

## The Core Obstacles of Continuous Improvement Implementation: Some Key Findings from Health and Education Sectors

**Authors :** Abdullah Alhaqbani

**Abstract :** Purpose: Implementing continuous improvement is a challenge that public sector organisations face in becoming successful. Many obstacles hinder public organisations from successfully implementing continuous improvement. This paper aims to highlight the key core obstacles that face public organisations to implement continuous improvement programmes. Approach: Based on the literature, this paper reviews 66 papers that were published between 2000 and 2013 and that focused on the concept of continuous improvement and improvement methodologies in the context of public sector organisations. The methodologies for continuous improvement covered in these papers include Total Quality Management, Six Sigma, process re-engineering, lean thinking and Kaizen. Findings: Of the 24 obstacles found in the literature, 11 barriers were seen as core barriers that frequently occurred in public sector organisations. The findings indicate that lack of top management commitment; organisational culture and political issues and resistance to change are significant obstacles for improvement programmes. Moreover, this review found that improvement methodologies share some core barriers to successful implementation within public organisations. These barriers as well are common in the different geographic area. For instance lack of top management commitment and training that found in the education sector in Albanian are common barriers of improvement studies in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Spain, UK and US. Practical implications: Understanding these core issues and barriers will help managers of public organisations to improve their strategies with respect to continuous improvement. Thus, this review highlights the core issues that prevent a successful continuous improvement journey within the public sector. Value: Identifying and understanding the common obstacles to successfully implementing continuous improvement in the public sector will help public organisations to learn how to improve in launching and successfully sustaining such programmes. However, this is not the end; rather, it is just the beginning of a longer improvement journey. Thus, it is intended that this review will identify key learning opportunities for public sector organisations in developing nations which will then be tested via further research.

**Keywords :** continuous improvement, total quality management, obstacles, public sector

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