



Staff Perspectives Toward Quality Management Practices At UNITI College, Pasir Panjang, Port Dickson, Negeri Sembilan.

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ABSTRACT

Quality management practices in organization are the prerequisite in seeking for achieved high performance. One of the tools used by many organizations including Higher Education Providers (HEP) is Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award Criteria (MBNQA). UNITI College in Port Dickson, Negeri Sembilan is the one of HEP that have their own objective to get ISO certification by applying quality management practices based on MBNQA education for excellence criteria's. The MBNQA criteria highlighted in this study are Leadership, Strategic Planning, Customer and Market Focus, Measurement, Analysis, Knowledge Management and Business Result. The purpose of this research is to assist the management of UNITI College in implementing quality management practices at their college before they applied for ISO certification. The significances of this research covered the top management, academic staff, student and researcher.

Keywords: Analysis, Leadership, Customer and Market Focus, Higher Education Provider (HEP) Knowledge Management and Business Result, Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA), Measurement, Quality Management Practices, Strategic Planning,

INTRODUCTION

In the rapid growth of private HEP's in Malaysia, there is tendency of the private college to seek for quality application in their organization to be used as competitive advantage in dealing with tight market competition. As quality currently becomes a major focus of businesses throughout the world, various organizations develop standards and guidelines (Evans & Lindsay, 2008, p.128).

UNITI College is one of the private colleges that realized the potential of ISO as their platform to improve and enhance their performance result. *According to Hj Mohd Zayeb Bin Sulaiman, Director of UNITI College based on our interview, "it is the most prominent objective of the college to get ISO certification in providing quality education to our students"*. This certification will be used as a mechanism in creating confidence among their students, potential applicants and stake holders and also can facilitated as a tool to attract new enrollment. This certification also can provide competitive edge to the college to compete in the market in order to achieve their goal to become the largest bumiputera college in Malaysia.

Although the current achievement of the college as the largest bumiputera college in Negeri Sembilan, the UNITI College want to challenge themselves to move further. The cooperation with UiTM has become a good platform to UNITI College in practicing quality education standard before applying for ISO (Hj Mohd Zayeb Bin Sulaiman, Director of UNITI College). Since UiTM has the certification of ISO, UNITI College also used that certification as a model of practices for their college but it will not bring any benefit for them in the future because the certification is not owned by them. Hence, they are interested to become an independent college that practice quality management with their own ISO certification in the future.

In completing the quest of college for ISO certification, this research is conducted to help and assist the UNITI College to understand, identify, guide them in making decisions and improve their overall organizational process by using MBNQA education performance excellence criteria as a tool for analysis.

Quality management practices involve the process of understanding on how people learn, how they interact, and how they sustain, develop or even destroy a culture. Hence, the quality management practices also involve any necessary well articulated methods of evaluation of the management process and often refer as a quality audits or monitoring and review (Hodgkinson & Kelly, 2007). The first independent variable is **leadership**. According to Vora (2002) Leadership is the key driver in MBNQA. Without the involvement and commitment of senior leaders, the quality management journey becomes difficult and at times impossible (Masood Abdulla et al.). In terms of higher education, senior leader should inspire and motivate the entire workforce and should encourage all faculty and staff to contribute, develop and learn, be innovative and be creative (Masood Abdulla et al, 2005). The second independent variable is **strategic planning**. The MBNQA strategic planning criteria examined the extent to which quality improvement plans are incorporated into the business planning process and the use and development of quality plans to sustain quality development (Kohoe, 1996, p.93). For higher education, the category stresses that learning centered education and operational performance are key strategic issues that need to be integral parts of overall organizations planning. The focus is on the drivers of key factors in educational success such as student learning, student persistence, student and stakeholder satisfaction, new markets, and market share (Masood Abdulla et al, 2005). The third independent variable in this research is **customer and market focus**. The MBNQA stresses the issue in its “customer and market focus” criterion by highlighting the importance of evaluating trends in customer satisfaction and how these trends compare with competitors as a means to assess effectiveness of the company customer-relationship management process. (Masood Abdulla et al, 2005). For higher education, this dimension considered relationship as an important part of an overall listening, learning and performance excellence strategy (Masood Abdulla et al, 2005). It was supported in a previous study that stated student feedbacks (relationship) as one of the mechanism adopted by internal stakeholder in higher education (Becket & Brookes, 2006). The fourth and last independent variable is **measurement, analysis, knowledge management and business result**. This criteria highlights the way in which information on quality performance is used to support the development of the organization, in particular competitive comparisons/benchmarking and the company level use of data (Kohoe, 1996, p.92-93). According to Masood Abdulla et al (2005) study, MBNQA provides for evaluation of data from support processes and it

evaluated information analysis at different level of business. Other than that, this MBNQA dimension also provided the organization performance and improvement in all key areas that include student learning outcomes, customer focus outcomes, budgetary, financial, and market outcomes; workforce-focus outcomes, process effectiveness outcomes, and leadership outcomes. Performance levels are examined relative to those of competitors and other organizations with similar programs and services (MBNQA; 2009-10 Education Criteria for Performance Excellence). In higher education, the measurement, analysis, and knowledge management dimension is the main point within the criteria for all key information about effectively measuring and analyzing performance and managing organizational knowledge to drive improvement in student and operational outcomes (Masood Abdulla et al, 2005). The organizational performance result category provides a result focus that encompasses student learning, student and stakeholder satisfaction, and overall budgetary, financial and market performance. This statement is supported by Adam et al (1997), has shown a positive impact of certain core practices on different aspects of operational performance (Lakhal et al, 2006). In addition, Choi and Eboch (1998) found a significant direct link between core practices “process quality and information” and “customer satisfaction”. (Lakhal et al, 2006).

METHODOLOGY

Sample Size

The population of this research consists of staff in UNITI College, Port Dickson, Negeri Sembilan. The total number of the respondents is 59 respondents.

Respondents

Respondents for this research are UNITI College management level and academic staff.

Objectives of the study

- To highlight the criterias and requirements needed to implement quality management practices before UNITI College applied for ISO.
- To identify which criteria that have been fulfilled and which criteria that still needs to improve.

- To recommend for improvement based on criteria which has not been fulfilled, and suggest for maintaining the fulfilled criteria.

Data Collection

The data for this study will be collected through personally administered questionnaires. The advantage of this method is the completed data can be collected from the respondents in one time or period (Sekaran, 2003).

The questionnaire is divided into three parts, which are:

Part I: Demographic Question

This covers background of the respondent such as gender, age, status, department, and educational level.

Part II: Independent Variable Question

Part II is about independent variable such as leadership, strategic planning, customer and market focus, measurements, analysis and knowledge management, human resources focus, process management and business result.

Part III: Dependent Variable Question

For part III, it is dependent variables question. Dependent variable for this research is quality management practices.

Data Analysis

This research will use the Statistic Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 16.0 for Window program system for the processing of raw data received, data analysis and to show the final result of data gathered. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of four independents and a dependent variable will obtain. The scale are based on range from 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree and

5 = strongly agree). The researcher use the Pearson correlation to see the strength of interrelated that present among all mentioned. Pearson correlation is important to measure the interrelationship between variables. Pearson correlation can be used to analyzed it whereby the value of $p < 0.05$, must below than 0.05. The researcher discussing the background of the respondent that consist gender, age, position, and education level by using descriptive statistic. The researcher might want to know the relation among the variable with one another in order to determine whether they are any difference two or more group and other.

RESULT

Significance of Study

Top Management

- From this study, it reveals and highlights the important requirement and criteria that should be identified and fulfilled by UNITI College before applying for ISO certification
- The result of this study will provide relevant information as guideline for management to give a clear picture to their employees about what they want to achieve in future.
- The results from this research also determined the expectation of management level towards their staff in term of business result and performance

Academic Staff

- From this research it will improve the awareness level of academic staff towards where the college is heading to or what the organization want to achieve. This research also encourages the involvement of academic staff in creating organization strategic planning and empowerment in performing their duties.

Student

- This research will open the opportunity for UNITI College student to get quality educations that adhere to ISO standard. It also create competitive student in comparison with other university and college student, and also increase the marketability potential for UNITI College graduates.

Researcher

- From this study, the researcher will gain experience in conducting the research, can applied the theoretical and technical knowledge learned before. The researcher also can assist UNITI College to implement quality management practices and applied for ISO.

CONCLUSION

As conclusion in seeking for ISO certification, they need to implement quality management practices through application of MBNQA criteria as a guideline in maintaining quality in many aspects of organization. Based on this research several improvements on certain key areas need to be done by UNITI College in order to gain competitive advantage in comparison to others HEP.

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