

ENABLERS AND BARRIERS OF IMPLEMENTING ISO 9001 - QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (QMS) IN THE SERVICE SECTOR IN SRI LANKA

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‘Quality’ in simple terms is the ability of goods and services to meet the customer requirements. As the society becomes more progressive and educationally advanced, the societal demands for quality of services increase. Therefore, in such situations, the varying needs and conflicting priorities of the society have to be recognized and dealt with. The effective management of quality is the key to business excellence. Therefore, the goods and services providers must ensure their customers that the goods and services offered by them comply with the required quality levels. With the growing volume of international trade and higher customer expectations for quality, the management concern on quality increased during the past few decades. Further, it led to the implementation of Quality Management Systems (QMSs) in their organizations. Most especially, as the organizations began to engage in international trade, the need to obtain internationally acceptable QMSs arose. QMS is a management system to direct and control an organization in respect of its quality. QMSs ensure that all the organizational activities are planned and managed in a way that ensures the quality of goods and services of the organization. According to the literature, ISO 9001 QMS is the most comprehensive and internationally recognized QMSs to date and it provides huge benefits to organizations. Even though, Sri Lanka is a country that has a large service sector, the ISO 9001 application is somewhat lower compared with other sectors. Further, research on the implementation of ISO 9001 QMS in service sector organizations in Sri Lanka hardly exist, and therefore, the identification of opportunities and challenges to the implementation of the standard is an area which needs to be explored. Thus, the aim of this research was to identify the enablers and barriers for the implementation of ISO 9001 QMS in service sector organizations in Sri Lanka.

A comprehensive literature review and an expert survey were employed in achieving the aim of the research. The expert survey was conducted among ten professionals who were knowledgeable and well experienced in the field of ISO 9001 QMS. Semi structured questionnaires were used for collecting data and the data were analyzed by using the Relative Importance Index (RII) method. According to the research findings, ‘receiving great internal support from executive-level management and staff during the implementation’, ‘having clearly integrated quality management goals and objectives with existing business processes and goals’, ‘having sound management throughout the organization’ and ‘having executive level employees having good knowledge on QMS’ were the enablers that make the implementation process ISO 9001 QMS in service sector organizations easier. Moreover, as the study revealed ‘lack of top management involvement during the implementation process’, ‘unwillingness of employees to change work systems’, ‘weak interdepartmental relations’ and ‘employee resistance’ were the major barriers for the implementation of standards. In addition, ‘time constrains’, ‘nonconformities and lead time’, high implementation and maintenance costs’ as well as ‘inflating the size of documents’ could be identified as minor barriers that make the implementation of ISO 9001QMS difficult. However, as per the findings, ISO 9001 QMS helps to improve the marketing, financial and operational performance of service sector organizations, and therefore, necessary action should be taken to strengthen the enablers and to eliminate the barriers so that the maximum output from the ISO 9001 QMS can be obtained.