

Problems and Prospects of the Quality Management of Higher Education

S. E. Turkulets, E. V. Listopadova, N. S. Barei
Far Eastern State Transport University,
Khabarovsk

Abstract— The article presents the analysis of the current state and prospects of the quality management system in the management structure of higher education institutions. The authors of this research found out that while the quality management system can be a kind of a managerial resource, its implementation in the education system must take into account the specificity of this sphere, where the concept of “service” is significantly different from its traditional economic interpretation. There are several problems connected with introducing and implementing the quality management system in the Russian higher education system that are not only of organizational, but also of social and psychological character. Quality management system should be considered as one of many possible factors of improving the quality of higher education.

Keywords— *Higher Education, Quality, Quality Management System, Reform of the Higher Education System*

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the 1990s, noncritical borrowing and adopting of foreign social projects, including the field of innovative management forms, has become a widespread practice in Russia. In contemporary Russian history, it has become a norm to neglect historical, national, cultural and other traditions while designing national innovative strategic programmes for the development of various spheres of society.

Looking back at the history and experience of national higher education development, it is safe to say that the quality of education in Russian is traditionally highly appreciated not only nationally, but also abroad. Numerous factors contributed to this, with the recognition of social and cultural value of education being the most significant of them all. The transition to a market model of socio-economic development in the country required a radical change in the management strategy of higher education institutions. University managers faced a difficult task: to make a transition to a new managerial mechanism in challenging times of budget restrictions, a demographic hole, and students’ lack of motivation for education. Comprehensive study of the theory and practice of using various innovative management techniques in higher education institutions is a very relevant issue today. The reforming of higher education should include a consistent

implementation of multiple consecutive step-by-step measures with applying efficient management tools that have passed the test of time and practice. It is worthwhile using international experience for this purpose, but the specificity of national higher education should be taken into consideration, too. One of the effective managerial resources is the quality management system (QMS), which traditionally means a certain system of management of the organization with regard to the quality of its activities as a whole, and products, in particular.

1.1 TOPICALITY AND SCIENTIFIC MERIT OF THE ISSUE WITH A BRIEF REFERENCE REVIEW

Globally, the most commonly used management tool is a model of total quality management (TQM). The basic tools of the TQM concept are: quality assurance; quality policy; quality improvement; quality planning; total quality control.

In Russia, a growing number of companies make a strategic decision to establish a quality management system on the ISO series standard. The developed ISO standards are united into families. ISO 9000 is a family of standards related to quality and aimed to help the organization to develop, implement and maintain an effective functioning of the quality management system.

The reference review shows that the efficiency of the quality management system has been paid considerable attention since the beginning of the 21st century. For instance, according to the results of empirical studies of advantages and issues of the ISO 9001 version: 2000 implementation, some of its imperfection was pointed out [1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6]. Several researchers openly claim that ISO 9000 is not perfect, though it is widely used [7, 8]. And, what is more important, the ISO 9000 model was observed to selectively affect certain activities [9].

Besides, the researchers have come to the conclusion that the implementation of standards can lead to the development of the static quality system that increases bureaucracy and reduces flexibility and innovation [10; 11]. As a rule, loss of flexibility and rigid paperwork lead to a limited possibility for an organization to change swiftly.

1.2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The purpose of the article is to define the essence of the quality management system (QMS) strategy in education, to clarify the nature of the QMS influence on university management, to identify the main problems and prospects for implementing the QMS in universities.

2. THEORETICAL PART

The main methods of achieving the objectives of this article are a review and analysis of the references on the quality management system in education, as well as empirical data on the results of sociological researches in some Russian universities. First, there was used a method of participant and non-participant observation. During the research there were also employed such techniques as a rather-legal analysis, a statistical method and a generalization method. 600 university teachers and staff members of 15 Russian universities from such cities as Moscow, St. Petersburg, Volgograd, Rostov-on-Don, Tomsk, Ulan-Ude, Khabarovsk, Birobidzhan, Vladivostok and Komsomolsk-on-Amur took part in the sociological survey devoted to the issue of QMS implementation and functioning in universities. Besides, for the purpose of this article there were used the results of sociological surveys of Russian citizens, conducted by the Public Opinion Foundation and Levada Center (2001-2017) [12, 13]. Those surveys were focused on identifying people's attitude to the problems and quality of higher education in Russia.

Obviously, the QMS cannot not be regarded a panacea. A focus on improving the quality only cannot be considered sufficient enough to achieve and maintain a competitive position.

QMS implementation process is voluntary, but in terms of the increased requirements for the manageability level, the organizational liability, the quality of their products and services, the companies are increasingly turning to certification center for a QMS certificate in order to increase their competitiveness. Empirical studies show that companies which have ISO implemented out of internal motivation have achieved better performance results than those which have introduced ISO because of external pressure. The latter have even shown a decline in productivity.

Initially, the implementation of quality management techniques was most widely spread in the industrial sphere. Recently, however, quality management has found its way in the sphere of providing services –healthcare, consumer services and education.

The efficiency of QMS in education has been paid considerable attention in recent years [14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21]. A number of studies indicate that the concept of quality in higher education is too vague and needs clarification [14], because for different parties concerned this concept can be perceived in different ways.

Studying the experience of QMS implementation in higher education institutions of the EU countries leads to the conclusion that QMS possesses some threat to the traditions of academic freedom and creativity.

Summing up the approaches to QMS in the higher education [22], it should be noted that it is necessary to create conditions for improving the process and quality of education as one of the determining factors of social and cultural development of the Russian society, by using the existing international experience on QMS implementation in higher education institutions, taking into account the traditions, specifics of the national education system development, the opinions of all parties concerned, as well as external objective evaluation.

3. PRACTICAL RELEVANCE OF THE RESEARCH

At the end of the 20th century, thousands of companies all over the world started to implement QMS in the process of their functioning. Under fierce competition in the market, enterprises are constantly striving for delivering the highest standards of product quality, since high quality is one of the major success factors of professional activities and the country's economic recovery as a whole. Therefore, to survive in market conditions, enterprises have always had to solve problems associated with providing the required product quality. To do this, they use all the tools designed by the world practice. One of such tools is QMS, which comprehensively covers all the aspects of companies' activities. This system is widely used and recognized throughout the world.

It should be noted that one has to face some difficulties while implementing QMS. Most of the problems arising during the implementation of quality management system are of psychological character, since the primary object of quality management is people's actions, which responsible executives have to deal with. These difficulties are as follows: staff's opposition; lack of understanding of QMS feasibility; communication problems; low self-esteem; rejection of additional load of work; fear of responsibility, and others.

The survey conducted and interviews with a number of professors of Russian universities from different regions (Moscow, Volgograd, Khabarovsk, Birobidzhan, Vladivostok, Komsomolsk-on-Amur), where QMS has been implemented and has been working for several years, allows making some general conclusions.

Difficulties arise at all levels of the quality management system implementation. Among the most typical ones, those surveyed mentioned the following:

- Introducing the quality management system nominally;
- Expecting results as soon as possible;
- Delegating responsibilities and sharing authority with subordinates possesses a great challenge for managers. They refuse to involve employees in the company's management;

- Misunderstanding of the QMS purposes from the part of employees. They are not willing to take on responsibilities and additional functions;

- An excessive load of paperwork. The staff finds it very difficult to understand an immeasurable number of various documents and their contents.

These are just a few problems connected with the quality management system implementation.

Taking the accumulated experience of manufacturing companies as their guidance for the development and implementation of quality management system, many universities worldwide faced significant difficulties. As a result, it became clear that a university and its functioning should be based on a modern and efficient system of providing quality within the framework of its social mission, before everything else.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the reference review and analysis of sociological research data, there were revealed the specifics of QMS in higher education, the main difficulties in the QMS implementation in the Russian system of higher education, such as:

- QMS in the system of higher education should be a tool of education quality management with regard of specificity of educational sphere (education is not a service, but an integrated purposeful process of upbringing and teaching which is a socially significant good);

- Difficulties of implementing the QMS strategy in higher education institutions are related to the nominal nature of its implementation; expecting results within the shortest possible time; an excessive load of paperwork to document the process; lack of understanding of QMS essence and purpose; neglect of the successful practices and traditions of the national high school management experience.

To achieve the desirable quality in high education, it is necessary both to use the existing achievements of the global scientific community and to test nationally relevant models for improving the educational sphere.

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