THE ROLE OF SELF EVALUATION IN QUALITY ASSURANCE: WIDYATAMA CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

To obtain quality assurance, an institution should conduct self evaluation for continuing improvement purposes. The purpose of this study is to investigate the implementation of Self Evaluation in quality assurance at a higher education institution. This paper looks at the effectiveness of self evaluation implementation at Widyatama University Bandung – Indonesia as an example for the investigation. The paper, therefore, explores the process and the role of self evaluation in quality assurance at the university. Data is collected through evaluating quality management documents, observation, and inquiries. Through research, the paper reveals the following contributions on the self evaluation in quality assurance:

1. Supporting university management and promoting quality assurance,
2. Strengthening the idea that “quality assurance is the “king” of a university
3. Improving the process and the role of self evaluation in quality assurance
4. Building campus culture to help people at the university be more involved in conducting self evaluation.

Key words: Quality Assurance, Self Evaluation, Internal Auditing, Higher Education

INTRODUCTION

Quality assurance in higher education institution has become an issue of major concern among universities all over the world. Due to the rapid changes in education environment, improvement on the quality retains its high priority the principles program of institution. In Indonesia, quality assurance has now recently placed on the main agenda as well. There are some environment forces imposing the need for quality assurance. These include:

1. The increase of nationally and internationally competition in higher education industry.
2. The rise in public accountability and demand for transparency in the way in which higher education institutions are managed.
3. An increase diverse students population as a result of international program
4. Greater expectation of students as paying customers.
5. An increase in collaborative provision between institutions.

Some of these forces demand that higher education institutions have quality assurance procedures that are transparent to the stakeholders.

One of the key elements in implementing quality assurance is self evaluation program. Self evaluation should be conducted systematically, independently and documented to assure that the quality management system comply with the standard that has been established. This article focuses on the experience of Widyatama University on

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quality assurance, especially in the implementation of self evaluation at unit and overall organization levels.

**Basic Concept Of Self Evaluation In Quality Assurance**

Evans (2002) stated that Quality assurance was informal; every effort was made to ensure that quality was built into the final product by the people who produced it. These themes, which were lost with the advent of the Industrial Revolution, are important foundations of modern quality assurance efforts. Bazargan (2002) suggested that quality assurance is the whole process whereby a particular organization is managed to achieve and hence be able to assure quality.

In the 1920s employees of Western Electric's inspection department were transferred to Bell Telephone Laboratories. The duties of this group included developing new theories and methods of inspection for improving and maintaining quality. The early pioneers of quality assurance- Walter Shewhart, Harold Dodge, George Edwards, and others are including W. Edwards Deming-were members of this group. It was here that the term *quality assurance* was coined. These pioneers developed many useful techniques for improving quality and solving quality problem. Thus, quality became a technical discipline of its own (Evans, 2002).

For the quality assurance purpose, an organization or institution should implement quality management system. The quality management system is required when an organizations (a) needs to demonstrate its ability to consistently provide product that meets customer and applicable regulatory requirements. and (b) aims to enhance customer satisfaction through the effective application of the system, including processes for continual improvement of the system and the assurance of conformity to customer and applicable regulatory requirements (ISO 9001:2000).

If an organization claims to have a system for the quality management, the organization should conduct self evaluation process through monitoring, measuring and improving activities (ISO 9001:2000). Organization should improve the effectiveness of its quality management system continually. Organization should plan and implement the monitoring, measuring, analyzing and improving activities needed to show product conformity, ensure the compliance of quality management system and continuous improvement on the quality management system. This process should be done in all levels of organization, unit as levels as well organization as a whole.

Self evaluation should be initialized with reporting of any activities in all level of organization. The self evaluation to the process by which an institution review the effectiveness of its quality management system for assuring, developing, and monitoring the quality of organization performance against the established criteria (Arens, 2008). Self assessment is useful for encouraging fundamental review of objectives, practices and outcomes (Bazargan. 2002).

In self assessment process, the unit collects and analyzes data on where it is and what it wants to be. The analysis covers the strengths, weaknesses, and the development programs which are prepared to indicate how the unit is going to reach the objectives (Kells, 1995).

The self evaluation has two objectives. Firstly, it should be used as documentation for the final report and its recommendations. Secondly, it should be seen as an inspiration for the evaluated unit or for quality improvement. Miller (2002) stresses that self assessment in higher education implies two aims: to contribute to
higher education quality improvement and provide reliable information about existing higher education quality including studies and research.

Self evaluation process is conducted through monitoring, evaluating and improving activities. Organization should plan and implement monitoring, measuring, analyzing and improving processes needed to show the compliance of quality management system, and to ensure continual improvement. The function of this process occurs in all levels of organization, unit level as well as organization as a whole.

Self evaluation within an organization involves an audit process called as internal quality auditing. Internal quality auditing is required to be a part of management. Ratliff (1996) purposes that internal auditing is an independent appraisal function established within an organization to examine and evaluate activities as a service to the organization. Arens, Elder and Beasley (2008) argue that auditing is accumulation and evaluation of evidence about information to determine and report on the degree of correspondence between the information and the established criteria. Based on these definitions it can be concluded that the authors see auditing process from different approach.

The objective of internal auditing is to assist organization member at all levels to implement their tasks effectively and efficiently (Hiro Tugiman, 2003). Ratliff (1996) said that the objective internal auditing is to assist member of organization in effective discharge of their responsibilities. Internal auditing furnishes them with the analysis, appraisal recommendation, counsel and information concerning the review of the activities.

Messier (2006) argues that the role of internal audit fall into two primary categories: assurance service and consulting service. Assurance services involve the internal auditor’s objective assessment of evidence to provide an independent opinion or conclusions regarding a process, or system. Consulting services are advisory in nature, and are generally performed at the specific request of the client.

In higher education, internal audit aims to provide a mechanism for the identification and transmission of good quality management practice and to assists organization in identifying its strengths and weaknesses in their operations.

The internal audit process covers the testing and evaluation of internal control in the organization. Internal audit plays an important role in organization for three reasons: (1) To increase efficiency and effectiveness of organization performance, (2) To provide reliable information, (3) To ensure that the organization obeys legal requirement and law.

The actualization of professionalism in audit is shown in professionalism standard of internal audit, which includes: independency, professionalism capability, scope of the job, audit implementation and internal audit management.

As every organization is unique, they should have an internal audit report that suits the management needs. Differences occurred in the procedure how to write, evaluate, improve and disseminate and follow up the report.

Audit report is the main product of internal audit unit which is usually distributed to the senior management, board of directors, and audit committee. Since the report is the only product that the management received, they tend to associate the quality of the report with performance, competency and professionalism. It implies that the report should be made in clear, concise, accurate, wise, appropriate manner.
Organization should conduct internal audit at planned intervals to determine whether the quality management conforms to the planned arrangements, the requirement of this International Standard, and the quality management system required by the organization, and is effectively implemented and maintained (see 7.1, ISO 9001:2000).

An audit program should be planned, taking into consideration the status and importance of the process and areas to be audited, as well as the results of the previous audits. The audit criteria, scope, frequency and methods should be defined. Selection of auditors and conduct of audits should ensure the objectivity and impartiality of the audit process. Auditors should not audit their own work (ISO 9001:2000).

The responsibilities and requirements for planning and conducting audits and for reporting results and maintaining records (see 4.2.1) should be defined in documented procedures.

The management responsibility for the area being audited should ensure that actions are taken without undue delay to eliminate detected nonconformities and their causes. Follow-up activities should include the verification of the actions taken and the report of verification results (see ISO 9001:2000, 8.5.2).

The Quality Assurance At Widyatama University

Widyatama University was established by Ministerial Decree on 2 August 2001, integrating School of Economics, School of Languages, School of Engineering and School of Visual and Communication Designs. Throughout its process of development, Widyatama has consistently committed in implementing quality management system.

The vision of Widyatama University is to be widely recognized as a university with high capability of producing professional human resources in their fields, yet always proactively adjust to the fast on-going development of knowledge, technology and arts in international environment.

The missions of Widyatama University are:

- Presenting programs, leading to the development and implementation of knowledge, technology and arts.
- Creating conducive atmosphere to improve the efficacy of teaching-learning process, and research to produce creative and innovative graduates.
- Promoting relevance and interrelations among all academic activities and ensuring that the school’s graduates turn out to be professional with positive attitude.
- Building partnership with national and international institutions so that the teaching-learning process and its materials are constantly updated.

The initial plan to implement the quality management at Widyatama University was first formulated in 2002. A series of meeting, workshops, and seminars were organized from management to faculty level to plan, prepare, and produce the document required for the program. The university established Widyatama Quality Assurance Center. Since 2003, Widyatama has been accredited ISO 9001:2000, certified by TUV International German. This certification has proven the university’s concern to satisfy not only the wishes and the needs of the customers but also continuous quality improvement.
Widyatama Quality Assurance Center (WQAC) is entrusted with the responsibility of carrying out a periodic review of the various programs, where the process assessment and quality assessment are set out. WQAC director tasks are:

1. Ensuring that the institutional quality system is established, implemented and maintained accordingly to ISO 9001:2000 standards.
2. Reporting the quality system performance to the management to be reviewed.
3. Providing a mechanism for the identification and transmission of good quality management practice across the university.
4. Promoting institutional awareness for stakeholders’ needs.

The organizational structure of Widyatama Quality Assurance Center is as follows:

The implementation of quality assurance at Widyatama University is the actualization of management commitment to quality and quality assurance. The policy of university, therefore, is designed to focus on quality improvement. It causes a comprehensive change in university management compared to previous approach in managing university. The management of quality assurance at Widyatama University represents a completely new approach to enhance various aspects of quality at the institution.

Although the QMS is constructed in such a way to involve all members of Widyatama University into designing, implementing and developing process, but its functioning still faces many obstacles. The reasons for this situation are:

1. The misperception of the QMS especially ISO 9001 which is regarded as a system that only fits for manufactured environment.
2. The absence of the quality culture among Widyatama communities.
3. The reluctance of Widyatama communities to overview their work openly, to critically evaluate oneself and to be evaluated by others (e.g. students, heads) and to be compared to the colleague achievements.

The Implementation Of Self Evaluation At Widyatama University
Existing internal quality assurance system at Widyatama University has been functioning according to the implementation and being constantly developed quality management model to integrate the system of quality management ISO 9001. The functioning is cyclic and its implementation is actualized through self evaluation.

Self evaluation process at Widyatama University is systematic, occurring in a particular cycle: all units, departments assess the previous annual activities according to the forms prepared by WQAC. Each area of activity in the form of self analysis is defined according to the certain criteria and indicators that have been established. Study program is the most important and widely analyzed. In this process continual pursuing for quality improvement is considered to be inseparable from the principle of accountability. Every semester the heads of departments present their self analysis must report to their deans and the deans to the rector of the university. This process indicates that the study program and the faculty should manage their activities complied with the established objectives and procedures.

At Widyatama University, self evaluation reports provide a good basis for a review and assessment content characteristics of faculties and for defining activities aimed at achieving improvement. Managers of Widyatama University are responsible to establish a new approach to management that will enable the organization to maintain and improve its performance in a changing environment. Each member of the organization contributes something different; but should be in line to the University goals.

The rector along with the working group from Widyatama Quality Assurance Center drafts an annual summary report of the university activity analysis which is presented to the academic community of the university through management review meeting.

As self evaluation is conducted at every level, students as the main customers of the university, their opinions concerning teaching and learning process, teaching staff, facilities, department, faculty and overall activity quality are very important. Studies' surveys are carried out annually.

After the self analysis of activities has been conducted, advantages and weaknesses are revealed, a very important component of internal quality assurance is public presentation through a report of internal audit findings.

Self evaluation at Widyatama University as a component of internal audit process is based on valid and reliable data collection and analysis. Due to this reason issue of objectivity, openness and analytical approach of self analysis occurred at all levels.

The process of continual monitoring and assessment has succeeded in improving a high level of quality assurance awareness at Widyatama University. Systematic and regular monitoring has facilitated the creation of a quality culture although there are some denials, or resistance from the organization members. According to Sallis (2002), development of quality culture is a long running process and a very difficult task.

Internal Quality Audit Process

Internal Quality Audit conducted as a part of self evaluation. The audit process consists of monitoring whether there has been compliance with regards to the core process and quality document. The audit process also examines whether the quality objectives has been achieved and measures taken to ensure continual improvement. Dictionary ISO 8402 defines an audit as follows “Thorough and independent checking aimed at finding out whether activities and results regarding quality are in accordance with the planned measures and whether these measures are implemented correctly”.

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The main parties involved in internal quality audit are:
1. Audit team leader/lead auditor- the person responsible for planning and managing audit activity.
2. Auditors- the persons carrying out the audit
3. Audittee- the persons, usually managers, responsible for the area or process being audited.

The internal audit process usually consists of 3 stages:
1. Self Evaluation: The first stage of internal audit is self assessment process of the units and the preparation self assessment report. The objectives of self assessment report are: (1) to provide a framework to stimulate internal discussion on the strengths and weaknesses related to the unit. This will provide the basis for further improvement and development of quality assurance system in Widyatama University (2) to provide the necessary documentation for the work process of the audit.
2. Site visit. An internal auditor conducts one-day site visit in which the auditor seeks confirmation of the unit performance report, asks for explanation. Based on this visit, the auditor compiles a report with recommendations.
3. Reporting. The analysis, conclusion and recommendation of the audit are documented in the audit report.

Independence And Competence Of Internal Auditor
The audits are performed by trained auditors. Most of them are lecturers, but quite few come from the management (deans, head of departments). In the present there are 10 internal auditors at Widyatama University. The internal auditors are qualified in doing their jobs. They have been trained in internal quality audit base on ISO 9001 standard and some received more intense training in order to be able to act as a chair person of an audit committee.

The independence of internal auditors is actualized by the audit procedures which state that the auditor is not allowed to audit in the unit where he/she engage in his/her activities. This requirement indicates that internal auditor must have independent mental attitude that auditor should maintain in performing their tasks.

Internal Quality Audit Report
When the audit process is implemented, the next step is preparing the audit report. The audit report is written based on the auditors' findings. The findings can be classified as: conformed, observed, minor, major. The report is then distributed to the unit audited which will be used as the basis for corrective actions and discussed in management review meeting.

Conclusions And Recommendations
Quality assurance in higher education institutions plays an important role due to the rapid changing in education environment. Widyatama internal quality assurance system is based on ISO 9000 principles. The greatest attention is focused on the customers' satisfaction.

Based on the organization and the process, self evaluation in quality assurance at Widyatama University is functioning quite effectively. It can be seen by the establishment of Widyatama Quality Assurance Center and implementation of quality management system based on ISO 9001.

Internal quality audit process has conducted quite effectively as well. Internal quality audit is being systematically and regularly implemented through self evaluation covering all
units/levels at the university, individually and as a whole of organization. The process determines comprehensive identification of strengths, weaknesses to be improved, opportunities and threats in different areas of activities at the university. The process of continual monitoring and evaluation has facilitated the university in creating quality culture among the organization members.

There are still some weaknesses in self evaluation process especially in internal quality audit. Internal quality audit sometimes cannot fulfill the audit schedule. Another matter that should be considered in improving internal quality audit is concerning with managers’ perception on internal quality audit function. The managers’ perception on internal quality audit function is still influenced by the old paradigm. They do not see internal auditors as their partners or as consultants; they tend to see them as “watch dog” instead.

Internal auditors should also improve their abilities to conduct their function as catalyst government and to give value added in management process of the university.

**RECOMMENDATION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Based on the description of Widyatama case, it is suggested that further research in quality assurance to improve internal audit should be done which covers large number of higher education institutions in Indonesia on how they implement and take benefit of self evaluation especially the approach of internal audit process by risk assessment based audit.

**REFERENCES**


