

KNOWLEDGE AUDIT AS A QUALITY TOOL IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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1. Understanding – the main focus in Quality & Knowledge management

Terms “quality” and “knowledge” appear as key terms in globalisation processes which set forth essentially new requirements and functioning concepts before contemporary organizations. With the aim of reaching the quality of products and services that provide global market competitiveness, organisations have been aware of the explicit causative link to the organisational knowledge and knowledge of its own personnel. In managing these categories there are numerous sets of organisational performances in the area of effectiveness and efficacy used, as well as a wide range of their measures and analyses of obtained data. These procedures lead to a new occurrence in the global economy known as “big data era” and as a result of it data management becomes almost impossible. Additionally, due to various perceptions of the quality and organisational knowledge, there are various methods implemented in its management with relatively unpredictable outcomes regarding improvement of performances. This points out to the existence of the certain level of misunderstanding from choosing appropriate performances, through measurement processes generating real data, data processing for creating correct information and competent knowledge to getting organization wisdom for competitive business. Significance of understanding is emphasised by the systemologist Ackoff [1] pointing out to the connection of intelligence to the efficacy and wisdom to effectiveness of the organisation. Thereto he stresses the management focus on effectiveness as a presumption of the sustainable development achieved by the evaluation of the efficacy. It could be concluded that processes of internal and/or external evaluations contribute to the increased level of understanding, and consequently level of knowledge and quality in organization. The latest version of ISO 9001:2015 standard explicitly indicates the significance of understanding organisational context and its presentation by a set of objective performances.

2. Knowledge audit methodology in organization

In context of previous elaboration, there is knowledge audit methodology as effective evaluation tool that emphasizes knowledge performances of organization representing effectivity rather than efficacy (результативність) of organization. Organization knowledge audit is an activity within the organization which is, as a rule, realized at the start of development intentions and implementation of the Knowledge management system and other complementary processes or knowledge resources within the organization. In that respect, this type of audit differs in type and methodology from the management system audit which is conducted with the purpose of evaluating compliance with relevant standards, and its methodology is defined in ISO 19011 standard and supported through training systems and professionalization of auditors. It could be stated that organization knowledge audit is conducted with the purpose of identifying existing “isles of knowledge” in the organization in the form of existing processes, methods, repositories, flows etc., and designing consistent Knowledge management system in the organization based on them. According to [2] Knowledge audit is conducted in 10 phases of which the first three phases are effectively realised through the design of Quality system in accordance with ISO 9001:2015 requirements.

Phase 1: Identification and review of Mission, Vision, Strategic objectives and organizational processes. Phase 2: Identification of key processes, their aims, criteria for measuring processes’ performances and its placement (consideration) in the context of knowledge management process. Phase 3: Selection of priority processes in terms of expected results of conducting knowledge audit. Phase 4: Identification of key persons in the selected process, for conducting interviews and surveys. Phase 5: Interview or survey. Phase 6: Identification and recording knowledge resources in processes. Phase 7: Identification and recording of knowledge flows. Phase 8: Knowledge mapping. Phase 9: Composing audit report. Phase 10: Repeated audit.

As authors have emphasized, phases 6, 7 and 8, are optimally realized through the implementation of the ontological approach, but sufficient level of effectiveness is also achieved through the implementation of the appropriate knowledge mapping models that can serve as a basis for the future development of ontologies. This approach is recommended by the American Productivity and Quality Centre – APQC, [3] in the process - based knowledge map.

3. Balanced scorecard as a core framework for internal/external evaluation

Conducting process of internal and/or external evaluation continuously over the planned timeframes, organization is getting more and more wisdom which should be presented by appropriate set of performances and followed by trends in valid time period. To support this intention, the use of balanced scorecard (BSC) methodology supported by various software applications is highly recommended, thus reliably decreasing number of misunderstandings, increasing probability of meeting objectives, mission and vision of the organization. Implementation of the BSC methodology integrated with the Knowledge audit for the purpose of internal/external evaluation, can clearly indicate organizational processes in which is suitable to implement specific knowledge management technologies such as knowledge discovery, knowledge capture, knowledge sharing, knowledge codifying, knowledge application etc. Within these knowledge management technologies it is possible to more clearly identify adequate learning (knowledge creation) processes such as socialization, externalization, combination and internalization (SECI). This approach is especially suitable for educational and higher education institutions that have creation of knowledge, skills and competences of students and teaching staff as a part of their mission statement. Selection of representational indicators and performances that shall be used in the evaluation processes as a development measure is currently popular topic also in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Useful example of this is the SHEQA TEMPUS project [4] affirming 36 indicators grouped in 8 categories thus providing basis for effective internal evaluation as well as for conducting benchmarking initiatives between partner universities. Selection of performances in the BSC model may also be led by criteria set by the relevant bodies that set ranking systems in higher education. There are examples of good practice [5] in the effective implementation of recommended indicators and their classification according to BSC model, including their subsequent use in the self-evaluation processes with the purpose of getting prepared for external evaluation according to European standards (ESG).

4. Conclusion

Obtaining higher level of understanding in organization result in more knowledge, wisdom and quality and more effectivity as a measure of sustainable functioning of organization. Evaluation processes, by caring out knowledge audit of organization and its key processes, appear as a main tool for achieving appropriate level of understanding. The representational set of measurable performances by the implementation of BSC methodology is recommended since it enables effective conducting of internal and external evaluation. An unambiguous conclusion is compulsory existence of consistent Quality management system and other management aspects important for sustainable functioning of organization, where knowledge generation and management processes appear as a tool for reaching desired effectivity and sustainability. In other words, we can talk about integrated Quality and Knowledge Management System (QKnMS) [6]. Knowledge audit aims are focused on improving these knowledge processes, what characterises the knowledge audit as a special quality tool. Education institutions can especially benefit from conducting knowledge audit since its result points out to the possibilities of improving the knowledge creation processes.

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