

QUALITY SYSTEM CERTIFICATION IN INSTITUTIONS OF SOCIAL RESPONSES

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Abstract

The major challenge of the European Economy on the crises time is to give adequate and answer to social necessities of the European population. The severe financial crisis is reflected in the answers given by the states social needs.

The effectiveness and quality of such services is becoming a very complex subject and often difficult to solve, but the urge to respond. The emergence of many private companies that seek to give answers to the growing social needs is another element to consider in the context of the social economy.

The competitiveness of this sector, particularly in terms of financial profitability, assumes that service quality is an essential component. In recent years there has been significant increase in the quality system certification of the answers members. In Portugal there are two specific certification schemes social responses EQUASS certification (European Quality Assurance in Social Services) and certified according to the models of the ISS (Institute of Social Security).

The existence of these schemes together with certification based on ISO 9001, created the need for this comparative analysis and discussion of the experiences gained, to give more accurate information to the market of social services, as well as identify key training needs professional sector.

The onset of the work of a Technical Committee for Standardization of quality management systems in social responses came also reinforce the need already identified.

The objective of this work is to analyze the differences and similarities of different certification systems and identify which kind of certification are uses in different social institution and why

This will be a first step to the future work of comparison of those different certification systems and elaboration of the one certification systems based on the experience and study of the existent ones.

Key words: quality management, certification, social answers, social institutions.

Introduction

In today's world, social economy takes a new meaning in the face of renewed climate of economic and social recession affecting Europe and the world in general. Solidarities emerge as alternative responses to the failure of the Welfare State disengagement of growing markets.

The growing social needs related to the bankruptcy of social states, demographic problems and lack of the principle of demographic renovation make the budgets of the states increasingly difficult to balance starting from the principle of solidarity of generations. Social needs are also evolving requiring new social answers.

The social policies will print, although in a fragmented faction, the needs and social challenges posed by the deregulation of the financial markets and the gradual decline of the welfare states. Therefore, it becomes urgent before the political, economic and social currents, the development and strengthens of policies and measures to support initiatives that promote social solidarity and reciprocity in a logical and transparent “crisscross” between the civil society, state and market.

It's continuously harder to answer these social needs by the state. Due to that, many private organizations have appeared that aim to address said needs replacing, in part, the State's responsibility in these responses. Central and local public authorities have been increasingly drawing up a framework of shared responsibilities concerning intervention in social cohesion.

Social economy organizations are gaining increasing awareness of the importance of quality certification.

Although the quality certification came initially applied in industry, in recent years there has been a significant increase of the certification of quality systems social responses.

There are quality dimensions that are common realities of enterprises and social organizations such as:

- tangibles - conditions of facilities and equipment;
- aspects of reliability- understood as the ability to perform tasks;
- responsiveness- related to the disposition and willingness to help others effectively;
- security guaranteed by the acquisition of knowledge that validates skills inspiring of confidence and trust;
- empathy, which allows a customized action to each of the beneficiaries.

Of all this quality dimensions, the last , following Fonseca (2013), "is crucial to the social institutions, because it is necessary to create a special atmosphere of humanity and community."

In Portugal, there are two specific certification schemes of organizations in social areas; certification EQUASS (European Quality Assurance in Social Services) and the certification according to the models of the ISS (Institute of Social Security). In addition, there is the system of quality certification ISO 9001 which has also been adopted by some social economy organizations.

The approach EQUASS, structured on the principles of quality Common Quality Framework for Social Services of General Interest and Self-Assessment methodology, uses a questionnaire on internal audit carried out by the organizations themselves, and external audit certification. The model is managed by EQUASS, who forms auditors and consultants and certifies the quality of social services and the best practices of quality management.

QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL RESPONSES (ISS) - is a reference standard based on the principles of quality management and in which the requirements for

implementation of the Quality Management System of the services provided by Social Responses are established.

It allows evaluating of the quality of services provided by Social Response and evaluates the system of quality management - assignment for levels A, B or C. It assesses the quality management system - by assigning levels C, B, A in the form of indicators.

The models differ in their design:

STANDARD MODEL • ISS – aims to build a system of quality management for the implementation of quality principles and criteria defined in the model. Certification is carried out by a certification body.

- MODEL EQUASS - certifies social services according to the 10 principles and criteria of the Quality EQUASS, ensuring the quality of service.

The models complement and contribute to add value to organizations. An organization can be certified according to the models EQUASS Assurance, EQUASS Excellence, ISS Level C, B or A and by ISO 9001:2008.

Methodology

In the beginning of this year (2013) we developed an inquiry based on the cross analysis between the requirement of the ISO 9001:2008 certification, the ISS references and the EQUASS references. Based on the analysis we verified the common requirements in order to standardize the collection of information on social institutions that would be interviewed.

The survey carried out for this qualitative analysis has a development plan based on the results of the analysis in quality systems. Initially we want to identify the entity and define what, how and why the Institution of Social Action selected one or other of the existing quality system. The survey is systematized in 8 criteria on the (more complex) ISS reference.

In Criterion 1 - Leadership, Planning and Strategy, questions related to documents guiding the quality, structure, roles, responsibility and authority within the organization and annual planning and management are addressed.

For Criterion 2 - People (Human Resources Management, HR), issues related to recruitment and retention policies, their legal compliance, HR Training and Development,

minimum requirements, involvement, recognition scheme, manual reception and existing indicators are addressed.

Criterion 3 - Partnerships and Resources, within the partnerships the questions what types, in what molds, and what parts does it concern are asked. Regarding Resources, Financial Resources are covered, from budgeting, financial reporting, registration tax status, accounts and procedures and policies. In Information Management, the availability, location and accessibility, of all information to customers and employees are inquired. For Facilities Management and Equipment, maintenance plans, records. Finally issues related to security, in situations of neglect, abuse and mistreatment, how they are treated and reported, Safety and Health at Work and Fire Safety.

In Criterion 4 – Processes: what names, models, management indicators and ways of managing processes.

Criterion 5 – Client Results: document with a Definition of Rights and Duties, definition of the information to be provided and procedures for managing complaints.

Criterion 6 – People Results: directly related to Criterion 2.

For Criterion 7 - Society Results: forms of interaction, connection and verification of connections to the society / community in activities, information, communication and registration of community opinions on the social response in question. Environmental Performance is also an issue to take into consideration.

Finally, Criterion 8 - Key Performance Results: Evidence of Continuous Improvement Cycle, procedures and indicators. Innovation and performance results considering both the global social responses and the financial results. Finally, comparing results with previous periods.

Based on the register of social institutions that have certification, it was initially intended to select social institutions which have one or more certifications, by different systems, for an interview. It has thus become possible to perform an analysis of social institutions with a certification from the three systems, having the surveyed institutions presented the valences of their certified skills.

Results

The quality management in social organizations begins to have an increasing importance. After some initial reluctance, mainly related to the need for organizational change, social organizations recognize the great importance of having a quality certification, since the

whole process of adaptation of rules and procedures for certification enables organizations to improve their capacity management organization and the effectiveness and efficiency of management.

Upon hearing of the directions of the IPSS, it is an unanimous opinion that the introduction of the quality policy enables greater customer focus, improves internal and external communications, promotes continuous improvement, training, and promotes economic and financial sustainability.

A periodic review of the quality system improves the performance of the institution in order to better serve customers, which is the main function of the IPSS. Besides this fundamental improvement for the IPSS, the introduction of quality policy allows the upgrading of the skills of the employees, increasing their capacity for innovation and creativity. It also ensures sustainability through diversification of responses and expansion of services, allows solidify and promote effective partnerships for business and improves the physical conditions of the equipment.

Based on the interviews conducted there was some uniformity of responses in relation to some aspects that systematize on:

- Significant organizational effort;
- Increase records and evaluations during the early stage, often regarded as increased bureaucracy;
- Conquering internal resistance to change due to the need of some drastic changes related to procedures previously adopted;
- Difficulties related to training people and their reorganization;
- Relatively expensive Process;
- Time-consuming procedure of the certification implementation;
- There is need for external consultancy;
- There are often difficulties in finding the ideal indicators of performance measurement for certain services.

There were identified add-values of the certification introduction such as:

- Standardization of language used in organizations;

- Introduction of clear procedures which facilitate the management of organizations ;
 - Individualization of interventions focused on users' needs and their expectations (especially in health related organizations);
 - Simplification of work and communication in the teams;
 - Data accessibility and greater articulation / dynamics between people;
 - Increased motivation;
 - Consistency of the intervention programs with clear and measurable objective interventions (IPSS health);
 - Involvement and empowerment of users;
 - Better integration of new employees due to records that support interventions;
 - Creation of the brand image for the institution, both outdoor and indoor;
 - Sense of pride of having the quality certification.
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Conclusions

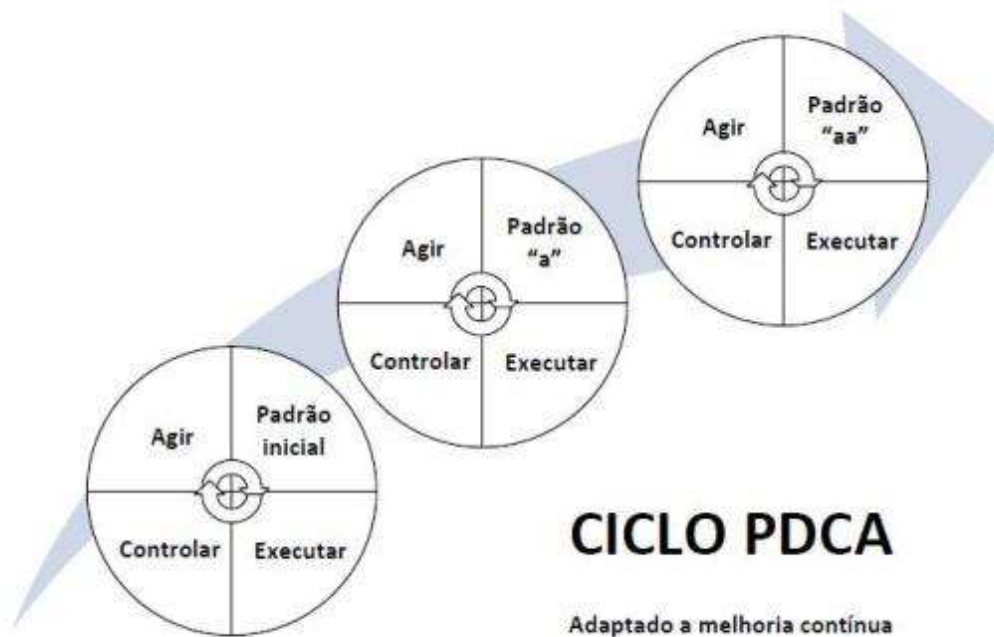
It's necessary to take some important steps to introduce the quality certification system in social organizations.

First, it is necessary to have a very large commitment by the management of these organizations. The quality cannot be seen as a bureaucratic process that involves "paper production" but must be understood as a way of improving the performance of organizations.

Next step is to involve everyone in the certification process that is beyond the leaders, developers, users / clients, their families and social partners. They should participate in the definition of a culture of values and the definition of rights and duties.

The entire process must be monitored and adjusted according to the specifications of each organization.

After the introduction and stabilization procedures, it's necessary to introduce the verification procedures, updating and reforming, according to the PDCA model for the purpose of continuous improvement.



Analyzing our results, it's possible to conclude that the social organization choice for quality certification systems depends on the definition of the general framework:

- The system ISO 9001:2008, presented as generic as possible, to adapt to any industry. For the case of Social Institutions, it can adapt to various aspects or to the entire existing management structure. However, it does not consider the specifications of the social organizations.
- The ISS system is considered more complex, expensive and difficult to understand. It requires external monitoring for implementation. Social organizations have some expectation that having this type of certification might have vantages in applying for future funds. This certification is applied individually to social responses. The disadvantage of this model is that it is not applicable to all of social responses.
- The system EQUASS is also a complex system, especially in terms of documentation, however, it is more adapted to the reality of these institutions. The introduction of this model is expensive and requires external support and funding for its implementation. It is flexible enough to be adopted for all social responses.

In general it appears that certification helps to manage social organizations, especially in the case of Portugal, because in that kind of organization, with volunteer leaders, there's usually a deficit of management knowledge.

Perspectives

In order to guarantee the collection of the information as close to the current situation as possible, concerning the quality certification in institutions of social action and to achieve consensus on defining a single model, we start with the three working hypotheses:

- Choose one of the models as a base for integrating inputs from other models;
- Develop an interpretation guide for Charitable Institutions Started based on ISO 9001 for quality management systems;
- Create a committee of standardization with the aim of developing a NP (Norma Portuguesa) for quality management systems in the institutions of social solidarity; the APQ (Portuguese Association for Quality) operates an ONS (Office for Standardization Sector) exactly in the area quality management;

During our investigation, it was necessary to change the methodology for gathering information in order to ensure a broader and representative sample. We scheduled interventions and investigations in CLAS (Local Council Social Action) to ensure a better and larger sample.

We developed a survey for institutions with or without certification in order to verify the sensitivity of the issues of same quality certification and the different certification schemes.

Based on the first results analysis it's possible to confirm the obvious interest of the institutions of social action, both certified and uncertified, to have a quality certification. Social organizations also confirmed the advantages of uniforming specific system of quality certification for these institutions.

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