

How Iwa 2 Helps To Implement A Quality Management System In Bacau University

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Abstracts: *The documentation surrounding ISO 9000 in education indicates that the application of this quality management system to education is debatable; the implementation process is time-consuming. The application of ISO 9000 in education is difficult because of interpretation problems. SR ISO IWA 2: Quality management systems - Guidelines for the application of ISO 9001:2000 in education, made the standard easier to understand and implement by the education sector.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade the topics Quality, Quality Assurance and (Total) Quality Management have become a central preoccupation of hundreds of thousands of organizations in Europe. It was the industrial world which first recognized that much of the growth and economic success of Japan could be attributed to the consistent focus of companies on quality and quality improvement.

One of the more visible features of this 'quality wave' has been, particularly in Europe, the certification of the quality assurance mechanisms on the basis of the ISO 9000 Standards. Despite the fact that the ISO 9000 norms cover only a sub-set of the TQM principles, this form of certification is becoming the de facto basic quality standard in many industrial sectors of the more developed European countries. Most other European industrial sectors and regions are catching up in this regard.

The concern for quality and performance is growing in society, with all organizations being expected to become more accountable to the citizen, shareholders – depending on whether they are private or public. In addition, clients of education increasingly desire "proof" of the quality promised. In this context, certification is a way of responding to such demands.

The first groups to pay attention were providers of continuing education and training for the business world, as well as, to a lesser extent, vocationally oriented schools. Both types of organizations are indeed closer to market needs and business developments than regular education institutions. Some general education schools and higher education institutions have also taken the ISO 9000 road; a few pioneers have already passed the certification stage. This development is still in its very early stages. It is only since the early 90s that the first education and training institutions in Europe have obtained an ISO 9000 certificate, some of them even for only part of their activities.

Undoubtedly, the world of education is facing rapid changes today and will probably face even greater changes in the future. With the emerging communication technologies, distance education is becoming a reality across the world. The exclusive local university markets will soon cease to exist, and schools will have to both think and act globally in order to survive. So, how will universities assure prospective students and their future employers internationally of the quality of education provided?

This paper will attempt to further discuss a quality assurance strategy in education, and provide a framework for a

systematic interpretation and a successful documentation/ implementation of the Guidelines for the application of ISO 9001:2000 in education; namely IWA 2.

2. PRESENTATION OF IWA 2

ISO has published specific guidelines for organizations in the education sector wishing to benefit from the implementation of ISO 9001:2000. While ISO 9000 users already include educational establishments of all types, the guidelines will facilitate implementation by the sector of ISO 9001:2000. The guidelines are intended for organizations at all levels, providing all types of education, including: elementary, medium and higher; special and adult education; distance and e-learning.

ISO/IWA 2: Quality management systems - Guidelines for the application of ISO 9001:2000 in education, contains the full text of ISO 9001:2000, clause-by-clause, followed by specific text making the standard easier to understand and implement by the education sector. In addition, IWA 2 includes the full text of ISO 9004:2000, which gives organizations guidelines for achieving further benefits from their quality management systems through the pursuit of continual improvement of performance.

The IWA 2 guidelines do not add to, change or modify the requirements of ISO 9001:2000 and it is not intended that organizations be certified to the document. However, it is intended to be useful to both internal and external parties, including certification bodies when the user organization is seeking ISO 9001:2000 certification, to assess the organization's ability to meet customer, regulatory and its own quality requirements.

IWA 2 is ISO's second International Workshop Agreement. This is one of several ISO alternatives to International Standards for cases where swift development and publication takes priority. Compared to the usual ISO process of developing International Standards through its technical committee structure, IWA's are developed in open workshops and organized by a national standards institute.

IWA 2 was approved at a workshop held in Acapulco, Mexico, in October 2002, and hosted by the General Bureau of Standards (DGN), with the support and cooperation of the

Mexican Institute for Standardization and Certification (IMNC) and the National Committee for Standardization on Quality Management Systems (COTENNSISCAL). The Latin-American Institute for Quality (INLAC) facilitated the meeting. From November 2006, IWA 2 is a Romanian official standard, named SR ISO IWA 2.

3. QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM CERTIFIED IN BACAU UNIVERSITY AND IWA 2

Bacau University was founded and developed in tight connection with the cultural and historical traditions of the area. In 1961 the Pedagogical Institute was set up with its Departments: Human Science, Mathematics, and Natural Science. In 1964 the Faculty of History – Geography and the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports were added, and in 1975 the Faculty of Civil Engineering.

In 1989, sequences to the Romanian Government Decision, all these faculties were reunited within Bacau University.

Within the past years, wishing to respond to the necessities of the Romanian society, at the beginning of a new millennium, to favor the graduates' integration with the economical and cultural network, Bacau University passed through a process of modernization of its structure, promoting new, attractive and efficient courses and programs.

At present, Bacau University has a number of almost 3 000 students, more than 200 educational academic personnel, 130 persons involved in administrative activities, 26 scientific research laboratories.

The University has throughout its history aspired to excellence in everything it does and the services it offers. As the University has grown and diversified since its re-foundation in 1989 it has met the challenge of continuing to meet its targets in a number of ways.

Image is important for all types of education and training organizations, because it influences the numbers of students, trainers – and hence in the long term the survival of the organization.

Improving or maintaining the quality of education or training provision is not the

only reason why providers seek to be certified under ISO 9001 or ISO 9002. Most of these reasons are similar to those of other organizations.

Overall, four types of arguments are put forward:

- promotion of a high quality image, high visibility and credibility.
- a response to external factors.
- develop a full quality assurance system.
- improvement of specific activities of the organization.

The importance of these arguments is likely to vary strongly depending on the nature of the organization and their external environment.

Arguments in favour of certification should, of course, be balanced against the counter-arguments and disadvantages. These are numerous as well and – in the light of the limited number of certified education or training institutes – still outweigh the positive arguments. Again, several groups of possible disadvantages can be listed:

- interpretation problems. The ISO 9000 standards are no easy reading. Especially, some of the longer paragraphs and overlap between some sections. SR ISO IWA 2: Quality management systems - Guidelines for the application of ISO 9001:2000 in education, contains the full text of ISO 9001:2000, clause-by-clause, followed by specific text making the standard easier to understand and implement by the education sector.
- insufficient relevance. Many education or training experts, particularly from the public education sector, criticize ISO 9000 at its core, as being of insufficient relevance for education and training institutions. It is true that the norms were neither designed nor optimized with education or training institutions in mind.
- inappropriate standardization. Since the ISO 9000 standards were originally conceived for medium-sized to large companies in the manufacturing sector, it is legitimate

to query its appropriateness for education and training organizations, which are in many ways similar to small SMEs from the service sector (the main exception to this analogy are higher education institutions, but even these are service organizations).

- time consumption and cost. The cost and time-consuming nature of the implementation of ISO 9000 requirements are probably the most serious obstacle to the generalized use of the standards in education and training institutions – and this is likely to remain so for the coming years.
- specific problems.

4. IWA 2 AND INTERPRETATION PROBLEMS

The University Production System (UPS) can be defined as a set of interdependent processes, such as teaching, learning and researching, and resources, including human, material and information that function harmoniously to achieve specified educational objectives.

According to Karapetrovic S. et al. (1998), a summary of terms found in the ISO 9001 standard and explanations of these terms with respect to these three products is quite hard to follow.

Maybe the most fundamental difference in interpretations of ISO 9000 standards for education and training is the definition of the 'product': is it the 'learning' or the 'learning process', or rather the education or training program which is offered? This is not just an academic problem, but one which has implications throughout the standard.

IWA 2 clarifies the problem using for 'product realization' from ISO 9001 a long definition: *'the different stages of instructional design, development, delivery, evaluation and support services activities, resource allocation, evaluation criteria, and improvement procedures to achieve the desired results'*.

Other concept clarified by IWA 2 standard is related to 'customer property'. When we talk about customer property in University, it is easy to think to documents

given by students (certificates, diplomas of previous scholar levels, personal ID documents), but IWA 2 completes this list performed by the student, applications, records of the student's academic history.

The 7.6 chapter of ISO 9001 is dedicated to control of monitoring and measuring devices. There are some interesting clarifications in IWA 2.

First, *'to ensure that measurement capability is consistent with the measurement requirements, measurement system should be validated for their reliability and utility'*. This validation can be made using examination commissions or using a peer review of the examination instruments.

Second, *'monitoring and measurement should be carried out during instruction to assure conformity with the instructional plan'*.

Finally, a problem that is difficult to solve using only ISO 9001 is the control of non-conforming product. Besides, that was an observation made by certification audit team. The observation was easily solved using IWA 2 clarifications:

'Where a nonconformity exists, involving student participation in the educational process, students may be, were permitted:

with other things, like: exams, test or paperwork

- a) *provided with additional training and permitted to be reassessed;*
- b) *to continue in the educational programme in accordance to defined procedures;*
- c) *transferred to another study programme.'*

5. CONCLUSIONS

In December 2007 Bacau University was certified ISO 9000 and the arguments in favour of certification outweigh the negative arguments. Application of the ISO 9000 standards is not straightforward. The requirements and even the underlying concepts have to be 'translated' or 'interpreted' into a language which an education or training provider can understand. SR ISO IWA 2: Quality management systems - Guidelines for the application of ISO 9001:2000 in education, made the standard easier to understand and implement by the education sector.

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