WP1. Scoping and Analysis of Quality Assurance in Azerbaijan Universities

NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT
Azerbaijan Cooperation University

1. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

The purpose of the questionnaire was to explore the development of quality assurance in education as well as the determination and investigation of needs at Azerbaijan Cooperation University (ISO 9001: 2015) .

The questionnaire comprised of selected twenty percent teaching staff , deans, heads of department, Vice-Rector on Education and students of our university.

A self assessment Questionnaire consisting of six sections to be responded were used to collect data. Questions related to the context of the organization include: determining internal and external problems related to quality assurance in accordance with the organization's objectives and strategic plans, their monitoring, taking into consideration the needs and expectations of stakeholders in setting up a quality assurance system, identifying the boundaries of the quality assurance system, the existence of documented information on the quality assurance system, system's compliance with international standards.

The analysis of the data revealed that university teachers need the training in the following areas: Research techniques, Professional competencies, Professional attitude, Global innovations in teaching strategies, Classroom Management, Counseling and Guidance, Student discipline, Communication skills, Learning Theories and Supervision . The work and responsibilities of Quality Assurance Centers. So it is recommended that the areas mentioned above may be included in the training curriculum of university teachers.

Students need the training in the following areas: flexible, innovative learning approaches and delivery methods to improve quality and relevance.

According to this questionnaire these principles are need improvement :

i. To explore the training needs for university teaching staff and students.

ii. To identify the areas in which development is needed by the teaching staff and students of Azerbaijan Cooperation University.

iii. Formulation of recommendations for staff development in Azerbaijan Cooperation University to improve education at higher level.

Keywords: Higher education, Need for training, Azerbaijan, Staff development, University teachers, Students.

2.   METHODS

The main focus of this questionnaire was on "assigning needs assessment of university ". The following procedure was adopted for questionnaire.

2.1 Respondents

Respondents of the questionnaire comprised of University teachers, who were readily involved in teaching process, deans, head of departments, and Vice-rector on Education.

2.2 Questionnaire Instrument

A self assessment Questionnaire consisting of six sections to be responded for collecting data. The workers of QAC personally visited and administered relevant questionnaires among respondents. They were requested to give their suggestions freely for the improvement of the questionnaire. They were requested to amend the questions, in format and language to make the questions simple and understandable.Questionnaire administered was confidential. Questionnaires were available in both English and Azerbaijani. Accordingly questionnaire was revised by incorporating their suggestions. Then the final version of questionnaire was developed. The highest percentage of "missing" answers from students was around 20%.

2.3 Data Collection

The data collection stage was very difficult for the workers of QAC. They had to visit most of the participants again and again. Afterwards medium number was calculated.

Analysis: Focus group and interview results were analyzed for need and asset trends and themes.The overarching results will be included throughout the summary of findings for each research question.

3.   KEY FINDINGS
3.1 Context of the organization.

Azerbaijan Cooperation University (ACU) has determined external and internal issues that are relevant to its purpose and its strategic direction and that affect its ability to achieve the intended results of its quality management system. Monitoring and reviewing system of the internal and external issues at ACU is weak because until establishment of QAC, there was not such a system of monitoring of the quality.These processes was managed by the top management of the university and, particularly, by the orders of our rector. For this reason, the Quality Assurance Center's development and impact on the existing system is essential.

The Quality Assurance Center has just been established in our university (ACU), so monitoring and other methods have not been implemented to determine the quality of education. Management of "Azerbaijan Cooperation University" is carried out on the basis of state registration 07.12.2011 on the basis of "Chatter". In accordance with the requirements of the "Chatter", the structure and management of the university is determined by its head (Rector) of the University.

As for interested groups (administrative staff, teachers and students) : they need preparation of new quality policy. Because lack of experience and insufficient communication among academic staff , teachers and students hamper the performance of this task. Actions in communicating the quality policy are weakly implemented.

Unfortunately Azerbaijan Cooperation University Quality Management System is not available now. Because management process of "Azerbaijan Cooperation University" is carried out on the basis of state registration 07.12.2011 on the basis of "Chatter". In accordance with the requirements of the "Chatter", the structure and management of the university is determined by its head (Rector) of the University.

Documented information source that supports the processes of quality assurance is weak. The maintenance of documentary information sources verifying the implementation of the work according to the plan is not sufficient.

3.2 Leadership

Today's ever-changing educational environment has
created a need for new leadership styles that encourage positive change
and improvement. ACU's the most commonly used
leadership models are the classic and/or traditional ones, which lead to
stagnation in innovation. A broad effort is needed to improve cooperation and encourage   leadership development.In ACU top management - leaders are sufficiently competent in the planning, communication and management. The top management has very defined roles and responsibilities within the university. The top management is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operation of the university. Problems usually arise when these guidelines are not followed.

The four points below outline the major responsibilities of the top management in our university.

1) Supervise, retain, evaluate the academic staff.

2) Provide direction for the organization. The top management has a strategic function in providing the vision, mission and goals of the organization.

3) Establish a policy based governance system. The top management has the responsibility of developing a governance system for the university.

4) Govern the university and the relationship with the Rector. Another responsibility of the top management is to develop a governance system.

There is not any integration between QA Management system and university's business processes, as it does not have any business processes.

Clients' demands are always the center of attention, but, they haven't fully responded. There are some difficulties in creating a service that enhance customer satisfaction. Although the main goal is to respond the customers' demands, some of the demands are solved ,while the other part of demands is not fulfilled.

The quality policy is a statement made by top management which expresses their commitment to achieve quality as a result of the university's operation. The quality policy is more than a slogan, it is the output of careful consideration of the university's purpose, context, strategic direction and the basis for quality objectives.

Quality policy of the university has never been available and maintained as documented information.

Unfortunately Azerbaijan Cooperation University Quality Management System established but quality policy has not been frame worked yet. Our university need serious improvement in this field.

Azerbaijan Cooperation University supports new Quality policy for achieving its vision defined at the Strategic plan. After establishment of QAC every member of the academic community shall contribute to the common goal of achieving the University's objectives and shall be responsible for his or her performance and outcomes. We hope new quality policy will aid the academic community and its members in developing a framework for quality management.

The University maintains and enhances the quality of activities through jointly determined procedures, processes or systems. The objectives set in the strategic plan, target programs and action plans are the foundation for all operations.

The top management of the Azerbaijan Cooperation University bears ultimate responsibility for quality principles and policies. The University leadership is

accountable for the overall quality of operations and results. The faculty deans,and heads of department answer for the operational and qualitative results of their own units. Every member of the academic community is responsible for the quality and improvement of his or her own work and results as a teacher, researcher, student, or member of the administrative and support staff.

The University's management principle is coordinated by the top management and Rector.

Each operating unit (faculty, department, Central Administration sector and unit) has duty it is to promote management procedure in his or her own unit and support the University leadership in management issues.

International standards of the QA system are not implemented at the university. There is only one standard which is centralized by the rector of the university.

3.3 Planning – ShafaAbdullayeva

The University has determined its quality aims and ways to achieve them in its Charter and Quality Assurance Center. The university developed an action plan and human recourses. The other structures and their responsibilities are taken into consideration. The action plan for quality assurance system is one year and main targets have been clarified. The Academic Council will determine the discussion and evaluation of the required actions. The university administration staff and quality management share the current trends in education and current methods to be improved for gaining higher quality of education. Therefore, our university tries to collaborate with the world's leading universities and update quality objectives by the way of experience exchange and setting the training courses on improvement of proficiency for our teachers in the future.

The main changes are expected in the period of the implementation of planned actions with the quality management. In this case, if any changes are required , it will be carried out in the plan. The University is planning to determine the need for changes and improvements to the quality management system thanks to the project we joined.

The essential aim of the university is to get positive results in developing needs and demand as well as determining new methods of quality. Therefore the main goals have to be focused on customer satisfaction. The university suffers from a lack of mechanism in order to inform the staff with quality changes.

3.4 Support

The university has been supplied with resources in order to improve quality such as financial and material resources, one training building and office equipments, information resources(http://www.aku1964@mail.ru); library, educational and publishing supports. The relevance of recommended teaching methodological resources in university libraries was identified. In the library, it was provided minimum 1-2 resources of three copies for each discipline taught.

A new section was created in order to make more beneficial use of teaching methodological and other resources as well

There are teaching and materials related to scholarship, periodicals and other publications as well as electronic database, student-alumni DEMS etc. in the library.

The library enriches its collection with the help of book stores and personal connections with the authors.

Textbooks, teaching and methodological resources meet the requirements considering the number of the students. There are 25787 teaching literature and resources, and 2190 students study in the university. Thus, student book ratio is 1:12. Two shift in the university makes the availability of the resources normal for everyone.

The library collection has more than 28 000 copies of recommended teaching resources. It means 80 resources for each 100 students from each discipline. In 2017, 93% of the library collection included textbooks and teaching resources, 6% fiction, and 1% monographers. Information Support function is secured by IT section and the Department of Education . Students are provided by e-books and internet use.

The students one privileged in payment for supporting the students' academic progress . Refugees and displaced students are allowed to pay 50% money, otherwise university does not do its best to provide them with job.

The university determined a number of supports to strengthen the activity of quality management system, In spite of these supports the infrastructure does not meet the update standards.

Evolution- This functions fulfills by Evolutionary Department with methods of monitoring and surveys. This process consists of open and close lessons that tutoring with lectures and seminars, lesson attendance, finishing free works, syllabus and program support , controlling of exam tickets, choosing of exam controllers, coding , gathering and checking students' exam papers by teachers. The Department of Education , Internal Control, and Dispatcher Service are liable for to hold monitoring.

Regulatory and Control Functions enable by Internal Control and Dispatcher Service. Participation of parents, press media at lessons and exams are provided. Lessons attendance , arranging of lessons, open and interrelation lessons, lecture and the other seminars are checked according to the syllabus etc.

Checking the results of exams- Control System , coding the exam papers , gathering and evolution, appellation commissions and other regulating processes are held in conditions of mutual understanding. Some deficiencies exist the structure of academic relationships. Nevertheless the development of four functions in our future work, taking into account of the recommendations of the Ministry of Education is expected to be improved. In ACU, there is no system for getting feedback from alumni.

A positive work environment has been created by involving specialists in the field of university education management. Special attention is shown to human resources policy, staffing issues, qualified personnel in human resources are preferred. Based on the roots and proximity to the territory, ACU establishes links with the environment and commits itself to the cultural, social and economic progress of the country.

The Azerbaijan Cooperation University frequently organizes scientific-methodological conferences on various subject as well as publishes materials and books. In 2018 the Rector of the university published his own books. Programs and textbooks prepared by professor-teacher staff are discussed in different departments (Scientific Council) and published as well. According to the result of the survey conducted among the students (60% of the respondents), the vast majority of participants are satisfied with the teaching staff's professionalism.

The Scientific Council informs about the policy of the university at the extended and different kinds of meetings.

Communication with interested parties is organized via electronic ways and Open Days

Information retention does not meet international standards.

3.5 Performance evaluation

We can confidently say that the organization really has determined, provided and maintained the environment necessary for the operation of its processes and to achieve conformity of products and services. Our university has not enough kinds of Information and communication technologies. University has 2 libraries , computer rooms, Translator Center. These technologies are introduced to support learning and the development of professional competencies. Thereafter they might be used for effective quality management system implementation.

Monitoring and measuring resources

The educational process is organized on the basis of credit and credit system in ACU. A number of teaching methodological documentation have been prepared in the direction of teaching at the university. The credit system of the organization in educational process at the university is regulated by the relevant structural units (teaching part, registration, assessment and so on).

Measurements on curriculum and exams are carried out for improvement of achievements. Unit resource for student achievement measurement includes examination papers (tickets).

The Cooperation University has implemented the process of Bologna reform, which brings an updated shift from a traditional methods to modern ones, which stresses competence development by means of an active role of students, a linking of teaching and research activities, group and team work, problem solving in work environments.

Competence

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Awareness

The Scientific Council informs about the policy of the university at the extended and different kinds of meetings.

Communication

Communication with interested parties is organized via electronic ways and Open Days

.Documented information

Information retention does not meet international standards.

Performance Evaluation

Monitoring, measurement, analysis, evaluation

There are structural divisions in the Department of Education that carrying out evolution, regulatory, information support and control functions.

Evolution- This functions fulfills by Evolutionary Department with methods of monitoring and surveys. This process consists of open and close lessons that tutoring with lectures and seminars, lesson attendance, finishing free works, syllabus and program support , controlling of exam tickets, choosing of exam controllers, coding , gathering and checking students' exam papers by teachers. The Department of Education , Internal Control, and Dispatcher Service are liable for to hold monitoring.

Regulatory and Control Functions enable by Internal Control and Dispatcher Service. Participation of parents, press media at lessons and exams are provided. Lessons attendance , arranging of lessons, open and interrelation lessons, lecture and the other seminars are checked according to the syllabus etc.

Information Support function is secured by IT section and the Department of Education . Students are provided by e-books and internet use.

Generally, these four functions are essential in the management process of university. Checking the results of exams- Control System , coding the exam papers , gathering and evolution, appellation commissions and other regulating processes are held in conditions of mutual understanding.

The improve of functions enable the objective and transparent assessment of the knowledge level of the students on the improvement of the quality of education in the Azerbaijan Cooperation University. The introduction of four committees of the university management which is active in the work of

the examination control office and the appellate commission during the training and examination session. So, the management process at the Azerbaijan Cooperation University is in line with the requirements of existing legislation and certification rules of the University "Chatter", there are some deficiencies in the structure in the structure of academic relationships and most results of exams- Control System , coding the exam papers , gathering and evolution, appellation commissions and other regulating processes are held in conditions of mutual understanding.

The improvement of functions enable the objective and transparent assessment of the knowledge level of the students on the improvement of the quality of education in the Azerbaijan Cooperation University. The introduction of four committees of the university management which is active in the work of the examination control office and the appellate commission during the training and examination session. So, the management process at the Azerbaijan Cooperation University is in line with the requirements of existing legislation and certification rules of the University "Chatter", there are some deficiencies in the structure in the structure of academic relationships and most importantly four functions of the structural division. Nevertheless the development of four functions in our future work, taking into account of the recommendations of the Ministry of Education is expected to be improved.

Internal audit

The current situation internal audits are planned, graphically implemented;

- The Appeal Commission and The Rector operates in the process of examination does not with international standards; The process of examination is held in written form.

Management review

Azerbaijan Cooperation University protects the individual features and idealism of its staff and ensures their participation in every level of management. Azerbaijan Cooperation University gives importance to the views and ideas of the stakeholders and observes them in the related processes.
 According to ACU's Charter management and directions of the organization of mutual activity of its main structural divisions are used for higher education

Relevant measures are taken in order to comply with the Strategic Plan and
Action Plan of the University.

Management review is based on the comments, proposals or opinions of the customers.

The university has a positive environment for the improvement of those areas.

Management review outputs

Opportunities for improvement and development of actions in certain areas (meet the needs of students, teachers, employees, etc.) are determined and implemented. However, these actions are documented using appropriate methods (analysis, generalization and result).

3.6 Improvement

Opportunities for improvement and development of actions in certain areas (meet the needs of students, teachers, employees, etc.) are determined and implemented. However, these actions are documented using appropriate methods (analysis, generalization and result).

University intends to meet the requirements of stakeholders in its internal regulatory legal documents and implements the following activities.
University administration, structural units of various levels are open to make changes in their actions, if necessary, in order to meet the needs of the interested parties.
Certain actions are being impemented; enhance the quality of the material and technical base; ensure the transparency of management; ensure justice and democracy; ensure the employment of young specialists at the university; take various measures to increase the number of specialized teachers in various fields etc.

Azerbaijan Cooperation University acts in accordance with the following basic principles as a university which acts with respect to the transparency and accountability terms, has a sustainable strong financial structure, is fair to the staff and does not make discrimination among the stakeholders, respects variability, gives importance to justice and worthiness, is ready to go beyond the limits in task definitions, forces change to achieve better results, and which produces added value.

Nonconformity and corrective actions.

When a nonconformity occurs, the university takes several actions to control and get over it. Necessary measures are taken to prevent the growth of the scope of the problem. However, the sequence of implemented actions like analyze of current situation, the adoption of appropriate decisions and its application and evaluation is not satisfactory.

Corrective actions, being implemented, are directed to the solution of nonconformities. The university Rector does not appoint responsible persons-Ombudsman to cope with nonconformity and its consequences.

Existing problems:
- documentation issues do not meet the requirements of ISO 9001:2015 standards;
- failure in the sequence of analysis, organization, evaluation while implementing the process.
In order to supply sustainable development, the organization takes into account the results of the analysis and evaluation and determines the requirements

4. SUMMARY

Strengths
- Compliance with current legislation
- Determination of the "Action Plan" of quality assurance system
- The goals are updated according to new circumstances in the university.
- Construction of a new university building
- Strong and established partnerships within our community;
- Quality academic programs and student services strong administrative support of academic programs.

Weakness

Here is some shortages that have to be implemented in the University. We hope to eliminate these drawbacks in the future. The following steps should be taken to strength the university's position:

- Providing technological advances;
- Making partnerships in support of University initiatives;
- Increasing external community and University relationships;
    a) Expanding academic programs
    b) Expanding of cultural activities
    c) Improving University services (Policy Center)
- Increasing value of Higher Education completion
- Construction of a new university building etc.
- Outdated infrastructure
- Lack of international experience

- The university has almost no experience with the implementation of international standards of quality assurance system.
- Low Competitiveness of specialists

- There is no supports to mobility of international students;
- There is not enough " Language Cabinet" to support the student's academic progress
- Poor support to graduate entry in the job market
- Insufficient links with former alumni

Opportunities

Establishment new system at university promises positive results in quality of education. From this aspect ACU has drawn more attention from the government. This creates an opportunity for ACU to involve more finance and reputation.

Threads

- failure of the teaching programs to meet international standards.

- low level of students' general secondary education

- low level of students horizons in their speciality

- failure of attracting students with above-average abilities, interests, and motivation

- reducing the quality of education

- low competitiveness of trained specialists and inadequacy to world standards

- low level of decision- making activity