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IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION STAFF ACCORDING TO ISO 9004 STANDARD

Abstract: Which attributes define the quality of life of employees at institutions of higher education is a question that opens a myriad of subjective, but real facts. Pleasure is a term encompassing the majority of claims, needs, desires and possibilities. The principles on which pleasure is based are of physical, mental and economic nature. In majority of cases, the last principle excludes the other two, however, the concept which encompasses the given principles to a large degree is the organisation of the working system, i.e. its system of quality. Institutions of higher education perceive the system of quality through all processes of their business, in order for their work organisation to be directed at fulfilling the requests of their users - the students. The quality system of institutions of higher education must serve their users, i.e. must be in the function of the users' pleasure. In this case, the students are not the end unit, but all those influenced by the work of the higher institution as an organisational system.

Key Words: quality of life, students, institution of higher education

1. INTRODUCTION

In the beginning of our paper, we point out the significance of the system of quality in higher education. Many particularities of the institutions of higher education are emphasised. A review of constructing and promoting the system of quality in institutions of higher education is given, along with the description of process owner's interest, i.e. employees and students, through the participation in said development.

The paper mentions the significance of implementing ISO 9004 standard (Managing for the sustained success of an organization -- A quality management approach), as one of the performances of a higher education institution, but also as one of the strategic steps towards sustained success of an organization.

In addition, a detailed commentary of ISO 9004 standard (Managing for the sustained success of an organization -- A quality management approach) is given. The activities of the process for achieving sustained success of an organization are explained in detail in this segment.

2. ANALYSING THE STATE OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Considering that numerous reports, accreditations and re-accreditations, expertise and other analyses of higher education institutions are made in most cases, the results indicate that reforms and changes are necessary in a great number of system of quality matters.

The need and necessity of introducing the system of quality must be in the function of stakeholders, i.e. in the function of their satisfaction.

The Bologna system of introducing and improving quality in institutions of higher education dedicated a significant part to the implementation of the quality system in institutions of higher education.

The end users - students expect high quality of educational services, contemporary and applicable study programmes, and the employees expect the realisation of quality policy, which gives broadness and includes all aspects of performing business.

Institutions of higher education should strive towards realising a satisfying balance between expectations and the students' needs, on

the one hand, and realising the educational goals, on the other. It actually means that applying, determining, implementing and promoting a programme of creating a system of quality in higher education. Therefore, the governments of a majority of European countries, especially in the past years, have invested great effort and keep investing enormous efforts into programmes of system of quality in higher education.

2.1. Needs and expectations of stakeholders

The stakeholders of higher education institutions are individuals and groups that influence or may potentially influence the higher education institution. According to the standard, achieving sustained success at a higher education institution is realised by fulfilling the needs and expectations of all interested issuers. Table 2 presents an example of stakeholders and their needs and expectations:

Table 1 - Example of stakeholders and their needs and expectations

| <u>Stakeholder</u> | <u>Needs and expectations</u> |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Students | Quality of education |
| Employers | Quality of knowledge of the newly-employed |
| Teaching and non-teaching staff | Satisfaction and personal improvement |
| Secondary school population | Quality of continued education |
| Society and community | Total social development |

In the modern society, the quality of education is the inevitability of the newly created opportunities from the environment [1]. Therefore, the following parties are equally interested in the quality of higher education:

- Students - who wish for their education to be the key to employment,
- Employers - who wish for newly-employed employees to acquire professional skills with their knowledge as soon as possible,

- Employees - with categories of scientific, research and administrative personnel, wish career advancement, good working environment and job security.
- Secondary school target group - interested in quality continuation of education,
- Social community - total social development through training human resources.

According to [2], a stakeholder organisation is defined as “individual or group that can be or are under the influence of the organisational system’s mission”.

It is important to note that the needs and expectations of stakeholders are various, and can be in conflict with other needs and expectations of other stakeholders. In addition, those needs can change very quickly.

3. MANAGING RESOURCES OF A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

Activities and methods applied must be relevant to the strategy of a higher education institution in general. Ensuring that those resources (equipment, knowledge, employees, finance) are used efficiently and effectively, it is necessary to establish processes of evaluating these resources. Investing into higher education resources management leads to increasing a country’s capital [3].

In order to ensure the availability of resources, the highest management of an institution of higher education should evaluate and establish the mechanisms for existing and potential risks. Accordingly, the top management should continuously conduct research for discovering new resources, modern technologies, etc. In addition, the activities of the higher education institution management should be reviewing, availability and adequacy of resources, as well as finding ways for continuous improvement of strategy and plans related to resources, all with the aim of improving the quality of life.

3.1. Financial resources of a higher education institution

According to ISO 9004 standard, the highest management should establish the mechanisms for financial needs in order to

ensure financial resources for current and future business activities, with the aim of maintaining and/or increasing one's capacity. The forms of financial resources can be: money, securities or other financial instruments. The competent education body of the higher education institution, in view of the goals, should effectively establish the mechanisms for maintaining the processes which direct efficient and effective use of financial means [4]. Also, its within management's authority to implement the activities for preventing inefficient and ineffective direction of financial means by reviewing financial reports and establishing measures for possible improvements.

Efficiency and effectiveness of the higher education institution management system can to a large extent influence the financial results, in two ways:

- Internally - by reducing the variations and errors, and
- Externally - by reducing errors in rendering educational services

These factors greatly influence the adequate direction of financial means in all sub-systems within the higher education institution, achieving the degree of employees' satisfaction.

3.2. Human resources of a higher education institution

According to ISO 9004 standard, human resources are the most significant resource for a higher education institution. Complete involvement of human resources created values for all stakeholders. Leadership belongs to the highest management, thus giving the authority to maintain a common vision and mission and common values through leadership, where the teaching and non-teaching staff can completely engage themselves in the realisation of common goals.

Considering that human resources are the critical resource, it is necessary that learning and teamwork and continuously encouraged in the working environment. Managing human resources should be done in a transparent, ethical and socially-responsible manner. The higher education institution should enable its employees to understand their roles and contribute to achieving the sustained success of the organisation.

3.3. Employees' competence

According to the Instructions for the Preparation of the Report of Self-Evaluation of HEI, the Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assurance, during lectures and practices, the lecturers and associated should act professionally and have an appropriate relation with the students. The principles and conditions for appointment to the title of lecturer and professor are determined in advance, are public and available to the public.

The higher education institution should create conditions for permanent education of all employees. During the appointment to the title of lecturer and professor, the higher education institution should comply with the regulated procedures and methods. While appointing and promoting the teaching staff, it is necessary to particularly evaluate teaching abilities. That is, their IT knowledge and skills, experience, knowledge of foreign languages, etc.

Based on ISO 9004 standard, in order for the higher education institution to ensure the competence of its teaching and non-teaching staff, it is necessary to:

- Identify professional competences,
- Identify competences which currently exists within the higher education institution, as well as those available in the future,
- Direct the improvement measures for acquiring competence,
- Evaluate the effectiveness of measures for ensuring competence and
- Implement measures for maintaining competence.

By achieving the aforesaid, the quality of life of employees in a higher education institution would improve, along with the sustained success as the end result.

4. INVOLVEMENT AND MOTIVATION OF THE TEACHING AND NON-TEACHING STAFF

Involvement and motivation of the teaching and non-teaching staff is of paramount importance for realising the sustained success of an organisation.

The higher education institution should motivate all employees in order to reach understanding and importance of individual responsibilities. The higher education unit

should enable the employees to participate in scientific-professional and art conferences and gatherings [5].

According to ISO 9004 standard, in order to improve the involvement of all employees, the higher education institution should:

- develop processes for knowledge exchange,
- introduce a principle and acknowledgements and rewards,
- establish a mechanism for qualification of employees,
- evaluate and measure the satisfaction of the teaching and non-teaching staff.

According to SRPS ISO 10004:2010, research on the satisfaction of employees can be performed in several ways:

- direct interviews,
- telephone interviews,
- discussion groups,
- on-line,
- questionnaires.

Depending on the context and goal of the research approach, the activities for evaluating the satisfaction of employees are created. By closing and repeating this cycle once a year, continuous promotion of the system would be achieved through measurement and evaluation of results.

4.1. Suppliers and partners of the higher education institution

Considering that the higher education institution is a specific institution regulated by the laws on higher education, and (in our country) under the competence of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, the partners and suppliers are various, their relations in correlation with the needs to maintain and develop the higher education institution.

The partners are frequently legal entities with whom the practical part of students' education is agreed and performed. This relationship is highly significant since it helps the students to involve themselves more easily into practical business activities, after their education. Chambers of commerce, other Associations, statistical institutes, Libraries, Institutes, whose role is to transfer operative, technical and other knowledges, represent an important group of higher education institution's partners. of a higher education institution present

unavoidable factors of life not only of the institution, but also of employees.

4.2. Infrastructure of the higher education institution

The infrastructure of the higher education institution includes: facility, offices, equipment in amphitheatres, IT equipment, etc. Based on standards, each higher education institution should plan, secure and manage its infrastructure in the most effective and efficient way. The highest management should periodically evaluate the benefits of infrastructure.

The management should establish mechanisms for identifying risks connected to infrastructure and activate measures for their removal or mitigation.

According to the Rules on standards and procedures for accreditation of higher education institution and study programmes, the higher education institution should provide the space and equipment for performing quality teaching in all fields [6]:

- facilities with 4m² gross per student, i.e. 2m² per student for teaching in shifts,
- amphitheatres, classrooms, laboratories, and other areas for teaching,
- library and reading area,
- working space for teachers,
- room in the amphitheatre, classroom, laboratory, etc. for every student,
- office space for administrative tasks.

Even though the infrastructure of the higher education institution is a technical notion, it significantly measures the quality of life improvement for employees of the higher education institution.

4.3. Work environment of a higher education institution

According to ISO 9004 standard, the higher education institution should provide an adequate work environment in order to establish the sustained success in all aspects. A suitable work environment, as combination of human and physical factors, includes:

- creative work principles,
- instructions and guidelines for security,
- employees' facilities,

- psychological factors (workload levels, stress, etc.),
- airflow, level of moisture,
- hygiene, cleanliness,
- noise, pollution, etc.

The management of the higher education institution should enable the work environment to be in accordance with the laws and other subordinate legislation, not just because of the educational inspection, but because of promoting the quality of life of higher education institution's employees.

Knowledge, information and technologies at a higher education institution

According to ISO 9004 standard, the higher education institution should establish mechanisms for maintaining important processes, such as knowledge, information and technologies. The teaching and non-teaching staff indicate how to modify, preserve, protect and evaluate the need for these highly significant resources.

Knowledge, information and technologies at a higher education institution are an important parameter of institution's business capacity, which has to be continuously monitored, evaluated and analysed.

4.4. Information protection

Like in all other legal entities, the information protection ranks high on the scale of business policy. Based on standards, the management of the higher education institution should establish possibilities for evaluating and gathering useful information. These activities relate to the processes of protecting and storing important information. The highest management of the higher education institution should provide informational and communicational conveniences, then confidentiality and availability that can be related to the institution's performances, finding a way for possible improvement and overall progress for all performances.

4.5. Technology of the higher education institution

In order for the training, trend and protection of information to be supported, the

higher education institution should possess modern technology mainly due to its primary activities. The specificity of activities defines the need to implement modern technologies that relate to all process activities within an organisation, including teaching and the quality of rendering services to students, as the users of all types of services in a school. According to ISO 9004 standard, the management of the higher education institution should analyse the possibilities for continuous improvement of total performances, such as the realisation of teaching, contemporary teaching, modern equipment of all administrative services, among which the student service is the most prominent.

The higher education institution management should consider the possibilities for evaluating and assessing:

- existing level of technology,
- growth of economic expenses,
- evaluating risks in accordance with the technological progress,
- competitors' positions,
- quick response to changes in students' demands.

5. CONCLUSION

Through the quality management system, every higher education institution contributes to the competence of adapting to modern conditions of the "knowledge market". The notion of higher education institution quality includes the realisation of joint segments connected to the teaching and non-teaching processes within the higher education institution. Based on available literature which perceives the level of acceptance of standards from the field of quality (ISO 9000), in our country compared to more developed areas (primarily Europe), the general conclusion points to devastating results. In this regard, these devastating results relate, primarily, to not accepting the essence of standards. In addition, excessive "paperwork" is often viewed as a barrier, that is aversion or application solely before inspection, compared to the developed approach to standards.

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