



When Recognition Matters



**THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING
EARNEST ABOUT EDUCATION
USING ISO 21001 TO FULFILL THE
PROMISE OF QUALITY EDUCATION**

It has been long argued that education helps individuals develop a world worth living in, and assists them in securing a culture based on reason, productive environments, and prosperous societies. Critical skill shortages, and the pervasive inequities in access, give rise to the need for change in the quality and quantity of educational services. In order to properly respond to current economic and social challenges, governments all over the world have made the transformation of education as one of their key priorities.

With hundreds of millions of learners all over the world, and with millions of educational organizations, there is a critical and continuous need for educational organizations to evaluate the degree to which they meet the requirements of learners and other stakeholders, and to improve their ability to do so. This is where ISO 21001 – *Educational organizations – Management systems for educational organizations*, seeks to provide help.

The ISO 21001 standard aims to benefit mainly educational organizations and learners worldwide by assisting educational organizations in delivering better educational services and products. However, the list of beneficiaries is not limited to these two, as other stakeholders who might prosper from the use of ISO 21001 include the government, the labor market and the society as a whole.

Written in line with ISO requirements for management system standards, the ISO 21001 standard follows the high level structure, where clauses 4 to 10 (Context of the organization, Leadership, Planning, Support, Operation, Performance evaluation, and Improvement) present the requirements for a management system for educational organizations (EOMS).

Upon reading the standard, more specifically clause 8.2.1 Determining the requirements for the educational products and services, one will find the following requirement:

The organization shall ensure it can meet the claims made for the educational products and services it offers. ”

The need to ensure that the organization fulfills learners' needs and expectations is stated implicitly in this clause. The usage of the word "claims" provides us with another dimension: that of how an educational organization must use marketing to promote its educational products and services and the promises it must (or must not) make to its interested parties.

Even if an educational organization excels in providing their educational products and services, if they employ exaggeration in their marketing strategy, they will magnify the difference between learner's expectations and the actual performance of the educational products and services received; thus, leading to dissatisfied learners and other beneficiaries, and placing the organization's reputation in peril. In such situations, it may be helpful to remember Warren Buffet's famous quote: *"It takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it. If you think about that, you'll do things differently."*

Given the ever increasing competition, many educational organizations face the necessity to equip themselves with the marketing tools, intelligence and information that will enable them to face the challenges of tomorrow. The usage of analytics is already common, and there is no knowing (yet) as to how Artificial Intelligence (AI) will impact this field.

However, educational organizations need to understand that the purpose of marketing is the exchange and delivery of value between them and those who seek to benefit from them, i.e. learners. As stated in the rationale of 'ethical conduct in education' principle *"for sustained success, organizations need to project an image of integrity (honesty and fairness) in dealing with all interested parties,"* marketing should be viewed as a means of building relationships based on trust.



While seeking an educational organization to attend, the future learners can get bombarded with advertisements that contain lavish promises of knowledge, wealth and prosperity. On top of this, educational organizations can also charge high fees for their educational products and services, only for the learners to find out that they're left with a heavy financial burden and low chances of employment.

What educational organizations that engage in such behavior have in common is a mixture of exaggerated advertisements and little or no pressure (either from outside or inside the organization) on fulfilling the claims made by ensuring high quality of educational products and services. This is where ISO 21001 can be used to make the difference.

It is obvious that issues of public relations and promotion, both locally and internationally, are significant because the survival of educational organizations depends upon their ability to maintain or increase their 'market share', improve their results, increase their resources and expand their services into new markets. However, promising more than they are able to provide is not the answer, as the failure to meet expectations leads to the breach of trust.

Ultimately, by implementing ISO 21001, educational organizations can benefit by delivering a more impactful and relevant learning experience that is aligned with their own mission and vision. Learners, on the other side, can benefit even more by receiving personalized and customized educational products and services.

About the author



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