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ISO 9000 FOR EDUCATION SERVICES IN HIGH SCHOOLS

Abstract

The Faculty of Commodity Science—the organizing unit of the higher schools—is the first one in Poland which received the ISO 9001:2000 certificate. The aim of the Faculty is to show a high level of education quality. This fact caused the discussion if the university accreditation is the only and sufficient system in order to guarantee development of particular faculties at the Polish high schools and if it stimulates the increase of the quality of education services. Maybe during the times of criticism of quality of education level—especially in non-public schools—it is high time to discuss the standards of education quality as well as its development.

Internal audits and certification of the Quality Management System according to ISO 9001:2000

Total Quality Management is not a fad or fashion that will disappear next season. It is a revolutionary concept that is taking root and fundamentally altering the way organizations do business and are managed. We have found that high schools should be treated also like the other business organizations. The aim of the Faculty is to achieve a high level of education quality.

At The Faculty of Commodity Science, Poznan University of Economics, in March and April 2001 according to accepted schedule of preparation for certification internal audits were carried out. Leading auditors of all process audits were assigned. They next chose audit groups and worked out detailed audit programs. The engagement of students of IVth and Vth of learning in carrying out the audits should be marked here. Despite the prior concern for interactions between auditors and people being audited we found it favorable solution after carrying out the first round. They are especially appreciated by students who acquire practical experience.

In May 2001 the assessment of documentation was made by DNV and the first part of certification audit within planning and carrying out lectures and classes took place because of education lectures before the summer exams. The second part of audit was made at the end of June 2001 and finally the Faculty of Commodity Science received the recommendation. Handing the certification took place during the anniversary of 75 years of existence of the University of Economics.

Quality of education process and defining a client of the Faculty

The extent of the quality management system as well as the certification at the Faculty of Commodity

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Science concerns preparation and realization of teaching process at the regular, doctoral and postgraduate study. That extent of the quality management that corresponds with a definition of a client-a student of abovementioned kinds of studies-is the most adequate.

The definition of a client, meeting his requirements and his satisfaction was discussed by the staff of the Faculty of Commodity Science. First of all it was said that university candidates, graduates, employers and MEN were the clients of the Faculty. Finally students' parents, society and ministry were defined as the interested client whose requirements are known and respected.

Such definition corresponds with the saying of J. Hodgkinson at the 43rd EOQ congress that a client is also a material during the education. Such attitude of teachers towards students is connected with the necessity of understanding the building system as well as the opinion of certifying organization of higher school.

Improvement of education quality

Except from seeking the best possibilities of defining and developing steady mechanism concerning the improvement of education quality also the grounds of university accreditation was considered. There were a lot of questions concerning that problem. So far the appraise system of education quality and accreditation consistent with the legislation has been introduced. Nevertheless the Higher Accreditation Commission of Vocational School and The Main Board of Higher Schools use the abovementioned system and the appraisal is made by Scientific Research Committee (KBN).

The accreditation system was not found by us to be intelligible enough and it did not guarantee the sufficient level of the Faculty development within the field of education quality. Negative opinions about accreditation systems in the discussion occurred, management systems based on ISO 9000 quality standards shown more advantages. They are following:

- meeting the requirements of international standards concerning management system of unambiguous mechanics of quality planning-defining measurable goals, necessary resources and verifying the extent of their performance at each level of the Faculty
- measurable goals and the way of reporting about their performance will contribute to facilitate the reporting system to Scientific Research Committee (KBN)
- defining the role of all activities of the Faculty (education, administration, scientific research) unambiguously within realization of goals of the Faculty and defining connections between the Faculty and other structures of the University of Economics
- determining responsibility and entitlements of teachers and administration personnel
- integrating and involving a big group of people in organization matters of the Faculty
- defining the required standard of education unambiguously and building strong mechanics of improving the quality of education process
- improving the communication-improving the efficiency of information exchange for workers and students
- making possible for students to participate in planning, realizing and improving the education process

Project management. The Quality Policy

The decision concerning the introduction work at our Faculty was preceded by long-lasting analysis. The aim of analysis was to specify the work that should be done, to determine responsibility and to define necessary resources (also material) in order to ensure the success of the undertaking. The new re-definition of commodity science and definition of critical aspects for this science was done:

The COMODITY SCIENCE understood as the quality science can be considered as the scientific and educational activity that ensures complete academic rights within the knowledge of environment and economics [1, 2]. The cooperation with the best organizations connected with creating standards of education and carrying out basic and application scientific research concerning the quality is indispensable.

The proper realization of the education process and scientific research is guaranteed by introduction and permanent improvement of the Quality Management System according to ISO 9001 and by determining the responsibility of the Dean, chair supervisors and finally engaging all staff in realization of quality goals which are following:

- to provide the students with broad and interdisciplinary knowledge of environment and economics
- to encourage students to perfect their knowledge and be able to analyze the problems accurately
- the University is an unit which services high public purpose and takes part in education of economic elite

Achieving the abovementioned goals depends on the access of resources which enables:

- permanent perfection of education level
- improvement of methods and organization of education
- perfection of educational and scientific qualifications of the personnel
- scientific and educational cooperation with leading scientific centers
- exchange of students and professional training of the staff
- permanent modernization of equipment for the needs of educational and research work

The quality mission, vision and policy are the leading documents which determine a strategy of the Faculty. They take into consideration the whole its activity especially the Quality Management System which means preparation and realization of the education process. Because of basic process organization it was necessary to accept system solutions for assisting activities such as purchase, organization of students' practical activities and social problems. It was also vital to define the staff's duties unambiguously in order to point out the range of system solutions precisely.

Process approach

Since the very beginning of our work over the system, despite the fact that ISO 9000:1994 was obligatory in that time and only a project of new edition of ISO 9001 was available, the process map was prepared. Requirements connected with process approach seemed to be sure. It was assumed that a chain of activities connected logically and using available resources (personnel, materials, information, equipment) processes inputs into outputs what leads to goals achievement is called a process. During mapping the APQC referential model and the P4 method were used. From last month of 2003 the software supporting the process management and documents supervision was applied with full success.

The processes map [2] is the basis of the process approach at the Faculty of Commodity Science. The map consists of:

- basic processes-with defined mutual correlation
- parallel processes-with input data necessary to realize more than one basic process

In case of each process input data (information, documents, notes) and output data (which decide about realization efficiency) were defined.

At the stage of planning and realizing particular process, resources and information necessary support the process function and monitoring were available.

Improvement of the Quality Management System

In May 2003 the third inspection of the Quality Management System took place and it was carried out by the management of the Faculty. Because of some understandable reasons the inspection was dominated by the assessment of the extent of preparation for the certification and most of conclusion and decisions were complied with that matter.

The leading problem appointed for the present time is to stabilize software supporting process management and document supervision[2]. In our opinion this new e-quality system of management require from users some kind of "cultural transformation".

Other the most important resolutions of the inspection are:

- common discussion over rules of planning within the Quality Management System-defining goals, their measurement and reporting
- emphasizing validity rules of education process in a Quality Book
- defining incompatibilities within the education process unambiguously, defining their sources precisely, defining the rules of correction activities
- organizing additional permanent meetings of students, the Dean and the Plenipotentiary of the Dean on Quality of Management in order to raise objections towards the education process
- verification of previous methods concerning the appraisal of efficiency and effectiveness of the Quality Management System
- encouraging the students to write thesis concerning the Quality Management System of the Faculty
- verification of planning system and internal audits system at the Faculty, changing its activity
- closer cooperation with people responsible for research of students' satisfaction on behalf of the University, improvement of research correlation at the Faculty
- editing internal newspaper connected among others with the Quality Management System according to ISO 9001

Conclusion

From 10th till 12th of March 2004 control audit was carried out at the Faculty of Commodity Science. Despite the fact that some unimportant incompatibilities were found the functioning of the Quality Management System was very favorable for the Faculty. It is not easy to estimate to what extent the Quality Management System has contributed for example to increase the importance of the Faculty in the opinion of Scientific Research Committee and increase position of whole Faculty at University as well. Nevertheless everybody is sure that the System had a great influence on the Faculty. What is the most important the students speak highly of changes which have taken place at the Faculty recently. A new way of doing education and scientific works running it must be sought. We learned to practice by process rather than by function, and in order to do so we must turn our Faculty into a learning one, where our staff not only learn to work together but also learn to learn together. Standards ISO 9000 do not replace more wide understanding of Quality Management (QM). They are an important part of it, however, and have to be treated as such. That is why we recommended the ISO 9000 effort be included in a wider, more global effort aiming at achieving high quality of

education process through QM. University accreditation system of evaluation of high schools is sufficient to create a output standards for education, output standards for certification on ISO 9000 standards, but absolutely not sufficient to guarantee permanent improvement of the quality of education and development of respective Faculties at high schools.

References

- [1] Quality Book, the University of Economics-the Faculty of Commodity Science, 3rd Edition, Poznan, 2004
- [2] <http://www.ae.poznan.pl/pages/i/1/1478.php>