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An Exploratory Study on ISO 9001 Certification in the
Macau SAR Government –
A Case Study of University of Macau

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Abstract

The public sector in many countries has been experiencing reforms in an attempt to change the structure, management and even the culture of the public administration. In most countries and in government, organizations are pursuing ISO 9000 certification, not only to enhance their long-term ability to compete and be recognized globally, but also for the beneficial side effects of pursuing and attaining ISO 9000 certification (Marash and Marquardt, 1994). In some situations, certification to ISO 9000 for public institutions has become mandatory as a result of government policy in improving quality and reforming public institutions (Mallak, Bringelson and Lyth, 2007).

In Macau, since the Handover, the public services have been undergoing work adjustment and continuous improvement through introducing various kinds of people-oriented arrangements. The Macau SAR government introduced ISO quality management certification since 2001. It has promoted the application of ISO certification and other methods of advanced technology, encouraged departments to obtain ISO certification and, through organizing training courses and practices, increased the audit skills of the internal auditors. Until now, there are 10 government departments and 63 subsidiary units that have successfully obtained the ISO 9001 certification (Government Work Report, 2009).

The purpose of this exploratory study is, by identifying the major critical success factors, to find out how well ISO 9000 enables the public entities to provide quality services and to study the effect of certification to the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM). Here, the University of Macau, a higher education institution and also a public entity, will be examined as a case study. In so doing, it is hoped that the findings in this

study can serve as references for government departments during their ISO and quality management implementation process.

In this thesis, literature review has been conducted in areas of quality management in the public sector and its trend in higher education, the experiences of governments in some countries and the reasons for implementing ISO 9000 in the Macau SAR government. The case study methodology and triangulation have been employed where data is also collected by observation and from written documents of the university. With the common critical success factors of quality management taken into consideration, questions are then designed for the personal interviews with the staff and the focus groups discussions among the students conducted.

In conclusion, it was found that the university is able to capture the benefits of implementing ISO 9000 through various strategies and approaches. The benefits being captured are provisions of a foundation in the pursuit of TQM. Likewise, the university is also aware of the numerous barriers that are faced by ISO 9000 certified companies, and tries its best to cope well with all circumstances to lessen the adverse effects which may be brought about. Nonetheless, there are still areas for further improvement and the university should pay close attention to the problems and suggestions mentioned by the staff interviewees and the student focus groups.

This study can serve as references for other Macao SAR government departments during their ISO and quality management implementation process. It is important for the government to promote the application of ISO certification which is a well-organized tool for paving way towards TQM. This study can help departments to visualize the benefits of ISO and TQM, and know what should be done better to achieve

TQM. The government should continue to encourage the departments to obtain ISO certification and organize more advanced training courses and practices to increase the audit skills of the internal auditors. It should also conduct more studies on quality management.



Table of Content

Declaration.....	i
Abstract.....	ii
Table of Content.....	v
List of Tables	vii
List of Figures.....	vii
Chapter 1. Overview	1
Chapter 2. Introduction of ISO 9000.....	4
2.1. Concept of Quality	4
2.2. Concept of ISO 9000.....	6
2.3. Brief History of ISO and ISO 9000.....	8
2.4. Concepts of TQM and continual improvement	10
Chapter 3. Quality Management in the Public Sector	12
3.1. Quality Management Experiences in Public Administration	12
3.2. Recent Trend of ISO Certificates	15
3.3. Trend of ISO 9001 Certification in Higher Education Institutions	18
3.4. Benefits of Implementing ISO 9000	20
3.5. Drawbacks of Implementing ISO 9000.....	22
3.6. Critical Success Factors of Quality Management	24
Chapter 4. Research Method.....	28
4.1. Statement of Purpose.....	28
4.2. Qualitative Analysis	29
4.2.1. Case Study Methodology.....	29
4.2.2. Triangulation.....	30
4.3. Research Design.....	31
4.3.1. Background of the Public Entity.....	31
4.3.2. Sampling.....	32
4.3.3. Documentation Review and Observations.....	33
4.3.4. Interviews with Staff.....	33
4.3.5. Focus Groups with Students.....	33
4.4. Areas of Investigation, Themes of Interviews and Focus Group Discussions among the Participants	34
4.4.1. Top and Middle Management.....	34
4.4.2. Staff.....	34
4.4.3. Students	35
4.5. Analytical Method.....	35
Chapter 5. Research Findings	37
5.1. Management Commitment and Open Culture.....	37

5.2.	Quality Leadership and Employee Empowerment	38
5.3.	Quality Improvement Measurement System, Process Capability and Control	41
5.4.	Employee Commitment	44
5.4.1.	<i>Improved company image and competitiveness</i>	44
5.4.2.	<i>Streamlined procedures and documentations, enhanced knowledge of work</i>	45
5.5.	Use of Teams and Shared Vision	47
5.5.1.	<i>Improved teamwork, team building and work attitudes</i>	47
5.5.2.	<i>Increased consciousness for preventive and corrective actions, creating an environment in which people are motivated</i>	50
5.6.	Employee Participation and Training	54
5.7.	Customer Satisfaction	59
5.8.	Customer Orientation	62
5.9.	Communication of Improvement Information and Continual Improvement	64
5.10	Summary Analysis	66
Chapter 6.	Conclusions, Recommendations and Limitations	71
6.1	Conclusions	71
6.2	Implications for Other Government Departments	75
6.3	Limitations of the Study	76
6.4	Recommendations for Future Research	77
Chapter 7.	References	78

