

A Qualitative Study on The Challenges in Islamic Quality Management System (MS 1900:2005):

Implementation within Malaysia's Public Higher Education Institution (MPHEI)

[Hasan Al-Banna Mohamed, Ab. Mumin Ab. Ghani, Siti Arni Basir]

Abstract—In 2005, Malaysia crafted history as it instigated the first ever Islamic quality management system in the world, namely Islamic Quality Management System MS 1900:2005. MS 1900 is developed employing ISO 9001 as its base. MS 1900 is a structured system to help organisations in delivering products and services that congregate customers' requirements, as well as regulatory requirements and the dictates of *Shari'a* (Islamic commandment). The *Shari'a* requirements are incorporated as an addition to the requirements of ISO 9001, and intend to close the gap that exists in the ISO 9001 standard in relation to the Islamic perspective. MS 1900 has three principles; namely compliance to the principles of *Halal* and *Haram*, value based management and decision taken in line with the objective of *Shari'a* (upholding human interest). Despite an ignition of interest in the promising of QMS in the recent years, little research has been carried out to study the MS 1900 implementation processes within higher education institutions. Little research has also been done to study what are the challenges involved in MS 1900 implementation within higher education environment. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to present challenges in MS 1900 implementation within Malaysia's Public Higher Education Institution (MPHEI). A qualitative approach and case study strategy was used to explore the phenomenon of MS 1900 implementation in one of the MPHEIs. Semi-structured interview was employed as main data collection method, and it was triangulated with data collected from documents and observations. Interviewees that actively involved in MS 1900 implementation were selected from various categories which encompass lecturers, administrators, *Shari'a* officer, quality management officers and top management. NVIVO Version 10 was utilised to facilitate data analysis processes. The study found that there are challenges emerged from MS 1900 in MPHEIs namely employees attitude, some employees are reluctant to change conventional bank account to Islamic bank account, intense workload, too many responsibilities, lack of time, lack of training, lack

of understanding towards MS 1900 and lack of manpower. This study adds to the knowledge of the emergence of the first ever Islamic QMS MS 1900. It also contributes a meticulous insights into the MS 1900 implementation within higher education environment, particularly in Malaysia. Remedial action should be taken to overcome all those challenges emerged so that MS 1900 implementation can be accomplished effectively. The findings from this paper can be employed by any university management or any organisation management as guideline in their attempt to implement QMS MS 1900 successfully.

Keywords—*Islamic Quality Management System MS 1900:2005; Public Higher Education Institutions, Malaysia; Challenges*

I. Introduction

Malaysia is now proven to be able to offer to its citizens and the world in general about quality education at the tertiary level. Aspects such as quality assurance, accreditation and the various rating and ranking have been adding value to the management of institutions and their image in the world. In fact, Malaysia is ranked in the top ten countries that have acquired and implemented ISO 9001 quality standards through the 2,151 organizations that have achieved the certification (The ISO Survey of Certification, 2010). The aspects of quality management system (QMS) have resulted in a more effective institutional management aspect and have a positive impact, particularly on job satisfaction among staff and students in general.

Various studies have been conducted accordingly on the impact of the implementation of quality management systems such as ISO 9001, 5S, Six Sigma, Balance Scorecard, KPI, and others that influence job satisfaction among internal customers in the industrial and manufacturing sectors. Previous studies had focused on the aspects of the impact of the implementation of the QMS, but specific studies that focused on the challenges that exist in the QMS implementation in the higher education institutions is very limited.

According to the Malaysian Certified Website (2014), until now, there are only three universities and one private college which have implemented MS 1900:2005. Therefore, the researchers need to explore the challenges of implementing MS 1900 quality management system in public higher education institutions in order to ensure effective QMS, plus

Hasan Al-Banna Mohamed
Academy of Islamic Studies, University of Malaya (UM),
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
e-mail: addimity@gmail.com

Associate Professor Dr. Ab. Mumin Ab. Ghani (*Author*)
Academy of Islamic Studies, University of Malaya (UM),
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
e-mail: abmumin@um.edu.my

Dr. Siti Arni Basir
Academy of Islamic Studies, University of Malaya (UM),
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
e-mail: sitiarni@um.edu.my

not to mention, management system that complies with the requirements of the *Shari'a*.

II. Quality Management System - Requirements from Islamic Perspective (MS 1900:2005)

Standards of quality management system of Islam, which is known as MS 1900:2005 (Quality Management System According to Islamic Perspective), was established since 2005 with the aim of providing added value, especially the aspect of spiritual that caters *Shari'a* with the implementation of the QMS in an organization. This standard was initiated during the formation of a special committee called 'The Industry Standards on Halal Standards Committee' (ISC I) (Hasan Al - Banna, Ab. Mumin & Siti Arni, 2013a; 2013b). Currently, 27 organizations in Malaysia have successfully obtained MS 1900 certification (Malaysian Certified, 2014).

Thus, in general, the standard of MS 1900:2005 is still based on the original standards of ISO 9001 plus the requirements of the *Shari'a* in its implementation as in the Figure 1 below.

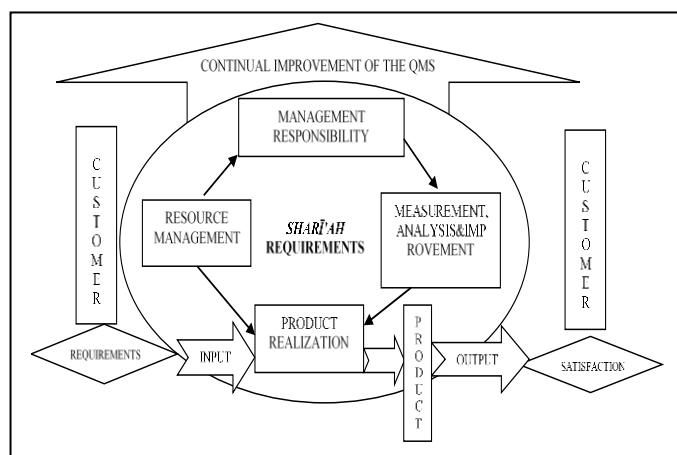


Figure 1. Quality Management System – Requirements From Islamic Perspective (MS 1900:2005).

Source. Malaysian Standard, Quality Management Systems - Requirements from Islamic Perspectives, Putrajaya: Department of Standards Malaysia, 2005, 3.

III. Background of the Malaysia's Public Higher Education Institution (MPHEI)

A research organization is a unique public institution of higher learning in Malaysia, which offers education at certificate level and short courses to Malaysian Certification of Education (MCE) holders and local residents. In contrast to other institutions, it provides the opportunity to continue studies or training courses to the community. This institution is the first and only public college being certified MS 1900 and the only public college that was awarded with two awards

simultaneously, which are certification of Quality Management System ISO 9001 and MS 1900 certificate. The certification covers the scope of provision concerning technical and vocational training at certificate level and 'National Modular Certificate' (NMC) is exercised throughout the year.

This higher education institution has also outlined a clear quality policy to be adopted by every employees and student:

'The institution will remain committed in developing the students' potential for excellence in the field of technology to comply with the requirements of the Quality Management System ISO 9001 and MS 1900 through a comprehensive continuous improvement and compliance with Shari'a.'

The selection of this institution is because it is the first university which acquired two QMS certification standards (ISO 9001 and MS 1900) and has been recorded in the Malaysia Book of Records (MBR) on January 14th, 2010, besides achieving various awards in recognition as the best public college by the Chief Minister in January 2011 during the 'Program with the People'.

IV. Literature Review

In an era of rapid globalization and massive changes of transformation, most organizations believe that in order to maintain the continuity of the product or service to the customer, they need to devote their full attention to the aspect of QMS. However, there are problems and challenges faced by the top management and the workers themselves in the implementation process of the QMS. Many previous studies present challenges faced by the manufacturing industry or service organization. The study conducted by Amar and Zain (2002) for manufacturing companies in Indonesia found that eleven factors that hinder the implementation of quality programs. Barriers include the aspects of human resources, management, attitude towards quality and organizational culture. Furthermore, Magd (2005) in his study of companies that have ISO certification in Saudi Arabia found that the biggest challenge is the high cost incurred for the performance of the system. This is further supported by studies conducted by Aslanertik and Tabak (2006) in Turkey. The challenges related to changing the attitudes of employees also become an issue in the implementation of ISO 9001:2000 quality management system; as noted in the study by Hesham and Magd (2007) for industrial companies in Egypt. A study in India by Bhat and Rajashekhar (2009) found that there are barriers that impede the implementation of the QMS, including program planning quality, involvement of top management, full participation by employees, and the challenges associated with resources.

Referring to previous literature reviews on the implementation of QMS in particular to higher education institutions, most scholars concentrate on the effect of the implementation of these standards to students or employees.

Even so, there are also studies focusing on the challenges of the implementation of quality systems standards, including a study conducted by Rashidi (2004) on the impact of the implementation of MS ISO 9002 in a private college, Pahang, Malaysia. The study listed twelve obstacles or challenges that had to be encountered by the college administrators and academicians, including the provision of more teaching hours; the management paid less attention to the issue of quality; and ISO 9002 is difficult to be implemented in an academic department.

In addition, there is also a study by Sohail et al. (2003) on a private higher education institution in Pahang, Malaysia which has implemented QMS in accordance with the MS ISO 9002. The study found that the challenges that may affect the implementation of the QMS is the mistake made by some parties to be undermining the issue of QMS in an institution. As a consequent, the implementation of the QMS will be stunted and less effective. In conclusion, previous studies mainly focused on industrial companies or higher education institutions to implement the quality management system ISO 9001, but no previous research studies were conducted on the implementation of the standards of Islamic QMS (MS 1900) which focused on the challenges faced by higher education institution's own citizens. Therefore, this study is appropriate for universities to be able to compare the differences among the challenges faced by the institution.

v. Methodology

The methodology of this study involved qualitative research design, which is a very appropriate case study for a comprehensive review of the behavior or attitude of an individual or unit, a group of people, families, institutions, communities, or cultural events (Yin, 1994). The study involved a total of ten interviewees selected by 'Purposive Sampling', which consisted of personnel directly involved in the field of MS 1900 who are as senior management officers, such as *Shari'a* Officer, Quality Systems Officer, Examinations Coordinator, three academicians and four non-academic staff. The selection of this type of sampling could represent an objective research related to an event (Burn, 1995) and can select specific samples to provide detailed information (Merriam, 1998) regarding this study. Interview questions are focused on the challenges faced during the implementation of MS 1900 in research institutions. Nvivo version 10 was utilized to facilitate data analysis processes. Semi-structured interview was employed as main data collection method, and it was triangulated with data collected from documents and observations (Piaw, 2006).

Validity and reliability in a research are very important because it shows the extent to which the findings are consistent and accurate (Merriam, 2001). This study involved a wide range of data from different sources such as interviews, direct observation and other documents supporting materials. The researchers also sent the interview transcriptions to every interviewee that had been interviewed for their final review.

They were used only as evidence of the reliability in this case study of the recording devices such as the interviews protocol, field notes and tape recordings during the review process. In addition, researchers also sent the transcript for peer review or expert review so that the content is valid, authentic and true plus accurate.

vi. Findings and Discussion

The findings indicated that there are some major challenges in the implementation of MS 1900:2005 in research institutions. Through the process of encoding the major theme of challenges in the implementation of quality management systems, it is divided into four categories: attitude, workload, lack of training and the humanities as shown in the Figure 2 below.

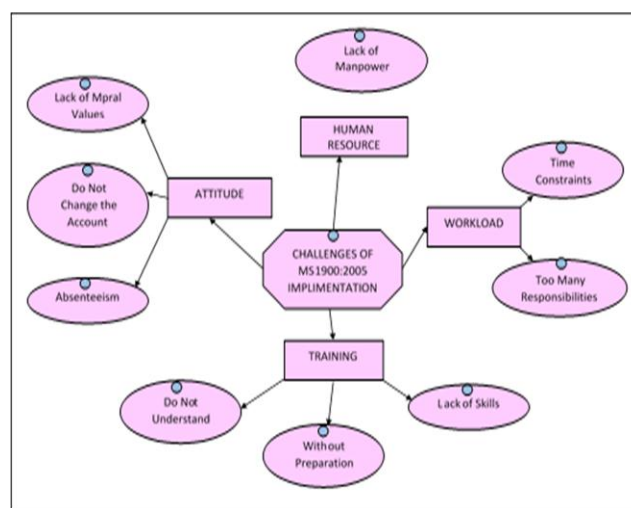


Figure 2. Challenges of the MS1900:2005in Malaysian Public HEI

A. Challenges of the MS 1900:2005 Implementation

1) Employee Attitude Challenges

The findings show that most challenges posed by the interviewees during the interview are related to the internal attitude of the employees who are directly involved with the quality activities. This is similar to the findings of a study conducted by Zelnik et al. (2012), which have stressed the importance of employee attitudes to understand clearly on the implementation of the QMS. Through the process of coding in 'Coding Query' with NVivo software version 10 of this challenge, researchers found a total of thirteen times reference code recorded during the interviews. The challenge is divided into several sub-categories of the other challenges; the absence of aspect entrants into organized programs, no appreciation of the values and attitude of some people who refuse to change their salary accounts to Islamic account.

The Assistant Administrative Officer at the institution asserted that the presence of employees in activities such as

religious talks on Friday is still not satisfactory. This is so because of the clash with teaching classes or had to attend meetings or courses organized by the institution. This has prompted the management to enforce mandatory rules by signing their presence in a certain activity. Then, the sub-category of the second challenge is that some people do not practice good hygiene especially in the cafeteria, which led to a negative comment during an external audit.

Moreover, according to an academician who was interviewed, he stated that the implementation of MS 1900 in universities faced little challenges when there are still some employees who had not changed their paycheck into a savings account in an Islamic banking. However, the management of the institution had made several arrangements to meet the representatives of the Islamic bank, where the employees were given a clear briefing on the benefits of the financial system. Therefore, this study approximates the statement submitted by Amar and Zain (2002); Magd (2005) and also by Al-Najjar and Jawad (2011) that the state of the challenges involved implementation of the QMS is the negative attitude or the refusal of its own employees to achieve quality programs.

2) Workloads Challenge

Challenges related to the workload burden are the second category of issues raised by the interviewee in this study, with a total of twelve times reference code being recorded. The researcher had divided the sub-category of this challenge into two: (1) the workload and (2) time constraints. This is due to the fact that lecturers in public universities had to hold a job or position of at least 2 or 3 posts at one time. Therefore, the workers are burdened with teaching schedule, as well as the other extra work, especially on the aspects of quality management responsibilities. These findings thus support a study conducted by Rashidi (2004) on the employees in a private college in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, which stated that the barrier of the performance of the QMS is where academicians being burdened with the provisions of the schedule to teach, the short time allocated for the quality program, while the staff are mad with increasing workloads and many quality procedures that it is difficult to be implemented.

3) Lack of Training

The third challenge in the implementation of MS 1900 in this institution is the lack of training with a total of nine times the reference code being presented during an interview with the interviewees. The challenge is stressed out by Quality Systems Officer that there is still lack of staffs' understanding at the beginning on what be done with the requirements of ISO 9001 with MS 1900 standards that emphasize adherence to *Shari'a*. But this confusion has changed when briefing and awareness workshops was done in stages.

Thus, these findings are similar to studies conducted by Rashidi (2004); and by Al-Najjar and Jawad (2011), which state that the QMS becomes difficult when employees do not understand about the QMS itself. In addition, other challenges such as lack of preparation during the course of the external audit also occurred, as an Administrative Assistant honestly said that he has no in-depth skills to implement Islamic quality

management (MS 1900) in the institution. This supports the findings presented by Souza-Poza et al. (2009), a lack of knowledge and experience in particular aspects of internal audit quality will affect the smooth implementation of the QMS in an organization.

4) Challenge of Human Resource

The final challenge in the implementation of MS 1900 in this study is related to the lack of adequate human resources for deploying a quality activity. The top management and non-academic staff have submitted a total of four times during the reference coding analysis being performed. According to a Quality System Officer, the aspect of human resource constraints often occurs because the same employees were involved with programs organized by the Quality Unit. If the institution had increased the number of staff who are specialized in the field of quality MS 1900, distribution or rotation of tasks would be performed. Barriers related to lack of human resources is also presented in previous studies, that directly affect the implementation of the QMS in the organization. Among such studies are by Amar and Zain (2002), Souza-Poza et al. (2009) and also by Al-Najjar and Jawad (2011).

All of these findings related to the challenges in the implementation of MS 1900 are shown in the Table 1 below.

TABLE I. THE CHALLENGES IN QMS IMPLEMENTATION (MS 1900:2005) IN MALAYSIAN PUBLIC HEI

No	Informants	Challenges		Reference Code
		Category	Sub-Category	
1	Non-Academic Staff	Attitudes	Absenteeism	8
	Top Management			1
2	Non-Academic Staff		Lack of Moral Values	1
3	Academic Staff		Do Not Change the Account	2
	Top Management			1
4	Non-Academic Staff		Workload	Too Many Responsibilities
	Top Management	5		
5	Academic Staff	Time Constraints		2
	Non-Academic Staff			2
6	Non-Academic Staff	Training	Do Not Understand	3
	Academic Staff			2
	Top Management			1
7	Non-Academic Staff		Lack of Skills	2
8	Non-Academic Staff		Without Preparation	1
9	Top Management		Human Resource	Lack of Manpower
	Non-Academic Staff	1		
TOTAL				38

VII. Implications and Recommendations

The results showed that the major challenges faced by the MPHEI during the implementation of Islamic quality management system (MS 1900) is the attitude of one's inner self. For example, the attitude of deliberately refused to attend quality programs organized the university without any reasonable cause, to take simple and nonchalant attitude in implementing the tasks entrusted. Such things complicate the implementation of the system if the negative attitude of the individual is an employee who refuses to change for the better. Moreover, the employees should not think of the tasks given as the burden, but to accept it with an open mind and a sincere dedication to fulfill their responsibilities and diligently, in order to succeed in the world and also earn the love of Mighty Allah. In addition, employees who are less familiar with the aspects related to QMS MS 1900:2005 will hinder its implementation.

Therefore, this study also presented a number of recommendations and suggestions for the improvement of Islamic quality management system (MS 1900) implementation in the institutions, namely:

- (1) The employees must regularly assess and self-reflect themselves to improve their weaknesses and always make continuous improvements.
- (2) If the employees do not have sufficient skills in Islamic quality management system (MS 1900), they must attend workshops, lectures or courses to understand and train immediately.
- (3) Employees should abide by the rules set by the first religious order to facilitate their compliance with other regulations set by humans.
- (4) The administration/top management of the institution should be exemplary to his subordinate and emphasize positive values during the implementation of MS 1900 as mutually criticize each other, leading to poor friend, recognize high-performing employees and others.
- (5) The human resources must be monitored continuously by adding staff/employees in the field of QMS in HEIs. In addition to ensuring that specific tasks relevant to the aspect of quality is given to individuals who are capable and responsible.

VIII. Conclusion

In total, it is clear that this study will explore some of the challenges arising from the implementation of MS 1900:2005 in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Malaysia. We hope that the challenges identified in this study can be overcome through some of the recommendations made by the informants themselves. Thus, the implementation of the Islamic QMS is not only able to overcome problems in the learning institution, but also provides additional value towards the goal of living in the world and in the Hereafter.

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