

THE RELEVANCE AND IMPACT OF INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS ON CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT IN CERTIFIED ORGANISATIONS: A CASE STUDY ON ACCREDITED CERTIFICATION

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ABSTRACT

Recent studies have explored the capabilities of an effective quality management system based on the principles of ISO 9001 and ISO 14001. Whilst profit maximization is the ultimate goal for any profit-oriented organisation, it becomes obvious that there is also a compelling need for organisations to look at every aspect of their processes by implementing cost-cutting measures. These cost-cutting measures must include the well-being of employees, the working environment, and the impact that operations have on the surrounding community. It is for this need that ISO has developed and published internationally accepted standards such as ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 for Quality and Environmental Management Systems, respectively. In the quest for business excellence, the trends in modern business management points towards composite, comprehensive and integrated management systems (IMS) that ensure competitive performance in the global economy. As a result, establishing and integrating a relevant quality assurance system that complies with both ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 has emerged as a major challenge, usually leading to misinterpretation and misapplication of requirements. This research study, therefore, sought to investigate the relevance and impact of IMS on conformity assessment in Gauteng organisations certified to both ISO 9001 and ISO 14001. The findings of the study revealed that although the study was only limited to the Gauteng region, it provided objective evidence that IMS was relevant to conformity assessment activities in certified organisations. Furthermore, apart from the focus on overall system integration and improvement, the study has confirmed that IMS necessitates a unified problem solving approach through effective management reviews and internal audits. The study also concluded that the impact of IMS on conformity assessment activities was evident through customer satisfaction surveys, better allocation and deployment of human and information resources.

Keywords: Conformity assessment, quality management systems.