



ISO 9001—Its relevance and impact in Asian Developing Economies

Based on Project TE/RAS/09/003

A survey covering quality management system development, certification, accreditation and economic benefits



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In conjunction with:

International Organization for Standardization
International Accreditation Forum
Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation



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PREFACE

UNIDO

Since their initial publication in 1987, the ISO 9000 standards have undergone three revision cycles (in 1994, in 2000 and again in 2008/2009) and have had a great impact on the implementation of international trade and quality management systems by organizations throughout the world. In particular, the ISO 9001 standard has been applied in a variety of economic sectors, including industry, as well as regulatory frameworks established by governments in many areas. This standard focuses on the management of the processes needed for an organization to be able to demonstrate its ability to satisfy customer needs and expectations on a constant basis. Successful implementation of ISO 9001 by an organization requires the formal auditing of its quality management system by a certification body, which itself needs to be duly accredited. Whilst there are numerous certification bodies around the world, there is usually only one government-recognized accreditation body in any given country. These accreditation bodies provide recognition of each other's accredited certificates under the International Accreditation Forum's Multi-lateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA). This offers certified organizations a unique opportunity to improve their competitive advantage by gaining access to international markets and formal tenders where certification to ISO 9001 is often a pre-requisite.

In recent years, however, some concerns have been expressed in the Asian developing economies and elsewhere about whether accredited certification to ISO 9001 has been achieving the desired outcomes, and whether excessive attention to obtaining certification has shifted the focus away from the effectiveness of the quality management systems of the organizations involved. These concerns have also been shared by the ISO, the IAF and others. This publication represents an attempt to address these concerns in the context of business-to-business transactions in the manufacturing and construction sectors. It is the outcome of a project initiated by UNIDO, funded by Norad and supported with technical inputs by ISO and the IAF.

It is pleasing to see that the results have demonstrated (with some exceptions) that the implementation of ISO 9001 and the associated certification has been a good investment of resources, from both the perspective of the certified organizations and that of their customers (the major purchasing organizations in the region). The project has, however, highlighted some areas of weakness and we expect that all the parties involved will take the necessary actions to ensure continued improvements in the ISO 9001 implementation and certification process.



Kandeh K. Yumkella
Director-General

Norad

Over the last ten years there has been a rapid expansion of developing countries' interest in ISO 9001, but often the quest for certification has been limited by a lack of infrastructure and poor awareness among government and private sector organizations of what certification and accreditation actually mean. Norad has made significant investments in recent years to help selected Asian developing countries to develop such infrastructure and awareness by funding projects aimed at setting up accreditation bodies, certification bodies and other conformity assessment activities.

There has also been a debate on the effectiveness of accredited certification - whether the focus has shifted from one in which organizations strived to develop an effective quality management system that could subsequently be certified, to one in which the achievement of certification is the only goal, with a tendency to cut corners as necessary to achieve that goal. This debate centres on:

- whether organizations are deriving tangible benefits through ISO 9001 certification;
- whether certification bodies are carrying out the certification process effectively;
- whether the varied expectations from different stakeholders are being met.

Norad was therefore pleased to be able to provide funding for this project, which was aimed at obtaining objective evidence with which to be able to determine the true effectiveness of accredited certification and its value for the Asian developing economies. We can see from the results that the implementation of an accredited certification to ISO 9001 within the manufacturing and construction sectors do generally bring positive results both to the certified organizations and their customers, and ultimately to the economies themselves. Of course the system is not perfect, and this report has highlighted several areas of concern where improvements can be made to ensure the continued effectiveness and credibility of the accredited certification process.



Dag Larsson

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