Abstract

Dr. Noha Gamil Ibrahim Bayoumi

Enhancing university's competitiveness and sustainability through the adoption of an ISO 9001/2000 quality management system

Institutions of Higher Education (HE) worldwide continue to face ever growing challenges. The need for universities and colleges is increasing governmental financial support constantly diminishes with spontaneous trend towards public HE privatization globalization implications provide for the mobility of students and disrupt local and regional student quotas and technological advancements contribute to a transition towards student-centered learning rather than traditional university-based teaching. Moreover, governmental, funding, and accreditation bodies have recently started to apply more pressure to HE institutions forcing them to demonstrate that they adopt a working system than can assure the quality of the educational services which they provide first time and every time. A global consensus has been reached as to rating quality among the most important factors in organizational survivability, growth and prosperity. Quality initiatives and quality-focused strategies are reported to have been successfully adopted in a wide range of organizations, including manufacturing and service companies, health care organizations, governmental agencies and many others. Institutions of HE have, in turn, started to explore the applicability of adopting quality-focused initiatives towards improving quality of the service they provide. However the progress of such initiatives in HE institutions has been reported to be uneven. In spite of the growing global interest in quality assurance/management approaches, however, the inherently illusive concept of quality within the context of higher education can not be pinned down to any particular and precise interpretation. Various scholars of higher education management have commented on the multiplicity of definitions of quality within the context of higher education. A fundamental option towards meeting the ever increasing demand for universities' quality and accountable performance is the adoption of a quality management system based on the internationally accepted ISO 9001/2000 standard. This generic standard presents guidelines for developing quality management systems, as well as a set of requirements with which a university should comply in order to gain systems' recognition and registration. The standard provides a possibility for streamlining university operations identifying, correcting and preventing quality problems as well as a systematic quality improvement mechanism by means of internal quality auditing and various statistical techniques. An established quality management system in the university also provides confidence to students, their prospective employers, research sponsors, the government, and other interested parties that their requirements for quality are met. This paper addresses the implementation of the ISO 9001/2000 international standard in the university environment, and presents examples of developing a quality management system based on this standard. The application is based on a systems concept, which is first explained. Emphasis is placed on the effective structuring of the system and the development of an exhaustive set of performance indicators the continuous monitoring of which maintains university's sustainability.