

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMON ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK (CAF)
AS A QUALITY MANAGEMENT INSTRUMENT IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR
OF THE FYR OF MACEDONIA**

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Abstract

This paper is a result of the conducted analysis and study on the process of implementation and the future activities for wider usage of CAF model in public institutions in the FYR of Macedonia. The country has established strong legal and institutional framework for implementation of CAF model. Significant number of institutions in the country have introduced CAF, and national pool of CAF facilitators/trainers and practitioners has been established for further expansion of the model. CAF is perceived as very useful instrument for improving public services in the FYR of Macedonia. In order for more public institutions to introduce the CAF model, a national roadmap for promotion and wider usage of CAF needs to be adopted, more promotional events should be organized and the Ministry of Information Society and Administration should work on building the capacity and the knowledge of the top management in the public sector for the benefits of CAF.

Key words: *Common Assessment Framework, quality, management, standards.*

Introduction

The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is a European instrument for quality management in the public sector, based on a self-assessment of a public institution. The introduction of international quality management methods stems from the need to improve services to citizens and their growing expectations in building an efficient and modern civil service. Furthermore, on the path towards European Union integration, the FYR of Macedonia is determined to adopt the values and standards of other EU Member States' public institutions. Thus, this model was implemented as part of a set of tools introduced for the promotion and implementation of quality principles in the country's Administration.

In order to assess the challenges in the implementation of the CAF model in the FYR of Macedonia and develop recommendations for its promotion, as a quality management instrument, a study was conducted by the Ministry for Information Society and Administration (MISA). The study encompassed all the certified CAF facilitators and trainers in the country. It also included an analysis of the activities implemented for the introduction of the CAF model in the public administration in the FYR of Macedonia. The results of this study were discussed during a workshop³ and suggestions for improvement in the CAF model implementation process were put forward.

Reasons for introducing the CAF model in the FYR of Macedonia

Public administration in the FYR of Macedonia - as well as in other parts of the world - faces

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³ The workshop was titled: "Introduction of CAF model as an instrument for quality management in the public sector". It was attended by the certified trainers/facilitators for the implementation of the CAF model in public institutions in the FYR of Macedonia.

constant pressures and challenges to innovate and improve its effectiveness and efficiency. The need for improving services to citizens, building and efficient, modern and transparent civil service that will ensure high quality of work is a key determination of the Administration of the country.

Thus, it needs to find new methods for assessing and improving the quality of work performed. Several international standards and tools exist for assessing the quality of work performed and the management of the organisation, e.g. the ISO standards, the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), the British Standard Investors in People (BSIP), the Model of the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM), the Balanced Scorecard (BSC), etc. They are all designed in such ways to help organisations ensure traceability of processes, learn from their own experience, constantly improve and be successful in providing services to citizens.

One of the most frequently used quality management method particularly designed for the public service is the Common Assessment Framework. As a simple and easy-to-use tool, CAF is aiming to support public administrations to understand and employ the Total Quality Management (TQM) principles and to achieve excellence in their work. The introduction of the TQM principles will guide public organisations through the process of self-assessment cycle⁴ and will help them diagnose problems and remit improvements actions. The CAF model is based on the assumption that excellent results in organizations are achieved through leadership based on inspiring strategy and planning and by supporting people as the most precious asset of the organisation through building partnerships, rational resource utilization and process improvement⁵. The introduction of the CAF model aims at continuous improvement of the work and processes in organizations, improvement of employees' motivation and performance monitoring. This improvement will have a big and positive impact on the entire system of public administration and will contribute to building a modern, efficient and professional administration in the service of the citizens.

Moreover, considering that quality management standards and quality management tools are becoming more popular in the EU countries where they have proven their effectiveness, it is also necessary to introduce them to public institutions in the country, on its path towards European Union integration. In this way, public administration organisations in the country can learn from the other EU Member States' experience in order to be able to deliver better results and meet the high expectations of its citizens. Guided by these motives, MISA decided to strengthen its capacity in order to provide assistance to the public institutions in the country in their efforts to increase the quality of the administrative services by implementing the CAF model as a quality management tool.

Last, but not least, the introduction of CAF as an internationally recognized standard allows the FYR of Macedonia to adopt European Union initiatives based on proven practices for establishing a high level of quality in the work of the public administration and assisting in the modernization of public services. The introduction of norms of excellence will ensure more successful implementation of all ongoing reform initiatives, especially in the process of European integration, for which a well-developed capacity is needed, modern and efficient management and timely achievement of goals.

⁴ PDCA, "plan-do-check-act".

⁵ "The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) - Improving Public Organizations through Self-Assessment – CAF", 2013, European Institute of Public Administration, European (EIPA) - CAF Resource Centre, p. 9.

Strategic & policy framework for the CAF model implementation in the country

The Strategy for Reform of the Public Administration and the Action plan, adopted in 2010, targeted specific measures to encourage wider use of the CAF model in the FYR of Macedonia. Such measures are coordinated by the MISA on the national level. In the PAR Strategy 2010-2015 and the revised Action Plan⁶ quality management is placed under the priority area A (Administrative procedures and services), where measure 5 (Introduction of CAF and implementation of the CAF model in the institutions) is also included. Implementation of the CAF model in the public institutions will be included in the new Public Administration Reform Strategy and the Action Plan for 2018 to 2022, currently under development.

Aspiring to increase implementation of quality standards in the public institutions of the country, the National Assembly adopted, in 2013, the Law on implementation of systems for quality management and the Common Assessment Framework in the functioning of public institutions and in the provision of public services⁷. The aim of the Law is to promote implementation of international standards for quality management in the Republic's public institutions, which would contribute to raising the quality of services they provide to the public. Public institutions in the Republic were obliged to implement the ISO 9001 and the Common Assessment Framework quality standards when the Law came into force in January 2014.

In ensuring proper implementation of the CAF model, the Ministry of Information Society and Administration developed guidelines for introducing the model to public institutions⁸. Three types of guidelines were prepared: [i] Guidelines for introducing Common Assessment Framework, forming and operating self-assessment teams, assessing the institutions and preparing situation reports; [ii] Guidelines for prioritization of measures for improvement; and [iii] Guidelines for preparing and adopting a plan for improvement of the institutions. The guidelines describe in detail each step of the process in introducing the CAF model. Thus, institutions should follow the guidelines in order to ensure proper implementation of the model in their organisation. In addition, the guidelines may be used by public institutions for multiple purposes: [a] to guide them through the process of implementation of the model; [b] to protect them from abuse by inadequate consultants in the process of implementation; and [c] to ensure proper and adequate application of the model in their organisation.

For the purpose of coordination of quality management standards implemented, the Law enables the Government to establish a coordinating body for QM and CAF, chaired by the Minister of Information Society and Administration. Its responsibilities are to prepare reports to the Government on the status of implementation of the Law. Its responsibilities were further substantiated by the Governmental Decision "On the establishment of the Coordinative Body for managing Quality Management Systems and the Common Assessment Framework of the work and provision of services in the public service"⁹. The oversight for proper implementation of the Law is the responsibility of the State Administrative Inspectorate, which has the authority to inspect and sanction, both the

⁶ Ministry of Information Society and Administration, 2012.

⁷ Official Gazette, No. 69 (14.05.2013).

⁸ The guidelines for the introduction of the CAF model are published and available on the website of the Ministry of Information Society and Administration <http://www.mioa.gov.mk/?q=node/3699>.

⁹ Decision No 81 (23.08.2013), 147th session of the Government.

managers of public institutions, as well as the individuals responsible for quality management within the institution, with monetary fines if they fail to undertake measures to implement the provisions of the Law.

The Law also requires public institutions to establish a job position that coordinates the process of implementation of the quality management standards and instruments. For this reason, MISA prepared the “Recommendations about the tasks and responsibilities of the Coordinator of the process of introducing quality management standards and instruments”. These recommendations were shared with public institutions as a general direction and they are not obligatory, as institutions are free to modify them, and supplement them according to their specific needs.

Overview of the CAF model implementation activities in the FYR of Macedonia

A strategically-driven coordinated implementation of the CAF model started in 2011. Although there are a few institutions, like the State Statistical Office, that have been using CAF since 2006, organised and targeted implementation efforts for implementation of the CAF model in the country’s public institutions began in 2011. Activities initially focused on the implementation of the model in the MISA, where building capacity initiatives were undertaken in order for the Ministry to become a CAF resource centre for public administration in the country. The following results were achieved during the first phase of implementation: [a] the CAF model was implemented in MISA; [b] trainings were organized, through which 15 MISA employees were certified as trainers/facilitators for the implementation of the CAF model in other public institutions of the country; [c] the MISA became the national CAF resource center for public administration in the country; and [d] the model was piloted in 5 public institutions¹⁰, allowing all to gain significant experience and knowledge in implementing this quality management tool. Wider implementation of the CAF model began in 2014. Since then, the following activities have been undertaken:

- **Increase the number of certified CAF facilitators/trainers in the country**

The MISA organised CAF trainings for trainers. The trainings were attended by civil servants from central and local government level institutions, who already had some solid knowledge of the CAF model. Experts from the European Institute of Public Administration were engaged in delivering the trainings. Training sessions took place in Skopje and they involved such methods of training as presentations, discussions, group work, skills exercises, etc.

- **Support public institutions in the implementation process**

Individuals who completed the CAF training for trainers successfully were divided into teams of two. They, supported other public institutions in the implementation of the model. The process was coordinated by the MISA.

- **Train external evaluators for the CAF model implementation**

The training for external evaluators was delivered by experts from the European Institute of Public Administration. Participants of this training were individuals who possessed advanced knowledge of the CAF model and of the concept of total quality management. Individuals who completed the training are able to analyse the

¹⁰ Four institutions at the central government level: Ministry of Education and Science; Ministry of Transport and Communication; Ministry of Labour and Social Policy; and Ministry of Agriculture. The fifth institution was at the local government level: the City of Skopje.

implementation of the model through the self-assessment process, the activities implemented for improvement and the organisation's established TQM values; as well as provide feedback and suggestions regarding the implementation of the model. Upon completion of the training, participants received a CAF External Evaluator Certificate. This was considered as the first step towards establishing the National CAF External Feedback Procedures, which is currently under development by the MISA.

Role and activities of the Ministry of Information Society & Administration (MISA)

The MISA is the national contact point and a resource centre for implementation of the CAF model in the FYR of Macedonia. Specifically, the Ministry:

- is a centre possessing the expertise for the CAF model implementation in the public institutions of the country;
- is responsible for ensuring proper implementation of the CAF model in the public institutions of the country;
- is responsible for promoting good practices for the use of the CAF model in public administration;
- keeps a register of national CAF Users, as well as register of certified CAF facilitators/trainers in the country;
- provides support to public institutions in the Republic for the implementation of the CAF model;

Within its competencies, the MISA also conducts capacity building and promotional activities for the CAF model implementation of CAF model. Some of the activities organized in the past period were:

- **Organization of national conferences on quality management**
The first national conference on "Quality Management in the Public Sector - Common Assessment Framework (CAF)", was organized by the MISA on 18 December 2012. The purpose of the conference was to present the principles and other relevant information of the CAF model and its advantages if implemented in public sector organizations. The conference was attended by 75 representatives of 45 public institutions of the country. A second conference was organised on "Quality Management in the State Sector" on 25 December 2013. The purpose of this conference was to present the ISO and CAF principles and standards and the experience gained through the use of the ISO standards and the CAF model, as well as the provisions of the Law on the implementation of quality management systems and the CAF model in the functioning of public organisations and the provision of public services. The conference was attended by representatives of 60 public institutions from around the country.
- **Counselling municipalities for implementing the provisions of the Law**
On March 8, 2014, the Ministry of Information Society and Administration, in cooperation with the Association of Local Self-Government Units of the FYR of Macedonia, organized municipal consultations on the relevant Law and it highlighted the obligations of the municipal governments arising from it. The basic principles and implementation modalities of the ISO standard and the CAF model were also presented. Special attention was paid to familiarizing the municipalities with the CAF model and the manner of its implementation. Representatives from 40

municipalities attended the consultations meeting.

– **Document with international best practices for implementation of CAF model**

The MISA prepared a document containing best international practices for the implementation of the CAF model. The document was prepared for use by the public institutions in the country and its aim was to present best practices and the benefits that have been derived from the CAF model implementation at the international level.

– **Trainings on the CAF model implementation**

The MISA regularly organizes trainings on the implementation of the CAF model. Since the start of the activities, 36 trainings have been delivered for public institutions in the Republic, with a total of 626 individuals participating in them.

Implementation of the CAF model in the MISA

The implementation of Common Assessment Framework in the Ministry of Information Society and Administration was supported by the Government of the United Kingdom, pursuant to a signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for cooperation. As soon as the MoU was signed, the project team, together with the MISA, developed an expert support project plan for introducing quality management standards based on the CAF model. The provision of expert assistance to the MISA also called for the engagement of the EIPA, a CAF resource centre at the EU level. International experts from the EIPA provided their assistance and support to the MISA personnel during the self-assessment process in order to ensure the proper implementation of the methodology.

The self-assessment team consisted of 15 members. Membership was established on a voluntary basis among the employees of the Ministry. There was a high level of organisational representation through the participation of different departments, from individuals at different levels of responsibility and management positions, of varied experience and gender.

The working method the team adopted for the self-assessment concerning each of the nine criteria consisted of two parts. First, conducting individual assessments of every group member in order to determine the strengths and weaknesses, identify areas for improvement based on one's knowledge and expertise and to formulate one or several measures and activity proposals for improving the areas in need. Second, a team assessment was conducted based on the existing evidence. The objective of this assessment was to determine the strengths and weaknesses and identify areas for improvement under each sub-criterion and to decide what is needed, as well as to formulate suitable activities in order to improve the situation in the institution.

The Report that was prepared by the self-assessment team contained the situation analysis along the nine criteria in the MISA, the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation, the areas for improvement and the proposed activities to improve the situation was processed through a three-day workshop in Bitola. From 119 activities proposed, 22 measures and 9 activities were finally selected. Then, the Ministry went ahead with their implementation and as soon as they were completed, it went through the external feedback procedure for the CAF model implementation. In August 2013, the Ministry was awarded the Effective CAF User Label.

The benefits from the CAF model implementation in the country's public institutions

The CAF model has been introduced in 29 public institutions at the central and local government level in the country¹¹. On the basis of the accumulated experience from the CAF model implementation in these institutions, a number of benefits can be identified.

- It increases the quality of the provision of public services, if properly implemented. The use of the CAF model helps institutions focus on the quality element of their work, while putting citizens and their needs at the centre.
- It contributes to raising awareness and building a culture for quality management and continuous improvement among the employees and the top management of the public institutions.
- It can improve the functioning of an organisation, as well as the results produced. It can help organisations set their strategic objectives and priorities and develop better processes.
- It helps institutions to identify areas for improvement in their work and thus encourage them to make changes and adjustments, as well as introduce innovation practices. The CAF model has proven to be a useful tool that triggers employees to “think outside the box” and propose new ways of doing things.
- It contributes towards improving communication among employees through their greater involvement, which leads to increased motivation, in turn as the model's implementation involves employees in the process of making decision on key priorities and goals. It also improves the transparency in the institution, which can lead to lower levels of resistance to change.

Assessment Study for the CAF model implementation in the FYR of Macedonia

A study was conducted in order to: [a] assess the situation in the implementation of the CAF model; [b] assess the challenges in the implementation of the CAF model; and [c] develop recommendations for the promotion and wider use of the CAF model as a quality management instrument. For this purpose, a questionnaire was developed and administered among the certified CAF facilitators/trainers. The questionnaire gathered information on the experiences and views of the facilitators/trainers. First, on their experience and knowledge of implementing the CAF model. And, second, on their views on future activities in widening the implementation of the CAF model in the country. The results of this survey were presented and discussed during a workshop. At the same time, suggestions for improvement in the CAF model implementation process were received.

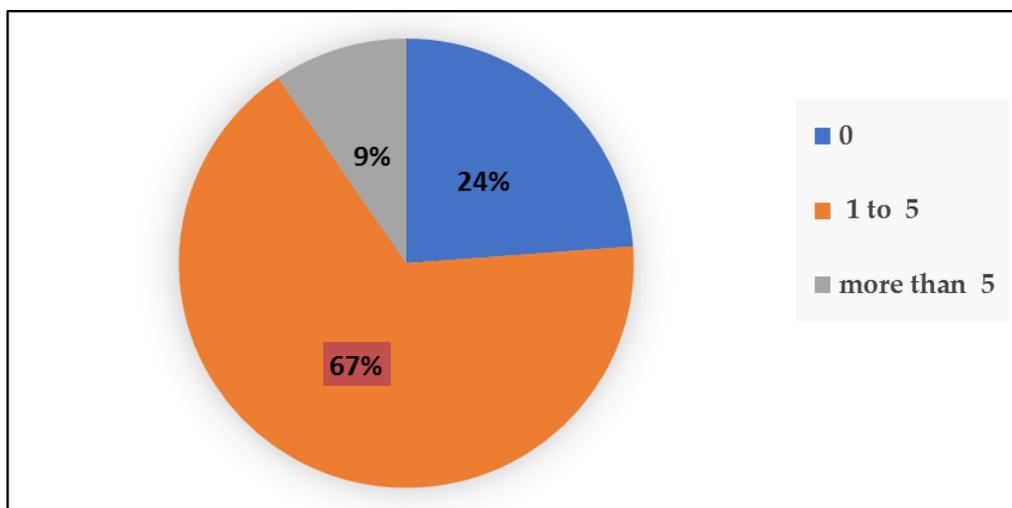
The report of this study consists of two substantive parts. The first part presents the finding of the survey and the second provides an overview of the main conclusions and points to which attention should be paid in view of the vision for further implementation of the CAF model in the country.

¹¹ These institutions were: the National Assembly; the Ministries of Agriculture, Economy, Education and Science, Information Society and Administration, Labour and Social Policy and Transport and Communication; the General Secretariat of the Government and the Secretariats for European Affairs and for Legislation; the Customs Administration; the Agencies for Administration and for Youth and Sports; the Commissions for Prevention of Corruption and for Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information; the Municipalities of Centar, Gjorche-Petrov, Gostivar, Jegunovce, Kicevo, Kumanovo, Lipkovo, Ohrid, Struga, Tetovo, and Zhelino; the City of Skopje; the State Statistical Office; and the Centre for Public Health in Tetovo (source: MISA).

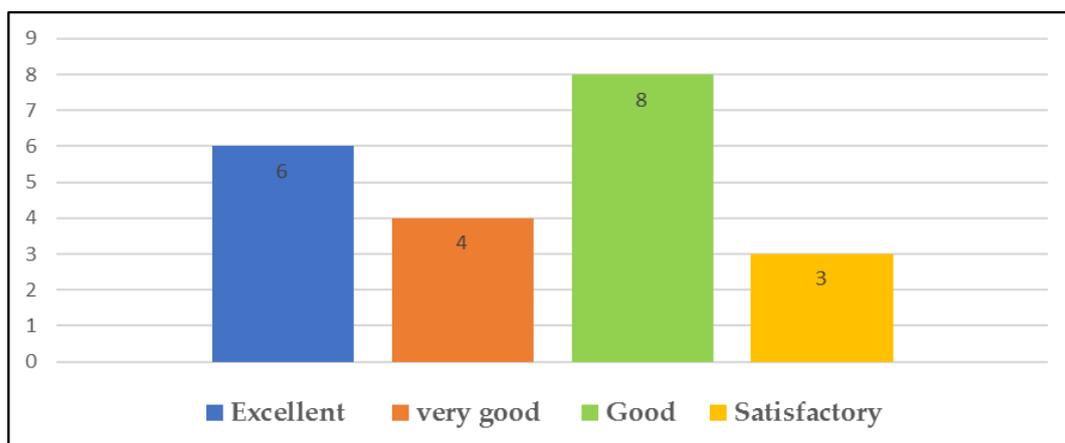
Profile of the certified CAF facilitators/trainers

There are 36 certified facilitators/trainers for CAF implementation in the FYR of Macedonia. The majority of them (71%) work in public institutions, and the remaining 29% are employed in the NGO sector. 35% of the CAF facilitators/trainers obtained their certificate in 2012, 61% in 2014 and 4 % in 2016. Most of the CAF facilitators/trainers have experience in facilitating the implementation of the CAF model. 67% have experience in implementation of the CAF model in 1 to 5 institutions and 9% have experience in implementation of the CAF model in more than 5 institutions. Although, the majority of them possess a good theoretical knowledge of the model, they expressed the need for additional training delivered by EIPA representatives, as well as for additional consultations between them and the representatives of the MISA in its capacity as the National CAF Coordinator.

Graph 1:
Experience of CAF facilitators/trainers in implementation of CAF model

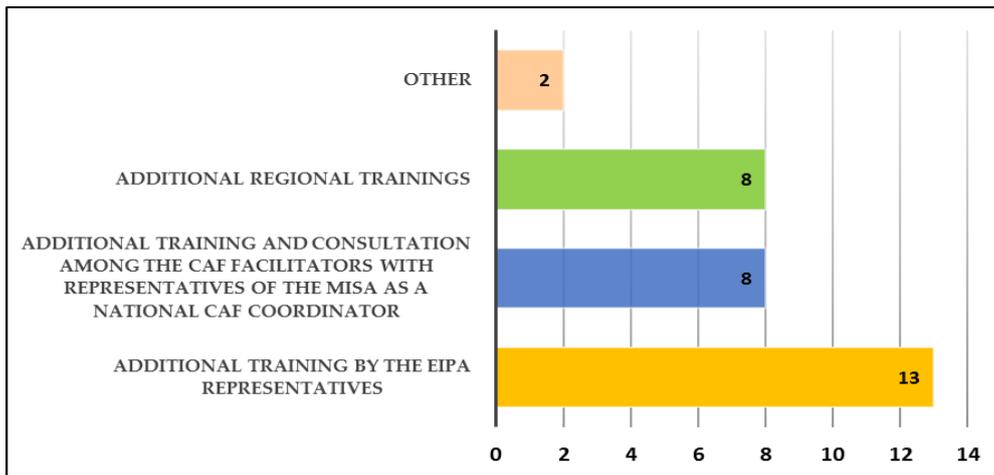


Graph 2:
Theoretical knowledge of CAF facilitators/trainers regarding CAF



Graph 3:

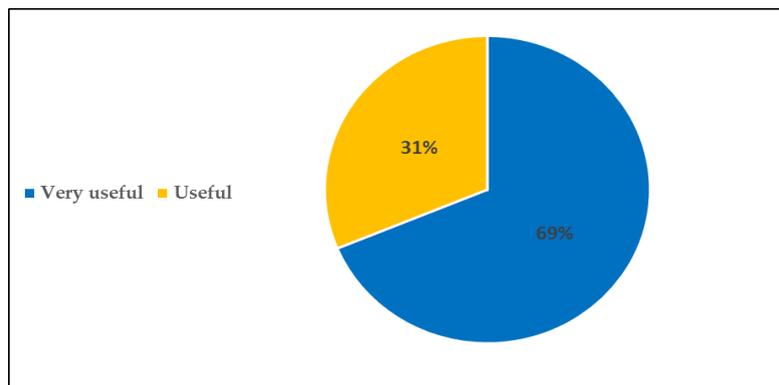
Additional trainings needed for implementation of CAF model



Implementation of the CAF model in public institutions

Based on the feedback received from the public institutions the facilitators/trainers they have worked with, most of them think that the CAF is a very useful instrument for improving the public services in the country¹².

**Graph 4:
Usefulness of the CAF model**



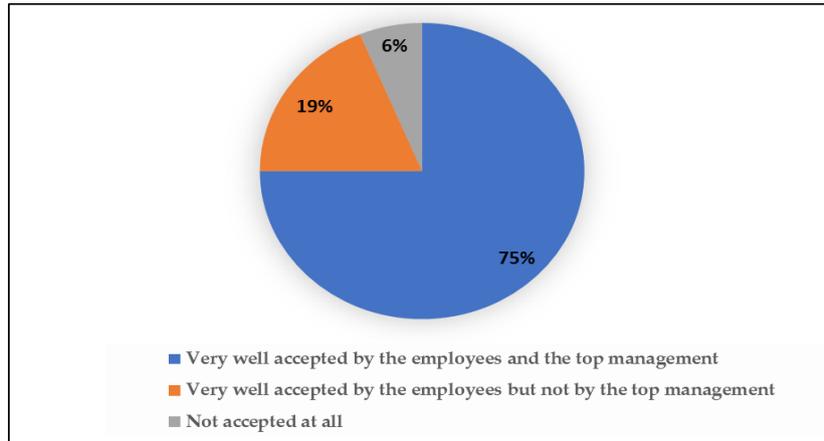
Furthermore, based on their experience, most of the certified CAF facilitator/trainers think that the CAF model is very well accepted by both the top management and the employees of the public institutions it has been implemented¹³. However, there is also a significant proportion, which expressed the view that the CAF model is very well accepted by the employees but not by the top management.

¹² "CAF is definitely the best tool for improving the functioning of the whole public institution. It provides holistic approach that incorporates all the areas of work while ensuring inclusiveness and transparency in the decision-making process that contributes to achieving all the results of the institution including the quality of the provided services (K.J., CAF facilitator).

"CAF is a useful instrument but it should be implemented continuously and it should not be one-time activity of the institution." (R.S., CAF facilitator).

¹³ "The level of acceptance is different in different institutions, but generally it can be noted that the management of the institutions is implementing CAF because it is obligation proscribed by Law and not because of the usefulness of the model." (K.J., CAF facilitator).

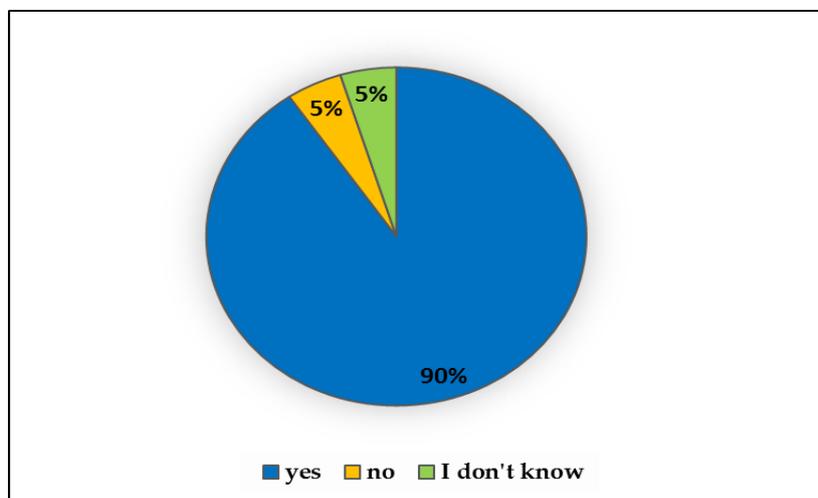
**Graph 5:
Acceptance of the CAF model by public institutions**



Future activities for widening the CAF model implementation in the country

The CAF facilitators/trainers expressed their willingness to be more actively engaged in the introduction of the CAF instrument in other public institutions. The survey showed that most of them (59%), could be engaged with the introduction of the CAF model in up to two institutions every calendar year. However, a significant number of them (31 %), said that they could be engaged in three to four institutions per calendar year.

**Graph 6:
Readiness of CAF facilitators/trainers to be more actively engaged
in the introduction of the CAF model**



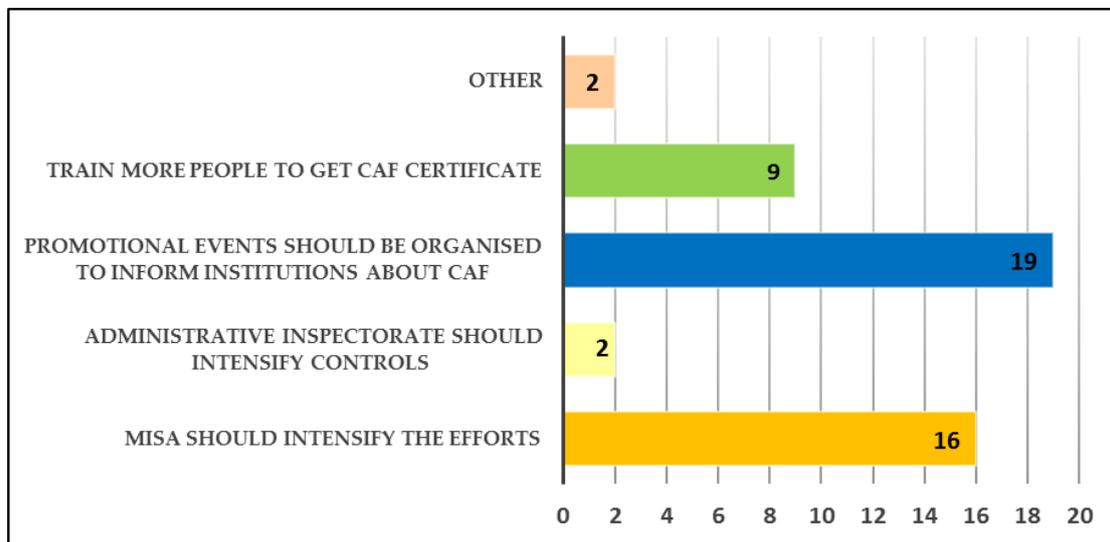
The facilitators/trainers also think that the following actions need to be undertaken in order to introduce the CAF model to more public institutions in the country (see graph 7)¹⁴:

¹⁴ "Public presentation of the results achieved with the implantation of the CAF model is a great way for its promotion. More often public presentation of the benefits from implementation of the CAF model can contribute to more institutions applying it in their work." (R.S., CAF facilitator).

"MISA should work on building the awareness of the top management in the public sector (on central and on local level) for the benefits of the implementation of the CAF model" (K. J., CAF facilitator).

[1] more promotional events should be organized to inform institutions about CAF; [2] the MISA should intensify its efforts as a National CAF Coordinator; and [3] additional people should be trained and certified as CAF facilitators/trainers in the country.

Graph 7:
Activities to be undertaken in order for more institutions to introduce CAF



Main points of attention for further implementation of the CAF model in the country

Based on the experience and knowledge of the certified trainers/facilitators for the implementation of the CAF model in the public institutions of the FYR of Macedonia the following recommendations were made¹⁵:

1. Development of a national roadmap for the promotion and wider use of the CAF model and other quality management instruments would be very beneficial to all public institutions in the country.
2. The key success factors for the CAF model implementation are:
 - The support of and cooperation with top management is most important throughout the process;
 - It is crucial for the coordinator and deputy coordinator of the self-assessment team to be professional individuals who are both persistent and devoted to the process;
 - The implementation of the CAF model should not be seen as a burden for the employees and they should be able to dedicate themselves to the self-assessment process and implementation of the relevant activities;
 - The implementation of the CAF model must be a continuous process in the institutions rather than one-time activity;
 - It is very useful and necessary to share implementation information with all the institution’s employees concerning activities included in the Improvement

¹⁵ The results of the survey were presented on the workshop "Introduction of the CAF model as an instrument for quality management in the public sector". The workshop was attended by the certified trainers/facilitators for the implementation of CAF model in the institutions in the Republic of Macedonia. The results of the survey were discussed and suggestions for improvement of the process of implementation of the CAF model in Macedonia were delivered.

Plan. Experience has shown that employees tend to have a negative reaction to the content of the plan for improvement when they realize that certain activities that were proposed in the self-assessment process are not included in the final plan. Thus, a certain level of flexibility should exist in prioritizing activities for improvement.

3. The experience of the CAF trainers/facilitators shows that a curve exists in accepting the CAF model in practice. At the beginning, the CAF model is accepted poorly. Later, when employees become more familiar with the self-assessment process and start working on it, they accept the model well. However, when the Improvement Plan is prepared or when they realize that it is not being implemented as it should, the acceptance of the CAF model declines again.
4. The experience in the CAF model implementation shows that the so called “quick wins” activities tend to have a high level of implementation while the core activities for improvement are either implemented with difficulties or not implemented at all.
5. It is important that institutions include formally the activities associated with the CAF model implementation in the job description of employees, who are engaged in this task.
6. Additional guidelines from the MISA - as a national coordinator - are needed concerning the steps that should to be taken after the adoption of the Improvement Plan.
7. Both the management and the employees of an institution should strengthen their capacities in developing a culture of work that is focused on meeting the needs of the citizens.
8. The MISA should raise awareness in public institutions that they need to include activities associated with the CAF model implementation and the Improvement Plan in their annual budgets.
9. The MISA – in its capacity as the national coordinator - should continue to provide support to institutions in the process of the CAF model implementation.
10. The National CAF External Feedback Procedure for obtaining the CAF User Label needs to be developed and adopted as soon as possible.
11. In the upcoming period, the MISA should concentrate more on the promotion of the CAF model and in providing support to the certified CAF trainers/facilitators.
12. It is necessary to increase the number of certified CAF trainers/facilitators in the country.
13. The engagement of the certified CAF trainers/facilitators needs to be regulated in the Law on implementation of the systems for quality management and common assessment framework in the functioning of public institutions and the provision of public services.
14. The Law needs to undergo changes in order to adjust to the needs and the means of the public institutions. Thus, an ex-post evaluation of the implementation of the Law should be carried out, as it seems that additional guidelines are needed to improve the process of implementation in the public institutions. The part of the Law that addresses the fines for the institutions and the responsible public servants needs to be revised.

Conclusions and recommendations

On the basis of the study’s findings, it may be concluded that the FYR of Macedonia has

established a strong legal and institutional framework for the CAF model implementation. A significant number of institutions in the country are using the CAF model and a national pool of CAF facilitators/trainers and practitioners has been established for the expansion of the model's implementation. However, the knowledge about the CAF model and its potential benefits is still insufficient among the top management of most public institutions.

Furthermore, when the CAF model is properly implemented can considerably contribute towards the better functioning of the country's public administration. In this connection, the public institutions should continue to apply the model as continuous process rather than one-time activity. In addition, more opportunities should exist for sharing and exchanging experiences with other CAF users as this would be mutually beneficial for all involved. They could learn how to avoid certain difficulties and thus achieve higher levels of success in the model's implementation.

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