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QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM BASED ON ISO 9001:2000 IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

ARPITA GHOSH*

Abstract

Today's globalised and liberalized world is foreseeing educational institutions producing citizen capable of leading meaningful and purposeful life in the 21st century where quality is encroaching into everyday life. Quality in education implies a philosophy that aligns the activities of all those involved in the education system with the common focus of customer satisfaction as today's world is customer driven. As such it is vital that education system embrace and implement quality management system into the educational institutions. This paper explores into the need of Quality Management System based on ISO 9001:2000 and its implementation in educational institutions.

Key Words; System, Quality management system, Process approach, Systems approach , ISO 9001

Introduction

A system is a set of interrelated or interacting elements. A quality management system is a management system to direct and control an organization with regards to quality. A successful quality management system could be defined as a system in which management can systematically operate in an environment that believes in the principles of Total Quality Management. It is a way in which organisations direct and control those business activities which are associated with quality. Broadly it consist of the organisation's structure together with the planning, processes, resources and documentations used to achieve quality objective to provide improvement of the products and services and to meet customers satisfaction.

Quality management system based on ISO 9001 is in a position to provide perfect system and processes. The quality management system approach encourages organisation to analyse customer's need and define the processes that contribute to the achievements of the product or services acceptable to the customers.

Process Approach

An organization is a composite of systems designed to meet customer needs. Organisations function efficiently only when proper systems and processes are in their place. A functionally related group of

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elements, especially with regards to its processes in a condition of harmonious, orderly interaction is best described as a system. Therefore a system is a group of interacting, interrelated or interdependent processes functioning towards a common goal.

A process is a series of interrelated or interacting activities which transform input into output. It is a series of actions, changes or functions bringing about a desired result on the basis of a prescribed procedure. It is a sequence of operations and activities within a system which receives an input, modifies it, and produces an output. Thus process is an activity using resources and managed in order to facilitate the transformation of input into output.

The application of a system of processes within an organisation together with the identification and interaction of these processes and their management can be referred to as a Process Approach.

Process approach used in ISO 9001:2000

According to Process Approach used in ISO 9001, a quality management system can be thought of as a single large process that use many inputs to generate many outputs.This large process is made up, in turn, of many smaller processes. Each of these processes uses inputs from other processes to generate outputs that, in turn are used by still further processes.

Organization using the process approach requires the management to take the following steps :

1. *Identify the processes :* This could include design and development marketing and sales, purchasing, product realization, distribution, and delivery,etc.
2. *Define and understand the process :* Decide upon the process definition and its coverage. Understand the activities and their flow, by flowcharting them. Align the process activities based on customer requirements. Determine the value adding activities and areas of no or little value addition.
3. *Define the boundaries:* Set limits within which the process will operate and specify its inputs and outputs.
4. *Identify the sub-processes:* Break it down into the basic activities.
5. *Designate a process owner:* He will own, manage and improve the process. He should be knowledgeable about the process, able to influence, capable of facilitating and totally committed.
6. *Create a partnership between user and processor :* This will create a link between the chain of activities.
7. *Understand the linkages :* Understand like linkages with other processes within the organization and with its customers and suppliers.
8. *Link parallel activities in a natural order :* This helps to do simultaneous jobs and speed up the processes.
9. *Balance Functional and Process Approach :* Since most organisations are functional, adoption of the process approach shall balance the mix of both.
10. *Training based on the Process Approach :* This being a new conceptneeds to be understood and accepted. It therefore requires a constant and persistent effort through training to reorient people.
11. *Measure the Process :* This is required for assessing the current level of performance and comparing with the required – level for compliance and identifying possible areas of improvement.
12. *Minimize Reconciliation :* Capture data and information at source and use it without re-entry at any other location.
13. *Combine Jobs :* This reduces lead-time and material movement.
14. *Manage the People :* The organisational structure may have changes but the people remain the same and so they need the same motivation and fulfillment of expectations and aspirations.
15. *Build Centers of Excellence :* These are needed to take care of proper utilization of specialized expertise and competence by centralizing it to help support weak areas in the organisational processes.
16. *Improve Continually :* This is needed to move ahead.
17. *Listen to all Interested Parties :* These interested parties consisting of customers, legislators and regulators, shareholders, suppliers and employees will provide facts and help build understanding.

Process Approach in Educational Institutions

In case of an educational institution, the single large process is providing education to the students/ trainees. Here, the input is required to fulfill the needs and expectations of parents, industry, society and primarily students.

Input is the student or trainee, who is in need of a particular ability to do specified activity.

Processing is being done with the help of various teaching methodologies.

Instruments are teachers, books, computers, internet and other computer based training (CBT) modules

Output is the desired ability of the student/trainee to do specified activity.

This may in turn be divided into smaller processes like- • Admission Process., • Design Development and Instructions Delivery Process., • Examination Process.

To accomplish above mentioned processes, following additional processes may be required; • Office and Administration Process., • Human Resource Process., • Library Process.

For every such process, inputs may be identified, processes may be defined and output can be expected

An ISO 9001 Quality Management System comprises of many processes, and these processes are joined together by means of several input-output relationships. These input output relationships turn a simple list of processes into an integrated system. Without these input-output relationships, one would not have a quality management system. These input-output relationships converging into an integrated system can be viewed as Process Map.

Once an organisation or individual embarks on a Process Approach to Quality Management Systems, it brings great benefits. Educational institutions in particular, upon implementing ISO 9001 too can gain a lot.

Thus in order to build up a Quality Management System that meets the ISO 9001standard, one must create processes and in order to do that each process has to be; • Developed, • Documented, • Implemented, • Monitored, and • Improved

Identification of Process

Organisations do evolve and revolve with and around interested parties. They draw their strength from external environment and provide support to external environment. It is an ongoing process of taking input from external environment and giving output to that very external environment. Admission is an essential process for any educational institution. Input for this process may be treated as number of seats available for a particular course, minimum qualification for admission and date by which this process should be completed. Processing may be - notification for admission, sale of admission forms, conduction of admission test, declaration of admission test results. Output will be the list of candidates admitted.

Design of a Process

Business process design is a process which designs a realization for a business process. A process can be a part of a large encompassing process. Process can be viewed at various levels of granularity. Process management is the application of knowledge, skills, tools, techniques and systems to define, visualize, measure, control, report and improve processes with the objective to meet customer requirements in a profitable manner.

Process Measurement

Process indicators are used for evaluating process performance and generally are the difference between the input and output of a process from a customer's view. These indicators exist in each and every aspect within the organisation. It is obvious that the measurement is possible in terms of some measurement unit. It may be in terms of time, numbers, units, etc.

Process Variation

\It is an accepted truth that in every process there are variations, which can be common, special or assignable. Let's briefly understand them.

- A *common cause* is the normal variation in an established process and it is always a part of the process.
- A *special or assignable cause* is an abnormal variation arising out of some particular circumstances within a process

While common causes can be improved only by a fundamental or structural change within the process itself, it is important to observe that special or assignable causes have to be rectified as a specific problem attributed to something outside the normal process.

Process Improvement

Process improvement is the activity of elevating the performance of a process, especially that of a business process with regard to its objectives. Process improvement can take the form of an improvement activity. Such a process of continuous improvement will be a part of organisation's management processes.

Process Improvement Methods

With variations affecting process performances, it is essential that one should also have effective steps for process improvements.

Understanding the Process

The overall focus should be on understanding the particular contributions to customer satisfaction as the first step. This shall define the overall process, specifying the customers or the end users of the product while listing their needs and expectations and determining whether the processes are meeting those expectations. It shall also be important to identify who shall own and control the processes, methods of measuring, and the measuring process, and listing all the problems associated with a process, if there exists any.

Generate New Alternatives

Use of imagination, innovation and creativity is required in this step, to explore all the alternatives that are possible to bring about improvement. In order to reach certain goals certain alternatives have to be identified and at the same time all the process that are acting upon the alternatives have to be determined. Various analytical tools will have to be used.

Select an Improvement

A particular improvement would have to be selected that could lead to the desired outcome. A Plan Do Check Act [PDCA] cycle would be quite helpful in bringing about improvements but one has to check the results against the desired outcomes. In fact the selection criteria for improvement would have to be specified, with the selection method being defined. One would also have to determine how the decision for the selected method will be made and who all will be involved in the decision making process.

Approval and Planning for Improvement

The preparation of a comprehensive implementation plan is required here. That would involve a presentation before the management to seek approval for execution of the improvement. Initially it has to be determined how the improvement shall be implemented; thereby requiring preparation of an implementation plan. The objective should be to gain support of the management while stressing on the benefits. The presentation should include a plea for action and then a follow up actions should also be addressed.

Implement the Improvement

Here improvement should be implemented as per plan. Necessary training should be given to the human resource and other essential resources should be made available. It is important that there should exist a continual feedback strategy to ensure that the improvement plan is working effectively. For this, one would have to develop documents and implementation procedures, decide the inputs that are required and the outputs that are expected/desired and the criteria for the measurement of these.

Follow Up

A continual check is required to ensure that the process is under control. If the process is not meeting up the preferred outcomes, one would have to again undertake the process improvement initiative.

A curriculum can spell out what is expected to be learnt and how the learning is to be evaluated. However, the curriculum by itself does not guarantee that needs and expectations will be met if deficient processes subsist in educational institutions.

Continuing assessment of the curriculum and educational processes that support instruction can ensure the efficiency of the learning process. Internal quality audits provide substantiation of the fulfillment of requirements. For example, stated claims of achievements.

Thus Educational institutions that provide educational products should define their processes. These processes, which are generally multidisciplinary, include administrative services and other forms of support, as well as those concerning assessment, such as :

- A strategic process to classify the function of the educational organisation in the socio-economic environment;
- Admission and selection of applicants;
- Developing, evaluating and updating study plans and curricula;
- Provision of the teaching effectiveness of the learning providers;
- Maintenance of the working atmosphere;
- Follow-up and assessment of student's education;
- Internal and external communication; and
- Assessment and measurement of educational processes

Systems Approach

A system is a set of interrelated or interacting element. It is an organised set of ideas or a particular way of doing things. An organisation's system is made up of many processes working towards the achievement of organisational objectives. The systems approach aims at determining and establishing a system that controls all business process of the organisations and their inter linkages. The origin of system approach lies in the principles of optimisation whereby the performance of the system as a whole gougers its operation and takes precedence over performances of its individuals components.

Traditional System Approach : The traditional system approach established system to focus on their products and market trend. Thus it was a product focused System Approach.

Modern System Approach : Modern systems approach views the system requirements aiming at controlling processes that directly affect quality. This approach ensures and enhances the effectiveness and efficiency of a system. It aims at establishing a quality management system which treats the organisation as an integrated and aligned groups of interrelated, interdependent and interacting process operating in harmony towards a common goal.

Educational Institution as System

Educational institutions can easily be brought into the ambit of systematic thinking. Most factors or components that are meaningful for an organisarion would very well apply to educational institutions' environment as well. The various components of educational system can be broadly classified as :

- Infrastructure.
- Learner.
- Curriculum.
- Teachers.
- Management of academics.
- Management of processes.
- Student parent services.
- Institutional dynamics.
- Evaluation and assessments.

Each of the above is a sub system of the total systems and contribute significantly towards the growth of the entire system. All of them are inter related and inter linked. One has to examine them in broader sence and in terms of their impact on each other.

Conclusion : Entropy

The natural state of things is chaos. The second law of thermodynamics states that while all form of energy can be completely converted into heat the complete conversation of heat into any other form of energy cannot take place without leaving some changes in the systems. That is to be say that it is not possible to convert heat into work without compensation. When applied to organisational systems we can interpret that any process no matter how orderly and well designed will degenerate to chaos unless we keep adding energy. This is the principle of Entropy.

It has been observed that however hard we try, the gain so painstakingly achieved tends to disappear if not managed systematically. Thus we have to keep adding energies to our business processes. The energies are controls, re design, additional training, performance measurement etc. Thus if these energies are not provided from time to time i.e. if systems are not maintained, then the performance level of processes come down which again rises with renewed experience when charged with additional energies. This is Saw Tooth Effect.

If we want to continuously improve the level of performances and see that our processes do not degrade over time, it must be governed by a system which is managed and for this we need a Quality Management System.

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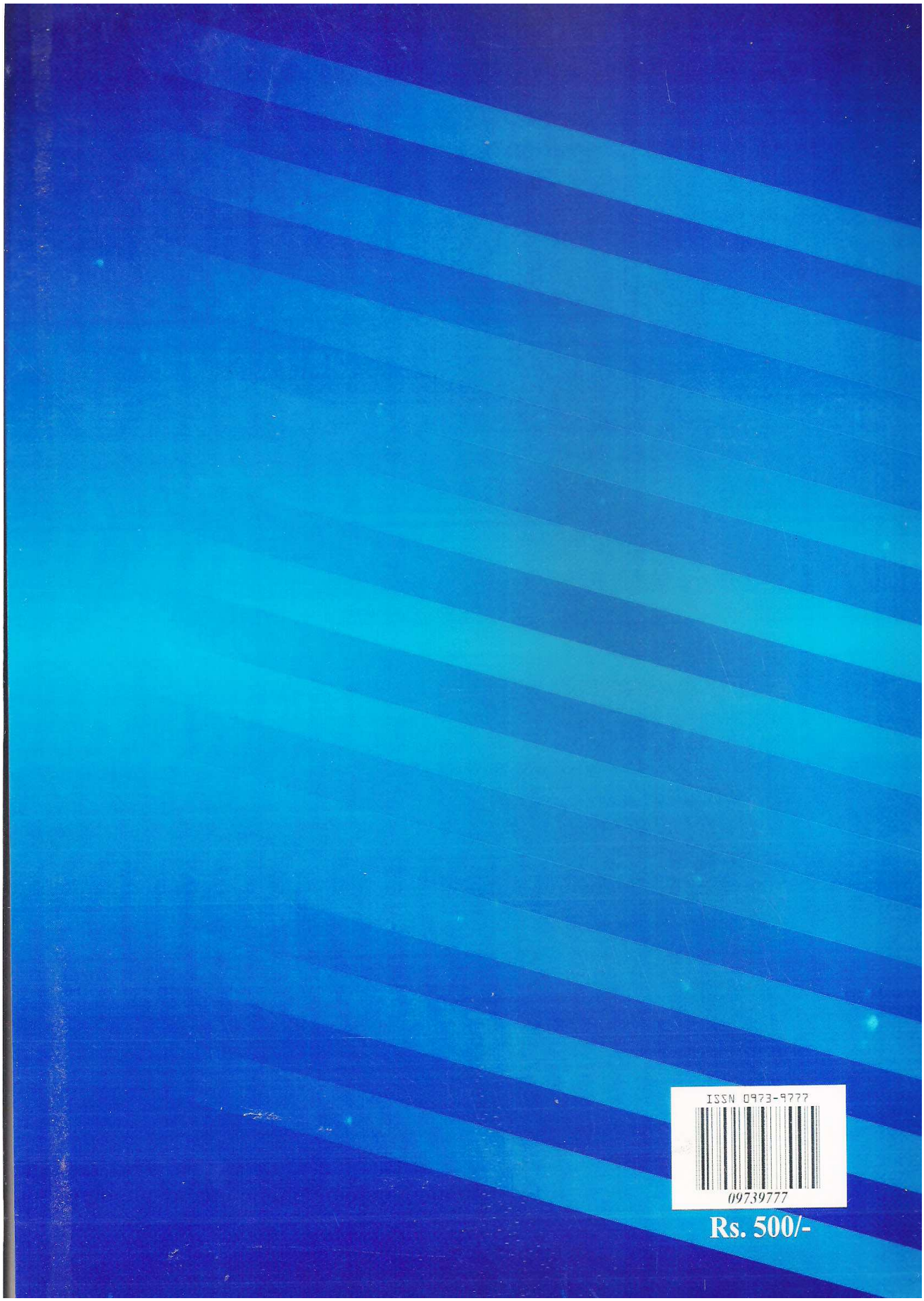
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