

Implementation of NAMS Cycle Model – A Continuous Improvement Model from an Islamic Perspective

Afroza Bulbul Afrin¹, Rafikul Islam^{2*} and Md. Yousuf Ali³

¹Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Business Studies, International Islamic University Chittagong, Kumira-4318, Chittagong, Bangladesh

²Department of Business Administration, Kulliyah of Economics and Management Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia, 53100 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

³Department of Fundamental and Inter-Disciplinary Studies, Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia, 53100 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

The main objective of this research was to develop an implementation process of the newly developed continuous improvement (CI) model – NAMS Cycle. Erecting on the affirmative postmodernism philosophy, fundamental epistemological foundations of this research are the Qur’ān and the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the contributions of scholars in Islam. A qualitative methodology was adopted to conduct this research. Data were collected through focus group discussions (FGD) and semi-structured in-depth interviews and were analysed manually. Based on the data, the researchers had finalised a five-step implementation process of the NAMS cycle started with decision making and followed by education and training, implementation, evaluation, and corrective measures. Organisations should test its practicability by implementing the model.

Keywords: Continuous improvement, implementation process, Islamic values of management, NAMS cycle, TQM

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E-mail addresses:

afrozabulbul132@gmail.com (Afroza Bulbul Afrin)

rislam@iiu.edu.my (Rafikul Islam)

mdyousufaa@gmail.com (Md. Yousuf Ali)

*Corresponding author

INTRODUCTION

The authors of the present article have recently developed a continuous improvement model from the Islamic perspective and named the model as NAMS cycle (Afrin et al., 2019). After developing the model, the next question is ‘how to operationalise the model?’ To respond to this question, the researchers attempted

to develop an implementation process of NAMS Cycle. Based upon a focus group discussion (FGD) meeting and the responses of the participants in the in-depth interview sessions, the researchers have developed a five-stage implementation process model of the NAMS cycle. The stages are started with decision making and followed by education and training, implementation, evaluation, and corrective measures.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Continuous improvement (CI) of quality, one of the fundamental elements of total quality management (TQM), is an essential requirement for any product that a firm produces or any process through which an organisation delivers services to its customers and clients (Ahbabi & Alshawi, 2015; Plenert, 2012).

NAMS Cycle

NAMS Cycle is a newly developed model of CI in TQM from an Islamic perspective (Afrin et al., 2019). There are four components in NAMS Cycle which are *al-Nīyyah bi al-Ikhlās*, *al-‘Amal*, *al-Muhāsaba*, and *al-Şhukr*. Each of the components has some constructs which are shown in Figure 1.

In every action, people need to think critically whether their activities are like *‘Ibādah* (worship Allāh (swt)) or, are being done according to Islamic *Sharī‘ah* and to please Allāh (swt) only.

The first component of the NAMS Cycle is “*al-Nīyyah bi al-Ikhlās*” which means noble intention behind the action. For Muslims, every action will start with a clear and pure intention of pleasing Allāh (swt). Fixing the *al-Nīyyah* is obligatory in Islamic *Sharī‘ah*. For example, the doer must be honest, clear, and pure about the *al-Nīyyah*,

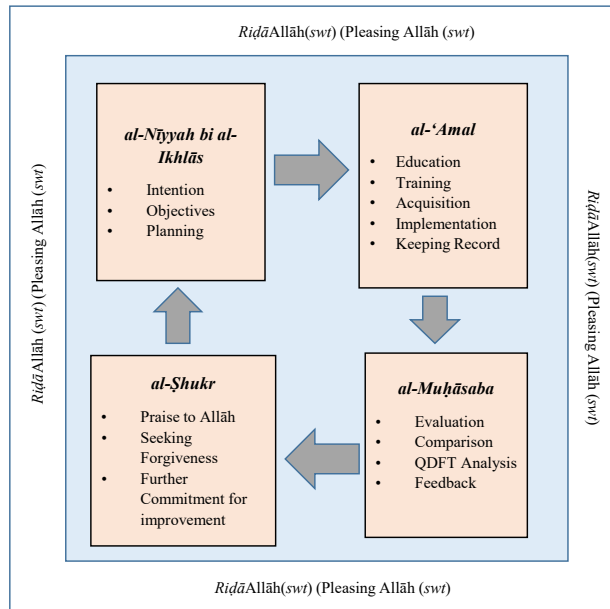


Figure 1. NAMS cycle of continuous improvement (Afrin et al., 2019)

because the result of every task depends on the doer's *al-Nīyyah*. Setting specific objectives and making an effective plan are also included at this stage.

The second component *Al-'Amal* means actions having religious motivation. In this model, *al-'Amal* consists of some constructs - education, training, acquisition, implementation, and recording - which should be implemented and justified by *'Ibādah*.

The third component *al-Muḥāsaba* means accounting. In theology, '*muḥāsabat al-nafs*' means 'inward accounting, spiritual accounting'. *Muḥāsaba* is the doublet of *ḥisab*. In this model, *al-Muḥāsaba* consists of actions that should be integrated and justified by *'Ibādah*. Measurement and evaluation, comparison and constructive analysis, identifying strong and weak points, and feedback are the constructs of this component.

The fourth component *al-Ṣukr* is an Arabic word that denotes the meaning of thankfulness, gratitude, or acknowledgment by a human. Simply, *al-Ṣukr* means praising one for his good deed. The term may also be used if the subject is God. In that case it takes the meaning of "divine responsiveness". *Al-Ṣukr* consists of some components/actions to construct the model such as *praise to Allāh (swt)*, *seeking forgiveness*, and *commitment to future improvement*.

Islamic Worldview (*Tasawwur*)

Quality management is not overlooked in Islam rather emphasised. Allāh (*swt*) wants people to do all of their works with best of

the quality and He will judge them on the basis of the quality of their deeds (He, Who has created death and life that He might test you, as to whose work, is excellent among you. And He is the Esteemed one the Forgiving (Al-Mulk, 67:2). Thus, to perform every task in the best possible way is a religious obligation for all Muslims.

In the Islamic system, management and any other mundane affairs of life are linked with man's mission in life. This leads people to the philosophical underpinnings of quality management in the Islamic framework. Broadly speaking, the philosophical underpinnings of human life and the management of its affairs in the context of the Islamic worldview are classified into four: 1) *Tawḥīd*, 2) *Risalah*, 3) *Khilāfah*, and 4) *Akhirah* (Sadeq, 1996).

al-Tawḥīd: *al-Tawḥīd* signifies the unity of Allāh (*swt*), the Creator, the Sustainer, the Wise and the Seer of everything, who maintains the universe through His unified law of nature (*fitrah*). The first part of the witness of faith in Islam is '*Lā ilāha illa' Allāh*' (there is no God but Allāh (*swt*)). This declaration is what is universally known in Islam as the principle of *al-Tawḥīd* or Divine Unity (Bakar, 2008). All mundane and other affairs of life and beyond will have to be consistent with this unified system.

Risalah: *Risalah* is an Arabic word that means 'message'. *Risalah* is the Divine institution that communicates the unified system of Allāh (*swt*) to mankind. It has two sources: 1) the Divine Books which contain the unified system and the code of life, and

2) the Sunnah, *that is*, the interpretation of the Book by the messengers through practice (*fi'l*), instruction (*qawl*), and approvals (*taqrir*). The last Divine book is Al-Qur'ān, the last messenger is Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his *Sunnat* has been narrated in several books of Hadith.

Khilafah: *Khilafah* means vicegerency which is the implementation of all the instructions of the Lord according to His desire. The person who implements these is known as vicegerent or representative or *khalifa*. Man has been created in this world with a vision to carry out a mission - to implement Allāh (*swt*)'s rules in the world as His vicegerent for the overall welfare of mankind in this world as well as in the life Hereafter. "And it is He, Who has made you successors upon the earth" (Al-An'ām, 6:165).

Akhirah: The concept of *Akhirah* brings about the idea of accountability in the life Hereafter. Vicegerency is subject to accountability. The people having a fear of accountability in *Akhirah* should be a good doer in this world. Allāh (*swt*) says, "What is the life of this world but play and amusement? But best is the home in the hereafter, for those who are righteous. Will ye not then understand?" (Al-An'ām, 6:32).

The dual accountability system is present in an Islamic framework. Dual accountability refers to i) accountability towards the employer if it is an appointed position, to manage the entity as best as possible, and ii) accountability towards Allāh (*swt*) for the discharge of responsibilities according to the Islamic normative system which requires high-quality performance.

The contemporary literature on quality management from the Islamic perspective shows that most of the works are on the elaboration on a list of values embedded in the practice of quality management and there are attempts in developing some models of quality management. For example, Musa and Salleh (2005) proposed a model of an Islamic total quality, Jabnoun (2008) developed 'Umar's TQM Control Process and the authors of the present article have recently developed a continuous improvement model from Islamic perspective none of which is being implemented in the organisations. However, the question still around is how the NAMS Cycle model can be implemented in practice. This question has been addressed in the present article and a detailed step-by-step process has been put forward.

Conceptual Framework

The researchers had developed the following conceptual framework to develop a NAMS Cycle implementation process model:

Decision Making → Education and Training → Implementation → Evaluation → Corrective Measures

Decision making is a pervasive function of managers aimed at achieving organizational goals. Most of the cases the decisions of top management and respective participants act as a barrier to implement any new theory or model for continuous improvement (Ingram et al., 2004). In this process model top management decisions are vital to implement the NAMS Cycle.

To improve the capacity of the related manpower it is essential to train them

with the required knowledge, education, and technology. The system of profound knowledge (SoPK) is highly recommended by Deming (1986) to enhance the quality of an organisation. In this process model, the employees are needed to be trained with the professional values of continuous improvement integrated with Islamic principles and values.

After training, all of the departments are responsible to implement and exercise the values in their respective fields. And then the outcome should be recorded and measured. The results will be compared with the standard previously set. If there is any deficiency, the organisation needs to find out the reasons behind those. Most of the time (94%), the reasons are general and only 6% of causes are special (Deming, 1986). After finding out the reasons the next step is to take necessary action to improve the situation.

METHODS

The nature of the present study takes the affirmative postmodernism philosophical stance. The distinctive subjectivist-epistemological and ontological position of affirmative postmodernism induces particular appraisal norms for such management research. The epistemological paradigm of this study is based on the idea of Unity (*al-Tawhīd*). The fundamental epistemological foundations are the Qurʾān and the Sunnah (Prophetic guidance), and the contributions of scholars in Islam. The traditional Islamic epistemology (theory of knowledge) provides all the necessary

safeguards against all kinds of philosophical deviations (Bakar, 2008). These form the foundation of every Islamic methodological inquiry and application (Choudhury & Harahap, 2009). Hence, serving only Allāh (*swt*) and to be successful here and in the life Hereafter, is the ontological standpoint of this study. The philosophical stance, epistemological, and ontological paradigm induced the researchers to follow the qualitative methodology to conduct the research.

Data were collected in two phases- Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and semi-structured in-depth interviews. For FGD, 18 participants were selected and invited purposively among whom 11 were present in the meeting. The meeting was continued for almost two hours. In the interview phase, 30 practitioners were selected purposively based on their knowledge and availability for semi-structured in-depth interviews. Both the discussion meeting and the interviews were recorded in audio form and then transcribed and analysed manually by applying six steps qualitative data analysis method: organise and prepare the data for analysis; read through all the data; begin the detailed analysis with a coding process; themes and description; interrelating themes/description; and interpreting the meaning of themes/interpretation (Creswell, 2010). Conversation analysis and narrative analysis were used for data analysis and interpretation.

Some of the participants in this study were not interested to disclose their names. So, the FGD participants are mentioned as

P1, P2, and P3 up to P11. On the other hand, the participants in interview sessions are stated as Int.1, Int.2, and Int.3 up to Int.30.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

How to Operationalise the Newly Developed Model?

From the FGD and interview sessions, researchers acquired valuable comments and suggestions leading to develop an implementation process of NAMS Cycle. The following sections describe the processes to implement the newly developed model of CI.

To implement/operationalise the newly developed NAMS Cycle of CI, an organisation needs to fulfil the following prerequisites:

1. Top management commitment
2. A strongly motivated work team

Top Management Commitment to Implement the Model

Top management's role alone in making decisions, strategies, and policies is vital. Top management, by definition, includes managers who serve at the top of the organisational hierarchy and are responsible for the whole organisation (Enz & Grover, 1992). However, according to Deming's (1986) research, 94% of the problems in quality are caused by general causes and the role of management. In organisations, decisions are made by the top management, so it is the first prerequisite that the top management should have a good intention and strong commitment to implement the newly developed model in their organisation.

Top management's commitment can be seen through their active participation in any program, financial involvement, and time investment to provide necessary training.

A Strongly Motivated Work Team to Implement the Model

"One of the more important ingredients, if not the most, for successful, high quality and excellent management is still the age-old one, that is human factor or personnel who actually performs all the tasks in the whole organisation" (Alhabshi & Ghazali, 1994). To be successful in achieving the goals and objectives, mission, and vision of an organisation, top management should develop the manpower according to their needs. Therefore, the second but equally important prerequisite for implementing the newly developed CI model is to develop a strongly motivated work team imbued with Islamic and professional values.

In the pre-Islamic era, there were positive values which Islam reinforced like courage, generosity, and directness. Besides these, Jabnoun (2008) described 18 more values in Islam which were practised by the companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Ishak and Osman (2016) described 18 Islamic quality management values which are similar to the values described by Jabnoun (2008).

In FGD, the participants also talked about some of those values. For example, P1 said,

"Because, the issue of *Itqān*, this issue is very very important".

P3 said,

“As Dr. said, the word ‘*Itqān*’ is used extensively in the Islamic Arabic literature to refer to ‘quality’ or ‘excellence’... And he is expressing the same issue that you are talking about implicitly that if a person has *Ikhlas*, what are his manifestations? And what will be the destination if a person has *Ikhlas*?”

P4 said,

“And then, for the ‘*Amal*, the *Ihsān* component I think bigger.”

And P5 said,

“As we talk about management, we are going to the corporate, companies, or, practically, our university also. The professor mentioned *Itqān*, *Ihsān*, and *Ikhlas*. Now, we look at the ‘*amānāh* that is given to us, the trust.”

P6 also mentioned,

“That is why here we say *Īmān*, *Taqwa*, and *Ihsān* are essential components that we have to gather. I believe that with these, *muḥāsabah* comes automatically. *Al-‘Amal* is not accepted if there is no *Īmān*. As Allāh (*swt*) says, “*Ittakullah wa kunumā al- sadiqīn*” (Have *Taqwa* in your heart and stay with righteous people who are truthful).”

The following is the merged list of Islamic and professional values mentioned by Ishak and Osman (2016), Jabnoun (2008), Mufti (2013) and also recommended by the participants in the FGD which required to

be inculcated into the employees during and after training sessions:

Al-Tawḥīd and Freedom from Tyranny.

Al-Tawḥīd is the backbone of Islam, literally means ‘making one’ or ‘unity’ or ‘oneness’ or ‘asserting oneness’ (Gibb & Kramers, 2001). It is applied theologically to the Oneness (*waḥdānīyya*, *tawāḥḥud*) of Allāh (*swt*) in all its meanings. It may mean that there is no God except Allāh (*swt*), Who has no partner (*sharīk*); Allāh (*swt*) is the Oneness in Himself (Al-Ikhlas, 112:1-4); He is the only being with real or absolute existence (*al-ḥaqq*) (Faruqi, 1992); all other beings having merely a contingent existence; it may even be developed into a pantheistic assertion that Allāh is All. In consequence, *Tawḥīd* means simply that ‘there is no God but Allāh (*swt*)’. If the employees can understand the meaning of *al-Tawḥīd* and maintain the standpoint - to serve only Allāh (*swt*) for pleasing Him, they will be successful in both the worlds.

Ikhlas. *Ikhlas* means to keep clear and transparent and to keep free from tyranny. In connection with the Qur’ānic use, the expression *ikhlasal-dīnillāh*, to honour and serve Allāh exclusively, *ikhlas* by itself received the meaning of “absolute devotion to Allāh (*swt*)” (Al-Baqarah, 2:133) and became used in opposition to *ishrāk*, *shirk*, “associating Divine beings with Allāh (*swt*)”. There is one *Sūra* in the Holy Qur’ān called *Sūrat al-Ikhlas* (also *Sūrat al-Tawḥīd*) which emphasises the unity and uniqueness of Allāh (*swt*) and denies that He has any associates (Upadhyay et al., 2017). As the

vicegerent of Allāh (*swt*), people must have this value ‘*Ikhlāṣ*’ which is indeed needed to implement the NAMS Cycle effectively in an organisation.

Iḥsān. *Iḥsān* is an Arabic term meaning “perfection” or “excellence”. It is related to faith (*Īmān*) and can be seen in both deed and action. “*Iḥsān* is simply the practice of Islam and the realization of *Īmān* at the level of excellence” (Bakar, 2008). It pertains to a person’s internalisation of Islam and *Īmān*.

Once Angel Jibrāil (as) visited Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and asked him to tell about *Iḥsān*. Then Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: “That you worship Allāh (*swt*) as if you are seeing Him, and in case you fail to see Him, then observe prayer (with this idea in your mind) that (at least) He is seeing you...” (al-Muslim, 2007a: 4). Having this sense in the work environment when people will do their duties, surely, they will do better and gradually improve their performances and achievement.

Abstaining from Ḥarām. *Ḥarām* means prohibition. According to the Islamic *Sharī‘ah*, which is prohibited or forbidden is known as *Ḥarām*. People in the organisation must not practice *Ḥarām* in any form. As the Qur’ān says, “*Allāh (swt) hath permitted trade and forbidden usury*” (Al-Baqarah, 2:275). They cannot make any transaction of interest or *riba*, but they are allowed to do business but not to do the business of *Ḥarām* products like an intoxicant, telling lie, and not to be fraudulent. If people practice this value in action, they will be helped by Allāh (*swt*).

Unity of Purpose. It means the Divine purpose of the creation of human beings in this world is to serve Allāh (*swt*) as His servant (by doing ‘*Ibādah*’- according to the will of Allāh (*swt*)). Good Muslims should not divide their *dunia* (worldly) and *Akhirah* (Hereafter) goals, and their individual and organisational goals. The purpose is one ‘to please Allāh (*swt*)’. This purpose is clearly mentioned in the verse, “*I (Allāh (swt)) have created Jinns and Men with the purpose of nothing but worshiping only Me*” (Al-Zariyat, 51:56).

Humility and Modesty. Another important value is humility and the person who possesses this value is known as ‘*Halim*’. This is one of the attributing names of Allāh (*swt*). People should be polite and humble to their parents, bosses and/or seniors. A humble person should never feel pride which is *Harām* (prohibited). Being Muslims and *Mu’minūn*, people must be humble and modest as well. These values are very essential in the organisational life to work together and achieve the goals together.

Trustworthiness/Amanah. Trustworthiness is another important quality for every human being. It is also a part of *Īmān*. People should be very careful, cordial, and sincere to keep their *Amanah*. Man is bound to keep his trust. Likewise, when people are appointed in an organisation, they are also given trust, which they are bound to keep. They will be asked about those on the Day of Judgement and will be rewarded or punished accordingly.

Brotherhood. Brotherhood is another important and essential value for mankind in this world. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) told us, “None of you will have faith till he wishes for his (Muslim) brother what he likes for himself” (al-Bukhari, 1997a: 12).

Likewise, in any organisation, employees should build up and maintain a relationship of brotherhood among them. If they can do this, they will be cooperative with each other, will improve gradually, and none can suppress them.

Dignity and Respect for Others. Dignity and respect for others is another essential attribute for mankind. Allāh (*swt*) does not like those who do not respect others. “*Woe to every [kind of] scandal-monger and-backbiter*” (Al-Humazah, 104:1). So, as co-workers, employees should respect each other, and honour and acknowledge everyone’s contributions to the organisation. It will create a positive environment to increase or improve their performances which the organisations demand from them.

Cost and Time Efficiency. Allāh (*swt*) does not like people who waste any resource. They will be asked on the Day of Judgement about the resources given to them. Allāh (*swt*) says, “*For the wasteful are the brothers of Satan; and Satan is ungrateful to his Lord*” (Al-Isra’, 17:27). A Muslim must make every effort to remove wastage around him, at home, the workplace, or in society, even when faced with confrontation. A common example would be to control the use of water, food, and electricity according

to needs. Wastage of resources such as material in the workplace, man-hours, machine-hours, human potential, and time, cause poor quality of products or services and loss to the organisation. Waste should be minimised as much as possible by efficiently utilising resources. While 100% elimination is not possible, it should nevertheless be an aim through continuous effort. Muslims should find this easier than others because they have been instructed to avoid wastage by their Lord.

Quality/Diligence. In Islam, quality is a process of positive change for excellent performance in all human endeavours. Excellence is a requirement not only in big matters but also in matters like slaughtering an animal. Shaddid b. Aus said: Two are the things which I remember Allah’s Messenger (peace be upon him) having said: “*Verily Allah has enjoined goodness to everything; so, when you slaughter, slaughter in a good way. So, every one of you should sharpen his knife, and let the slaughtered animal die comfortably*” (al- Muslim, 2007b: 4810). The people in any organisation should have and practice this value to ensure the expected quality of their tasks all the time.

Flexibility. Flexibility is another value that helps people avoid hardship and enjoy the freedom and lets others enjoy their freedom too. So, the people should have this value to practice in the organisations to allow others to exercise their knowledge who have the expertise.

Fairness/Justice. People must be fair with every dealing in their life. Otherwise, they will be punished accordingly (Al-Mā'idah, 5:8-9). This value is equally significant for the administration, HRM, leadership, production, and marketing divisions to achieve their respective and collective goals and objectives of the organisation.

Cooperation. In any organisation, to achieve the goals and objectives, cooperation among the employees and staff is a must. Many organisations fail due to a lack of proper cooperation. The Muslim *Ummah* is not beyond the need for cooperation. Allāh (swt) asks people to cooperate with each other in good deeds and not to cooperate with each other in evil tasks. So, in any organisation, people must be cooperative and helpful to each other to achieve their goals.

Discipline and Obedience to Leaders. Discipline means to obey the rules and regulations of any organisation. Allāh (swt) wants every creature to be disciplined. He says in the Qur'ān, "*And strive in His cause as ye ought to strive*" (Al-Ḥajj, 22:78). "*O ye who believe! Obey Allāh (swt), and obey the Messenger, and those charged with authority among you*" (Al-Nisā, 4:59).

In an organisation, an employee must obey the organisational rules and regulations and obey his superior until or unless they directly oppose Allāh (swt) and His Messenger (peace be upon him).

Participative Management. Everyone should take part in the participatory

management process as per their capacity with good intentions. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said that religion is sincere advice and whoever sees wrong among Muslim brothers, should correct it.

When people can take part in the organisation's decision-making process, they are motivated to implement and execute that decision, which helps the organisation to achieve its target.

Innovativeness/Eagerness to Learn and to Share Knowledge. Allāh (swt) has created human beings with the faculties to think, analyse and understand the issues and matters in this universe and they can produce many necessary goods that can bring *falāḥ* (welfare) to mankind. To acquire true knowledge and spread it to people is a divine command (Al-'Imrān, 3:187). By practising this the individuals will be aware of all related matters and will be able to improve significantly.

Responsibility and Accountability. Everyone in the organisation is responsible for his/her duties, and they will be asked about it by the supervisor and by Allāh (swt) on the Day of Judgement. Everyone should be very responsible for his/her duties and responsibilities and be very careful about that because of being asked on the Day of Judgment (al-Bukhari, 1997b: 18).

This sense of responsibility and accountability leads people to do their duties rightly and without any negligence, which may help the organisation to do better in a competitive age.

Trust on Others. After putting trust in Allāh (*swt*), people also have to put trust in their co-workers and Muslim brothers. Trusting on others helps us to reduce our workload and pressure, and to obtain the love and best performances of others. In this way, the employees in an organisation can build a positive environment that may help them achieve their goals efficiently and to do better day by day.

Optimism. Optimism is a very positive force that makes a man successful. Allāh (*swt*) asks people to be optimistic, and He helps the optimists. As such, people should be optimistic in all aspects and have to say, '*in shaAllāh*' meaning 'If Allāh (*swt*) wills'. This value is equally important in individual life as well as in organisational life.

Consistency. For effective implementation and gradual improvement, one must be consistent with his/her actions. The Prophet (peace be upon him) emphasised the consistency in action which is found in the following Hadiths:

Masruq is reported to have asked 'A'isha about the action (most pleasing to Allāh (*swt*)) the Messenger of Allāh (*swt*) (peace be upon him). "*She said: He (the Holy Prophet) loved (that action) which one keeps on doing regularly*" (al-Muslim, 2007c: 1614). Similarly, in any organisation, people should be very consistent in their actions which will help them to improve their quality as well.

Patience. The implementation of any plan and decision requires patience. Islam has asked people to be steadfast, patient, and to help one another to maintain patience while doing righteous work. It is one of the attributes of successful people (Al-'Aṣr, 103:1-3).

So, keeping patience is very vital to establish any good thing, to improve continuously, and to have any reward.

Thankfulness. In any organisation, people should be thankful to each other, thankful to the supervisor, and thankful to Allāh (*swt*). If there is a culture of thankfulness in the organisation, people will be happy to work there, and the productivity and the quality of their activities will be increased.

Tawakkul. *Tawakkul* means doing any task with one's utmost best and putting trust in Allāh (*swt*) for its result. Once a Bedouin who had confused *Tawakkul*, came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and asked about the matter, he (peace be upon him) explained that it was to take the appropriate action and then trust in Allāh (*swt*). He asked, "*Should I tie my camel and rely upon Allāh (swt), or should I leave her untied and rely upon Allāh (swt)?*" The Messenger (peace be upon him) replied, "*Tie her and then rely upon Allāh (swt)*" (al-Bukhari, 1997c: 169).

Employees and owners should practice this value in their every day activities by investing their level best and trusting in Allāh (*swt*) for the best result.

Implementation Process Model of NAMS Cycle

P7 (in FGD) commented on operationalisation of the newly developed model. She said,

“I am wondering how do you want to apply this model. How can the *ulul al bab* (an Islamic concept) be applied in the organisation? If you can answer, wonderful.”

Based on the comments of the discussants, the researchers developed an implementation process as shown in Figure 2. Like many other models, the NAMS Cycle can be implemented in any organisation through a process comprising five steps. In every step, there are specific tasks to be carried out by a particular group of people as mentioned and briefly described in the following sections:

Step 1: Decision Making

At this stage, the heads/managers of all divisions should (Int.8, Int. 11, Int.12, Int.13, Int.17, Int.23)

1. be determined to implement the NAMS Cycle in their own areas of responsibilities;
2. set standard for their actions;
3. make a budget and allocate finance as per requirements; and
4. spend enough time to implement the model.

Step 2: Education and Training

Int.2, Int.4, Int.5, Int.9, Int.10, Int.13, Int.14, Int.16, Int.17, Int.18, Int.20, and most of the participants mentioned the necessity of education and training of the employees to let them know about the mission, vision, and objectives of the organisation. In this step:

1. All of the employees should know about their Divine identity and Divine purpose.
2. All of the employees should be trained on ‘how to make every task as *‘Ibādah’*.
3. For every division, there would be a separate and specialised training session.

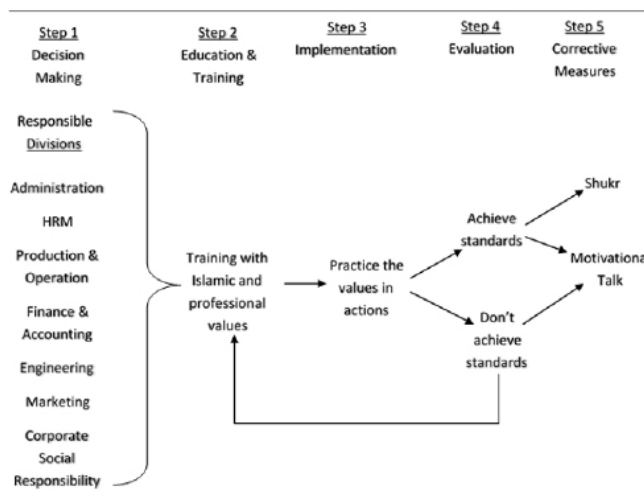


Figure 2. NAMS cycle implementation process (newly developed by the researchers)

4. The non-Muslim employees should be educated and trained on how to work in an Islamic environment and together they can help achieve the goals of the organisation.

Step 3: Implementation

This is the most vital step where all the decisions should be executed. Here all the staff should remember their divine identity (vicegerent of Allāh (*swt*)) and divine responsibility (to worship/serve Allāh (*swt*)) at the time of doing any task in this organisation/world (Int.10, Int.19, Int.20, Int.24, Int.25).

Staff should take any decision and/or make any policy that will bring *falāḥ* (welfare) for the organisation, for the employees, for the customers, for the stakeholders, and for the society at large. They must not do any task which is harmful to any group or individual, or which is *Harām* (prohibited) in Islamic *Sharī'ah*. It is observed that people who have belief in Allāh (*swt*) and do or practise the good deeds, only they will enter into Heaven (Al-Nisā, 4:57). It is also indicating that without implementing any good plan, no good result will come. So, effective implementation is essential for the organisation to improve.

The human resource division has a very vital role in developing human resources in line with Islamic as well as professional teachings. They need to arrange training programs for all the staff of the organisation and to create a positive environment to fulfil the divine purpose of the creation of human beings in an effective and efficient manner. Secondly, they have to practise Islamic

teachings in their activities. They should be fair in recruiting new employees, to train them, to promote them, to pay them, and to maintain them. Allāh (*swt*) says in the Holy Qur'ān, "Allāh (*swt*) doth command you to render back your trusts to those to whom they are due; ... Verily, how excellent is the teaching which He giveth you!" (Al-Nisā, 4:58).

The production division must be conscious about *ḥalāl* and *harām* issues along with cleanliness and goodness at the time of producing the products. They should always try their level best to maintain standards. They should ensure the quality of the products by using the right ingredients as needed. They have to mention all ingredients with their measurement, their food values, or energy so that customers can know. They should not hide anything that the customers should know.

The finance division should provide all the necessary costs as and when needed but no waste of money. They should not allocate money for work which is not allowed in Islamic *Sharī'ah* and which is directly prohibited by Allāh (*swt*) and His Messenger (peace be upon him). The accounting division is responsible for keeping proper records of all financial transactions of the organisation. To keep such records, they must be fair and transparent. They should not maintain different accounts to deprive any party like the government and other stakeholders of the organisation.

The functions of the engineering division are significant to the organisation. They should not follow any formula or

production system which is contradictory to Islam or which violates the rules of Allāh (*swt*). They also should be conscious of the *ḥalāl-harām* issue and should not design products and processes which Islam does not allow. For example, they should not produce any product following the physical appearance of human beings or any animals. They also should not use any non-Islamic signs. Producing only *ḥalāl* products is not enough; they must be careful about the goodness of those products for mankind and for the environment as well.

The marketing division has a significant role in promoting and selling the products and services they produce. If this division does not perform their duties and responsibilities efficiently, the organisation may incur a loss. Money flow is like the blood of an organisation and selling the products and services is the only way of money inflow in the organisation. This division is very vital for the organisation. Nowadays, many organisations are practising unethical and un-Islamic marketing activities to maximise their sales and profits. They are unnecessarily using images of women dressed indecently to advertise their products and services which are not permitted in Islam. Also, the organisation should not convey any message to the customers which are not true for that product or service. If there are drawbacks to the product, they need to inform the customers. Also, at the time of pricing the products and services, the organisations should set a fair price, not less which may cause loss of the organisation or an excessive price to maximise profits.

Every organisation works within a social community and neighbour organisations. Along with the staff, customers, and stockholders, organisations also have responsibilities to neighbours, the community, and the society as a whole. They must take the necessary steps so that society will not be polluted. They have to provide jobs and work for the community. They can open service centres for the poor community for education, training, and medical services. They have to abstain from harming neighbour organisations and communities. It is narrated on the authority of Abu Huraira (*ra*) that the Messenger of Allāh (*swt*) observed: '*He will not enter Paradise whose neighbour is not secure from his wrongful conduct*' (al-Muslim, 2007d: 174).

Step 4: Evaluation

This step was suggested by Int.4, Int.5, Int.11, and Int.12. In this step, actual practices should be measured and compared with the standard (set in step 1) from the viewpoint of Islam. Though it is subjective, and we cannot see the intention of human beings, the intention is reflected in the practices and actions of the doers. Truly, the *Muttaqīn* (Allāh (*swt*) conscious people) do all tasks only for the sake of Allāh (*swt*) to please Him, and not for showing off to people. In the holy Qur'ān, many characteristics have been mentioned to recognise the *Muttaqīn* (Al-Baqarah, 2:3-4).

From the above discussion, it may be concluded that if the organisation/divisions do not produce and provide any *harām* or harmful products or services, and they deal

properly with the staff and customers and follow Islamic teachings and principles at the time of dealing with customers and society, then they are doing their job for the sake of Allāh (*swt*) to please Him. The organisation or groups may use a checklist for evaluation as per their purposes.

Step 5: Taking Corrective Measure

This step was also suggested by Int.4, Int.5, Int.11, and Int.12. At step 4, whoever achieved the standard goals to be appraised (*al-Shukr*) for their success, and who did not achieve the standards, the organisation should identify the reasons for their failure and arrange training programs. For both groups, the organisation needs to arrange motivational talks to improve their morality, spirituality, and other values. By following the above steps, an organisation can easily implement the NAMS Cycle to continuously improve the quality of its products/services/processes.

CONCLUSION

The contemporary models of continuous quality improvement in the organisations are based on the worldly purpose only. They do not address the purpose of the life Hereafter. On the other hand, the newly developed Islamic model of CI is very new to the practitioners to implement. This study tried to help the organisations and practitioners by developing an implementation process of the NAMS Cycle, and thus satisfy the ontological standpoint of this study. Therefore, this research has contributed to practising Islamic principles and values to

improve the quality and performance of an organisation continuously.

The outcome of this research is a theoretical model of implementing the newly developed continuous improvement model from an Islamic perspective. Its fundamental theory is based on the basic Islamic values and principles related to quality improvement. Future researchers-individuals and/or organisations- can test its practicability in the organisations by implementing the model.

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