus on them and their

empowerment was reflected on their personal life. The department established a quality unit. In addition, the award approach smoothed resistance of change among all employees. As a result of the far distance between the center and the field centers, the dissemination and transformation of the best practices among the employees was considered to be difficult in terms of time and effort. However, the customs department was able to smooth it through simple, effective messages by the intranet, concerning communication skills and quality culture.

For purposes of transparency they developed a customs encyclopedia which includes instructions, reports, minutes of meeting, suggestions and internal and external complaints. All disseminated through intranet where the internal complaints are taken care of by the quality unit whereas the external ones by the public relations and international cooperation section. The customs department lack professional financial planning and studies regarding cost of service. They also lack professionalism in the material they are in the process of developing a special program for material management to go in line with the international criteria. They are also in the process of developing a system for suppliers, providers and tenders. They established customers service unit linked with the electronic system for providing service to clients.

The customs department had developed a communication plan with the public to show that the role of the department is not only revenue generation but it has other security and safety rules regarding important issues. Such as combat smuggling and illicit trade activities as well as protecting local community and environment from terrorism and hazardous substances. Moreover, combating money laundry.

**General comments:** In the interview, some expressed comments concerning the assessors that they lack the experience and the know how of the institution, so it becomes difficult for them to be evaluated by somebody who is not familiar with the institutions policies, procedures, scope of work.

Regarding the criteria, some of them have commented that the criteria should be developed and adapted according to the national context. For example, the criteria of transparency. Some of the government institutions have their own independent system that includes the budget whereas other departments are linked directly to the public budget department, so when they want to apply the criteria of financial matters they have nothing to be assessed upon, so the assessors might give them a zero which is unfair. Or they would link their score to their mother department which is also unfair. The knowledge management is considered to be to most of them as IT.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Questionnaire results:** The change survey showed high results regarding the occurrence of dramatic change which averaged 67.1. The results will be discussed:

**Ministry of trade and industry:** The survey showed that 66.2% of the respondents believe that a dramatic change has occurred. Whereas, 33.8% of the respondents think that the change that occurred is moderate.

The fact that the ministry has been participating in the award for 3 years, justifies that only 66.2% find the change dramatic as the drastic changes had already occurred and were built and institutionalized in the system in the earlier years.

**Jordan industrial estate corporation:** The survey showed that 67.5% of the respondents believe that a dramatic change has occurred. Whereas, 32.5% of the respondents think that the change that occurred is moderate. The reasons behind these percentages were: it is the first time that the corporation participates in such an award. Since, it was the first participation, it is expected that 32.5% of the respondents were still not affected by the change that was taking place.

**The Jordan Institution for Standards and Metrology (JISM):** The survey showed that 64.3% of the respondents believe that a dramatic change has occurred. Whereas, 35.7% of the respondents think that the change that occurred is moderate. Since, this is their third participation where they won the 1st year but failed the 2nd year. The changes that occurred in the 3rd year were concentrated on the deficiencies that led to their failure in the former year.

**The customs department Ministry of Finance:** The survey showed that 70.5% of the respondents believe that a dramatic change has occurred. Whereas, 29.5% of the respondents think that the change that occurred is moderate. This department is composed of many divisions which are scattered around the country, hence, spreading the culture of quality was hindered by the distances between the sub-departments.

## CONCLUSION

The King Abdullah II award for government performance and transparency, created a great impact on the governmental organizations however more efforts are needed particularly to enable the mental change required to adopt and to the new excellence culture. Additionally, human resources empowerment and financial resources to reach the acceptable level of service delivery are required. The award underlines a healthy balance in the relationship

between the government's management and wider membership stakeholders in the society and that progress and atmosphere does not occur that fast and serious without such an award.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

More intensive awareness sessions are direly needed. Develop the criteria according to a national context. Intensive training programs for the assessors in order to be fully knowledgeable about the award detailed criteria and how to apply it for each institution. Thorough study of the particular intended organization to be assessed.

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