



When Recognition Matters



ISO 21001
A MANAGEMENT SYSTEM
FOR EDUCATIONAL
ORGANIZATIONS



The International Standardization Organization – ISO – being one of the oldest and most experienced in the field of industry standardization, ranging from quality management to food safety, has proven to be a global benchmark of standardization which impacts businesses, organizations, policy-makers, and various regulations around the globe.

One of its latest published standards is ISO 21001 – Management Systems for Educational Organizations (EOMS). This standard focuses on educational organizations and their respective services and products. Although its primary aim is to enhance learners and other beneficiaries' satisfaction, its principles clearly outline that being more socially responsible and offering educational services that are accessible and equitable are the core components of ISO 21001 as well.

ISO 21001 Content Layout

In terms of the content layout, those who are familiar with ISO management systems will find the usual Annex SL layout in ISO 21001. However, in this standard there are specific requirements in regards to educational providers and their services and products, and in contrast to other ISO standards, the Annex A of ISO 21001 (normative) points out additional requirements for early childhood education.

It must also be added here that its annexes, especially Annex A, B & E are quite extensive, and provide considerable information and guidance in regards to ISO 21001 requirements and education related concepts.

ISO 21001 Terminology and Perspectives

When considering the standard and its requirements from the perspective of the educator or someone who is directly involved in education-related research, it must be stressed out that the standard does a solid job in offering a comprehensive document which includes detailed requirements towards educational service design and development controls. These are specifically stated throughout clause 8 Operation and its subclauses: *8.3.4.4 Summative assessment design and development controls*; *8.3.4.3 Curriculum design and development controls*; *8.3.4.2 Educational service design and development controls*; and so on.

Special Needs Education

What is most impressive about this standard is the language used and the emphasis it places on special needs education.

It can be noted that they took special precautions not to use any deficiency terms, which view students as having a deficiency but rather employed terms such as students with special needs, exceptionalities, etc. which are more in line with the current disability studies in education. This is further supported by stressing out the need for a special education focus from the leadership perspective (clause 5), to the requirements set for facilities which ought to be accessible and “ensure that the dimensions of the facilities are adequate to the requirements of those using them” (clause 7.1.3.1), and continued with the requirements for curriculum and instruction modification/adaption (clause 8.3.4.3), in order to meet the diverse pool of learners’ needs.

Although not directly stressed out, which is common for ISO/standardization documents, it can be seen that requirements on special needs education were well elaborated and reflect – to an extent – the work of Universal Design (UD) and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles – whose main focus is to offer **all** students (no matter their dis/abilities, background, etc.) accessible educational services, products and environments.

Conclusion

The ISO 21001 standard provides a great basis for educational providers to enhance the quality of their products and services. Although, there might be a general wariness in regards to standardization, due to the educational fields’ overtly reliance on standardized performance tests and the controversial debates surrounding it. However, if the standard is implemented, and complemented with best practices in the field of education, it will help organizations yield positive results for its beneficiaries – be it students, parents, community, and/or others.

About the author

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