ISSUES OF ISO 9001: IMPLEMENTATION: IMPROPER PRAXES LEADING TO BUREAUCRACY

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Abstract

The ISO 9001 standard was developed to yield consistent processes and satisfied customers. Several benefits of its implementation, including better business and financial performance, are expected and reported through the research. However, the standard is often used simply for a marketing advantage. In such a case, the implementation does not provide an efficient quality management system and causes some side effects such as bureaucracy, etc.

This paper deals with this issue and shows some of its drivers, through an analysis of the standard requirements, misunderstanding of these requirements and their improper implementation in the companies. Unfortunately, there has not yet been much empirical research available on this issue.

The analysis shows that the roots of the problem do not lie in the standard itself but rather in its implementation. The standard says nothing about making business more complex or adding a great deal of unnecessary paperwork. Companies should consider it when implementing their quality management systems. They should develop and adjust their system documentation to suit the company's needs instead of merely taking available common templates of 'ISO documentation'. The system documentation and its management should give full support to the business processes. Companies should have internal motives and staff commitment to reach this goal. Moreover, understanding the standard requirements is vital to fight the problem of bureaucracy. The integration of some other compatible lean approaches (such as lean office) might also help.

This paper might be interesting for practitioners and researchers as an explanation of the background of the most frequent problem related to ISO 9001 implementation. It also calls for some further research.

Keywords: *ISO 9001, quality system management, bureaucracy, documentation, lean thinking, lean office*

1. INTRODUCTION

A quality management system (QMS) should help a company to develop and keep a proper and stable level of quality of its products by controlling the business processes of the production and its support. ISO 9000 international standards (including ISO 9001, ISO 9000 and ISO 9004) give a framework for such a QMS. This paper discusses one of the cited and most troublesome side-effects of the implementation of the ISO 9001 QMS –bureaucracy. The large number of ISO 9001 certified companies or just interested in it imply a need to clarify the situation of this issue, the background for it and some suggestions to avoid it. Frequent questions and even incorrect claims from managers, practitioners and students about this issue motivated us to conduct this research. We wondered whether the ISO 9001 standard and its requirements actually gave a basis for boosting bureaucracy.

Before we investigate this phenomenon, what we mean with the term 'bureaucracy' should be explained. This term is meant to be used for producing documents as an end in themselves (i.e. nobody actually needs them in performing a business process). Furthermore, 'bureaucracy' also includes implementation of such document-handling pro-

cedures that cause users (i.e. employees) unnecessary obstacles or are useless and take extra time. People are often incorrect in believing that large amounts of documents themselves already mean 'bureaucracy'. They overlook the fact that the usefulness of the documentation and the effectiveness of the document management activities is much more important than the amount of it. 'All this work could seem like unnecessary bureaucracy. If you do nothing but file the report, that is, what it will have been' ('Jack' West, 2008).

Authors have different views on the effects of implementing ISO 9001 into companies. Likewise, the results of empirical research differ regarding the effects of the ISO 9001 QMS implementation: from highly positive to even negative ones.

Many positive effects including better effectiveness and efficiency (Ališ, 2003; Van der Wiele et al., 2005; Magd, 2008; Rusjan and Ališ, 2010; Solomon and Hogan, 2012) can be attained if the system is properly implemented. Moreover, obtaining an ISO 9001 certificate gives companies an opportunity to signal the quality of their business (Singels et al., 2001). A documented system including better work documentation is one of the most commonly perceived benefits from ISO 9000 certification (Al-Rawahi and Bashir, 2011). However, it can result in increased paper work.

Since the year 2000, the use of the standards has help manufacturing and service organisations to achieve higher output quality and improvements in business performance and become effective competitors (Raisinghani et al., 2005). In that year, the ISO 9000 standard introduced eight quality management principles that can help companies to achieve better business and financial performance (Hoyle and Thompson, 2001; Kaynak, 2003; Gotzamani, 2005; Valls and Vergueiro, 2006), as they are the principles of the efficient companies (Waite et al., 1998, p. 3) reflecting the best management practices (Magd and Curry, 2003). With this issue, the ISO 9001 requirements provide a stronger emphasis to the effective implementation of business processes (ISO 9001:2008 – cl.4.1). Therefore, less bureaucracy can be expected with this issue of the standard.

However, the research shows there are objections to the introduction of the ISO 9001 QMS, stating that it initiated and/or encouraged bureaucracy. Studies measuring these problems have confirmed their existence. Conversely, studies overlooking these problems seemed to implicitly assume that they did not exist by remaining focused solely on the measurement of benefits (Boiral, 2012).

It is a global issue. Indications about it come from different countries in Europe (e.g. Spain, Sweden, UK, Slovenia), (Seddon, 1998; Douglas et al., 2002; Poksinska, Eklund and Dahlgaard, 2006; Heras-Saizarbitoria, 2011; Dolenec, 2005; Tomažič, 2011, 25-26), the USA (Anderson et al., 1999; Russo, 2012) and Asia (e.g. Iraq, Iran, Oman) (Fard and Abbasi, 2010; Al-Najjar and Jawad, 2011; Al-Rawahi and Bashir, 2011) involving different types of businesses in the private and public sectors. Bureaucracy is generally considered as to be the most important and most frequently mentioned pitfall of certification (Moatazed-Keivan, GhanbariParsa, and Kagaya 1999; Marcjanna and John, 2000; Martinez-Costa in Martinez-Lorente 2007; Al-Rawahi and Bashir, 2011). Some empirical research shows this issue in more than a half (up to three quarters) of the analysed cases or respondent answers (Poksinska, Eklund and Dahlgaard, 2006; Al-Najjar and Jawad, 2011; Heras-Saizarbitoria, 2011; Bangert, 2012). It is easy to find messages on internet such as 'ISO 9001: QMS: DOCUMENTATION. MORE PAPERWORK. MORE MANPOWER. BUREAUCRATIC.' (www.qualman.co.in/iso9001.swf) that contribute to forming such general opinions. Managers and professionals may also be influenced by this, and so they do not adequately attempt to overcome this problem via a proper implementation of the QMS (Ališ, 2013). More and more managers seem concerned about this side effect (Walgenbach 2001; Marcjanna and John, 2000; Boiral and Roy, 2007). They often blame the standard requirements for it. The requirements are considered as unrealistic, thus making the system documentation cumbersome and increasing bureaucracy (Al-Najjar and Jawad, 2011).

The issue of increased bureaucracy often discourages companies from deciding to implement ISO 9001 or to renew certification. Benefits perceived from the implementation of the standard may appear insufficient to offset potential disadvantages (Poksinska, Eklund and Dahlgaard, 2006; Martinez-Costa and Martinez-Lorente 2007; Fard and Abbasi,

2010). Complaints about ISO 9001 from the majority of the employees can be taken as a serious and quite common indicator that the ISO 9001 QMS in the company is heading towards a failure. Most complaints are about excessive bureaucracy, burdensome paperwork and extra work before audits. At the same time, those employees see no benefits from ISO 9001 (9001 Council, 2013).

Moreover, the latest available global survey (The ISO Survey - 2011) shows that after a decade of a steadily growing number of ISO 9001 certificates on the global level, a decrease in their number was recognised in 2011. On the global level, their number decreased by 1%. The decrease was still stronger at the European level (by 7%). In Slovenia, such negative trends have been present since the year 2007. The reported decrease may be related to insufficient benefits (Sampaio et al., 2009; Psomas and Fotopoulos, 2009) and obstacles of the certification, including bureaucracy. However, no research in support of the relationship between the reported decrease in the number of the certificates and bureaucracy has been found.

The purpose of our research is to contribute to a better understanding of problems related to the ISO 9001 documentation in companies. Our first goal is to uncover a possible basis for boosting bureaucracy in the requirements for the QMS documentation in the standard itself. The second goal is to give some guidance for avoiding or battling bureaucracy upon studying the literature and previous research. We would like practitioners to realise the real roots of their QMS problems and the way out of them. Simply blaming the standard ISO 9001 requirements (whether correctly or not) will not solve the problems in the company: it will only prevent others from implementing the system. Unsuccessful implementations of the ISO 9001 QMS cast a shadow over the standard, regardless of their causes. Consequently, if these systems can be beneficial for the companies, helping to make these companies successful is worth attempting. Only the prevailing of satisfying and successful cases over the unsuccessful ones will stop the spread of common negative opinions related to implementation of such a system.

This paper gives insight into the situation via a review of previous research on this issue (in Introduction – Section 1), including a descriptive analysis of requirements of the ISO 9001 standard regarding documentation (Section 2). In the following part (Section 3), other reasons for the increase of bureaucracy and some suggestions from empirical research are given for fighting bureaucracy.

2. ISO 9001 DOES NOT REQUIRE EXTENSIVE DOCUMENTATION

This section contains a descriptive analysis of the requirements of the 9001 regarding documentation (ISO 9001:2008 – cl.4.2), including the general requirements of the standard (ISO 9001:2008 – cl.4.1). We attempt to identify two sets of requirements: those that require additional documentation or related procedures (Group A) and the other ones that enable their optimisation (Group B). By comparing and explaining both groups of requirements, we will come to a conclusion regarding how heavy the system documentation should be and how it can affect bureaucracy.

Group A:

ISO 9001 requires some additional documents, records and their handling procedures, such as (ISO 9001:2008 – cl. 4.2.1 - 4.2.4):

- documented statements of a quality policy and quality objectives (a separate document or included in the quality manual);
- a quality manual (one document);
- 6 documented procedures (for control of documents; control of records; control of nonconformities; internal audit; corrective actions and preventive actions);
- 21 records or related applicable evidence, specifically called for or implied throughout the standard in other clauses of Chapters 4 to 8 linked to the requirements of each clause (e.g. records for training, competency, contract review, design and development, inspection and test, purchasing, nonconformity, corrective action, etc.);
- documents and records determined by the organisation to be necessary to ensure the effective planning, operation and control of its processes.

- document and record handling and control according to the documented internal rules and clauses 4.2.3 and 4.2.4.

Group B:

The requirements of the standard (ISO 9001:2008 – cl. 4.1 and 4.2; ISO 9000:2005) and guidelines for their correct use (ISO, 2008) that enable optimisation of the documentation:

- emphasis of the standard in general on the effectiveness of the QMS (ISO 9001:2008 – cl. 4.1): Not only conformance but also effectiveness of the QMS is sought. Undoubtedly, documentation and document management should be considered as a part of these efforts to achieve effectiveness.
- possibility of using the existing documentation (ISO, 2008): Organisations may already have had some of the required documents before implementing the ISO 9001. They need not rewrite them to be used in the QMS. They can use the existing documents after checking or adopting them to meet the ISO 9001 requirements.
- flexibility in the form and extent of the obligatory documents and records: A company has the flexibility to combine some of these procedures, e.g. document and record control; or corrective and preventive action. This might make sense for a small company. You are also allowed to have more than one procedure for these activities, e.g. a separate procedure for QMS documents and engineering documents. This might make sense for a larger company.
- flexibility in identifying a non-obligatory set of documents and records: Each organisation should determine what documentation is needed to ensure effective planning, operation and control of QMS processes. The choice of these documents and records should be based upon factors, such as customers; regulatory and the organisation's own requirements. Other factors to consider may include the complexity of products and processes, the effect on quality, risk of customer dissatisfaction, economic risk, effectiveness and efficiency, the competence of personnel, and the stability of the organisation's workforce. The need to have additional documentation beyond those specified in this standard may depend upon the same factors.

The results of analysing the ISO 9001 requirements on documentation

There are some (up to eight) documents and 21 records explicitly required by ISO 9001:2008 (see Group A). These documents should be prepared and regularly maintained, and the documented business procedures should be performed. Clearly, no extensive documentation is required. It takes some work to do it, especially if all the documentation is to be prepared from the beginning during the QMS implementation. It might be a burden to prepare and maintain this documentation, and it might cause pointless paperwork if the documentation is not necessary or used in everyday business.

To avoid such an unwanted effect, the latest issues of the ISO 9001 standard (after the year 2000) emphasised effectiveness and brought more flexible requirements regarding the amount, detail and form of the documentation (ISO, 2008) in order to simplify the requirements and make them equally applicable to small as well as to medium and large organisations (see Group B). Thus, ISO 9001:2008 allows an organisation to be flexible in choosing the way of documenting its QMS. This enables each individual organisation to develop the minimum amount of documentation needed in order to demonstrate the effective planning, operation and control of its processes and the implementation and continual improvement of the effectiveness of its QMS. Such documentation would follow the processes. It is likely it would be used at work, and it would meet its general purpose: communication of information, evidence of conformity and knowledge sharing. Therefore, the changes of the standard after the year 2000 are in favour of more effective QMS and less bureaucracy.

With this descriptive analysis, we can conclude that the ISO 9001 requirements on documentation themselves do not boost bureaucracy. There might be some other reasons for it.

3. APPROACHES TO AVOIDING BUREAUCRACY

Mostly the reasons for boosting bureaucracy lie in improper implementation of the QMS and in the obstacles for its effectiveness. Incorrect motives are

one of them (Abraham, 2000; Fard and Abbasi, 2010; Bangert, 2012). Organisations that only seek the perceived marketing advantages of the attained certificate are not motivated to use the QMS to improve internal organisation and business performance. In addition to the wrong motives, there are some other obstacles for effective QMS implementation, such as the lack of top management commitment (Escanciano et al., 2001; Wiele et al., 2005; Magd, 2008), implementation costs and financing problems (Fuentes et al., 2000; Al-Najjar and Jawad, 2011; Bangert, 2012), resistance (Psomas et al., 2010), lack of skills of the employees (Awan and Bhatti 2003; Boiral 2003), lack of workforce and unrealistic requirements of the standard that increase bureaucracy (Seddon, 1998; Al-Najjar and Jawad, 2011).

If such obstacles appear, the ISO 9001 implementation does not lead to an effective QMS (Llopis and Tari, 2003). Negative effects, such as increased bureaucracy may appear (Llopis and Tari, 2003; Al-Najjar and Jawad, 2011) and sometimes even prevail over the positive ones (Martinez-Costa in Martinez-Lorente 2007). However, a concern remains how to avoid the obstacles and stimulate organisations to develop and maintain their QMS in such a way that bureaucracy would be avoided, and the expected benefits could be attained (Muir, 2009).

In this section, some approaches found in the literature and especially some suggestions from empirical research are listed and shortly explained.

3.1 Understand the ISO 9001 requirements – it is the key to effective QMS

Correctly understanding ISO requirements should not boost the company documentation and should not lead to bureaucracy. On the contrary, implementing ISO 9001 should make the processes more effective but properly documented.

Documentation should follow the processes

Analysis of the processes should be the driving force for defining the amount of documentation needed for the QMS, taking into account the requirements of ISO 9001:2008. It should not be the documentation that drives the processes (ISO, 2008). It is emphasised in the guidelines that ISO 9001 requires (and always has required) a 'documented quality management system', and not a 'system of documents' (ISO, 2008) in order to make the processes simultaneously more effective and better documented (Bangert, 2012). Indeed, organisations often make a common mistake: they document a process as it should be (to better fit the ISO 9001 requirements) instead of as it actually is (Poksinska, Eklund and Dahlgaard, 2006).

Upon the analysis of the processes and upon the process, the system and the continuous approach, ISO 9001 tries to 'eliminate all kind of waste' from processes (including the documentation management processes). This is the core approach of lean thinking or lean approaches, such as lean office, which can be reasonably integrated with the ISO 9001 QMS (Chiarini, 2011).

Avoid adopting your system to common documentation templates

Organisations often strive to take easy steps to a QMS, believing this would be the shortest and the cheapest way to attain the ISO 9001 certificate. They mostly hire external consultants, although some of them (the ones having their own professionals) develop the QMS by their own. Some consultants are open to preparing 'the easiest solution' by offering documentation templates or even transferring copies of a set of the required documents from similar cases (ISO Consultants.com, 2012). Likewise, the organisations can obtain templates of 'typical' QMS manual and other system documents on the internet (e.g.: http://freepdfdb.com/pdf/quality-manual-template; 9000World.com, 2012; 9001 Council, 2013). Many organisations take such documentation as their own, not considering whether it suits their needs. If it does not (which often happens), it is not used in every-day business. It is maintained only for the purpose of the certification process and is perceived as a burden.

Use existing documentation where possible

An organisation with an existing QMS need not rewrite all of its documentation in order to meet the requirements of ISO 9001:2008. This is particularly true if an organisation already has its QMS structured using a process approach and the QMS operates

effectively. In this case, the existing documentation may be adequate and can be simply referenced in the revised quality manual (ISO, 2008).

There is no need for extensive documentation

Organisations may be able to demonstrate conformity without the need for extensive documentation. To claim conformity with ISO 9001:2008, the organisation has to be able to provide objective evidence of the effectiveness of its processes and its QMS. Objective evidence does not necessarily depend on the existence of documented procedures, records or other documents, except where specifically mentioned in ISO 9001:2008. If not especially required in the standard, it is up to the organisation to determine what records are necessary in order to provide this objective evidence. Organisations are free to develop other records that may be needed to demonstrate conformity of their processes, products and QMS (ISO, 2008).

Brevity and conciseness are characteristics of proper documentation (Wilson, 1998). It is difficult or nearly impossible to find the time to review and remove or consolidate unnecessary documentation after registration. Therefore, each company should fight bureaucracy consciously. The necessity of each paper causing some additional work should be checked.

Organisations often find it extremely difficult to find an optimal level of standardisation (Poksinska, Eklund and Dahlgaard, 2006). Working instructions and procedures should not be overly general, because they will not provide any support for users. However, they should not be overly detailed either, because people need to have a certain degree of freedom in the means and methods they use in performing their work. The level of standardisation and the way of documenting depend on the type of the business the organisation operates (its dynamics and required flexibility). They also depend on the size and culture of the organisation (only guidelines or strict and detailed instructions needed or expected).

Another mistake organisations often make is writing a new document if some activities that are required by ISO 9001 have been missed in a documented procedure (Poksinska, Eklund and Dahlgaard, 2006). Thus, the number of documents steadily increases and the transparency of the QMS documentation decreases.

3.2 Get top management motivation and support

The commitment of managers and employees in the implementation of the standard, in particular the search for quality management improvements plays a pivotal positive role and has an impact on the effectiveness of the QMS (Llopis and Tari, 2003).

If the managers do not show their interest in the system by giving it high priority, taking it seriously, cooperating in implementation activities, using the QMS documentation and encouraging others to do so, the employees are not sufficiently motivated and supported to attain the expected outcome, i.e. an effective QMS.

It is interesting to note that the described problems, such as bureaucracy, are a direct consequence of management's action and management's attitude towards ISO 9001, rather than the often-blamed employees' resistance to ISO 9001. Ensuring that top management buys into the benefits of ISO 9001 and that top management remains actively involved in ISO 9001 will dramatically improve any ISO 9001 QMS (9001 Council, 2013).

Executive management of some organisations wrongly considers the ISO 9001 QMS to be a documentation task instead of seeing it as an implementation of improved and systematic management style. A consequence of this misconception is the appointment of the management representative (the top manager required by the ISO 9001 and responsible for the QMS) having no power to make real changes. In such a situation, it is exceedingly common to find an increasingly disappointed ISO 9001 management representative who is desperately trying to improve the organisation's QMS while the rest of top management pays mere lip service to it (9001 Council, 2013).

3.3 Involve the employees in documentation development

The participation of employees in preparing/modifying the QMS documentation is a tremendously significant factor for the common acceptance of these documents and records as their tool and a

useful element of their work activities. In organisations in which a high level of internal acceptance of the QMS exists, personnel without managerial duties in the organisation either take part or have taken part in drafting and/or modifying the QMS documentation (Heras-Saizarbitoria, 2011).

In cases of such organisations, documented operative procedures, job instructions, their templates and record forms are available to all employees. Likewise, there are several cases in which improvements in the procedures are requested by the employees themselves. Unplanned consultations are may be witnessed on various occasions by employees who are doubtful about the planning and control, correct and effective performance, related work instructions or output quality of a specific operative procedure. Such consultations and consequent analyses aid in eliminating doubt related to the process determination and performance, and lead to subsequent modification and improvement of the process documentation and performance.

3.4 Availability and accessibility of documentation

Accessibility and availability of the QMS documentation at the workplace is of crucial importance. Organisations that understand the importance of the QMS documentation for correct and effective business performance do provide the needed QMS documentation at the workplace Heras-Saizarbitoria (2011).

To assure the use of only valid documentation, increase its accessibility, and simplify the documentation handling procedures, many organisations design electronic (e.g.: web-based) document systems in the hope that this would help them to reduce the documentation problem and costs (Poksinska, Eklund and Dahlgaard, 2006).

3.5 Make documentation easy to use

Wilson (1998) recommended that organisations keep the documentation process simple and easy to use. Contrary to popular belief, the standard does not require only textual documentation. Flowcharts, process maps, and photographs to document the procedures and work instructions can all be used. Since it is essential to keep the users' needs in mind, the language used, and the reading level of the documentation must be considered Wilson (1998).

The importance of the features of the QMS documentation, such as user-friendliness and extent of adaptation of the QMS documentation to the specific needs of the companies (regarding its content and form) has been proven in praxis (Heras-Saizarbitoria, 2011). The procedures, job instructions and formats should be designed user-friendly. There should be specific boards at the workplace where all these documents can be displayed, so that they can be continually used by the employees (to contrast measures, review tasks, take preventive action, etc.), together with other informative elements encouraging improvements (such as indicator panels, control graphs and cause-effect diagrams). Thus, everything is clear and better controlled with indicators and procedures to prevent mistakes. Such information support would be especially desired and appreciated by recently hired employees.

One of important characteristics of the documentation is the ease of its identification, especially if there is a lot of documentation in the organisation and if its modifications are frequent. The documents should be identified and referred to using their traceability codes. Employees commend the use of such documentation (Heras-Saizarbitoria, 2011). Therefore, there is no need to waste time for always searching for something missing or misplaced.

3.6 Measure the use of the QMS documentation

Briscoe et al. (2005) suggest measuring the greater or lesser extent of use of the ISO 9001 documentation in daily activity in accordance with the following three proposals:

- 'ISO 9001 documents should be used in daily practice';
- 'ISO 9001 documents are updated regularly'; and
- 'Top management uses ISO data to solve business problems'.

Measurements of the use of the documentation in daily practice show that the work behaviour of middle managers and employees often deviated from that prescribed requirements in the documents (Heras-Saizarbitoria, 2011).

Such measurement aids in cleaning the documentation (getting rid of unused and not needed documents) and keeping it 'alive'. If the routines and instructions are not followed, it means that something is wrong with them. If employees continue to work in their own way and do not follow the descriptions in the documents, it is impossible to trace problems and improve the way they work.

3.7 Avoid high transaction costs

One kind of rising bureaucracy is increased measurement. Where ever its range, frequency, time spent and costs exceed the need to assure the planned quality, the result is bureaucracy. It has been realised (Freiesleben, 2004; Al-Rawahi and Bashir, 2011) that organisations spend much more for transactions involved within inspection and defect treatment than for transactions involved with quality improvement. Organisations often exclude the transaction costs from their cost calculations. This results in a systematic underestimation of the total costs of poor quality (Freiesleben, 2004).

3.8 Limit external pressure

The decision for the QMS and its design may be affected from external demands coming from customers or business partners, hired consultants and chosen certification bodies. Companies should know how to deal with them to make the best use of their QMS. Those that perform business on a global level should also consider the cultural complexity and impact of the abovementioned demands on their QMS and hence on their organisational culture (Klemens and Kaar, 2011).

Consider the ISO 9001 certification simply because of the demand of your business partners

If the only motive for implementation and certification of the QMS is the demand of a customer or a partner, the system probably will not work well and yield the expected benefits (Jang and Lee, 2008). It may become bureaucratic. Moreover, the extra activities and the costs of its maintenance and certification may be perceived as a real burden.

The case of a Slovenian company, Torka, d.o.o., shows similar experiences (Tomažič, 2011, 25-26). The motive was a demand of a new potential customer. The implementation of QMS was annoying and costly, but it was essential in order to obtain the desired contract. The implementation required a great deal of documentation and its implementation. The new documentation was annoying for the employees and also for the management. Therefore, some resistance to this system appeared among employees. Nobody guaranteed that all this extra work would assure the company would get that specific deal or overall good business performance. However, they had little choice if they wanted to get this new customer. Additionally, they expected a better reputation and competitive position in Slovenia and abroad.

Choose your QMS consultant carefully

Organisations implementing the ISO 9001 QMS frequently begin the process by hiring consultants. They should choose their consultants carefully, since the design of the QMS and its documentation and consequently effectiveness and the costs of the system depend on them to a great extent. Although certification bodies should meet certain accreditation requirements, ISO 9000 consultants have no overseeing bodies to qualify their competence. Many ISO 9000 or quality consultants have a variety of licenses and certifications showing mastery of specific knowledge, but education and special training do not necessarily make someone the right person to help the organisation to achieve the ISO 9001 certificate (ISO Consultants.com, 2012; Russo, 2012).

Frequently, management decides to hire ISO 9001 consultants that are tasked with the implementation of ISO 9001. These ISO 9001 consultants promise to write a quality manual, quality procedures and other documents; in many cases, they also provide ISO 9001 implementation training. Typical problems with this approach are (9001 Council, 2013):

- The ISO 9001 consultant is unfamiliar with the business, the organisation and its culture. The resulting ISO QMS does not fit the organisation.
- The ISO 9001 consultant tries to justify his high fees by setting up an overly complicated ISO 9001 QMS.
- The ISO 9001 consultant does not adjust to the particular organisation and sets up his usual 'one-size-fits-all' ISO 9001 system. However, these

'standard' systems are often tailored for large corporations, and they are often far too bureaucratic and labour intensive for small and medium-sized organisations.

- The ISO 9001 consultant is not flexible. Instead of creatively modelling the ISO 9001 quality management system to fit the realities of the organisation, the ISO 9001 consultant tries to model the entire organisation to fit his 'one-size-fits-all' approach.

Because of unfortunate selections of consultants, many organisations end up losing valuable time, money, resources and efforts without any tangible benefits in terms of process improvements, productivity and efficiency enhancement (ISO Consultants.com, 2012).

Implementation of ISO 9001 by a company insider as opposed to an external consultant is not only cheaper but it will also result in a more efficient ISO 9001 QMS (9001 Council, 2013).

Choose your certification body carefully

Choose your ISO 9001 certification body carefully! Some certification bodies and their auditors are too focused on documentation (searching for nonconformities in the documented system), which actually does not provide any value to the certified organisations (Poksinska, Eklund and Dahlgaard, 2006; 9001 Council, 2013). What they have to fix after an audit is only paperwork.

It can happen that the same organisation can experience many different auditors with different views on their QMS. Some auditors can be more documentation driven, the others are development oriented. The auditors' view on the QMS and their audit procedure may considerably influence the way the QMS is operated. Thus, it can happen that the QMS is primarily designed and determined by external forces, i.e. the consultants and the auditors. Consequently, the organisation obtains a QMS that is only a documentation system instead of a tool for organisational improvement. Therefore, if an organisation wants to gain something from the system, it should not blindly listen to auditors or merely do things because of ISO 9001 requirements, but it should see advantages in performing some activities, writing documents or having instructions.

3.9 Integrate lean thinking – eliminate unnecessary documentation and all other wastes in documentation handling procedures

'Lean thinking' (or briefly; 'lean') is the way of production based on the Toyota production system. It includes approaches for improvement of processes and 'speeding the flow' by reducing manufacturing waste, such as (Ohno, 1988a, b) overproduction, inventory, extra processing steps, motion, defects, waiting; and transportation (a seven wastes principle). The main focus of such approach is building a competitive advantage on quality factors such as zero defects, on-time delivery, price and relevant customisation (Piercy and Morgan, 1997).

Lean has many tools and principles. We will focus on one of them, called 'lean office', that is closely related to documentation handling (Chiarini, 2001). Wastes are not found only in the production processes. The seven wastes principle can also be applied to administration, support, marketing and other office processes. These latter are normally mapped and improved after applying lean tools in the shop floor (Huls, 2005). Applying lean to the office processes is different from production, because within the office there are transactions instead of products, sometimes these are not easily visible (Subramoniam et al. in Chiarini, 2001). For instance, the wastes could be a backlog of electronic orders, long approval processes, documents waiting to be signed and so on (Keyte and Locher, 2004).

Therefore, the rules for handling documentation according to the ISO 9001 requirements can be easily merged with the approaches of a lean office (Alič, 2013).

3.10 Revise the ISO 9001 documentation

These revisions can vary from small corrections to a total makeover of the entire ISO 9001 documentation. If the organisation finds its ISO 9001 QMS to be bureaucratic and cumbersome, if it finds their employees having negative feelings about ISO 9001, and if it needs to spend excessive time preparing for each audit, then its ISO 9001 QMS has plenty of opportunities for improvement and the organisation should consider a complete makeover of the system and its documentation (9001 Council, 2013a)

4. DISCUSSION

The descriptive analysis of the ISO 9001 requirements and guidelines on documentation (see Section 2) shows that they do not boost bureaucracy. We compared two sets of requirements and guidelines ((ISO 9001:2008 – cl.4.1, 4.2; ISO 9000:2005; ISO, 2008) and concluded that the number of the explicitly required documents and records (Group A) is not high (up to 8 documents and 21 records). Additionally, there are some guidelines in the standard (Group B) that aid in keeping the documentation manageable, quantitatively and qualitatively.

However, the ISO 9001 standard can indirectly influence the bureaucracy through system procedures (such as internal audit, management review) required through other clauses of the standard. This is the case if these procedures are not properly determined, implemented and performed. In this paper, we did not extend the analysis of the ISO 9001 requirements to all such requirements indirectly influencing documentation and documentation handling. However, we considered some of these possible indirect effects in the guidelines for fighting bureaucracy (see Section 3).

The most common reasons for the bureaucracy in the ISO 9001 QMS are only briefly listed (see Section 3). All of them are related to improper implementation of the QMS. More emphasis is given to the suggestions for fighting the bureaucracy. They are gathered from the empirical research and professionals (ISO Consultants.com, 2012; 9001 Council, 2013), grouped into ten initiatives for practitioners and briefly explained.

When starting the research, we encountered the problem of poor previous research on the addressed issue. There has been a great deal of research on QMS; in fact, the majority of the research (and the papers) were focused solely on potential benefits and overlooked the possible pitfalls of the standard and implemented QMS. According to Boiral (2012), who carried out a systematic review of the 111 selected papers on effects of implementation of the ISO 9001 QMS, only 25% of the reviewed papers (also) addressed negative and unexpected effects of ISO 9001. Only 15 of the studies that measured (also) negative effects observed an increase in bureaucracy. However, there are other signals, such as informally received questions, calls on the internet to avoid bureaucracy (e.g. www.qualman.co.in/iso9001.swf) and decreases in the number of certificates (The ISO Survey - 2011) that show that the extent of this problem might be greater and more widespread as evidenced by the research. Moreover, the geographical distribution of the studies in that review was not truly representative regarding the number of the ISO 9001 certificates by country; the highest number of studies was from USA and Spain, while only a few studies focused on developing countries with a high number of certifications, especially China.

The observed lack of the research on bureaucracy in the ISO 9001 QMS and on its impact on the business performance of the certified organisations calls for additional national and international research on this issue. We need some greater insight to the extent of this problem in specific countries or regions and in different sizes and types of organisations. The dynamics of this problem through time and related to the development of the ISO standard (new issues) are also of interest. The effects of the bureaucracy are difficult to measure. However, this would be important information for decision making about the QMS implementation and its effective functioning.

5. CONCLUSION

The ISO 9001 standard was designed to yield consistent processes and satisfied customers. Several benefits of its implementation, including better business and financial performance, were expected and reported through the research. Unfortunately, it is often used simply for a marketing advantage. In such cases, organisations search only for certificates. Often, such a QMS only formally meets the requirements of the standard. The purpose of the standard is not met and the implemented QMS does not provide much value. Negative effects, such as bureaucracy, can appear and even prevail over the benefits of the system.

Our review of the literature and research shows that a general opinion that the standard causes bureaucracy as one of most emphasised negative

effects of the ISO 9001 implementation is still present, and that the roots of the problem probably lie in the QMS implementation and their abovementioned obstacles, such as incorrect motives for implementation of the standard, insufficient support from the managers, lack of internal mobilisation, poor knowledge and understanding of the standard, choice of consultants and certification bodies, implementation costs, etc. However, our analysis of the ISO 9001 requirements on documentation shows that the standard says nothing about making business more complex or adding large amounts of unnecessary paperwork. Moreover, its latest issues (after the year 2000) allow much more flexibility in the extent, detail and form of documentation according to the size, business complexity and needs of the organisation. Despite such findings, our review of the research shows that the fear of implementing bureaucracy with the ISO 9001 QMS implementation is still the most significant obstacle to the widespread acceptance of ISO 9001.

Issues related to the ISO 9001 implementation and its effects call for answers and improvement actions. Upon a review of previous empirical research, this paper gives some guidelines to practitioners in order to document their QMS better and avoid bureaucracy when implementing the ISO 9001 QMS. Understanding the requirements of the standard and adjusting the documentation to the needs of the company are the basic rules to avoid bureaucratic solutions. This means that documentation should be developed upon the analysis of the business processes in the company. It is recommended that a broader range of professionals and users be involved in this process. The documentation should be user-friendly, of a proper volume, available and accessible to all the users and used by the managers as well. The documenting and measurement procedures should be lean enough in order not to waste precious working time and other resources. This should be considered even when there exists external pressure from consultants, auditors, customers or partners.

In this paper, we wanted to highlight the issue of bureaucracy in relation to the implementation of the ISO 9001 QMS. We would like to contribute to changing the view of it and to encouraging the managers and professionals in organisations to fight it using the guidelines from the paper. The general opinion that ISO 9001 is synonymous for bureaucracy will be overridden only through proper understanding of the standard requirements and by managers taking responsibility for undesired effects of improper implementation.

This paper also opens some questions for academics, and calls for some further research of this issue. As it is evident from the discussion, there is a lack of empirical research on this issue. In particular, quantitative research showing the extent of this phenomenon in specific regions or businesses and the related measurable wastes and costs for the organisations are called for.

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