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Impact of EFQM Excellence Model on leadership in German and UK organisations

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Abstract

Purpose of this paper: The research aimed to discover whether there were differences in leadership practices and perceptions of good leadership practice between German and UK organisations. Design/methodology/approach: A survey based on analysis of self-assessment documents submitted for the European Quality Award or its equivalents in Germany and the UK was distributed to 300 organisations in Germany and the UK. A response rate of 20% was achieved. The survey was also distributed to 20 assessors. Findings: There were more differences in perceptions of good practice between German organisations recognised for excellence and German organisations not using the Excellence Model than between German and UK organisations. In the UK, there were more differences between what was described as good practice and what was described as usual practice among organisations not using the Excellence Model than among organisations recognised for excellence. German assessors differed in their view of good practices from UK assessors and German organisations. Research limitations/implications (if applicable): The number of respondents was small, the organisations which chose to respond may not be typical and responses may not be accurate. A larger survey would help establish the generalisability of the findings. Focus groups would be particularly helpful in understanding the difference in perspective of the assessors. Practical implications (if applicable): An awareness of Anglo-German differences is helpful for managers with cross-border teams. The difference in assessor perceptions suggests that the training offered by the EFQM has not resulted in a common understanding. What is original/value of paper: The paper is valuable both to academics who are interested in cross-cultural leadership and to practitioners wrestling with the issues posed by cross-cultural teams.

Disciplines

Business

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Introduction

Leadership is the first criterion of the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Excellence Model, a model of organisational excellence which is used by an estimated 20,000 organisations across Europe (EFQM 2003). Management literature is mostly Anglo-American as noted by Stewart (1994). The authors compared leadership as described by the EFQM (see Appendix 1) with leadership as described in management literature. The authors then examined Anglo-German differences identified by previous researchers. The authors conducted research to explore whether there are still differences in how leadership is perceived and exercised in German and UK organisations, both in organisations which are unfamiliar with the Excellence Model and in organisations which have been recognised for excellence.

Leadership theory and the Excellence Model

Many leadership texts focus on aspects of leadership relating to mission and vision, goals, motivation and people management which relate to the EFQM Excellence Model sub-criteria 1a and 1d (Appendix 1). With regard to mission and vision, EFQM guidance is very similar to that of American writers such as Kouzes and Posner (2003) and Kotter (1988) The EFQM suggests that this may include developing the organisation's mission, vision and culture. The role of organisational leaders in promoting improvement and excellence is defined in total quality management (TQM) textbooks e.g. Dale (2003) and Oakland (1999) but does not feature in traditional management books such as Yukl (2002) and Bass (1990).

People management and motivation are the aspects of leadership which have received most attention in leadership texts, e.g. Adair (1983; 2003; 2004), Kotter (2001), Kouzes and Posner (1999) and Yukl (2002). These authors advise leaders to listen, inform, motivate, recognise, delegate, mentor and team build, which corresponds closely to the EFQM guidance for criterion 1d. Change management, sub-criterion 1e introduced in 2003, is discussed in change management texts e.g. Carnall (1999) but change is increasingly seen as part of the leadership role, e.g. Kotter (2001). The EFQM (2003) guidelines include standard recommendations such as planning change, communicating the reasons for it, enabling

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people to manage change and reviewing the effectiveness of change. The EFQM Model is in keeping with developments in leadership theory.

Relatively few leadership texts mention stakeholders. Relationships with customers, suppliers and the community as well as with employees are included in Hampson (1999) and Logan (1999). These aspects of the leader's role are further described in specific texts e.g. Burnes and Dale (1998) on partnerships or Daffy (1995) and Whiteley (1991) on customer service. A recent survey by Larraine et al. (2003) reported that many business leaders believe that building partnerships had been relatively unimportant in the past but is critically important for the future. Kettley and Strebler (1997) also found that the role of senior managers has become far more externally focused than previously. Again, the EFQM Model is in line with developments in Anglo-American management literature.

The EFQM guidance on leadership is more broadly based than many leadership texts, in its references to partnerships and to excellence and improvement activities. This may reflect European input into the EFQM Excellence Model. Including stakeholders for example is an important aspect for Germany and Scandinavia. The topics where EFQM guidance overlaps most closely with Anglo-American leadership literature are mission and vision, people management and change. Interestingly these are also topics which have been found in previous research to be points of difference between Germany and the UK, as will now be discussed.

Anglo-German leadership comparisons

With regard to mission and vision, early studies e.g. Booz Allen and Hamilton (1976), Lawrence (1980) and Bessant and Grunt (1985) found German managers less likely than their British or American counterparts to define corporate goals, or to refine objectives, being more concerned and comfortable with day to day management than longer term planning . Comparisons in the 1990s (e.g. Lessem and Neubauer 1994) continued to report that German managers did not like formulating or formalising company goals. However, Ferner et al. (2001) reported that German multi-nationals were now adopting Anglo-Saxon practices such as mission statements and defining objectives but in doing so, were incorporating familiar German reference points such as acknowledging the workforce as collective

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stakeholders. Multi-national corporations, consultancies and the international business press have contributed most to the diffusion of management practices across Europe according to Engwall (2003).

The most common differences identified in Anglo-German comparisons relate to people management, although some studies conflict. Some studies (e.g. Ebster-Grosz 1996, Tillier 1993) found that Germans preferred authoritarian rather than participative relations, while others e.g. Millar (1979) and Lane (1989) reported that German managers were more aware of the role and significance of genuine participation, and that industrial conflicts in Germany were resolved relatively easily in contrast to Britain. Lawrence (1980) noted that German managers appeared to value teamwork less than British managers. Mason (2000) found that in recent years, German managers had become very interested in the notion of teamwork. However, Koopman (1999) reported that countries in the Nordic and Anglo clusters (including UK) favoured a team-oriented approach to leadership more than did Germanic managers. The annual German 'Excellence-Barometer' survey organised by the Verein Deutscher Ingenieure/Association of German Engineers (VDI 2002; Prudent 2003) found that while business leaders were highly qualified, their qualifications were generally technical and they lacked both commercial and interpersonal skills. Dames (2001) stressed that relationships and people management mattered as well as technical management and recommended coaching as the leadership style to develop. Brodbeck also found that care for employees was not a hallmark of the Germanic cluster in the Globe project.

In terms of employee involvement, Tüselmann et al. (2002) reported that fewer German-owned companies in the UK used team briefings, problem-solving groups and attitude surveys than British-owned companies, while more German-owned companies used suggestion schemes, regular meetings with the work-force and newsletters. Lane (1992) noted higher loyalty to employers in Germany, partly because of the active involvement of the works council and also because of the generally cooperative style of industrial relations. In Britain, the ease of mobility between firms resulted in lower levels of employee involvement and less employee loyalty. This may also reflect a greater degree of comfort with change than has been found in Germany by Hofstede (2001).

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Difficulties in introducing change and innovation in German organisations have been noted by several writers. According to Lynn (1997) and Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (1993), Germans associate risk with failure, leading to their unwillingness to try something new in case it does not work. Bloch and Groth (1998) found German companies poor at transferring technology from the laboratory to the market place, which they attributed to an aversion to risk and reluctance to accept new ideas. Brainstorming and creative problem-solving were seen as difficult in the German environment according to Ebster-Grosz (1996).

However, while it may take time to introduce changes in Germany, deployment of agreed processes is widely regarded as systematic. Hofstede (2001) argued that while innovations were more difficult to bring about in high uncertainty avoidance cultures such as Germany, once accepted they were implemented more seriously. Waechter (1997) noted that the complicated and time-consuming consultation process in Germany delayed implementation of new ideas. However he also suggested that once accepted, implementation would be thorough and the impact stronger. In Britain, by contrast, policy implementation has been patchy, pragmatic, incoherent and inconsistent, according to Cooke (2000).

In summary, leadership practices advocated in the EFQM guidance such as defining mission and vision, and motivating and recognising employees, are very similar to guidance in Anglo-American literature and not associated with Germany in previous research. The present research aimed to explore whether there are still differences in leadership practices in German and UK organisations and whether deployment of the Excellence Model has an effect on organisational perceptions and behaviour.

Methodology

Comparative leadership studies e.g. Schneider and Littrell (2003) often deploy a questionnaire developed in one country, frequently the USA, and compare the results. This approach works well if leadership is practised in the same way in the two countries being compared. However if there are practices in either or both countries which differ from the country where the questionnaire was developed, then these practices will not be identified. The present research used a novel methodology, beginning with an analysis of the leadership criterion in German and UK award submissions written for the European Quality Award

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(EQA). These documents offer numerous advantages to the researcher but are under-utilised in management research. The documents were written by the organisations themselves, providing an unobtrusive measure of leadership in those organisations. In addition to a description of their processes, organisations include data such as employee surveys and key performance indicators. The documents had been submitted for assessment to external organisations (European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM), British Quality Foundation (BQF), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Qualität (DGQ)) in the knowledge that external assessors might visit the organisation to validate the self-assessment. Thus, while the documents may present a positive self-image, they are unlikely to present a totally false picture, as this would be revealed by the site visit. A further advantage for the researcher is that they are written with external assessment in mind, hence jargon is kept to a minimum and a company overview is provided.

The researchers compared the leadership practices described in self-assessment document which had been submitted for the German and UK national quality awards and for the European Quality Award. 42 practices were identified which were either more common in one country than the other or in some cases only featured in documents from one country. However, such differences might be confined to organisations familiar with the European Quality Award. The researcher therefore used this list of statements as the basis for a questionnaire. A further ten statements, where differences had been found in comparisons by other researchers but were not apparent in the award submissions, were added, resulting in 52 statements as listed in Table 1.

Take in Table 1.

In order to understand whether the practices identified were common and seen as desirable by other organisations in Germany and the UK, the questionnaire was sent to 300 organisations, in comparable industries: automotive, pharmaceutical, hotel and retail. The automotive sector was included in the sample as a sector advanced in TQM but not known for use of the Excellence Model (Dale et al., 2000). Pharmaceutical companies have to cope with intense regulation from the various authorities regulating the development, manufacture and sale of medicines. Their quality regimes are very strict and heavily regulated (Gough, 2001). Some service companies were included as they might have an alternative perspective on leadership. Again, to increase comparability, two specific sub-sectors were selected: retail and hotel. These four sectors are defined similarly in the standard industrial classification

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systems in both countries. For each sector, the selection included companies with a turnover greater than €500,000,000 and a turnover less than €100,000,000 and companies in different regions of Germany and the UK.

Some organisations were members of the EFQM, BQF or DGQ, many were not, allowing a comparison between organisations familiar with the European Quality Award and organisations not familiar with it. The survey was also sent to 20 EFQM-trained assessors, ten in Germany and ten in the UK, to obtain an expert view on what is usual practice in the two countries. Assessors are re-trained each year they assess award documents. The training is common across Europe, based on case studies provided by the EFQM, and assessors use a common methodology in assessing organisations.   It might therefore be expected that this would outweigh any country differences in what the assessors regarded as good practice.

A response rate of 60% was obtained from assessors in both countries. The overall response rate was 20% overall as shown in Table 2

Take in Table 2

Respondents were asked to indicate whether the statement was usual practice in their organisation, was sometimes deployed or never deployed. Respondents were also asked whether they considered the practice to be good practice. Responses were analysed by country using SPSS to generate cross-tabs.

For each statement, there were two variables, one relating to how common the practice was in the respondents' organisation (or other organisations in the case of assessors), the second relating to whether the respondent believed the practice to be a good practice. Percentages were used to compare German and UK responses of usual practice and good practice, following Reynolds' (1984) advice that one of the easiest ways to measure association (or lack of it) is to calculate percentages to compare how people in different categories behave with respect to the classes of another. Differences of 25% or more (the gap between score bands in EFQM assessments) were regarded as indicating a genuine difference.

The correlation coefficient was not used, as it demonstrates how the value of a dependent variable Y changes with changes in the independent variable X (Fink, 1995), whereas the dependent variables here are not numeric but categoric, i.e. people are not either more or less German or British, they are one or the other. Furthermore as most of the statements were based on award submissions, they might all be positively regarded and hence more

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organisations might describe them as 'usual practice' than not. In other words the distribution of responses would not be normal. Certain statistical techniques e.g. t-tests which can be used to compare the performance of independent groups of individuals, can only be used where the data is 'of at least interval level of measurement, normally distributed, and have equal variances' (Brace et al., 2003). Instead, the odds ratio was calculated for organisations as this indicates the strength of the relationship between two nominal variables (Reynolds, 1984). It answers the questions:

- how likely is it that German organisations will respond usual practice to each of these statements?
- how likely is it that UK organisations will respond usual practice to each of these statements?
- Is there a difference between the two, i.e., does country of origin differentiate between responses?

If there were no difference between the country responses, the odds would be the same. The odds ratio differs from other measures of correlation in that a nil association is indicated by 1.0 rather than 0. An odds ratio <1 indicates that it was more likely for German organisations to respond usual practice, while an odds ratio > 1 suggests that it was more likely for UK organisations to respond usual practice. The odds ratio was not calculated for assessors due to the small number of respondents.

Main findings

The survey revealed many differences in what was reported as usual practice but fewer differences in what respondents regarded as good practice. Three main areas of difference are discussed here: differences between German and UK organisations overall, differences between organisations familiar with the Excellence Model and organisations not familiar with it, and differences between assessors.

German and UK organisations overall

In the overall survey responses, odds ratios between Germany and the UK less than 0.5 or greater than 1.5 were found for 33 of the 52 statements (Table 3) suggesting that country of origin does have an effect on responses. The survey statements were grouped by themes which had been identified in the document analysis. These themes were self management, people management, people development, strategy, external relations and excellence.

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Looking at the data by theme, country of origin had little effect on statements relating to strategy, but in all other themes, there was a relationship between country and practice in over half the statements listed, with German organisations responding that the survey statements were usual practice more frequently than did UK organisations. Given the previous differences found between German and the UK in strategy, it was interesting that this survey found little difference between organisations on defining mission, vision and strategy. It is also interesting that the themes with the most statements showing a country of origin effect were external relations (100% of statements in that section) and excellence (83% of statements in that section). As stated in the introduction, both themes are treated in specific books e.g. on partnerships or quality management, but receive scant attention in general management literature. Neither theme has appeared in previous Anglo-German comparisons.

With regard to good practice, there were many common perceptions between German and UK organisations. Responses from all the organisations in the survey showed differences of ≥25% in only three of the 52 statements shown in Table 1:

- *S38 Leaders personally provide training to employees* (50% UK, 77% Germany)
- *S19 Leaders work in different functions, to broaden their understanding of the business as a whole* (90% UK, 64% Germany)
- *S24 Leaders communicate mostly with other leaders* (27%UK, 55% Germany)

For all other statements, there was less than 25% difference between responses.

As shown by Table 4, responses of usual practice were higher in Germany than in the UK in general, suggesting that if organisations believe something to be good practice, they will implement it. This is consistent with findings by Waechter (1997) and Hofstede (2001) that implementation in Germany is generally more consistent and systematic.

Take in Table 4

The findings suggest that Germans organisations expect their leaders to interact with their suppliers and with their local community more than do UK organisations. More German organisations also claim that it is usual practice to encourage employees to act on their own

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initiative and to respond quickly to requests for decisions or information. In line with the collective orientation noted by Hofstede (2001), team recognition is described as usual by more German organisations (77%) than individual recognition (64%) while individual recognition is described as usual by more UK organisations (53%) than team recognition (47%).

Responses by familiarity with the Excellence Model

German and UK organisations which had been recognised for excellence, either at national or European level, shared many perceptions of good practice but differed by 25% or more in six statements as shown in Table 5. German and UK organisations not using the Excellence Model differed on a different set of six statements. In both groups, UK organisations were more likely to denote a statement as good practice.

Take in Table 5

More UK than German organisations recognised for excellence thought it was good practice for senior leaders to take part in improvement teams without leading them (S7), to promote employees who behaved in line with company values (S43), to recognise both team (S45) and individual performance (S44) and to give recognition in public (S46), and to play a role in the local community (S52). More German than UK organisations recognised for excellence thought it was good practice to share business information with employees (S28).

More UK organisations than German organisations not using the Excellence Model saw it as good practice for leaders to work in different functions (S19), to regard junior members of staff as leaders (S25), to provide training personally (S38), to mentor employees (S39), to spend time outside work with employees (S40), and to be aware in detail of team members' activities (S49). There were no statements to which more German organisations than UK organisations not using the Model responded more positively.

Interestingly, there were more differences between German organisations recognised for excellence and German organisations not using the Excellence Model, than between German and UK organisations. As shown in Table 6, German organisations recognised for excellence differed by 25% or more on 20 statements from German organisations not using the Model.

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Take in Table 6

More German organisations recognised for excellence described as good practice statements such as defining the mission, socialising with employees outside work, personally providing training, leading improvement teams, and regarding people in junior positions as leaders. More German organisations not using the Model described recognition, peer support and coaching as good practice than German organisations recognised for excellence. There were different perceptions of good practice in only four statements between UK organisations recognised for excellence and UK organisations not using the Model as shown in Table 7.

Take in Table 7

This contrasts with differences in 20 statements between German organisations recognised for excellence and German organisations not using the Model as shown in Table 6. The differences between Tables 6 and 7 confirm that use of the Model has a greater effect on perceptions of good practice in Germany than the UK.

In many cases, fewer German organisations recognised for excellence responded usual practice, perhaps because organisations recognised for excellence have a more realistic picture of their own performance, through use of employee feedback and other leadership performance measurements and possibly through benchmarking with other organisations.

German and UK assessors

UK organisations and UK assessors shared perceptions on good practice, with none of the 52 statements showing a difference ≥25%. The situation is reversed between German assessors and organisations with 51 of the 52 statements differing by ≥25%, and in 30 of these, the difference was ≥50%. German and UK assessors differed on good practice on all but one of the 52 statements by ≥25% and in 46 of these, the difference was ≥50%.

The statement where German and UK assessors came closest was S12, *senior leaders personally define the organisation's strategy*, which 67% of German assessors and 83% of UK assessors agreed was good practice. The other five statements with a difference of 33% between German and UK assessors were:

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- *S1 Leaders meet customers personally*(67% German, 100% UK).

- *S3 Leaders meet suppliers personally*(50% German, 83% UK).

- *S11 Senior leaders have defined the organisation's mission and values* (50% German, 83% UK).

- *S24 Leaders communicate mostly with other leaders* (17% German, 50% UK).

- *S49 Leaders are aware in detail of their team member's activities* (17% German, 50% UK).

The biggest differences (83% or more) between German and UK assessors were in practices not associated with Germany in previous Anglo-German comparisons e.g. Stewart (1994), Ebster-Grosz (1996). These include S35 coaching, S39 mentoring, S16 championing change, S41 rewarding performance, S47 employee feedback on leadership performance, S48 single status workplace, S29 visiting employees at their workplace and speaking directly to them. Few if any German assessors identified these as good practices while all or most UK assessors did so.

German assessors' views of what is usual practice were less positive. In 27 of the 52 statements, there was a difference of at least 25% between German organisations and German assessors, and in only two of these did the assessors respond more positively than the organisations:

S24 *Leaders communicate mostly with other leaders.*

S34 *Leaders are expert in their areas and help their employees with their day to day work.*

By contrast, UK assessors differed by 25% from UK organisations in response to usual practice on only three statements. In two of these, assessors were more positive than organisations:

S41 *Leaders ensure that employees who exceed targets or surpass expectations are rewarded.*

S47 *Leaders seek feedback on their leadership performance from their employees.*

In the third,

S17 *Leadership roles and competencies are defined in this organisation,*

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UK organisations were more positive. In the remaining 49 statements, UK assessors and organisations responded similarly. This would seem to indicate either that the German organisations are overly optimistic, or that the German organisations which chose to respond to the survey were not typical of organisations seen by German assessors, or that German assessors are difficult to convince that good practices are usual practice.

For the UK, in both organisations' self perceptions and assessors' perceptions, there were frequently fewer organisations which described a statement as good practice, than described it as usual practice. There was for example a large gap between the number of organisations rating leaders meeting suppliers (S3) as good practice (88% UK organisations recognised for excellence, 89% UK organisations not using the Excellence Model) and those describing it as usual practice (38% UK organisations recognised for excellence, 33% UK organisations not using the Model). There were similar large gaps between usual practice and good practice relating to leaders working in different functions (S19), and learning from other companies (S4 and S5).

There were many more differences between good practice and usual practice for UK organisations not using the Excellence Model (differences ≥25% between responses of good practice and responses of usual practice for 31 statements) than for UK organisations recognised for excellence (gaps ≥25% in 20 statements). Practices where UK organisations not using the Model differed from organisations recognised for excellence in the gap between good practice and usual practice included use of feedback, peer support, responding rapidly to requests for information or decisions, being role models, sharing business information with employees, coaching, motivating, providing opportunities for employees to develop leadership, individual and team recognition, creating single status environments and community involvement.

This suggests that use of the Model encourages UK organisations to implement good practices and make them 'usual practice'. There was little difference in Germany, with gaps between good practice and usual practice ≥25% in 22 statements in organisations not using the Excellence Model, compared with gaps ≥25% in 18 statements in organisations recognised for excellence.

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Many German (75%) and UK organisations (63%) recognised for excellence described S47 *Leaders seek feedback on their leadership performance from their employees* as usual, as did some 22% of UK organisations not using the Excellence Model. However, none of the German organisations not using the Excellence Model did so, although almost all organisations in both countries considered it good practice. Similarly, none of the German organisations not using the Model described as usual practice leaders providing training, taking part in improvement teams without leading them, or socialising with employees. This suggests that adopting the Excellence Model encourages organisations to deploy practices which are not common in Germany.

Discussion

Despite pressures for convergence, this study found many differences still exist in leadership practices and perceptions of leadership practices between German and the UK. The significance of the findings is less in the differences in responses to individual survey statements than in the following three areas:

1) many common perceptions in German and UK organisations but differences in some areas which had not previously been researched and no differences where differences had previously been found;

2) impact of the Excellence Model on perceptions of good practice in Germany and deployment of good practice in the UK;

3) differences in assessor perceptions.

1) Common perceptions and differences

German and UK organisations overall have many common perceptions of good practice in leadership. Differences were found in the themes of excellence and external relations, topics which had not been addressed by previous Anglo-German comparisons such as Stewart (1994), Ebster-Grosz (1996) and Eberwein (1993). These differences support the suggestion by Matthews (2001) and Lagrosen (2003) that different countries will implement TQM in different ways. Practices such as employee feedback on leadership are relatively new in the UK and may appear in Germany in the future. Some other differences had previously been identified e.g. e.g. a preference for team rather than individual recognition in Germany

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(Hofstede 2001), little evidence of a coaching style in Germany (Dames, 2001), more mobility among British managers (Lane, 1992).

This research found little difference between German and UK organisations in relation to strategic management, unlike previous studies e.g. Lawrence (1980), Bessant and Grunt (1985) and Lessem and Neubauer (1994), suggesting that changes are taking place in German leadership practices. The Excellence Model has not previously been identified as a force for convergence of management practices but this is an area worthy of further exploration.

2) Impact of the Excellence Model

There were more differences between German organisations recognised for excellence and German organisations not familiar with the Excellence Model than between these organisations and their UK counterparts. German organisations using the Excellence Model are now adopting some Anglo-American practices, such as coaching, recognition, motivation and empowerment compared with normal German practices as described by Stewart (1994), Ebster-Grosz (1996) and Eberwein and Tholen (1996).

The introduction highlighted similarities between the Model and Anglo-American leadership literature. It is therefore not surprising that UK organisations have common perceptions of good practice, regardless of their exposure to the Excellence Model. The literature review had found that inconsistent deployment was associated with the UK (Cooke 2000) and thorough implementation with Germany (Waechter 1997). In the UK, the impact of using the Excellence Model appears to be increased deployment of what are regarded as good practices.

Although German and UK respondents shared many perceptions of good practice, there were more differences between German and UK organisations recognised for excellence than between organisations not using the Excellence Model. This suggests that the non-prescriptive nature of the EFQM guidelines (EFQM, 2003) facilitates different interpretations of what constitutes excellence rather than imposing a homogeneous view. This view is supported by the differences between the German and UK assessors' perceptions of what constitutes good practice in leadership. Nevertheless, the differences between German

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organisations recognised for excellence and German organisations not familiar with the Excellence Model suggest that the EFQM guidelines do have a modifying effect on people's understanding of concepts such as leadership.

(3) German and UK assessors

The differences between German and UK assessors' views on good practice prompt questions on how assessors from different countries regard the same practices. German assessors may have been reluctant to regard a practice as 'good practice' out of context, while the UK assessors had no such qualms. Assessors have common training on assessment to the Excellence Model. One would therefore have expected fewer differences between what UK assessors regard as good practice and what German assessors regard as good practice. However, the small sample of assessors or an unwillingness to accept a list of statements out of context as good practice may affect the generalisability of the responses. The EFQM (2003) introduced a definition of good practice as 'an error free, proven and documented working practice that exceeds the norms of known, current operational performance within a specific business environment'. German assessors may have had this definition in mind when responding to the survey whereas UK assessors may have thought of a vaguer notion of 'good practice'. Perhaps German assessors expect practices such as sharing business information (S28) to be in place and therefore do not regard it as a 'good practice'. If so, they are frequently disappointed as only 33% of assessors describe S28 as usual practice (although 82% of German organisations did so). While some previous research has been done on assessors' scoring (Van Der Wiele 1995), further research is needed on differences in assessors' understanding of the Excellence Model.

An evolving model of leadership in Germany

The findings suggest an evolving model of leadership in Germany, with organisations familiar with the Excellence Model adopting Anglo-American practices such as coaching and individual recognition. The traditional model of leadership in Germany, based on organisations not familiar with the Model and on German assessors' responses, is summarised in Figure 1.

Take in Figure 1.

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In this model, leadership is task-oriented. The leader defines the tasks to be carried out and gives guidance on how they are to be carried out. The leaders' involvement with customers, suppliers and the community enable opportunities to be identified for innovation and improvement. There are systems in place to ensure that training is given, that employees progress, that roles are properly defined and that business information is shared. Team members, like their leaders, are technically qualified and satisfied with doing their job well. Where feedback on performance is given, it is given by superiors not by team members.

 In the UK model shown in Figure 2, there are more personal interactions between leader and team members. Team members can give feedback to leaders and are involved in developing strategy.

Take in Figure 2.

It is the leader's role to ensure understanding of the big picture, motivation, adequate training and development and recognition. Team members have more autonomy in determining which tasks need to be carried out in order to achieve the company's aims and how those tasks should be implemented. Ideas can come from employees on how to carry out their jobs or from customers.

It should be noted that in both models, the outcome in terms of task achievement and employee satisfaction can be the same. However problems arise if a leader works to one model when team members expect the other, or if teams in a multi-national corporation see leadership being exercised in different ways by different leaders. The German practice of leaders meeting suppliers as well as customers and being involved with the local community could yield benefits for UK/US leaders. It remains to be seen how far the German approach will evolve towards UK/US practices or how UK/US practices will be re-interpreted to work in Germany.

Conclusions and recommendations

The findings of this research are significant for managers of multi-national teams and those working in the headquarters of multi-national corporations). They emphasise that there are still differences in leadership practices between Germany and the UK. The findings are also

important for the EFQM and its national partner organisations in considering the consistency of the assessment process and the understanding of key concepts in the Excellence Model. The findings also highlight issues which the academic community, both in total quality and in general management, should consider. The relevance of the findings for each group is discussed below.

Practitioners

It is important for leaders of cross-cultural teams to be sensitive to possible differences. UK team members do not expect the hands-on guidance German leaders are used to providing and may feel micro-managed if not allowed to define their own roles and tasks and contribute to the big picture. German team members expecting such guidance may feel neglected and unsupported when they do not receive it from UK team leaders. German team members expect their leader to be technically qualified in their area and will find it surprising to have a leader from another functional area or industry. They may also find the lack of systems surprising. Such differences can lead to intense frustration, lack of mutual respect, and lower productivity. A particular challenge is for the leader of a multi-national team, trying to give each team member the leadership they need, while remaining consistent and fair to all. Where such teams are virtual and not physically co-located, the challenge is heightened. Multi-national corporations should consider how far down in the organisation matrix management should be deployed, and where it is better for people to report to someone locally using leadership practices accepted in that country. An awareness of differences in leadership practices and strategies to minimise the associated difficulties can improve the success rate of international collaborations and should be incorporated into training not only for expatriates, but for all those working with people from other cultures, whether in permanent teams or ad hoc teams, e.g. project teams.

There are many pressures for convergence of leadership practices, such as globalisation, institutions, regulation, consultancy and publications and as this research suggests, the European Model of Excellence. This research found many common perceptions of good practices in leadership. Nevertheless there are still differences between what is described as usual practice, although the positive answers from German organisations makes the extent of the differences difficult to assess. It would be interesting to monitor the time it takes for the

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diffusion of management practices across Europe and whether these practices are modified in different countries. Award submissions are one way to do this.

EFQM

Comparisons of the assessor responses raise interesting questions for the EFQM and its National Partner Organisations, particularly relating to the concept of what is good practice. If a good leader is seen differently in different countries, do assessors reflect this in their evaluations? Would a German organisation be assessed differently by German assessors than UK assessors? Comparative analysis of regional, national and European award submissions could show whether organisations applying at the European level align their practices more with the guidelines in the Model than with norms in their own country.

The sample used for this survey was small and may not be representative. There would be merit in carrying out a larger survey in Germany and the UK and to extend the survey to other countries using the Excellence Model. This might reduce reliance on Anglo-American theoretical concepts and encourage acceptance of variation in specific practices, resulting in a shared understanding of excellence in Europe. It would also be interesting to explore further assessor perceptions across Europe of what constitutes good practice in leadership and in other criteria of the Excellence Model. Focus groups would be a useful way to understand the different opinions and drill behind the survey results.

Academic community

The total quality management academic community should do more empirical research across Europe. There are rich sources of documentary information such as award submissions, often including leadership performance and perception data and data on other aspects of management such as HRM, strategy, innovation, customer management and partnerships. Analysing these sources can uncover differences in areas not explored by standard management questionnaires.   In this research, differences relating to leaders' approach to external relations and to excellence were identified, issues which had not been considered in previous Anglo-German comparisons as well as changes in aspects such as strategy which had been previously reviewed.

General management academics should also consider using these sources. .While it is clear that the EFQM draws on developments in management literature in updating its Model, the learning process appears to be one way. A two-way dialogue between the total quality and general management academic communities would enrich both. Furthermore Anglo-American journals should actively seek contributions from non-English language sources in order to broaden the leadership debate. Academics involved in teaching and training should incorporate examples from around the world to raise awareness of differences in leadership practices.

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Appendix 1

Leadership Criterion (EFQM 1999)

Definition

How leaders develop and facilitate the achievement of the mission and vision, develop values required for long term success and implement these via appropriate actions and behaviours, and are personally involved in ensuring that the organisation's management system is developed and implemented.

1a Leaders develop the mission, vision and values and are role models of a culture of Excellence

This **may** include:
developing the organisation's mission and vision; developing and role modelling ethics and values which support the creation of the organisation's culture; reviewing and improving the effectiveness of their own leadership and acting upon future leadership requirements; being personally and actively involved in improvement activities; stimulating and encouraging empowerment, creativity and innovation, e.g. by changing the organisation's structure, funding learning and improvement activities; encouraging, supporting and acting upon the findings of learning activities; prioritising improvement activities; stimulating and encouraging collaboration within the organisation.

1b Leaders are personally involved in ensuring the organisation's management system is developed, implemented and continuously improved

This **may** include:
aligning the organisation's structure to support delivery of its policy and strategy; ensuring a system for managing processes is developed and implemented; ensuring a process for the development, deployment and updating of policy and strategy is developed and implemented,; ensuring a process for the measurement, review and improvement of key results is developed and implemented; ensuring a process, or processes, for stimulating, identifying, planning and implementing improvements to enabling approaches, e.g. through creativity, innovation and learning activities, is developed and implemented.

1c Leaders are involved with customers, partners and representatives of society

This **may** include:
meeting, understanding and responding to needs and expectations; establishing and participating in partnerships; establishing and participating in joint improvement activity; recognising individuals and teams of stakeholders for their contributions to the business, for loyalty etc; participating in professional bodies, conferences and seminars, particularly promoting and supporting Excellence; supporting and engaging in activities that aim to improve the environment and the organisation's contribution to society.

1d Leaders motivate, support and recognise the organisation's people
This **may** include:
personally communicating the organisation's mission, vision, values, policy and strategy, plans, objectives and targets to people; being accessible, actively listening and responding to people; helping and supporting people to achieve their plans, objectives and targets; encouraging and enabling people to participate in improvement activity; recognising both team and individual efforts, at all levels within the organisation, in a timely and appropriate manner.

The EFQM stress that use of these guidance points is not mandatory nor are they exhaustive lists but are intended to exemplify the meaning of the sub-criterion.

1e Leaders identify and champion organisational change
(a new sub-criterion introduced in 2003 but not in place at the time the survey was undertaken)

Tables and Figures

Table One   Survey Statements

S1. Leaders meet customers personally.
S2. Leaders act on the findings of customer surveys or other customer feedback.
S3. Leaders meet suppliers personally.
S4. Leaders learn and encourage employees to learn from other companies in the same industry.
S5. Leaders learn and encourage employees to learn from other companies in other industries.
S6. Senior leaders lead improvement teams.
S7. Senior leaders take part in improvement teams but do not lead them.
S8. Senior leaders encourage improvement teams to be set up but do not personally participate.
S9. Leaders encourage people from different functions to work together to solve problems.
S10. Leaders encourage people to develop innovative solutions.
S11. Senior leaders have defined the organisation's mission and values.
S12. Senior leaders personally define this organisation's strategy.
S13. Senior leaders review the effectiveness of this organisation's strategy.
S14. Leaders maintain an overview of the whole business.
S15. Leaders monitor performance indicators for key aspects of the business.
S16. Leaders identify the need for change and champion changes in this organisation.
S17. Leaders carry out self-assessments to the Excellence Model (EFQM) and use to improve.
S18. Leadership roles and competencies are defined in this organisation.
S19. Leaders work in different functions, to broaden their understanding of the business as a whole.
S20. Leaders help each other to improve the quality of their leadership performance.
S21. Leaders take on new challenges willingly.
S22. Leaders respond rapidly to requests for information or decisions from their employees.
S23. Leaders are role models of their organisation's values.
S24. Leaders communicate mostly with other leaders.
S25. Junior members of staff can also be regarded as leaders in this organisation.
S26. Leaders set targets for themselves each year.
S27. Leaders gather data before making decisions.
S28. Leaders share business information with employees.
S29. Leaders visit employees at their place of work, and speak directly to employees.
S30. Leaders encourage employees to act on their own initiative.
S31. Leaders promote teamwork.
S32. Leaders encourage employees to develop new skills.
S33. Leaders set targets for their team members each year.
S34. Leaders are expert in their areas and help their employees in their day to day work.
S35. Leaders coach their employees, helping them to improve their performance.
S36. Leaders motivate their employees.
S37. Leaders create opportunities for employees to develop leadership, e.g. leading a project.
S38. Leaders personally provide training to their employees.
S39. Leaders mentor their employees.
S40. Leaders spend some time outside work with their employees e.g. at social events.
S41. Leaders ensure that employees who exceed targets or surpass expectations are rewarded.
S42. Leaders promote employees based on the individual's performance.
S43. Leaders promote employees who behave in accordance with the organisation's values.
S44. Leaders praise and recognise good performance by individuals.
S45. Leaders praise and recognise good performance by teams.
S46. Leaders give recognition for good performance in public
S47. Leaders seek feedback on their leadership performance from their employees.
S48. Leaders create a single status environment without symbols such as bigger desks or designated car spaces
S49. Leaders are aware in detail of their team members' activities.
S50. Leaders answer employees' questions honestly.
S51. Leaders give personal encouragement to future leaders of the organisation.
S52. Leaders play a role in the local community in which their organisation is based.

Table 2 Survey Response rate

	UK		Germany		Total	
	Sent	**Rec.**	**Sent**	**Rec.**	**Sent**	**Rec.**
EFQM Members	50	9 (18%)	50	7(14%)	100	16 (16%)
BQF/DGQ	10	4 (40%)	10	6(60%)	20	10 (50%)
Manufacturing	60	13 (22%)	60	8 (13%)	120	21 (18%)
Service	30	4 (13%)	30	1 (3%)	60	5 (8%)
Total companies	**150**	**30 (20%)**	**150**	**22 (15%)**	**300**	**52 (17%)**
Assessors	10	6 (60%)	10	6 (60%)	20	12 (60%)
Total	**160**	**37 (23%)**	**160**	**27 (17%)**	**320**	**64 (20%)**

Table 3   Odds ratio by theme

Practice	Odds ratio
Leaders' Self-Management	
S18. Leadership roles and competencies are defined in this organisation.	0.24
S19. Leaders work in different functions, to broaden their understanding of the business as a whole.	0.52
S20. Leaders help each other to improve the quality of their leadership performance.	0.44
S21. Leaders take on new challenges willingly.	0.26
S22. Leaders respond rapidly to requests for information or decisions from their employees.	0.30
S23. Leaders are role models of their organisation's values.	0.41
S26. Leaders set targets for themselves each year.	0.19
S27. Leaders gather data before making decisions.	0.47
S47. Leaders seek feedback on their leadership performance from their employees.	0.53
S50. Leaders answer employees' questions honestly.	0.65
Number of statements where odds ratio ≤0.5 or ≥ 1.5 = 7 Total: 10 (70%)	
People Management	
S24. Leaders communicate mostly with other leaders.	1.01
S28. Leaders share business information with employees.	0.33
S29. Leaders visit employees at their place of work, and speak directly to employees.	0.61
S30. Leaders encourage employees to act on their own initiative.	0.44
S33. Leaders set targets for their team members each year.	0.43
S36. Leaders motivate their employees.	0.67
S40. Leaders spend some time outside work with their employees e.g. at social events.	0.50
S41 Leaders ensure that employees who exceed targets or surpass expectations are rewarded.	0.38
S44. Leaders praise and recognise good performance by individuals.	0.65
S45. Leaders praise and recognise good performance by teams.	0.26
S46. Leaders give recognition for good performance in public	0.24
S48. Leaders create a single status environment without symbols such as bigger desks or designated car spaces.	1.32
S49. Leaders are aware in detail of their team members' activities.	0.44
Number of statements where odds ratio ≤ 0.5 or ≥ 1.5 = 8 Total: 13 (62%)	

Table 3 (continued) Odds ratio by theme

Practice	*Odds ratio*
People Development	
S4. Leaders learn and encourage employees to learn from other companies in the same industry.	0.20
S5. Leaders learn and encourage employees to learn from other companies in other industries.	0.35
S9. Leaders encourage people from different functions to work together to solve problems.	0.11
S25. Junior members of staff can also be regarded as leaders in this organisation.	1.54
S31. Leaders promote teamwork.	0.51
S32. Leaders encourage employees to develop new skills.	0.75
S34. Leaders are expert in their areas and help their employees in day to day work.	0.44
S35. Leaders coach their employees, helping them to improve their performance.	0.80
S37. Leaders create opportunities for employees to develop leadership, e.g. a project.	0.33
S38. Leaders personally provide training to their employees.	0.81
S39 Leaders mentor their employees.	0.29
S42. Leaders promote employees based on the individual's performance.	0.41
S43. Leaders promote employees who behave in accordance with the organisation's values.	0.53
S51. Leaders give personal encouragement to future leaders of the organisation.	0.73

Number of statements where odds ratio ≤ 0.5 or ≥ 1.5 = 8   Total: 14 (57%)

Strategy	
S11. Senior leaders have defined the organisation's mission and values.	1.40
S12. Senior leaders personally define this organisation's strategy.	0.73
S13. Senior leaders review the effectiveness of this organisation's strategy.	1.09
S14. Leaders maintain an overview of the whole business.	0.79
S15. Leaders monitor performance indicators for key aspects of the business.	0.24

Number of statements where odds ratio ≤ 0.5 or ≥ 1.5 = 1   Total: 5   (20%)

External Relations	
S1. Leaders meet customers personally.	0.20
S2. Leaders act on the findings of customer surveys or other customer feedback.	0.28
S3. Leaders meet suppliers personally**.	0.22
S52. Leaders play a role in the local community in which their organisation is based.	0.18

Number of statements where odds ratio ≤ 0.5 or ≥ 1.5 = 4   Total: 4   (100%)

Excellence	
S6. Senior leaders lead improvement teams.	1.70
S7. Senior leaders take part in improvement teams but do not lead them.	2.00
S8. Senior leaders encourage improvement teams to be set up but do not personally participate.	0.44
S10. Leaders encourage people to develop innovative solutions**.	0.44
S16. Leaders identify the need for change and champion changes in this organisation.	0.52
S17. Leaders carry out self-assessments to the Excellence Model (EFQM) and use to improve.	0.35

Number of statements where odds ratio ≤ 0.5 or ≥ 1.5 = 5   Total: 6   (83%)

Overall

Number of statements where odds ratio ≤ 0.5 or ≥ 1.5 = 33   Total: 52   (63%)

Table 4   German UK Differences in usual practice

Survey statement	German	UK
Leaders meet suppliers personally.	73%	37%
Leaders play a role in the local community in which their organisation is based.	46%	13%
Leadership roles and competencies are defined in this organisation.	86%	60%
Leaders learn and encourage employees to learn from other companies in the same industry.	68%	30%
Leaders take on new challenges willingly.	77%	47%
Leaders respond rapidly to requests for information or decisions from their employees.	59%	30%
Leaders encourage employees to act on their own initiative.	77%	37%
Leaders create opportunities for employees to develop leadership.	50%	37%
Leaders encourage people from different functions to work together to solve problems.	96%	70%
Leaders praise and recognise good performance by teams.	77%	47%
Leaders give recognition for good performance in public.	64%	30%
Leaders play a role in the local community in which their organisation is based.	46%	13%

Table 5   Perceptions of good practice by use of Model

	Recognised for Excellence		Not using Excellence Model	
	Ger	UK	Ger	UK
S7 Senior leaders take part in improvement teams but do not lead them.	**50%**	**75%**	60%	56%
S19 Leaders work in different functions, to broaden their understanding of the business as a whole.	75%	88%	**60%**	**100%**
S28 Leaders share business information with employees.	**100%**	**75%**	100%	89%
S25 Junior members of staff can also be regarded as leaders in this organisation.	88%	88%	**60%**	**89%**
S38 Leaders personally provide training to their employees.	75%	75%	**0%**	**67%**
S39 Leaders mentor their employees.	63%	75%	**60%**	**89%**
S40 Leaders spend some time outside work with their employees e.g. at social events.	88%	75%	**40%**	**67%**
S43 Leaders promote employees who behave in accordance with the organisation's values.	**63%**	**88%**	80%	89%
S44 Leaders praise and recognise good performance by individuals.	**63%**	**88%**	100%	89%
S45 Leaders praise and recognise good performance by teams.	**63%**	**88%**	100%	89%
S49Leaders are aware in detail of their team members' activities.	75%	75%	**20%**	**67%**
S52 Leaders play a role in the local community in which their organisation is based.	**63%**	**88%**	60%	78%

Table 6　　　　　　　**German perceptions of good practice by use of Model**

Survey statement	Not using Model	Rec. for Excel-lence
S6 Senior leaders lead improvement teams.	60%	88%
S11 Senior leaders have defined the organisation's mission and values.	60%	88%
S17 Leaders carry out self-assessments to the Excellence Model (EFQM) and use to improve.	40%	75%
S20 Leaders help each other to improve the quality of their leadership performance.	100%	75%
S22 Leaders respond rapidly to requests for information or decisions from their employees.	100%	75%
S23 Leaders are role models of their organisation's values.	100%	75%
S24 Leaders communicate mostly with other leaders.	40%	75%
S25 Junior members of staff can also be regarded as leaders in this organisation.	60%	88%
S32 Leaders encourage employees to develop new skills.	100%	75%
S35 Leaders coach their employees, helping them to improve their performance.	100%	50%
S36 Leaders motivate their employees.	100%	63%
S37 Leaders create opportunities for employees to develop leadership, e.g. leading a project.	100%	75%
S38 Leaders personally provide training to their employees.	0%	75%
S40 Leaders spend some time outside work with their employees, e.g. at social events.	40%	88%
S42 Leaders promote employees based on the individual's performance.	100%	75%
S44 Leaders praise and recognise good performance by individuals.	100%	63%
S45 Leaders praise and recognise good performance by teams.	100%	63%
S46 Leaders give recognition for good performance in public.	100%	75%
S49 Leaders are aware in detail of their team members' activities.	20%	75%
S51 Leaders give personal encouragement to future leaders of the organisation.	100%	63%

Table 7　　　　　**UK Perceptions of good practice**

Survey statement	Not using Model	Rec. for Excel-lence
S4 Leaders learn and encourage employees to learn from other companies in the same industry.	56%	88%
S6 Senior leaders lead improvement teams.	56%	88%
S17 Leaders carry out self-assessments to the Excellence Model (EFQM) and use to improve.	44%	88%
S27 Leaders gather data before making decisions.	100%	75%

Figure One

Traditional German leadership
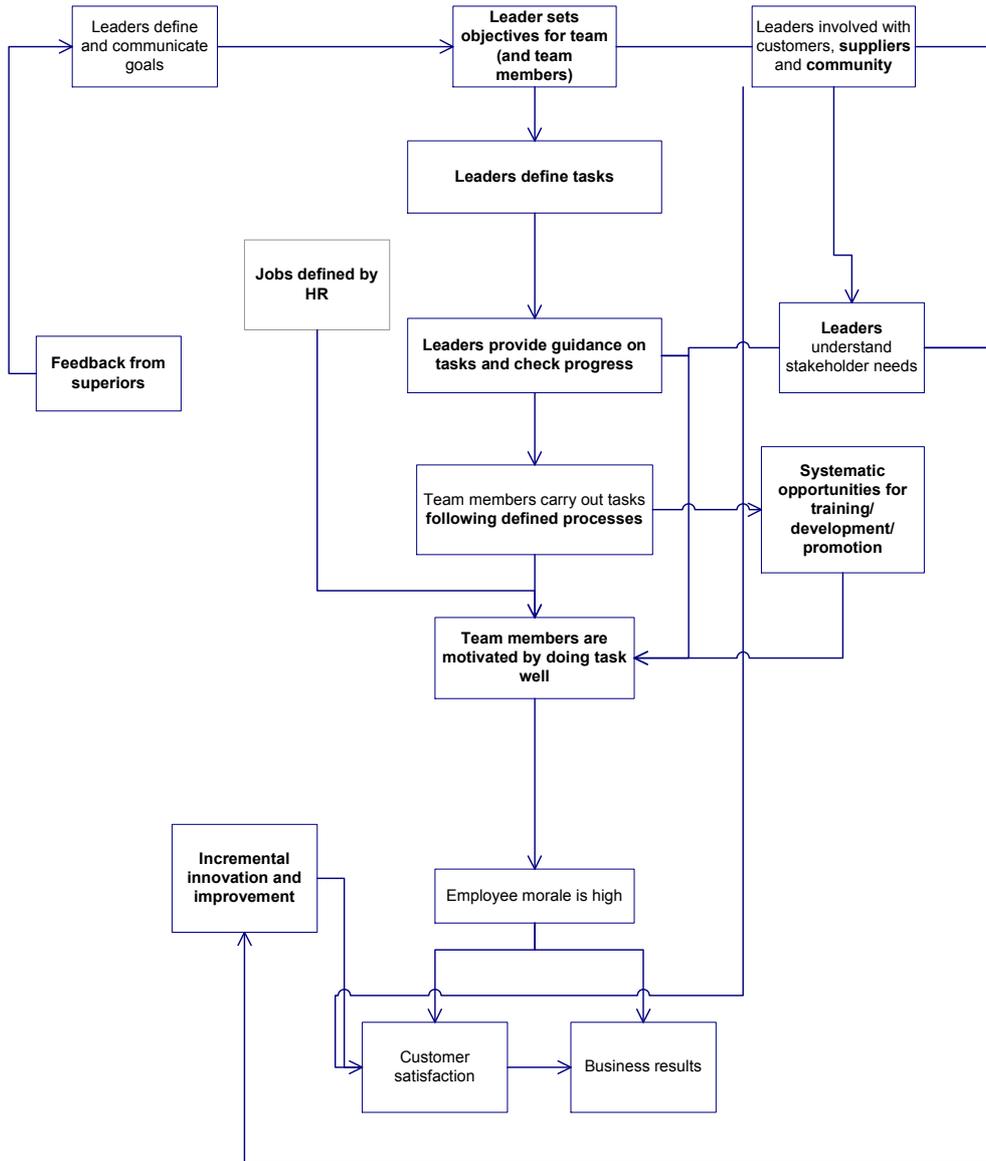
Steps in **bold** differ from the UK model shown in Figure 2

Figure Two

UK leadership

Steps in **bold** differ from the German model shown in Figure 1