NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

This section describes the purpose of the needs assessment and the specific questions and issues the assessment was designed to explore.

Quality assurance related issues at Ganja State University. Currently there is not any quality assurance center functioning at Ganja State University. But, there are some offices, committees and groups that do job which are related to quality assurance issues. Hereafter, when we mention quality assurance at the university, we mainly talk about the work of abovementioned groups. In this passage, the work of these groups will be discussed:

Office of Strategic Analysis, Evaluation and Monitoring. The Office of Strategic Analysis, Evaluation and Monitoring is recently created within the Department of Innovation. The office will offer recommendations to the university administration by preparing recommendations for the creation of stimulating mechanisms for development of the university human resources. In addition, it will try to add modern specialties to the collection of university programs, and work on creating specialties based on international educational programs. Improving work with graduate students and creating alumni information database. It learns need for specialists in different parts of the region and based on that information improves admission strategy to the university.

Monitoring Groups for Quality Assurance in Teaching and Discipline. This group monitors the lessons aiming to improve the quality of teaching.

It also monitors the labor discipline of professors, teachers, lab assistants and technical staff as well as teaching processes.

Committee for Quality Assurance in Ethical Issues. Ethics committee has been created to monitor professor-teacher and students in terms of ethical behavior in the workplace. This committee monitors and tries to improve academic research and intellectual property issues.

Working Group for Quality Assurance in Teaching and Learning. Working group aims to assure that new approaches are applied in teacher preparation. It also works on preparation of human resources for future modern specialties that will be created at the university

2. METHODS

Data Collection

- Brief description of each data collection method used
- Surveys – include a description of the groups that received and submitted surveys, including how representative each sample was of their larger population
- Focus Group – include a description of the number and types of groups that participated
- Interviews – include a description of the individuals that were interviewed

Surveys and Focus groups are the data collection methods were used. Focus group was comprised of 8 people. Participants were gathered around the table and completed self-assessment questionnaire. Then average values were calculated and then written in the final self-assessment questionnaire. Participants were top managers who are the followings:

- Vice rector in science and innovation

- Vice rector in organization of teaching and training technologies
- Dean of biology and chemistry
- Director of department of innovations
- Head of ICT office
- Head of international relations office
- Head of technology transfer and marketing office
- Head of digital education center

3. KEY FINDINGS

3.1 Context of the organization

a) Understanding the organization and its context

The university to some degree determined the external and internal issues that affect quality management. Yet, it needs to apply more appropriate and systematic approach adopted by European universities. Followings are some of the quality related external and internal issues:

Internal issues. Recently, the university arranged with the local IT Company which will set up a new Learning Management System. Starting this fall, most of the teaching and learning issues at the university will be automatized. As already mentioned above, some other quality related internal issues identified are ethics in the workplace, discipline in teaching, effective teaching. Abovementioned monitoring groups consistently monitor and review these issues and report to the university administration every Friday.

External issues. Career and Internship center always cooperates with local schools with aim of placing students in those schools to have an internship. Moreover, the center works with local business and tries to find job opportunities for newly graduates students. Participating in programs such as Tempus, Erasmus+, Twinning, DAAD, Mevlana, the university tries to strengthen its intentional experience. Currently the university participates in four different Erasmus + projects. The university already participates Erasmus + project which is

called Promoting Excellence in Teaching and Learning in Azerbaijani Universities. Teaching and Learning Center is created within the framework of this project. New approaches to teaching and learning will be taught to teachers who can improve the quality of their teaching. In another Erasmus + project, namely Advocacy Establishment for Students through Ombudsman position, the newly created ombudsman center aims to protect the rights of the students. Another Erasmus + KA1 project, which is inter-institutional agreement program, helps teachers to participate in Ca Foscari Venice University, where they can improve their linguistic skills. The university collaborates with the Ministry of Education in many levels and participates in different projects.

b) Understanding the needs and expectations of interested parties

To understand the needs and expectations of interested parties, which are mainly students in our case, the university does some work. For example, newly created Office of Strategic Analysis, Evaluation and Monitoring conducts surveys in this regard. Yet their work still needs an optimization. Center of Electronic Education also conducts anonymous surveys before choosing elective courses, foreign language and instructor.

Surveys done with students are done in traditional way and it negatively affects the quality of decision and education. For example, last year students when choosing supervisor and topics would be better do it online. It would be better to conduct these surveys in an electronic way to better understand the needs of the students.

The newly created Ombudsman center will aim to understand student problems, analyze it and solve it with the help administration.

There are external monitoring bodies within the university such as a Student Trade Union which is a representative of Azerbaijan Trade Union Confederation, and Student Youth Organization which is a representative of Azerbaijan Ministry of Youth and Sports. These organizations provide financial aid such as stipends and lump sums for those who are in need of help. Besides, these organizations help

students to spend their leisure time effectively. For example, there are several clubs functioning within the university such as sport club, dance club, book club etc.

But these organizations can improve their work and make it more systematic, effective and aligned with European standards. They can also collaborate and co-operate with international organizations, and learn their experience.

c) Determining the scope of the quality management system

Since there is not a quality management center functioning at the university, much of quality management related factors are not documented. Scope of the quality management system is one of them. Every department or office has their own work plan aligned with overall work plan of the university. The product and services are covered in the scope of these work plans.

But, overall, since the quality management issues have not been considered in a systematic way, the concept of scope has not been paid enough attention.

d) Quality management system and its processes

In general, quality management system has not been established. But, as it is stated earlier, some elements of quality management are applied. For example, several monitoring groups function. Several processes are defined in their work plan of these groups but it may not include all the necessary quality management processes. Criteria and methods may be vaguely defined, and sequence and interaction of the processes may be limited.

These monitoring groups have necessary resources, computers, human resources, transport etc. they have their own evaluation sheets and forms. Processes and methods usually defined by the monitoring groups themselves. But risks and opportunities may not be considered as stated in international standards.

3.2 Leadership

a) Leadership and commitment;

a.1 General

Top managers perform their duty based on the specifications described on the charter and regulations of the university. But, they perform these activities to accomplish their duties. They do not do it with quality management system in mind. Thus, having quality management system may increase the effectiveness of the quality of their job.

Since there is not a quality management system, top managers may not think about quality policy and objectives when accomplishing their duties.

University has identified two main business directions one of which is having benefit from student tuition and the other is benefiting from academic research. When it comes to student acquisition, last year all the vacant places for bachelors and masters students were occupied with 98.7 percent which was the second best in Azerbaijan. The reason for this was that marketing group from the university has been doing meetings with pupils from high schools in the city and the western region. As for earning money for academic research, commercialization of academic research is a relatively new area in Azerbaijan. Newly created Department of Innovation will engage in these issues.

For what the university currently has regarding the quality management system, some resources such as human resources, transport, accommodation, and equipment are allocated.

When top management assigns duties they usually emphasize the effective completion of the duty, but they may not communicate and emphasize it in terms of quality management system.

Every weekend top management, namely rectors and vice rectors, conduct meetings with top managers and review the work has been done over the weeks. In these meetings, top managers are given orders to improve the work in the upcoming weeks.

a.2 Customer focus

To meet student's needs, several surveys are conducted. The university rector himself has meetings with students and interests in their needs.

Students Trade Union and Student Youth Organizations conduct activities so that students spend their leisure time effectively. Very often media tours and open door classes are held in which public such as parents can attend examinations and lessons. Finally, the student ombudsman center is open every day for students to visit and consult their problems.

b) Policy;
b.1 Establishing the quality policy

Top management establishes, maintain and implement quality policies in a background, but these are not called quality policy. There are not any documents created saying that identified policies are quality policies. After the establishment of the quality management center, quality policy will be created and presented to academic council for approval.

b.2 Communicating the quality policy

Created policies are usually approved in the committee of the methodology and then sent to the faculties, departments and offices for the discussion. Then the final decision sent to the academic council for the final approval. Next the administration of these bodies familiarizes their members with the new policy and then instructs them to work with a new policy.

c) Organizational roles, responsibilities and authorities

After the creation of present monitoring groups, there has been a positive turn in the work of the teachers. Teachers usually set their work according to the guidelines of the policies. Compared to previous years there have been improvement in their work. Level of preparation and documentation of teachers improved recently.

Usually monitoring groups try to ensure that the processes are delivering their results, report the results of the present system, and discuss rooms for improvement. However, methodology and efficacy of these groups may be improved with the presence of quality management system.

3.3 Planning

a) Quality objectives and planning to achieve them

Every department, faculty and offices has their own work plans which have objectives. These work plans are determined by the administration. They are discussed and evaluated in the academic council of the university. Usually, these plans are monitored by the commission of the rector and accreditation in a yearly basis. Plans and objectives are updated every semester and communicated to the appropriate places. But, these plans may not be prepared with quality management system in mind. Thus when setting such objectives, some quality related concepts such as measurability or consistency may not been taken into account.

b) Planning of changes

Changes are made to the plans in the beginning and end of the semesters.

3.4 Support

a) Resources;

a.1 General

Capabilities of and constraints on existing internal resources may be considered, but again, it may be done without considered quality management system in mind. Usually collaboration is done with external providers but there is broad avenue for better opportunities.

a.2 People

Usually persons provided for operations and processes are determined by thee rector and vice rector on training.

a.3 Infrastructure

The university does not have problems in terms of infrastructure. There are auditoriums, training labs and scientific research lab, centers, sport centers, necessary equipment, libraries, reading centers etc.

a.4 Environment for the operation of processes

Stable environment is provided for the operations of the processes.

a.5 Monitoring and measuring resources

To provide quality, there has been created monitoring groups by the order of the rector. These groups are provided by the resources necessary during monitoring. Groups have measurement documents such as measurement blanks, protocols, guidelines.

a.6 Organizational knowledge

Sometimes, the vice rector on science and innovation recommends necessary knowledge has to be mastered for the operations of the university's processes and the rector brings up the topic in the scientific council. After the discussion, the decision is made as to how proceed. As a consequence, activities are planned and implemented.

b) Competence

Usually, various trainings are offered for the teachers and the administrative staff. For example, currently the university participates in Erasmus KA1 and KA2 projects through which our administrative staff and teachers learn experiences of European universities. Besides, trainings are offered by the university itself. But currently, there is not any specific office which keeps track of the all trainings and documents information. Yet, Human Resources Department collects some of the achievements and includes in the personal documents of the individuals.

c) Awareness

Persons who are doing work related quality objectives always aware of the quality policy and relevant quality objectives. They are aware of benefits of improved performance.

d) Communication

The organization determined its internal and external communication relevant. Persons usually know and instructed on what to communicate, with whom to communicate, when to communicate etc.

e) Documented information;

As stated earlier, since there is no quality management center, not all the information documented considering quality management elements.

3.5 Performance evaluation
a) Monitoring, measurement, analysis and evaluation;
a.1. General

Things are monitored and measured usually include examinations, attendance etc. Always, the monitoring groups know when and how to monitor. Every weekend the monitoring groups reports to the rector and administration about the work they have done. The quality of the work are discussed and evaluated.

a.2 Customer satisfaction

Usually, there are surveys conducted among students anonymous and open to learn their opinion. Alumni are contacted to collect information about them. Media tours are often held so that people from public and parents can attend and see the process and provide their opinion.

a.3 Analysis and evaluation

Monitoring groups usually evaluate the results themselves. They have evaluation sheets. Yet the evaluation criteria, tools etc. are identified by the monitoring groups themselves. These methods and overall approach may not be aligned with the international quality management standards and therefore the modernization of these approaches would be desirable.

b) Internal audit

According to the order of the rector a temporary work committees are created. These committees implement internal audit based on the order. The results are documented and then presented to the rector. The rector sends the documents to the appropriate places for discussion. After the discussion, the decision is made and then presented to the scientific council. Then academic council makes final decision. But these internal audits are traditional way of doing an audit and may not be aligned with ISO 9001:2015 standards.

c) Management review;

c.1 General

Since there is no quality management system, top management do not review the system. But, it reviews quality related issues such as the work of monitoring groups.

c.2 Management review inputs

Management may not usually consider status of actions from the previous management review. But they usually pay attention to the effectiveness of quality in the processes and check if the quality objectives are met.

c.3 Management review outputs

Management always monitors the processes, takes corrective action and tries to do improvements. When necessary, it does changes to the quality related issues.

3.6 Improvement

a) General

The university tries to meet customer requirements and meet customer satisfaction. But these could be improved and be better.

b) Nonconformity and corrective action

When nonconformity occurs the top management holds meeting and tries to determine the causes. The top management tries to analyze the results of the meetings. Next the decision is made whether there will be changes in the initial decision to get conformity.

c) Continual improvement

The top management continually makes improvements to the current system. But, since it is not a fully functional quality management system, top management may not systematically analyze results, evaluate or make improvements.

SUMMARY

a) Strengths

Already some work has been done regarding quality. Building upon that and integrating previous quality related work into new quality management system could ease the process. One of the strengths is that university administration thoroughly supports the innovative ideas and the project team. Another strength in terms of the implementation of the project is that the university has enough experience in such projects. The university has necessary resources to support the implementation of the similar projects.

b) Areas of improvement

The most important improvement would be introduction of the quality management system which will make quality related issues more systematic as well as introduce new quality related elements.

c) The SWOT analysis of the current state of Ganja State University.

Strength	Weaknesses
• Administrative support • Experience in European projects • Energetic and young project team • Availability of necessary resources • Desirability by the students in the country (98 % student admission rate, 2nd in this category in Azerbaijan) • 2nd best university in the publication of impact factor journals in Azerbaijan in WEB of Science • Availability of stimulation programs	• No present quality management system • Resistance to change from elder faculty members • Lack of IT skills in elder faculty members • Resistance to be monitored continuously • Nonconformity for the increasing number of quality requirements
Opportunities	**Threats**
• Increase of reputation • New business collaborations • Increase in income • Increase in student number • New project ideas and partnership • Experience of European education • Increase in knowledge and competence	• Failure due to a desire to do a drastic change within a short period of time • Change in the current environment • Key staff leaving

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