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Benchmarking of TQM practices in INGOs: a literature review

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to aggregate significant part of debates in the field of International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) toward performance improvement by benchmarking of the Total Quality Management (TQM) practices, and to propose TQM-Benchmarking model as a seed for future research in the context of INGOs.

Design/methodology/approach – TQM practices for INGOs were first identified based on critical synthesis of the literature for both, existing for-profit TQM literature and the INGOs field-specific quality and accountability frameworks, initiatives, and practices (Jordan introduced as an example) followed by solicitation of the opinions of experts and colleagues through personal interviews and focus group discussions to define the proposed TQM-Benchmarking model.

Findings – TQM-Benchmarking model of six practices vital to INGOs performance are proposed by this review including leadership and management commitment, beneficiaries focus and participation, partnership management for sustainability, human resource (HR) focus, process management and learning and continuous improvement, and use of quality information.

Originality/value – While TQM practices succeed in improving performance of for-profit organizations, this review proposed TQM-Benchmarking model with field-specific practical pillars of performance improvement in the INGOs.

Keywords Performance, Benchmarking, Accountability, Quality, Total quality management, INGOs

Paper type Literature review

1. Introduction

The multiplicity of humanitarian actors in the affected areas with the scarcity of resources and donations creates competitive environment such as that environment which exists in the for-profit sector. As a result, the innovative leaders and scholars of non-profit sector were early started to adopt for-profit management philosophies such as Total Quality Management (TQM) to keep themselves in the humanitarian space and to maintain sustainable results and impacts of interventions and, in turn, sustainable funding.

Since the eighties of the last century, TQM gained increased popularity as a key strategy to enhance performance of the firms (Mensah *et al.*, 2012) and still represent one of the most important comprehensive improvement approaches in the modern economy (Slack *et al.*, 2010) to achieve organizational excellence (Goetsch and Davis, 2013). By nature, the relief work imposed lack of awareness to the issue of business sustainability as a result of the sudden nature of the disasters and the diversity of

specialists working in the interventions (Madu and Kuei, 2014). However, while it seems to be difficult to identify quality from NGOs perspective, it can be attained by both: achieving beneficiaries' satisfaction and creating the intended positive impact on the beneficiaries (Al-Tabbaa *et al.*, 2013).

In comparison with for-profit sector, the International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) did not get significant attention from the management scholars regarding benchmarking of the TQM practices. This review tries to directly shed the light on this area and to present the related efforts of scholars and field actors from the literature. However, it discusses the benchmarking of TQM practices in INGOs context through reviewing the current state of research and addressing what is applied on the ground through critical review of the field-specific frameworks and initiatives. In this context, case of two working INGOs in Jordan was analyzed as an empirical evidence on what is being advocated by the research and to define the proposed TQM-Benchmarking model.

The main aim of this review is to identify TQM practices vital to performance of humanitarian interventions of INGOs and to develop a framework consisting of these practices toward improving performance of INGOs as well as satisfying donors and beneficiaries alike.

2. Background

2.1 Definition of INGOs

Enormous multiplicity was found in the literature when referring to the humanitarian organizations, for instance, Non-profit Organizations (NPOs), NGOs, Non-profit sector, third sector, voluntary sector, independent sector, civil society organizations, charitable sector, and social economy (Zulkhibri, 2014). This multiplicity makes the term NGO wide and ambiguous (Lekorwe and Mpabanga, 2007) and its definition amazingly problematic (Brendan and O'Dwyer, 2006). In this context, some of researchers supported the classification of NGOs by their activities such as Brendan and O'Dwyer (2006) and considered the frame in which the terms were used such as Lecy *et al.* (2012) who pointed that the term NGOs was used in the public administration literature while the term NPOs was used in the political science and international relations literature. Other researchers equalized among the terms such as (Reichel and Rudnicka, 2009) who used the three terms: NGOs, NPOs, and the third sector synonymously as a kind of simplification in their research of collaboration between business and NGOs in Poland.

In the USA the term NPO used to refer to the exempted organizations. However, NGOs considered by many researchers such as Lekorwe and Mpabanga (2007), Connollym and Kelly (2011), Cordery and Sinclair (2013), and Zulkhibri (2014) as part of NPOs or the "Third Sector." Moreover, many researchers were used the two terms interchangeably such as United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) (2003) and Al-Tabbaa *et al.* (2013).

In general, the term NGO used to define the organizations that neither related to government (Willets, 2002) nor traditional for-profit organizations (Lambell *et al.*, 2008; Unerman and O'Dwyer 2010; Schwenger *et al.*, 2014) that support the projects of public interests (Cheng and Chang, 2012; Schwenger *et al.*, 2014), and improving the quality of people's lives (Tajuddin and Ahmad, 2013). However, the unavoidable contradictions in defining NGOs are an element of their increasingly importance, and put them under attacks regarding the accountability as well Gray *et al.* (2006).

For the purpose of this study, the researchers will focus on the International Non-Governmental Organizations as abbreviated by INGOs (Willets, 2002). INGOs are specific type of NGOs that engaged in cross-border humanitarian relief and development interventions such as CARE, ACTED, Oxfam, World Vision, Danish Refugee Counsel (DRC), NRC, Mercy Corps, and Caritas.

2.2 INGOs performance

In the context of complex environment, whether it be internal, external, political, economic, and geopolitical surrounding the INGOs and despite the great efforts of coordination amongst them, they seek to survive by engaging in fierce competition for the purpose of fund raising. However, the variety of needs and the limited charitable resources cause the NPOs to take into account competition (Ashley and Faulk, 2010) and to find approaches to overcome the resulted changes from competitive realities with respect of the specific moral ideals of the sector (Schwenger *et al.*, 2014). In this context, most of NPOs considered the donors as the main customer of their services (Scherhag and Boenigk, 2013) while other NGOs play the role of mediator between both donors and beneficiaries (Awad, 2013). Schwenger *et al.* (2014) considered that donors as the customers who buy the NGOs services and who prefer to donate through the qualified NPOs with respect of resources, personnel, high impact, managerial mechanisms, and social networks (Xueying, 2014). According to Nunnenkamp and Öhler (2012), the relationship between the NGO efficiency and the competition is one of the key aspects of the topic of aid proliferation. Thus, strengthening the organizational capacity and management through creating effective interventions and strategies have become interesting for NPOs managers (Judith *et al.*, 2010). However, NGOs need to measure their performance to prove differences that made by interventions, to ensure the effective utilization of the limited funds (Cordery and Sinclair, 2013), to keep learning (Huang and Hooper, 2011; Phil, 2013) and to ensure accountability toward performance improvement (Lewis and Madon, 2004).

Typically, research on performance measurement in non-profit sector focussed on the delivery of programs (Hughes, 2013) such as Ismail *et al.* (2014) who investigated the critical success factors of post-disaster reconstruction projects. However, Cordery and Sinclair (2013) were very close to what is happening on the ground in most of the humanitarian aid programs when they touched on the term "Logframes" (Logical Frameworks) as commonly used tool of planning, monitoring, and evaluation in the international development and which consists of three basic concepts of measuring performance of Output, Outcome, and Impact. According to Cordery and Sinclair (2013) the Output is a quantitative measure of the number of assisted beneficiaries, while Outcome refers to the change brought by the intervention, and Impact refers to the long-term effect and the sustainable change which occurred as a result of intervention. Moreover, Logframe as a measurement tool of performance of interventions can fulfills the up-accountability to the donor (Huang and Hooper, 2011) and down-accountability to the beneficiaries. In this context, O'Brien and Tooley (2013), and Cordery and Sinclair (2013) warned about the risk of performance reporting when it is oriented only to the donors while the other parties in the humanitarian interventions such as affected population (the victims) and volunteers are discarded. Brunt and McCourt (2012), suggested that focussing on the long-term benefits of INGOs can assure participation of donors and beneficiaries as well.

Recently, sustainability imposed itself to be the core of NGOs development aids missions (Unerman and O'Dwyer, 2010). Therefore, NPOs started to pay more attention to the aspect of organizational sustainability (Al-Tabbaa, 2012; Al-Tabbaa *et al.*, 2013) to maximize the value for affected population and for NGOs themselves (McPhee, 2014). In this context, Coate *et al.* (2006) pointed to the importance of NGOs to facilitate sustainable recovery toward building resilience of communities. UNEP (2003) and Mahalinga and Suar (2012) pointed to the role of stakeholders' participation in such facilitations. However, Al-Tabbaa (2012) suggested sustainable activity model which gave an extended focus to the external impacts and opportunities toward sustainability and resilience. Moreover, Lecy *et al.* (2012) proposed four-dimensional paradigm of NGOs/NPOs effectiveness including core organizational management processes, design and effectiveness of programs, responsiveness to the external environment and influences, and networks and partnerships.

The early attention to the issue of harnessing business ideals of for-profit sector in the context of NPOs were observed in the literature in several forms, for instance Kearns *et al.* (1994) who advocated that NPOs are mature enough for TQM, and Letts *et al.* (1999) who adduced CARE's international benchmarking practice toward performance improvement through adapting business planning tools of non-profit sector. However, this review tries to explicitly and clearly identify the specific applicable TQM practices within INGOs in the form of TQM-Benchmarking model for this vital sector.

3. Methodology
The main purpose of this review is to identify the critical TQM practices for INGOs and to propose INGOs field-specific TQM-Benchmarking model learning from for-profit sector. Mixed approach has been adopted by reviewing both of general for-profit TQM literature and field-specific quality and accountability practices of the non-profit sector. This paper is organized as follows, after the introduction and background, literature review is conducted in four steps: reviewing the literature of TQM practices using the factor-based approach and the excellence models and awards, reviewing the quality in the context of INGOs and the field-specific quality and accountability initiatives, reviewing two of the practical quality and accountability frameworks (CARE Jordan and DRC Jordan as an example), and presenting the key findings from the field discussions, focus group discussions and opinions of experts and colleagues. The TQM practices for INGOs are then explored. Lastly, the emerging reflections and conclusions have been presented along with the suggested future scope.

4. TQM practices and models
Quality has been the focus of attention of various sectors for many years through the constantly evolving approaches of inspection, quality control, quality assurance, and TQM (Dale, 2003; Ahmad and Elhunim, 2014) which engaged all business components in application of quality management aspects (Mehra *et al.*, 2001; Altayeb and Alhasanat, 2014). However, since the early appearing of TQM phenomenon it was recognized by the scholars and businesses as the most successful approach for managing service quality (Chaston, 1994), key business management subject (Martínez-Lorente *et al.*, 1998), organizational philosophy (Mehra and Agrawal, 2003), and guiding principles (Rawabdeh, 2008) aims to improve competitiveness in the global marketplace (Motwani, 2001; Mehra and Agrawal, 2003; Altayeb and Alhasanat, 2014)

through reducing costs and increasing productivity (Psomas *et al.*, 2014) of the physical and human organizational assets (Silva *et al.*, 2014).

Despite of the absence of consensus on the TQM definition (Graham *et al.*, 2014) and the continuous struggling to achieve clear and common definition (Yapa, 2012), there were some implicit agreement on the definition, scope, and key principles and concepts (Psomas *et al.*, 2014) that are vital for TQM efforts in the services organizations and important for achieving effective results from the TQM effort (Talib, 2010). However, TQM literature was very rich with respect of categorizing the critical factors and practices. In this context, Zairi and Youssef (1995), Boon *et al.* (2005), Fotopoulos and Psomas (2009), Psomas *et al.* (2014), and Calvo-Mora *et al.* (2014) separated between "soft" and "hard" TQM elements, and Mehra *et al.* (2001) conducted their significant review of research to identify 45 TQM implementation elements grouped into five factors. However, as part of this research, the researchers reviewed TQM practices shown in Table I from the for-profit literature.

TQM practice	Adopted by whom
Top management support and commitment	Saraph *et al.* (1989), Flynn *et al.* (1994), Powell (1995), Ahire *et al.* (1996), Zeitz *et al.* (1997), Martínez-Lorente *et al.* (1999), Motwani (2001), Singh and Smith (2004), McAdam and Henderson (2004), Perdomo-Ortiz *et al.* (2006, 2009), Salaheldin (2009), Fotopoulos and Psomas (2010), Laohavichien *et al.* (2011), Abusa and Gibson (2013)
Leadership	Saraph *et al.* (1989), Prajogo and Sohal (2003), Singh and Smith (2004), McAdam and Henderson (2004), De Jager and Nieuwenhuis (2005), Salaheldin (2009), Laohavichien *et al.* (2011), Valmohammadi (2011), Martínez-Costa and Martínez-Lorente (2008), Kim *et al.* (2012)
Customer focus	Flynn *et al.* (1994), Ahire *et al.* (1996), Black and Porter (1996), Martínez-Lorente *et al.* (1999), Motwani (2001), Prajogo and Sohal (2003, 2004), Singh and Smith (2004), Perdomo-Ortiz *et al.* (2006, 2009), Martínez-Costa and Martínez-Lorente (2008), Fotopoulos and Psomas (2010), Laohavichien *et al.* (2011), Valmohammadi (2011), Abusa and Gibson (2013), Altayeb and Alhasanat (2014)
Supplier relationship and selection	Powell (1995), Ahire *et al.* (1996), Black and Porter (1996), Zeitz *et al.* (1997), Martínez-Lorente *et al.* (1999), Singh and Smith (2004), McAdam and Henderson (2004), Perdomo-Ortiz *et al.* (2006), Martínez-Costa and Martínez-Lorente (2008), Salaheldin (2009), Laohavichien *et al.* (2011), Valmohammadi (2011), Kim *et al.* (2012), Abusa and Gibson (2013)
Process management	Saraph *et al.* (1989), Flynn *et al.* (1994), Powell (1995), Martínez-Lorente *et al.* (1999), Motwani (2001), Prajogo and Sohal (2003, 2004), Singh and Smith (2004), Perdomo-Ortiz *et al.* (2006, 2009), Fotopoulos and Psomas (2010), Laohavichien *et al.* (2011), Valmohammadi (2011), Abusa and Gibson (2013), Altayeb and Alhasanat (2014)
HR management (HR focus)	Flynn *et al.* (1994), Powell (1995), Black and Porter (1996), Martínez-Lorente *et al.* (1999), Motwani (2001), Prajogo and Sohal (2003, 2004), McAdam and Henderson (2004), Perdomo-Ortiz *et al.* (2006, 2009), Abrunhosa and Sá (2008), Salaheldin (2009), Laohavichien *et al.* (2011), Valmohammadi (2011), Abusa and Gibson (2013), Altayeb and Alhasanat (2014)
Use of quality information	Flynn *et al.* (1994), Ahire *et al.* (1996), Zeitz *et al.* (1997), Martínez-Lorente *et al.* (1999), Motwani (2001), Prajogo and Sohal (2003, 2004), Singh and Smith (2004), Perdomo-Ortiz *et al.* (2006, 2009), Fotopoulos and Psomas (2010)

Table I.
Reviewed TQM literature of for-profit sector

Researchers tended to use the factor-based approach to identify the critical TQM practices. However, with the large number of influencing factors, TQM adoption became complex practice (Chin *et al.*, 2002). Therefore, many researchers, businesses, and even countries turned to adopt the excellence models and awards to categorize TQM elements, to guide organizations toward business excellence (Sabella *et al.*, 2014), to be used as "how to" scheme the organizations that are not mature enough, and as a "measurement method" by the mature enough organizations (Fotopoulos and Psomas, 2010), and assessment tool for benchmarking purposes (Sarkis, 2001; Chung, 2001; Talwar, 2011; Bolboli and Reiche, 2013). In this context, Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA) recognized as the most famous excellence model in USA (Gouthier *et al.*, 2012) to acknowledge the organizational excellence in manufacturing, service, and small business sectors (Rawabdeh, 2008). However, MBNQA assesses companies' quality programs through seven-dimensional schema and focussing on the aspects of customer satisfaction and continuous improvement in order to achieve business excellence (Motwani, 2001). In Europe, the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) is considered as the most famous business excellence model (Gouthier *et al.*, 2012) as a practical stage which could be used to outline the improvements toward successful TQM (Tari, 2005) through two excellence dimensions, the "Enablers" and the "Results" (Shahin *et al.*, 2014). However, many businesses fail to incorporate the quality global aspects into their localized operational plans (Mehra and Agrawal, 2003). Therefore, several countries built their localized business excellence models and awards that are mostly based on MBNQA and EFQM. In this context, Rawabdeh (2008) named about 16 national quality awards and Mohammad *et al.* (2011) listed 94 examples of the national excellence awards.

4.1 Benchmarking of TQM practices in INGOs

The essence of this review is to identify the TQM practices in the context of INGOs and to propose TQM-Benchmarking model to address the specific needs of the sector. To that extent, various studies were reviewed and analyzed while taking into consideration the nature of humanitarian work and the special morals and characteristics that should be addressed in any benchmarking effort in this vital industry. However, various efforts were found in the literature that aimed to adopt business management practices of the for-profit into INGOs. In this context, Lekorwe and Mpabanga (2007) recommended reinforcing leadership, strategic management, accountability of operations, and governance of NGOs. However, Tajuddin and Ahmad (2013) advocated to the importance of group of factors that need to be emphasized in order to improve the service quality of NGOs. These factors include long-term direction, customer focus, high integrity and transparency, effective feedback responses and communications, improved people participation, and continuous dissemination of quality culture.

Significant TQM-Benchmarking effort has been conducted by Al-Tabbaa *et al.* (2013) within NPOs where they advocated on how EFQM model can be used for the purposes of self-assessment and performance improvement strategy. However, based on qualitative study, Al-Tabbaa *et al.* (2013) suggested three modifications on EFQM model criteria to be aligned with the specific aspects and needs of NPOs as follows:

(1) To include "Board of Trustees" in the leadership criterion of EFQM.

(2) To include "beneficiaries and donors" instead of "customer" in the customer results criterion of EFQM.

(3) To increase and decrease several weightings of EFQM main criteria.

However, Al-Tabbaa *et al.* (2013) provided practical quality definition in the context of NPOs, their definition built on the two dimensions, quality of management (the dimension which reflects the perception of operational-level staff), and the beneficiaries' satisfaction (the diminution which reflect the policy-making related staff). According to (Al-Tabbaa *et al.*, 2013), the two dimensions definition lead to donors satisfaction who are looking for efficiency (quality of management) and beneficiaries who are looking for effectiveness (Satisfaction) and in turn, increasing the value for all stakeholders.

As a result of significant roles and the increasingly importance of NGOs, high level of expectations with resect of accountability issue became imposed on the humanitarian interventions to present evidences on the results, to survive in the humanitarian space (Okorley and Nkrumah, 2012), and to ensure sustainability (Lekorwe and Mpabanga, 2007). Accordingly, NGOs become obligated to design and implement needs-based interventions, to reinforce good leadership, to encourage learning, and to effectively and efficiency manage the resources (Lekorwe and Mpabanga, 2007).

As part of this research, many field-specific quality and accountability initiatives have been reviewed. However, the reviewed initiatives were lunched and adopted by large number of INGOs and widely accepted as a benchmarking models and frameworks for the humanitarian interventions as follows:

- The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief (International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), 1996) is a jointly effort of International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the ICRC which aimed to save the standard of behaviors but not to assure effectiveness or impact of the interventions. However, the initiative was pointed to the accountability to both, beneficiaries and donors, and to the importance of providing both, aid and sustainability as part of its principles.

- People in Aid (2003) is an internationally recognized code of good practice framework which resulted from years of collaboration among the humanitarian actors to help them in improving the quality of human resource (HR) management. The People in Aid (2003) principles are: HR strategy, staff policies and practices, people management, consultation and communication, recruitment and selection, learning, training and development, and health, safety, and security.

- The Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action ALNAP (1997) which is a shared learning and lessons learned wide-sectorial network amid to strengthen the quality, accountability, and performance of the humanitarian sector.

- The Sphere Project (1997) Sphere (1997) is a widely accepted voluntary initiative aims to improve the quality of assistances provided by the humanitarian agencies and to improve their accountability to the affected populations, donors, and agencies' constituents.

- Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) (2010) is one of the most important and comprehensive joint effort of the international humanitarian actors which aims to promote the quality and accountability standard of the humanitarian work. HAP started in 2003 as set of accountability principles and then became comprehensive framework which includes benchmarks and indicators for the accountability and quality management in the humanitarian work. However, the last revision of HAP was conducted in 2010. Now HAP is widely accepted standard which has around 94 certified international humanitarian organizations.

However, HAP (2010) which established as set of basic accountability principles in 2003 and then became a comprehensive accountability and quality management framework of six benchmarks assessment tool for the humanitarian interventions was chosen to be adopted by this review as a main field-specific framework which guides the definition the TQM practices for INGOs. The six benchmarks of HAP (2010) are shown in Table II.

4.2 Revision of the practical accountability and quality management frameworks

As part of this review, two practical accountability frameworks of two key working INGOs in Jordan were reviewed, CARE International and DRC. However, both of the two frameworks were based on HAP and locally customized to be fit into the related interventions in Jordan. The following summarizes revision of the two frameworks.

Accountability framework of CARE International in Jordan: CARE's accountability framework defined the accountability as "the means by which we fulfill our responsibilities to our stakeholders and the ways in which they may hold us to account for our decisions, actions and impacts", and identified the goal of CARE's Refugee Emergency Response Program by "Enhanced resilience of all populations impacted by the crisis through strengthened social and economic readiness to reside in Jordan with dignity and to support recovery efforts of their home communities upon return." CARE's accountability framework characterized by providing more practical innovations through the following:

- Structured, visible, accessible, and matured humanitarian feedback mechanism which linked to robust learning agenda for the purpose of continuous improvement, and, in turn, beneficiaries' satisfaction.

- Adoption of the idea of community committees as a proactive approach of beneficiaries' engagement. According to CARE's accountability framework, community committees aims to take account of the voice of beneficiaries and to establish a permanent channel of communication between CARE and the affected population, they are meet on a regular basis and help on conveying beneficiaries' suggestions, feedback, needs and priorities, and any other issues to CARE for better planning of the future services and activities.

- Regular orientation and scheduled training on accountability and quality management for managers, front liners, and partners' staff.

Accountability framework of DRC Jordan: DRC's accountability framework summarized the specific DRC commitments to their stakeholders in Jordan. However, it gave more attention to the beneficiaries than the other DRC stakeholders. DRC's accountability framework gave significant importance to the sustainability of refugees' life by identifying the goal of DRC's work by "protection and promotion of durable solutions to refugee and displacement problems in the Middle East and North Africa, on the basis of humanitarian principles and human rights", and focussed on the importance of addressing both of immediate and future needs for the purpose of enhance self-resilience of refugees. DRC's accountability framework emphasized on participation of the beneficiaries through the project life cycle by beneficiaries' involvement in project design, beneficiaries' consultation through needs assessment and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities, integration of lessons learned from the past projects, and information sharing with the beneficiaries.

Benchmark	Requirements
1. Establishing and delivering on commitments "The organization sets out the commitments that it will be held accountable for, and how they will be delivered"	Organization's accountability framework should be in place. The accountability framework should addresses stakeholders in interest, states the commitment to assist them, includes HAP benchmarks, approved by the leadership, and has milestone for each commitment
	Management system should be in place for the purpose of accountability framework implementation. This is include clear management and board of governors roles and responsibilities, adopts set of processes to that ensures proper resource usage to achieve objectives, engages staff in decision making, and enables continuous improvement
	Working with partners should be in partnership based on mutual accountability respect and continuous improvement. The organization should document its overall partnership approach, selection criteria that ensure the role of accountability in the process, what is negotiable and what is not with respect of accountability
	The organization should work with each partner to agree on expectations, commitments to the assisted population, aims of commandments, aims of interactions with assisted people, and how partners put in the practice the related parts of accountability framework
2. Staff competency "The organization ensures that staff have competencies that enable them to meet the organization's commitments"	The organization should define, document, continuously develop, and consistently review the needs of staff to effectively meet the commitments including knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors
	The organization should have in-place and understandable staff code of conduct. Staff code of conduct is particularly refers to prevention of targeted people from the abuse and exploitation
	The organization's staffs who interact with partners should understand partnership agreements, the effects of accountability framework on the partnership, and obligations of each party
	The organization should work with its partners to agree on knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors of their staff, to ensure reflection of these agreements on the partner's code of conduct, and to help partners on how to implement and monitor their staff's code of conduct
3. Sharing information "The organization ensures that the people it aims to assist and other stakeholders have access to timely, relevant and clear information about the organization and its activities"	The organization should define and document the process of information sharing with targeted population including: commitment to information sharing accurately and timely, what information to be shared, and timing and rationales and criteria on how decisions to share or not to share information are taken
	Appropriate, suitable, understandable, and accessible information to the needs of targeted population should be shared including: background and contact details, accountability framework, staff code of conduct and staff roles and responsibilities, complaint procedure, intervention's goals and objectives, timeframes, financial summaries, summary of evaluation and progress reports, vulnerability criteria, and how participation activities feeds into organization's decisions

Table II.
HAP benchmarks

(*continued*)

Benchmark	Requirements
	Organization's staff should identify themselves to the assisted people and to the other stakeholders
	Working with partners should be visible with ensuring that the following are public: name of the partners, main joint activities, and financial summaries of the funded programs
	The organization should work with its partners to agree and put into practice on how and when to share information, and to work with them regarding information sharing processes and visibility of their staff
4. Participation "The organization listens to the people it aims to assist, incorporating their views and analysis in program decisions"	The organization should define and document the processes of targeted population identification and representation and the processes of ensuring participation of the different genders and age groups
	The organization should develop and put into practice the processes that assuring influence and feedback of the affected population in: initial assessment, project design and deliverables, vulnerability criteria and selection processes, project implementation, and monitoring and evaluation
	The organization should enable the beneficiaries to provide their feedback, to have the influence on the interventions continuously and adaptively, or as minimum to obtain their informed consent for the actions
	The organization should work with its partners to put into practice, improve, and agreed on how to assure targeted population participation in all of interventions stages
5. Handling complaints "The organization enables the people it aims to assist and other stakeholders to raise complaints and receive a response through an effective, accessible and safe process"	The organization should define, document, and put into place complaints procedure covering the following: who have the right to complain, how to complain, purpose and limitations of the procedure, complaints handling steps and time frame, process of accelerate handling of the serious complaints such as abuse and exploitation, privacy, non-retaliation, appeal options and witnesses for the complainants, and safety referral process if the issue cannot be handled by the organizations such as medical or legal support
	Complaints procedure should be based on preferences of the affected population, staff, and all stakeholders
	Complaint procedure should be understandable by the affected population, staff, and all stakeholders
	Complaints handling, responses, and timescales should be in line with the complaints procedure
6. Learning and continual improvement "The organization learns from experience to continually improve its performance"	Organizations should define and document processes of effective learning, in particular monitoring and evaluation and complaints
	The organization should regularly monitor its performance with respect of the accountability framework, staff competencies, information sharing, participation, complaints handling, and learning
	Scope and plans of evaluations should include progress assessment of delivering accountability framework
	Monitoring and evaluation, complaints, and learning on accountability should be contributes in improvements and should be reflected in the work plans

Source: HAP (2010)

4.3 Findings from the field discussions and opinions of experts
The researchers explored perspectives of sample of key stakeholders in the humanitarian interventions of INGOs as part of the research. The exploration used personal interviews technique with the senior management members and experts, and focus group discussions with the staff and implementing partners and local community-based organizations (CBOs).

During the early discussions of this research, CARE's international M&E and accountability coordinator expressed his astonishment at the great development which has been occurred on the quality and accountability-related debates in the context of humanitarian interventions after the ethnic cleansing in Rwanda 1994. Commenting on the Rwanda crisis, many researchers such as Farrell (2013) wondered if the humanitarian intervention can really provide solutions for the beneficiaries or it just Band-Aid solution. However, Seybolt (2009) pointed to the development which occurred on the humanitarian system in terms of effectiveness during responding to Afghanistan 2001. Noticeable awareness to the importance of promoting quality management practices was observed among all of the colleagues who were interviewed and discussed. In this context, program director of CARE international and M&E colleagues in Oxfam strongly advocated on the applicability of for-profit total quality TQM practices in the humanitarian context. Moreover, the CBOs and implementing partners' leaders emphasized on the positive impact of the long-term partnerships with the INGOs on the ultimate service quality of humanitarian assistances and activities. They also showed great interest and willingness to learn more about quality and accountability standards and practices from INGOs and to institutionalize these practices in their organizations for the benefit of targeted population.

The following are the key conclusions, agreements, and convictions that resulted from the interviews and focus group discussions:

- Senior INGOs management expressed their conviction regarding the importance of TQM practices and their impact on the effectiveness and sustainability of the humanitarian interventions, and in turn, the ultimate satisfaction of all stakeholders. They also agreed on the causal relationship between effectiveness and sustainability of intervention and INGOs ultimate competiveness and survival.

- There was an agreement on the importance of beneficiaries' participation on the ultimate survival of INGOs business particularly among the senior management and quality and accountability specialists of INGOs.

- Particular attention was noticed among the front liners and implementing staff to the aspect of empowering them through enlarging and strengthening the channels for their voices to be taken into account in implementation of interventions, proposals' design, and generation of business ideas.

- The importance of implementing humanitarian interventions through local implementing partners for the benefit of all stakeholders. However, the middle management colleagues (project managers and team supervisors) pointed that such approach will allow them to be more focussed on the aspects of quality and accountability rather than focussing on the actual implementation efforts where most of their time is consumed.

- The interviewed colleagues agreed on the importance of continuous provision of awareness and training opportunities to all staff for the purpose of providing effective services and assistances to the affected populations.

- Regardless of the differences among the INGOs in terms of working areas and targeted populations, it is very important to take into account the different needs of the beneficiaries in all programs' stages, for instance, the specific needs of women and girls as well as disabilities that should be identified separately during needs assessment and planning, and should be implemented, monitored, and evaluated sensitively in terms of access and control aspects.

- Most of senior management colleagues and quality and accountability specialists agreed on the importance of maintaining up-to-date and dependable information system to track projects, to report achievements, and to extract trends and behaviors of affected populations. However, lack of awareness was noticed among some of the staff regarding this aspect which is seen as additional unneeded effort as reported by some of them.

- Particular attention was noted among the senior management team and quality and accountability specialists on the importance of maintaining documented standard operating procedures (SOPs) for all of implemented activities. Learning agenda which based on the findings from the internal reflection processes should be associated with such SOPs as agreed by the interviewed colleagues.

5. TQM-Benchmarking model for INGOS
Guided by the steps of research methodology, TQM practices of TQM-Benchmarking model for INGOs were identified as follows.

5.1 Leadership and management commitment
The commitment of top management, leadership, and strategic planning are the most important drivers of a successful TQM (Kutlu and Kadaifci, 2014) and play a major role toward enhancing the organizational performance (Valmohammadi, 2011). Thus, the top management must believe in TQM and committed to it (Boateng-Okrah and Fening, 2012). The leadership includes integrity, bravery, mercy, humor, emotion, and wisdom (Altayeb and Alhasanat, 2014). However, there are many styles of leadership discussed in the literature (Laohavichien *et al.*, 2011). In this context, Sabella *et al.* (2014) pointed to the leadership by unifying the purpose, determining the strategic direction, and motivating and change, and Hardy (2007) pointed to the importance of leading by heart in addition to the head in the context of NGOs.

Leadership and management commitment have been stated as a key TQM pillar by the quality pioneers, and broadly adopted by the factor-based literature as shown in (Table I), and by most of TQM models and excellence awards as well as field-specific frameworks. However, and despite of Boateng-Okrah and Fening (2012) pointed that transformational leadership has not direct impact on the NGOs effectiveness, they advocated on the significant role of it in promotion of NGOs organizational culture.

As the case in for-profit sector, the literature of non-profit sector stressed that top management has the focal responsibility of accountability (Geer *et al.*, 2008). However, the assessment tool of HAP (2010) focussed on establishing and delivering approved accountability framework for both organization's staff and partners' staff as a key indicator of leadership and management commitment in the humanitarian work context.

5.2 Beneficiary focus and participation

Despite of the noticeable multiplicity in accountabilities of INGOs (Davison, 2007), the beneficiary or the victim of humanitarian crises still recognized as a key stakeholder in the humanitarian interventions (Wellens and Jegers, 2014), and should be dealt with as a for-profit organizations deals with a customer. However, AbouAssi and Trent (2013) recommended NGOs to constantly be ready for institutionalize participation of beneficiaries rather than ad hoc and project-based adoption of participation.

Based on the reviewed literature of beneficiary focus and participation, this research identified the following pillars to be taken into account by INGOs as part of their beneficiary focus approach:

- It can be strongly argued that what has been discussed in the for-profit TQM literature under the title of "product design" by many scholars such as Saraph *et al.* (1989), Flynn *et al.* (1994), Martínez-Lorente *et al.* (1999), Motwani (2001), McAdam and Henderson (2004) and Perdomo-Ortiz *et al.* (2006, 2009), can be seamlessly adopted under the title of beneficiaries' engagement in design of humanitarian interventions as stated by HAP (2010) and both reviewed practical accountability and quality frameworks where the beneficiary should be part of design of provided assistances, and part of decisions of interventions as well.

- Disseminating clear, right, accessible, understandable, and timely information regarding the activities and interventions (HAP, 2010). According to all senior managers of INGOs and quality and accountability specialists who have been interviewed, to be honest and to determine the limits of interventions are the most important pillars of the service quality in the humanitarian interventions. Moreover, Seybolt (2009) pointed to the obstacles and complex nature of the humanitarian work and how information sharing can help in overcoming these obstacles.

- Providing committed, formal, visible, safe and accessible complaint and feedback handling process to ensure conveying of voice of beneficiaries. Some of scholars such as McAdam and Henderson (2004) and Martínez-Costa and Martínez-Lorente (2008) considered customers' feedback as one of the TQM factors. Goetsch and Davis (2013) advocated that despite of the importance of feedback mechanism, they named it as "after the fact" approach which should take less attention by the organizations than the proactive approaches and processes of customers' engagement. However, the humanitarian interventions involves imbalance in the powers between the beneficiaries and the INGOs by nature, thus, the existence of complaint and feedback handling processes impose itself to be essential pillar of service quality and accountability as considered by most of the field-specific quality and accountability frameworks. For the purpose of this research, HAP (2010) and ISO 10002:2014 (2014) (Guidelines for complaints handling in organizations) were also been reviewed and adopted regarding the feedback mechanism features. Accordingly, two aspects have been suggested to be part of the proposed TQM-Benchmarking model; these aspects are: management involvement and commitment through providing resources and training, and auditing as well as continuous revision of the effectiveness and efficiency of the process by continuously getting customer feedback on the complaints and feedback mechanism.

5.3 Partnership management for sustainability

In general, NPOs work together to secure funds and ensure resource acquisition, to conform adherence to the external field norms and working environments, to take benefit from the information streaming which resulted from networking in their risk mitigation strategy, to improve and widen the provided services (Proulx *et al.*, 2014), and to strengthen their outreach capabilities. However, preliminary frustrations are always expected for NGOs particularly when building cross-border partnerships; the thing that can be essentially overcome by the close, frequent, and open communications (Kuijpers and Meershoek, 2013). Moreover, Fitzpatrick and Molloy (2014) advocated to the need for creating stronger partnerships by NGOs to implement the resilience building activities toward sustainable community resilience.

Unlike the local CBOs and NGOs, the presence of INGOs in the affected areas is often seen as temporary presence. Moreover, the local humanitarian actors often have better local understanding of the affected populations and better outreach abilities. In this context, Coate *et al.* (2006) stressed on the importance of partnerships between INGOs and Local NGOs with regard of provision of aids and implementation of rehabilitation programs.

Stop awarding contracts based only on the low price as one of the Deming's (1982, 1986) commandments and maintain quality and long-term partnership management with the suppliers (Goetsch and Davis, 2013) has been extensively discussed in the literature (see Table I). In this context, HAP (2010) stressed on the partners in all of standard's benchmarks in order to ensure the adherence to the standard not only from the INGOs side but also from the implementing partners' side.

5.4 HR focus

HR focus means how the organization involves and empowers its workforce (American Society of Quality (ASQ), 2014). According to Altayeb and Alhasanat (2014), HRs involvement, empowerment, and training are mandatory aspects toward TQM. However, Analoui and Samour (2012b) indicated to the importance of strategic HR management to improve the strategic performance in NGOs.

Despite the fact that HR is the base of sustainable competitiveness in the global marketplace, non-profit sector has seldom been considered in comparison with the for-profit sector (Fenwick, 2005) and not much is known regarding HR architectures and its configuration in the context of NPOs (Ridder *et al.*, 2012). Sondhi and Nirmal (2013) indicated that the expected benefits from talent management and strategic HR management are applicable in NPOs as well. However, the leaders and managers of NPOs need to practice different behaviors from those in for-profit organizations (Hamlin *et al.*, 2011). Many reasons make HR focus to be the TQM practice of great significance in the context of INGOs, for instance, the differences between management style in developing countries and the preferred style of international staff which can lead to dissatisfaction with the NGO managers among the relief workers (Cosgrave, 1997), the difficulty of application of HR practices because of shortage of resources, pressure of funding, the increasing implementation costs (Ridder *et al.*, 2012), and the temporary and dynamic nature of INGOs interventions which resulted in high turnover rates (Beudean, 2009). In this context, Akingbola (2013) proposed his strategic HR model for NPOs.

HR focus as key TQM practice was mentioned in the reviewed literature under various titles such as: "succeeding through the talent of people" and "staff competency" (HAP, 2010).

5.5 Process management, learning, and continuous improvement
Regardless of the success or the failure, various organizations have adopted process management initiatives in order to attain and sustain their competitive advantages (Jones and Linderman, 2014). Lassiter (2007) recommended the NPOs to be engaged in process improvement in order to motivate the internal changes toward enhancing the organizational ability to respond to the external realities, change, and opportunities. In this context and through introducing case study of Amsterdam city, Steketee (2010) advocated on how process management can significantly supports the managerial problems in the treatment of social issues, and Cheng and Chang (2012) provided case study on how quality concepts such as Lean Six Sigma and the process of Define-Measure-Analyze-Improve, and Control can improve services provided by the NPOs that suffers from lack and instability of resource and requested to serve people within short timeframes.

Despite that HAP (2010) pointed to the learning and continuous improvement as one of the six benchmarks of the standard, INGOs literature is lacking with respect of process management, learning, and continuous improvement. Generally, most of TQM literature discussed this practice under the title of "process management" (see Table I) while some of literature discussed it under the title of "continuous improvement" such as Martínez-Costa and Martínez-Lorente (2008). However, excellence models such as EFQM have clearly defined the role of stakeholders in the continuous improvement and systematic innovation and mentioned this practice under the title of "harnessing creativity and innovation."

For the purpose of this research, we adopted CARE international case as one of the key INGOs working in Jordan through portfolio of around 20 active humanitarian projects as of January 2015 guided by HAP (2010) benchmark of learning and continual improvement in order to identify the proposed TQM-Benchmarking model. In this context, CARE adopted and practiced the following:

- Agreed-upon, documented, and well communicated SOPs for all programatic components.

- Quality assurance practices such as observations check lists, internal reflection meetings or quality circles, and brainstorming.

- Periodic revision for SOPs based on the quality assurance outcomes.

- Documented and agreed-upon communication management plan to serve the learning cycle and to feeds into development of the new business ideas.

5.6 Use of quality information
Based on the reviewed TQM literature in Table I, the last TQM practice adopted by this review entitled "using quality information." However, MBNQA listed this practice under the title of "measurement, analysis, and knowledge management" which refers to the extent to which organizations use data to support the processes and performance management (ASQ, 2014).

HAP (2010) pointed to the importance of using outcomes of M&E activities in the continuous improvement. M&E as a key point on the development agenda (White, 2013) has been defined by the related literature as the central point of the governance system (Mackay, 2007), tool for improving satisfaction with projects' performance (Sangole *et al.*, 2014), and feedback mechanism of the management

framework which includes identifying indicators of performance, data collection system, and information recording and analysis which aims to feed the information into day-to-day management and decision making and to enhance the execution of the future projects as a result of the evaluation of the previous projects (Fiador, 2013).

Practically, it is generally accepted in the INGOs that M&E units bear the responsibility of managing the overall quality information in the Humanitarian interventions of INGOs. However, the field-specific quality information can be disaggregated to the following practical manifestations:

(1) Needs assessment for community and household levels to determine the gaps and the proposed areas and sectors of intervention (Syrian Needs Assessment Project (SNAP), 2014), and households or individuals' vulnerability assessment to determine the specific needs of targeted cases.

(2) According to HAP (2010), the results of M&E should be contributed in improvements and should be reflected on the implementation of interventions. However, it can be strongly argued that the resulting information from M&E activities in the humanitarian context is considered as the quality information.

(3) Availability of Information management system which is concerned by NGOs to be used such as the case in the private companies (Analoui and Samour, 2012a) to provide detailed information about their activities and outcomes (Ivanovic and Antic, 2008), to increase the level of accountability, and to ensure effective use of resources (Lewis and Madon, 2004). According to colleagues of senior management and quality and accountability specialists who were interviewed, the benefits of existence of robust information system include, but not limited to: first, supporting quality assurance effort through automation and enforcement of application of the SOPs; second, supporting coordination among INGOs with respect of relief activities; third, avoiding double funding and duplication; fourth, prioritizing the needs of beneficiaries; and fifth, analyzing trends and behaviors of the targeted population.

6. Findings and emerging reflections

In the midst of crises, most of managers in INGOs tend to focus on the humanitarian relief side of their interventions rather than ensuring effectiveness and sustainability of business results. However, the issues of effectiveness, sustainability of interventions, and beneficiaries' satisfaction increasingly began to take more importance in the related debates and donors' criteria for donations.

Through learning from the for-profit sector and relating with the INGOs context and the nature of their humanitarian interventions, this review tried to participate in the TQM-benchmarking effort of INGOs by identifying the potential TQM practices vital for INGOs performance, and by proposing TQM-Benchmarking model (see Figure 1) for the use of future research. TQM-Benchmarking model suggests six TQM practices along with the initial pool of scale statements from review of the literature to be seamlessly adopted by research instruments. The remainder of this section summarizes the six proposed TQM practices that formulate TQM-Benchmarking model for INGOs.

The first TQM practice identified by this review was entitled by "leaderships and management commitment." Just as the case in the for-profit organizations, this practice primarily means that INGOs should have a clear and well communicated vision or/and mission in which quality of beneficiary care is promoted and accountability to
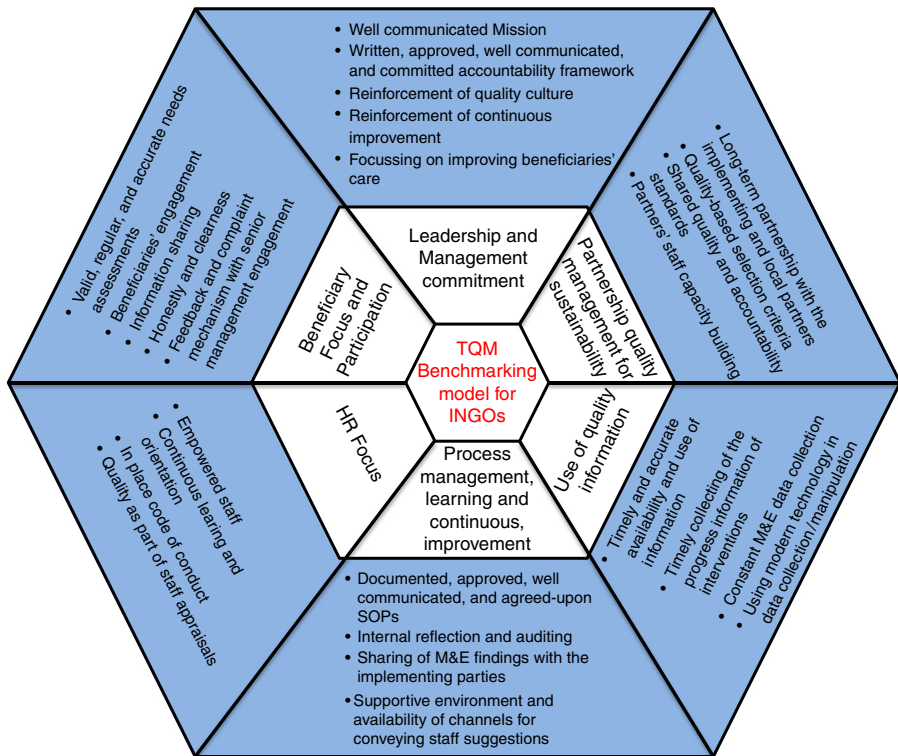
Figure 1.
TQM-Benchmarking
model for INGOs

beneficiaries, donors, and to the other stakeholders are reflected. However, a field-specific form of management commitment imposed itself through the necessity of maintaining documented, approved, and well-communicated accountability framework which might be customized based on the context of each intervention. Moreover, the leaders of INGOs bear the responsibility to disseminate and reinforce the culture of quality and beneficiary care among the staff, volunteers, implementing partners, and all other stakeholders. Reinforcement of learning and continuous improvements is also key aspect of innovative INGO leadership in this regard.

As the case in for-profit TQM literature with respect of the significant adoption of "customer focus" aspect, this review adopted the second TQM practice using the expression "Beneficiary focus and participation" to urge INGOs to recognize the beneficiaries as key stakeholder in their interventions. With respect of INGOs context and nature of humanitarian interventions, this practice indicates first, to the significance of conducting accurate, valid, and scientific needs assessment which takes into account the specific needs and vulnerabilities of each sub-targeted group on both, community and household levels as preliminary stage of interventions. Second, to the proactive approach of beneficiaries' participation where the INGOs should engage their potential beneficiaries proactively in the planning and design of humanitarian assistance, activities, services, and decisions of interventions that related to them as key stakeholders. Yet, this is can be achieved practically through what is called "community committees" as an example. Third, to the necessity of ensuring right, clear,

honest, accessible, timely, understandable information sharing with the beneficiaries regarding the interventions and their limits, and lastly, to the obligatory of maintaining formal, documented, visible, accessible, and safe feedback and complaint handling mechanism with engagement and commitment of the senior management and constantly evaluation and measurement of the mechanism's effectiveness.

As most of INGOs interventions are implemented on the targeted areas through local implementing partners or local CBOs, the third TQM practice identified as part of the TQM-Benchmarking model is to maintain quality and long-term partnerships and alliances with those partners. The INGOs should consider the quality as the most important selection criteria to choose the implementing partners, the quality standards and accountability frameworks should be shared and communicated effectively, and to be part of the grants and contracts. Capacity building of the partner's staff in terms of quality standards and accountability frameworks should not be neglected. Moreover, strategies, procedures, and budgets to support the implementing partners in complying with the quality and accountability standards should be in place. Implementing humanitarian interventions through quality partnerships can also enhance the outreach capabilities and provide in-depth understanding of the targeted populations.

The fourth identified practice of TQM-Benchmarking model is "HR Focus." To be HR focussed in the humanitarian interventions, INGOs should empower their staff, particularly those who are in contact with the targeted populations and beneficiaries, well communicated and understandable humanitarian code of conduct should be in place, all staff should understand their roles and responsibilities regarding quality and accountability and adhere to the applied quality and accountability standards as well as any applied or field-specific humanitarian principles, and to include these adherences in their continuous appraisals. INGOs should enable their staff to access the ongoing orientation and learning opportunities of quality and accountability. Moreover, INGOs should give particular attention to the staff who are in contact with the partners in order to make them fully aware about the quality and accountability standards and to work closely with the partners' staff on developing their capacities in terms of quality and accountability standards as well.

Process management, learning, and continuous improvement formed the fifth TQM practice which advocated by this research as part of TQM-Benchmarking model for INGOs. In the context of INGOs humanitarian interventions, this practice translated on the ground by maintaining agreed-upon, documented, and approved SOPs for all implemented activities, systematically practicing the internal reflections and auditing exercises, sharing the findings of M&E and feedback from the beneficiaries with the staff who carry out activities, functional units, and implementing partners, and promotion of a supportive environment for continuous improvement through facilitating the channels for conveying staff suggestions.

The last identified practice of the TQM-Benchmarking model is "use of quality information". In addition to the importance qualitative information and findings that resulted from the needs assessments, the humanitarian decisions cannot be taken effectively without availability of timely and accurate quantitative information. Therefore, the information about implementation and progress of the programs should be accurate, timely collected and distributed, and used widely in the agency, information management system which stores and manages information about the beneficiaries should be in place, information management systems for the

purpose of coordination with the other agencies and coordination platforms should be constantly maintained and updated if applicable, M&E data should be constantly collected and shared, and the modern technologies of data collection, analysis, and disseminating should be harnessed for the purposes of accountability, accuracy, and facilitation.

Through advocating of TQM practices for INGOs, this review has sought to lay the foundation for the future debates regarding the overall quality obsessions in the humanitarian interventions, and to propose a seed TQM-Benchmarking model for INGOs and for the benefit of vulnerable people around the globe.

7. The future scope

Learning from for-profit literature of TQM, this review aimed solely to develop a TQM-Benchmarking model for better understanding of specific, applicable, and vital TQM practices in the context of INGOs toward performance improvement. As significant suggested research opportunities, quantitative research can be conducted based on the proposed TQM-Benchmarking model by this review in terms of validation, evaluation, and benchmarking of performance.

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