

Quality management in university education

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The purpose of the study was to present a view of problems of quality management in university education and to indicate the validity of applied methods verified and used in the productive industry and services.

Design/methodology/approach: In the paper there was presented an approach to quality management in university education and associated requirements and purposes.

Findings: The paper presents an opinion about validity of introduction quality management system based on standard ISO 9001:2000 with reference to the other means of assurance of quality in education.

Research limitations/implications: Limitations associated with the presented in the article approach can concern quality awareness of persons involved in the processes of quality management system and costs of certification.

Practical implications: Presented in the paper opinion should acquaint with advantages of introduction in the universities the quality management system based on standard ISO 9001:2000.

Originality/value: The paper is based on personal experience of the authors in introduction of the quality management system in educational units with usage of standard ISO 9001:2000.

Keywords: Quality management; Education; University

1. Introduction

Management of educational institutions is becoming more and more difficult because of very fast changes in their environment. Changes in the environment forced the introduction of innovative activities in a very fast tempo making the subjects responsible for the costs and they are very difficult to foresee. Universities are dealing with a lot of problems: how and by what means planned activities should be done receiving the best economic effectiveness and not missing quality of offered education. It should be noticed about competition which is more and more aggressive because nowadays at times of demographic depression skilful attraction and maintenance of the student is very important [1-4].

Summarizing, to the basic activities of modern educational market comprising all the fields of education belong processing,

introduction, maintenance and improvement of the quality of education.

Quality of education is becoming one of the elements of formation of strategy of education in the university and other educational institutions.

2. Quality of the education

Idea of "quality of education" is relatively young and it replaced the concept of "effectiveness of education" which was used until now.

Quality of education is differently defined by the authors, as for instance expression of significant range of educational effectiveness and reflection of a new approach in which need of systematic evaluation of undertaken activities is taking essential

meaning including improvement and making endeavors towards accreditation which aim is to confirm that all the standards of educational effectiveness are provided [5,6].

The essential fact in all these considerations is that every university realizing trend of progress should form quality of education as well as quality of carried scientific researchers. Resulting from this, more and more interest and searching for new solutions and introduction of modern concepts and methods of management are needed.

Quality of education is becoming to be defined in the halves of nineties of the 20th century. It was associated with rapid systemic and economic changes in Poland.

This period was characterized by:

- increase in number of students,
- creation of new directions of the studies,
- introduction of changes in the programs and adjustment to current needs,
- arising of private schools,
- development of cooperation with foreign universities.

One of the problems was no increase or decreasing inputs on realization of the process of education.

The problems of quality of the education is enrolled in the undertaken activities in the international area what is expressed in process beginning in 1999 of leveling of the barriers in cooperation between universities which was called Bolonian Declaration and was signed by ministers of education in 29 European countries, including Poland.

Further activities undertaken in this direction are expressed in the Parisian Announcement (2001), Berliner Announcement (2003) and during Conference in Bergen (2005). These activities tend to creation of the European Field of High School Education in 2010 based on realization of postulates concerning [7,8]:

- introduction of the system of readable and comparable degrees in the aim of promotion of the possibilities of employment of European citizens and assurance of competitiveness of European system of university education,
- introduction of the system of points in the evaluation of the students (ECTS),
- cooperation in range of assurance of the quality.

Announcement from Bergen comprises also attachment "Standards and instructions concerning assurance of the quality of the education in the European Field of High School Education".

Bolonian Declaration was the first which emphasized the problems of assurance of high level of the education and necessity of adaptation of the system of the education to the needs of the work market. One of the fractional purposes of the Bolonian Declaration was "promotion of the cooperation to increase quality of the university education", which was interpreted also as "cooperation to assure quality of the education".

It should be emphasized that the Bolonian Process is tending to harmonization but not standardizing of the process of education assuming that in variety of the harmonized systems lies power of development with respect to the autonomy of the university.

The idea of quality of the education is not easy to define as far as it is easy to establish the concept of the process of education.

There are so many definitions of the quality as opinions about these problems beginning from the classics of the science about

quality, theorists and practitioners to the personal look of the customer at quality of the service or the product. The quality is a complex idea this is why its definition is still searched.

Education is a process depending on providing the service in which a lot of subjects participate, not only a student and a teacher. Considering this one could look for answer to the question how to define quality of the didactic service realized by the universities. But one should remember that not only didactic constitutes the sense of the existence of the universities.

Considering the quality of education as a service one can describe it as follows [9]:

- it has no material character
- there is a close association between a provided service and a person who provides it
- the lecturer has proprietary rights to the realized service

Ch. Gronrossa ascertains that description of global quality of the service is needed what is possible by comparing the expected quality with the quality experienced in the process of its providing. In such comprehension the quality is possessed by the service which was done according to the expectations of the customer. Remembering that in case of educational service it is essential to look for confirmations how it is done based on defined criteria such as plans of the studies and the others [7].

Looking for discrepancies between expectations and experience has to serve to search the directions of improvement in the sphere of quality management of the service.

With reference to the process of education, the idea of quality of the education is very often found next to effectiveness or efficacy of the education.

A.I. Vroeijsstijn creates the following definition of the quality of the education: "It is a result of the negotiations between all the participants of the process of the education when these negotiations concern realization their expectations by university education. The system of university education should tend to realize all these expectation in the best way through clear description of the purposes of the education at the university level." The participants of this process are students, teachers, employers, government, community [10].

The quality of the realized process could be described in different aspects [5]:

- financial effectiveness – looking for the response to the question how universities spend public money,
- academic standards – realizing activities aiming maintenance suitable level of education in the universities,
- public usefulness.

The problems of the quality of the educational services refers to the following fields [11]:

- effective organization of the process of the education,
- variety of educational offer,
- determining the requirement to the students,
- competences of the persons conducting the classes,
- quality of the relation with lecturers and managing personnel,
- access to the infrastructure supporting the education.

Here it should be emphasized that even in the Announcement from Bergen there is no definition of the quality of the education, but so expressions as culture of the quality, the quality management, assurance of the quality could be found.

The most often used definition is assurance of the quality of the education. Wanting to define the quality of education and using methodology of the science it is difficult to agree that expression of assurance of the quality with reference to the problems discussed here is the most proper. According to the obligatory norm PN EN ISO 9000:2001 "Systems of the quality management. Basics and terminology", assurance of the quality is understood as part of the quality management [12].

The quality of the services provided by the universities should play a strategic role in the management of the university. Universities must be aware that suitable quality of the education, service and the communication ensure not only optimization of usefulness of the service for the student but also it makes possible effective competition at the market.

The suitable level of the quality of the education one could reach through realization of the external and internal activities (fig. 1) [2,13]. However, what is essential, realized in conditions of the introduced and certificated quality management system undertaken internal activities can be characterized by bigger value added arising from their realization.

The market of services in the field of university education must tend to continuous improvement of realized by themselves processes. Such possibilities are suggested by the elaborated standard concerning quality management systems ISO 9001:2000 [12-15].

The norms of ISO series 9000 are characterized by stable position in the international area as recognized collection of rules of proceeding and forming of the processes in purpose to improve them but also they could be introduce in every economic subject as well as in the universities.

The problems of the certification of the quality systems are more and more appreciated, also in the sphere of education, especially after 2000.

One should solely emphasize that obtained certificate of the introduced quality management system based on standard ISO 9001:2000 is not a quality mark but guarantee that this system fulfills requirements described not only in the standard but also in the superior papers as act about university education or statute of the university [12-15].

Significance of introduction and obtaining a certificate of the introduced quality management system and further its maintenance is a confirmation that realized processes are performed in still supervised and improved conditions. Such information means more and more not only for the industrial customers purchasing material goods but also in the sphere of servicing subjects [3,7,14].

Undertaking by the university the introduction of the quality management system based on norm EN ISO 9001:2000 is associated with gaining general philosophy of the quality with reference to all the participants of the realized processes. So it is a conscious activity with purpose of accompany the global movement of the quality – involving all the employees in the process of maintenance and improvement of the system. [3,6,12].

This activity is based first of all on conviction about rightness

of using specially elaborated procedures adapted to the specificity of the university, department or organizational unit which in a readable means establish proper organization of the work.

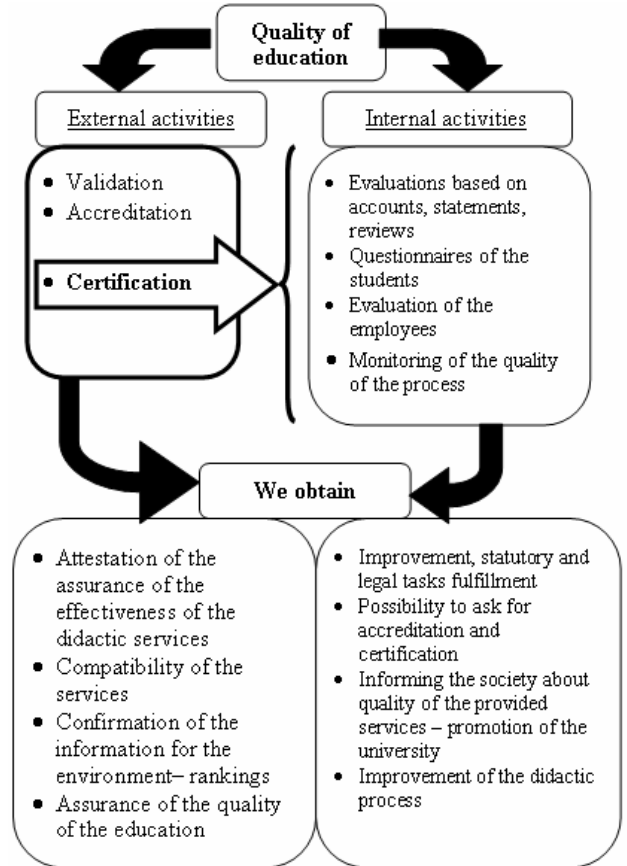


Fig. 1. Activities tending to assure quality of education [2,13]

The problems of introduction and maintenance of the Quality Management Systems based on standard ISO 9001:2000 is widely described basing on rich experiences associated with functioning of these systems despite using different methodologies during introduction and auditing of these systems.

It is essential and incontestable that the main need associated with the education which is noticed by the authors concerns establishing and introduction of the procedures of actions in the spheres of realized activities in the processes of education in purpose to obtain their transparency, accuracy and sequentiality.

All above mentioned allows to establish for instance procedure of realization of the plans of the studies or flow of the documents during the study.

Known advantage of introduction of systems based on standard ISO 9001:2000 is also care about continuous monitoring and improvement of the realized processes [12].

Taking into account very well described in the literature successes of the firms which introduced quality management systems based on standard ISO 9001:2000 allows to think that also introduction it in the universities helps them to reach the

success. Only clear and precise described schedules of proceedings assure enough reproducibility in care of quality of education [12].

The university taking decision to begin process of obtaining the certificate of the introduced quality management system according to standard ISO 9001:2000 must undertake such activities as:

- description of politics and purpose of quality
- establishment of responsibility and competences of all the employees
- calling the plenipotentiary to quality system
- elaboration of necessary documentation of the system including description of the processes.

Advantages of introduction and maintenance of the quality management system in the university there are as follows:

- improvement of quality of the realized didactic process
- improvement of work organization
- transparency and readability of responsibilities and entitlements
- supplying documentary evidence of the processes and activities in shape of readable procedures
- increase of awareness of quality among the employees
- fulfillment of requirements of the customers
- improvement of reputation

3. Summary

The authors of the paper emphasize the essence of the conducted activities in limits of legal supervision influencing quality of education. However, in context of individual approach to the essence of discussed in the article problems it seems to be correct to benefit from rich experience of the science about management (including quality management) and implementing in the universities certificated quality management systems as a tool of maintenance and improvement of conducted didactic and research activities.

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