THE INFLUENCE OF ISO 9001 QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS CERTIFICATION ON THE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE OF KENYA’S UNIVERSITIES. A SURVEY OF SELECTED ISO 9001 QMS CERTIFIED UNIVERSITIES IN NAIROBI, KENYA

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A RESEARCH PROJECT REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION IN STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OPTION OF KENYATTA UNIVERSITY

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DECLARATION

I declare that this research project report is my original work and has not been submitted in this or other form for the award of a degree in this or any other university.

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ABSTRACT

ISO 9001 Quality Management Systems certification is a business strategy aimed at bolstering the way organizations are managed and direct them towards realization of their competitive advantage. It is a strategic business approach that creates standards for business management systems expected to exceed customers’ expectations (Tricker and Sherring-Lucas, 2005), and comprises eight principles structured in sections which show aspects of quality (Evans and Lindsay, 2009). On the other hand, a Competitive Advantage is the delivery of equivalent customer value to target customers relative to competitors but at a lower cost (Grundy, 2003). An organization has Competitive Advantage if it has distinctive capabilities developed on the basis to either reduce costs or differentiate it from competitors. The descriptive survey was adopted to examine the influence ISO 9001 quality management systems certification on Universities’ competitive advantage in Nairobi. The respondents were asked to indicate the extent of the competitive factors two years before and two years after ISO 9001 QMS certification. They were also asked to indicate whether the changes if any, were due to the certification only or other reasons. The findings were analyzed in terms of student enrolment, improved perception and image, and growth in research and development, and the universities’ ranking for the sampled Universities. The population was Six thousand eight hundred and fifty (6,850) staff drawn from four targeted ISO 9001 QMS certified Universities in Nairobi, Kenya. They include a total of 2,640 teaching staff and 3,410 non-teaching staff of selected ISO 9001 QMS certified public and private universities in Nairobi, Kenya. Simple random and stratified sampling method was used to get a sample size of 231 selected for the study. These are the University of Nairobi and Kenyatta University (Public) and the Strathmore University and Catholic University of East Africa (Private). The staff was drawn from schools and faculties of these universities. The structured questionnaire was dropped and picked to and from respondents. The data collected was sorted according to sections in the questionnaire and scored using numeric scores. The researcher used SPSS to process the data and statistically analyzed and presented it by means of pie charts, bar graphs and tables. Inferential statistics, correlation and regression were used to compare variables, infer from the results for credible conclusions from data. The results from the study revealed that there is an effect of ISO 9001 quality management systems certification to the competitive advantage of Kenya’s Universities. These findings are supported by high correlation between the predictor’s variables (Customer Focus, Leadership, Involvement of People, Process Approach, Systems Approach, Factual Approach, Continuous Improvement, and Closer Supplier Relationship) and response variable (Competitive Advantage). The study findings are presented according to the study objectives and are expected to benefit ISO 9001 QMS certified Institutions in Kenya including: Universities, Statutory bodies, Service and Manufacturing sectors. Finally, universities should embrace quality management systems like ISO 9001 QMS in an endeavor to give quality and relevant higher education. However, the implementation of the standard should be in reference to other quality standards such as 5s program and the Kaizen. There is a need to emphasize and encourage documentation of processes and procedures to clear ambiguities to help staff and clients to synchronize processes, duties and responsibilities that sustain continuous improvement in quality higher education. Furthermore, training of all staff on ISO 9001 QMS and its time span will help stem negative perceptions from staff and motivate a quality mind-set which was visibly lucking in the majority of respondents. Organizational leadership should be strengthened to avail necessary skills that inculcate quality and performance.