

ANALYSIS OF MODERN METHODS FOR MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE USING THE ANALYTICAL CRITERIA METHOD

Marian - Petrișor MUȘAT*

PhD. Student, Faculty of Entrepreneurship, Business Engineering and Management, National University of Science and Technology POLITEHNICA Bucharest, Splaiul Independenței 313, București 060042, Romania,

*Correspondence: marian.musat2107@stud.enerq.upb.ro

Petruța MIHAI

Assistant Professor, PhD, Faculty of Entrepreneurship, Business Engineering and Management, National University of Science and Technology POLITEHNICA Bucharest, Splaiul Independenței 313, București 060042, Romania,

mihaipetruta@yahoo.com

Nicoleta CRISTACHE

Professor, PhD, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, "Dunărea de Jos" University of Galați, Strada Domnească 47, Galați 800008, Romania,

cristache.nicoleta@yahoo.de

Marian NĂSTASE

Professor, PhD, Faculty of Management, Bucharest University of Economic Studies (ASE), Piața Romană 6, Bucharest 010374, Romania,

marian.nastase@man.ase.ro

Abstract: In today's dynamic and competitive business environment, systematic evaluation is essential to improve the organisation's competitiveness, by choosing and using the right model for evaluating and improving organizational performance. This paper identifies, describes and compares three modern models for evaluating and improving the management performance—Balanced Scorecard, EFQM Excellence Model, and the Baldrige Performance Excellence Framework—using the Analytical Criteria Method. Several evaluation criteria were selected, among which can be listed strategic alignment, flexibility, stakeholder focus, and measurability. The models were compared through pairwise evaluations to highlight their strengths. The results show that the Balanced Scorecard is strong in strategy and measurement, EFQM is appreciated for continuous improvement and stakeholder involvement, and the Baldrige Framework performs well in terms of flexibility and overall structure. Based on this comparison analysis, the models were ranked, offering useful insights and proposals for managers in choosing the most suitable approach. The paper also mentions possible directions for deep research, such as combining the models or analysing how different industries influence performance evaluation. Additionally, this study contributes to a better understanding of how decision-making processes can be improved through structured comparisons, supporting both academic and practical perspectives. The findings are particularly relevant for organizations operating in complex or regulated sectors, where adaptability and strategic clarity are essential for long-term performance. The research also opens the door for future empirical validation of the evaluation matrix proposed, by applying it in real organizational contexts.

Keywords: Balanced Scorecard, EFQM, Baldrige Framework, performance management, Analytical Criteria Method, comparative analysis, management tools

How to cite: MUȘAT, M.-P., MIHAI, P. ., CRISTACHE, N. ., & NĂSTASE, M. ANALYSIS OF MODERN METHODS FOR MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE USING THE ANALYTICAL CRITERIA METHOD . *International Conference of Management and Industrial Engineering*, 12. <https://doi.org/10.56177/12icmie2025.73>

Introduction

Uncertainty and lack of predictability are two critical variables that today's business environment must constantly face. Rapidly changing economic conditions, combined with legislative volatility and sectoral disruptions, put intense pressure on organizations, especially in emerging markets such as Romania. In this context, performance management becomes more than a competitive advantage — it becomes a necessary condition for survival, efficiency, and long-term sustainability.

Unfortunately, many companies are no longer seeking to grow or scale up, but rather to maintain stability and resist in the face of increasing market and operational risks. As Scott (2009) states, performance measurement plays an essential role in defining and achieving strategic goals. However, a wide variety of models are available for assessing organizational performance, and this diversity often makes the selection process difficult and uncertain for managers.

This paper aims to identify which of the three methods analysed is most suitable for a company, depending on its field of activity, by using a tool that eliminates as much subjectivity as possible from the decision-making process. This topic is relevant because the specialised literature does not clearly indicate the best option, making the choice difficult and uncertain for managers [1].

Balanced Scorecard, EFQM Excellence Model, and the Baldrige Performance Excellence Framework are among the most well-known and widely used tools for evaluating and improving organizational performance. Balanced Scorecard focuses on balancing financial and non-financial goals through four main perspectives: financial, customer, internal processes, and learning and growth [2]. EFQM promotes a performance model based on organizational excellence, evaluating both enablers and results, with a strong focus on continuous improvement and innovation. On the other hand, the Baldrige Framework offers a systemic approach, with a strong emphasis on leadership, strategy, and outcomes, and is often used in both public and private sectors in the United States [3].

To ensure a more objective and structured comparison between the three models, the Analytical Criteria Method was chosen. This method allows the evaluation of multiple alternatives based on pre-defined criteria, using pairwise comparisons. In this way, each model is analysed in relation to the others according to the relative importance of each criterion. The method ensures transparency in the decision-making process and supports the creation of a clear ranking of the analysed alternatives. Thanks to its flexibility and relevance in management studies, the Analytical Criteria Method has proven to be a valuable tool for comparative research in organizational contexts [4].

This paper contributes to a better understanding of how modern performance management tools can be compared and evaluated, helping decision-makers choose the model that best fits their organization and the current volatile and competitive environment.

Literature Review

Balanced Scorecard

Balanced Scorecard is a performance measurement tool developed in the early 1990s by Kaplan and Norton, aiming to integrate financial and non-financial indicators into a strategic framework. It introduces four key perspectives: financial, customer, internal processes, and learning and growth [5].

The model was designed in response to the limitations of traditional financial indicators and the increasing importance of intangible assets. Its purpose is to help leaders communicate strategic direction through measurable indicators aligned with long-term goals [6].

While the Balanced Scorecard offers clarity and structure, it can become rigid if not regularly updated and may overlook qualitative or contextual factors.

EFQM Excellence Model

The EFQM Excellence Model is a recognized framework designed to help organizations manage change and improve performance. Updated periodically, it remains relevant in dynamic environments. Its main objective is to support sustainable competitiveness through a holistic approach focused on leadership, strategy, people, partnerships, processes, and results [7].

The structure includes three main areas—Direction, Execution, and Results—with seven core criteria such as Purpose, Strategy, Organizational Culture, Stakeholder Engagement, and Performance Outcomes.

The model integrates financial and sustainability indicators and uses the RADAR logic (Results, Approach, Deploy, Assess, Refine) to drive operational efficiency and continuous improvement.

Baldrige Performance Excellence Framework

The Baldrige Framework, developed in the U.S. in the 1980s, emerged as a response to increased competitiveness from Japanese companies that excelled through continuous improvement practices [8]. It helps organizations identify strengths and improvement areas, using relevant data for strategic decision-making and operational efficiency.

The model includes six categories—Leadership, Strategy, Customers, Workforce, Operations, and Results—supported by systems for measurement, analysis, and knowledge management. At its core is the organizational profile, which

defines values and context. The framework is appreciated for its systemic, integrated approach and adaptability, although its complexity and resource demands can be seen as limitations.

Analytical Criteria Method

The Analytical Criteria Method (ACM) is a useful decision-making tool for comparing strategic options based on predefined evaluation criteria [9]. It involves pairwise comparisons between criteria using a standard scale, leading to the calculation of relative weights and the structured ranking of alternatives.

This method minimizes subjectivity by encouraging comparative thinking and is applicable in diverse contexts—from supplier selection to performance model evaluation [10]. In this study, ACM was used to compare the Balanced Scorecard, EFQM, and Baldrige models based on four key criteria: strategic alignment, stakeholder focus, measurability, and flexibility.

While the research is conceptual, the proposed framework can be validated through future case studies, particularly in the energy sector, to test its consistency and real-world applicability..

Methodology

This paper uses the Analytical Criteria Method (ACM), a structured multi-criteria decision-making tool designed to compare and prioritize different performance management models. The method involves a series of logical steps to assess multiple alternatives using predefined evaluation criteria [11], [13].

The methodology begins with the identification of the most relevant criteria, derived from both the literature and practical applications in organizational performance evaluation [9]. In this study, five key criteria were selected: Strategic Alignment, Stakeholder Orientation, Measurability, Flexibility/Adaptability, and Ease of Implementation.

Next, a pairwise comparison matrix was constructed to evaluate the relative importance of each criterion. Each comparison followed Saaty's nine-point fundamental scale [14], and reciprocal values were used to ensure consistency across the matrix. The matrix was then normalized, and relative weights for each criterion were calculated.

Subsequently, each of the three selected models—Balanced Scorecard, EFQM Excellence Model, and Baldrige Framework—was evaluated against all five criteria. Using pairwise comparisons, relative weights were assigned to each alternative within each criterion. The final ranking of the alternatives was obtained by aggregating the weighted scores across all criteria.

This structured approach minimizes subjectivity in decision-making and ensures a transparent and replicable evaluation process. While this research is exploratory and theoretical in nature, future work is planned to validate the proposed framework through real-world case studies in the energy sector.

Comparative Analysis using the analytical criteria method

This case study aims to identify the most effective performance measurement method for companies, in a practical and decision-oriented manner, for stakeholders interested in this topic.

The selected methods are among the most widely used, a key criterion for their inclusion being their proven effectiveness in numerous companies where they have already been implemented. To conduct this comparison, each method was first analysed individually to better understand its specific characteristics and to identify the criteria under which each method performs best [11].

The method chosen for comparison supports decision-makers in selecting the best option or in prioritizing available alternatives, based on pairwise comparisons of options against a set of criteria [1]. Moreover, this method is also introduced as a decision-making tool that facilitates the evaluation of different alternatives by involving members from interdisciplinary teams, such as those responsible for risk assessment, performance, efficiency, or other relevant areas [12].

This paper aims to apply the analytical criteria method in selecting the most suitable performance measurement model, following the steps outlined below [13]:

1. **Establishing the evaluation criteria:** Relevant criteria are selected to support the comparative analysis. These criteria represent a standardized framework applied equally to all alternatives.
2. **Constructing the pairwise comparison matrix:** Criteria are compared two by two by determining the degree of importance of one over another. Each comparison is expressed on a standard scale:
 - 1 (equal importance)

- 3 (moderately more important)
 - 5 (strongly more important)
 - 7 (very strongly more important)
 - 9 (extremely more important) Reciprocal values (e.g., 1/3, 1/5) are used for the opposite direction in the matrix.
3. **Calculating column sums and normalizing the matrix:** The values in each column are summed, and then each element in the matrix is divided by the corresponding column total. The result is a normalized matrix.
 4. **Determining the weight of each criterion:** The average value of each row in the normalized matrix is calculated. This value represents the relative weight (or “importance”) of each criterion in the final analysis.
 5. **Applying the weights to the alternatives:** In this step, each alternative is evaluated against every criterion, usually using a scale from 1 to 5. The scores are then multiplied by the previously determined weights, and a weighted sum is calculated for each alternative.
 6. **Final ranking of the alternatives:** The alternative with the highest total score is considered the most suitable according to the evaluated set of criteria [13].

Starting with the first step, the selection of the criteria presented in Table 1 was based on a review of relevant literature and practical applications of performance measurement methods in organizational settings [4], [12], [10]. These selected characteristics represent the key areas that companies aim to monitor and improve to enhance results and ensure their overall performance in the market.

Table 1. Comparative analysis of key characteristics for performance measurement methods

Criterion	Balanced Scorecard (BSC)	EFQM Excellence Model	Baldrige Framework
Strategic alignment	Strong alignment with organizational strategy	Strong alignment with strategy	Strong alignment with strategy
Stakeholder orientation	Partial stakeholder involvement	High focus on stakeholders	High focus on stakeholders
Measurability (clear indicators)	Clearly defined performance indicators	General indicators, less specific	Clearly defined performance indicators
Flexibility/adaptability	Limited flexibility due to a structured approach	High adaptability to various organizational contexts	High adaptability to different environments
Ease of implementation	Easy to implement	Implementation is considered complex	Complex to implement, requires extensive training
Innovation encouragement	Does not explicitly promote innovation	Actively supports innovation	Encourages innovation and creativity
Sustainability integration	Sustainability is not a primary focus	Fully integrates sustainability dimensions	Partial integration of sustainability
Organizational learning/feedback	Weak feedback mechanisms	Strong mechanisms for learning and feedback	Strong feedback and learning systems
Recognition / awards system	No formal system for recognition	Includes recognition and awards components	Includes a structured recognition system
Benchmarking / standardization	Limited support for benchmarking	Encourages benchmarking across organizations	Strong emphasis on benchmarking
Leadership focus	Minimal focus on leadership roles	Leadership is a core element	Leadership development is strongly emphasized
Continuous improvement	Focus is limited	Strong focus on continuous improvement	Strong focus on improvement and refinement
Cost of implementation	Low implementation cost	High cost due to complexity	High implementation and maintenance costs
Scalability across industries	Easily scalable across industries	High scalability	High scalability
Customization potential	Highly customizable	High potential for customization	Highly adaptable to specific organizational needs

The common criteria applied to the selected methods, as shown in Table 1, include Strategic alignment, which represents a core strength for all three methods. Stakeholder orientation is another relevant criterion, where EFQM and the Baldrige Framework demonstrate strong performance compared to the Balanced Scorecard. Measurability is clearly defined in the Balanced Scorecard and Baldrige Framework, while in the EFQM model, it is addressed at a more general level. Flexibility and adaptability distinctly differentiate the Balanced Scorecard, where its limitations are more evident in contrast to the other two methods. Ease of implementation also becomes a distinguishing factor—Balanced Scorecard is easier to implement, while the other two methods are more complex, as illustrated in Table 2 [14].

The remaining criteria were not included in the comparative analysis for the following reasons: Innovation encouragement, although important in the long term, is clearly emphasized only in EFQM, while the other methods address it vaguely, making it difficult to use for effective differentiation. Another excluded criterion is Integration of sustainability dimensions, which is addressed in all models (or nearly all), but with only subtle variations [15]. Because it does not generate a significant distinction between the methods, it was not selected. The same rationale was applied to the other excluded criteria as well.

Table 2. Selected criteria applied to the analysed performance measurement methods

Criterion	Balanced Scorecard (O1)	EFQM Excellence Model (O2)	Baldrige Framework (O3)
C1. Strategic alignment	Demonstrates strong strategic alignment	Demonstrates strong strategic alignment	Demonstrates strong strategic alignment
C2. Stakeholder orientation	Addresses stakeholders partially	Strong stakeholder orientation	Strong stakeholder orientation
C3. Measurability (clarity)	Provides clear and specific performance indicators	Provides general indicators	Provides clear and specific indicators
C4. Flexibility/adaptability	Limited adaptability due to a structured framework	High flexibility and adaptability	High flexibility and adaptability
C5. Ease of implementation	Easy to implement and operationalize	Implementation is complex and resource intensive	Implementation is complex and resource intensive

Source: Authors' own research.

The next step in the comparative analysis for determining the most suitable performance measurement method involves the construction of the criteria matrix, which is a critical phase in the process. The criteria matrix is a square table in which each criterion is compared pairwise with the others. For each comparison, a score is assigned to reflect which criterion is more important, and its reciprocal value is used in the opposite cell of the matrix. The next step is to calculate the sum of each column, followed by normalization of the values, which is done by dividing each element in a column by the total sum of that column. This process results in the relative weight of each criterion [14].

Table 3. Criteria Matrix

CRITERIA	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	SUM	RELATIVE WEIGHTS
C1	1	3	5	5	7	21	0.3932
C2	1/3	1	3	5	7	16.33	0.3058
C3	1/5	1/3	1	3	5	9.53	0.1784
C4	1/5	1/5	1/3	1	3	4.73	0.0885
C5	1/7	1/7	1/5	1/3	1	1.81	0.0338
						53.4	

Source: Authors' own research

The comparison between criteria was carried out based on insights from the specialized literature on performance management, as follows:

- Strategic alignment (C1) is moderately more important than Stakeholder orientation (C2), as strategic alignment represents the foundation of any performance model. Without a clear strategic direction, stakeholders cannot be effectively integrated.
- Strategic alignment (C1) is considered significantly more important than Ease of implementation (C5), since strategic alignment is essential in the long term, whereas C5 (ease of implementation) is relevant only tactically. A model that is more difficult to implement but strategically robust is more valuable than one that is easy to apply yet poorly aligned.
- Stakeholder orientation (C2) is strongly more important than Flexibility/adaptability (C4). Stakeholder engagement directly impacts both performance and trust, whereas flexibility, while useful, acts more as a facilitator than as a performance driver.
- Measurability (C3) is moderately more important than Ease of implementation (C5), because a model that is harder to implement but provides clear and measurable indicators is more useful than a simple one that lacks relevant metrics.
- Flexibility/adaptability (C4) is more important than Ease of implementation (C5), as adaptability enables the model to be applied across different contexts, while ease of implementation does not necessarily guarantee long-term success. Moreover, Measurability (C3) is more important than Flexibility (C4), because without clear indicators, performance cannot be measured, compared, or improved. Similarly, Stakeholder orientation (C2) is more important than Measurability (C3), since organizational performance is strongly influenced by the satisfaction and involvement of stakeholders.
- After constructing the criteria matrix, the next step involves building five separate matrices, as shown in Tables 4 to 8. Each matrix corresponds to one of the five selected criteria and is used to compare the alternatives based on that specific criterion. The same calculation principle applied in Table 3 is used—summing up each row and determining the relative weights for each alternative within each criterion.

Table 4. Options versus criteria: Strategic alignment

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT	O1	O2	O3	SUM	RELATIVE WEIGHT
O1	1	3	5	9.0	0.6413
O2	1/3	1	2	33.333	0.2375
O3	1/5	1/2	1	1.7	0.1211
				44.03	

Source: Authors' own research

Table 5. Options versus criteria: Stakeholder orientation

STAKEHOLDER ORIENTATION	O1	O2	O3	SUM	RELATIVE WEIGHT
O1	1	4	6	11	0.6567
O2	1/4	1	3	4.25	0.2537
O3	1/6	1/3	1	1.5	0.0896
				16.75	

Source: Authors' own research

Table 6. Options versus criteria: Measurability

MEASURABILITY	O1	O2	O3	SUM	RELATIVE WEIGHT
O1	1	5	4	10	0.6689
O2	1/5	1	2	3.2	0.214
O3	1/4	1/2	1	1.75	0.1171
				14.95	

Source: Authors' own research

Table 7. Options versus criteria Flexibility/adaptability

FLEXIBILITY/ADAPTABILITY	O1	O2	O3	SUM	RELATIVE WEIGHT
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O1	1	2	3	6	0.5294
O2	1/2	1	2	3.5	0.3088
O3	1/3	1/2	1	1.8333	0.1618
				11.3333	

Source: Authors' own research

Table 8. Options versus criteria: Degree of Ease implementation

EASE OF IMPLEMENTATION	O1	O2	O3	SUM	RELATIVE WEIGHT
O1	1	2	4	7	0.535
O2	1/2	1	3	4.5	0.3439
O3	1/4	1/3	1	1.5833	0.121
				13.0833	

Source: Authors' own research

The final step in this method involves applying the relative weight of each criterion to every evaluated alternative. Based on the resulting values in the Sum column, the best-performing option can be identified according to the selected criteria and the decision-maker's priorities.

Table 9. Summary matrix of options versus criteria

	C1 (STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT)	C2 (STAKEHOLDER ORIENTATION)	C3 (MEASURABILITY)	C4 (FLEXIBILITY/ADAPTABILITY)	C5 (EASE OF IMPLEMENTATION)	SUM
O1	0.73x0.3932=0.287	0.7x0.3058=0.2141	0.6x0.1784=0.107	0.5x0.0885=0.0442	0.4x0.0338=0.0135	0.6658
O2	0.25x0.3932=0.0983	0.2x0.3058=0.0612	0.3x0.1784=0.0535	0.3x0.0885=0.0265	0.35x0.0338=0.0118	0.2513
O3	0.02x0.3932=0.0079	0.1x0.3058=0.0306	0.1x0.1784=0.0178	0.2x0.0885=0.0177	0.25x0.0338=0.0084	0.0824

Source: Authors' own research

As shown by the results of the analysis, the most suitable option is Option 1 – Balanced Scorecard, which obtained a total score of 0.6658, significantly higher than EFQM Excellence Model (0.2513) and the Baldrige Framework (0.0824).

Discussions

As previously mentioned, risk remains one of the most intimidating factors in both business and everyday life, as it is associated with uncertainty and the fear of making the wrong decision. Our efforts to manage risk are essentially efforts to perform better in increasingly difficult environments.

In this paper, the use of the Analytical Criteria Method was precisely intended to minimize the risks associated with intuitive or subjective choices, offering strong support in making well-founded decisions regarding performance management methods. This approach provided a logical and balanced foundation for the selection process [16].

The evaluation framework considered the most influential criteria across all three available models. Among these, Strategic Alignment (C1) and Stakeholder Orientation (C2) had the greatest weight in the analysis, decisively influencing the overall scores. As a result, the models that performed poorly on these criteria were disadvantaged, even if they had other strengths.

The Balanced Scorecard (BSC) proved to be the most suitable option for implementation, offering clarity, measurability, and ease of application. It is often easier to integrate into organizations that have simple structures and limited implementation budgets, making it a valuable model for a wide variety of companies globally [17].

Although the main goal of this research was to use a structured method to eliminate subjectivity from the decision-making process, it must be acknowledged that some degree of subjectivity still exists in selecting criteria and assigning pairwise values. Another limitation lies in the difficulty of converting certain qualitative aspects into numerical scores, which led to the exclusion of some criteria that might have otherwise been relevant. Furthermore, this study was not

applied in a real-world organization, but was instead a theoretical exercise, meaning that its practical utility remains to be validated in future case studies.

One advantage of this method is that it can be replicated and adapted to various industries and decision-making contexts, such as supplier selection or project prioritization. For future research, it would be valuable to explore hybrid models and determine the best combination through similar analytical comparisons [18].

In conclusion, the analytical approach not only brought structure to the decision-making process, but also opened new perspectives for future research in selecting and customizing performance management tools. This study represents a theoretical and exploratory approach, with future research planned to empirically validate the proposed framework through its practical application in real organizational settings, particularly within the energy sector.

Conclusions

The use of the analytical method allowed for an objective comparison between the three performance management models. Despite their different final scores, each method remains a validated option in the field of organizational performance. Balanced Scorecard obtained the highest overall score due to its ease of use and low implementation cost, followed by EFQM and the Baldrige Framework.

Although a structured analytical approach was used to rank the methods, managers should still choose the model that best aligns with their organizational culture and available resources. The most effective model is the one that fits the internal realities of the organization. In today's dynamic and uncertain macroeconomic context, a method that is strategically clear and easy to apply—such as the Balanced Scorecard—can bring immediate value to organizations [19].

As for future research directions, applying this method in a real-life company would provide deeper insights into how such decisions are made under the pressure of both internal and external factors. Adding more criteria or including new models into the analysis would also be valuable, as would exploring hybrid combinations that could offer improved performance outcomes [20].

Therefore, while the Balanced Scorecard emerged as the most suitable model in this analysis, the final choice should always be tailored to the specific strategic and operational realities of each organization.

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