

*An innovative way to integrate a Quality and Social-Ethical System in the post graduate education of “Scuola Normale Superiore” of Pisa - Italy*  
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### **Introduction**

The Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa (hereinafter SNS), a University centre for teaching and research, is based on a model that shaped European educational history. Founded by Napoleon in 1810 as a branch of the *Ecole Normale Supérieure Paris*, it is traditionally grouped into two divisions, the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Sciences. Students can work towards an undergraduate diploma, finishing with a 2nd-level honours degree, or as graduate students, completing a course of study, which grants a diploma equivalent to the PhD.

Inside SNS, there is also an office dedicated to Post Graduate & Continuing Education.

This office obtained the ISO 9001 certification in May 2005 for the planning and offering of post-graduate education, orientation, professional and continuing education and, later, it obtained also the SA 8000 certification. According to Social Accountability International's database, it was the first university office in the world ever to achieve this important result.

But as first experience of quality and ethics integration, SNS has had to study a specific and innovative way to reach the target.

### **The model under research**

The office of the SNS developed a Quality and Social-Ethical Integrated System in a very innovative way. This research, carried out in an inductive way (Johnson 1994), wants to prove that the best method to realise this kind of integrated system is:

- To issue a strategic document (Policy) integrating both quality and social-ethical objectives and key indicators;
- To implement an Integrated Manual based on the main processes of the organisation and in compliance with ISO 9001-SA 8000 requirements;
- To implement integrated procedures and records.

Regarding the core activity - the performing of services - SNS' Post Graduate & Continuing Education Office has worked out specific procedures/work instructions but also issued an Ethical Code. This latter document, for example, is not typical of a quality management system (Chiarini, 2003).

In any case, to develop the model, we followed the stage as below described.

At the beginning of the project, we raised employees' awareness by providing special one-day workshops. In particular, all the employees were trained in ISO 9001 and especially in ethical issues such as discriminations, forced labour and others.

Then, a dedicated team started to study a model in a deductive way.

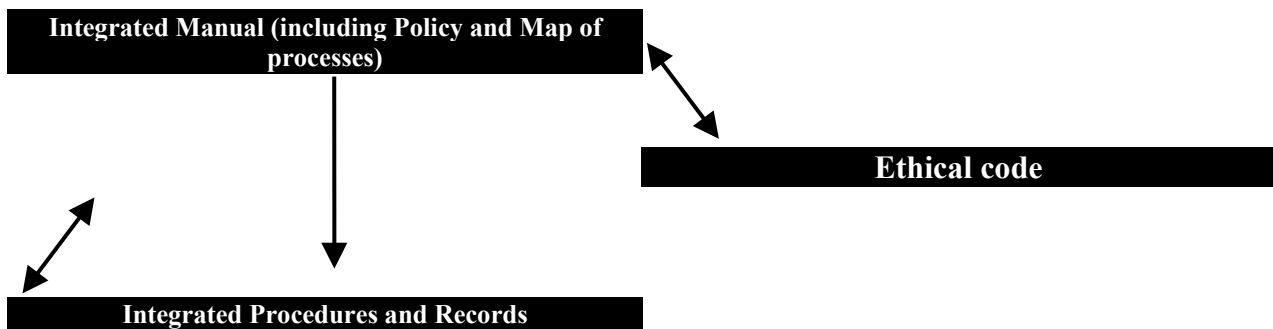
The team was made up of:

- A top management representative with a commitment to report periodically to the top;

- An employee trained in ISO 9001 and SA 8000 and responsible for the management of Quality and Ethics (team leader);
- A TQM consultant;
- An external supervisor in field of the TQM and Excellence.

First the team analyzed the state and the flow of the processes, collected data and suggests from the staff, gathered other experience of integration for the excellence (Al-Shaghana, Lawrence, 2006) and established the model's structure. In particular they learned how to integrate the documentation.

The outcome from the first attempt was a structure as below shown below.



In the beginning, for instance, the team prepared an integrated policy, whose objectives were both quality and ethics, some of which are as follows:

- Increasing of customer satisfaction;
- Increasing of Staff satisfaction;
- Respect of ethics issues;
- Reducing of service nonconformities;
- Increasing of communication with the stakeholders,
- Etc.

The team wrote the integrated manual with sections referring to the ISO 9001 and SA 8000 requirements (SAI, 2004).

Index of the Integrated Manual (based on ISO 9001:2000)	SA 8000:2001 § Reference
0 – Scope of the manual	
1 – Quality and Ethics Management System	
2 – Management Responsibility	II-IV-9.1-9.2-9.3-9.4-9.5-9.11-9.12-9.13
3 – Management of resources	9.5
4 – Product Realization	9.5-9.6-9.7-9.8
4 – Measurement, Analysis and Improvement	9.2-9.5-9.9-9.10

The team, also, took care to outline a process map integrating both aspects and chose an ISO 9001:2000 map based on core processes:

- Strategic planning
- Gathering of customers' requirements
- Design
- Provision of services
- Measure of services and customer's satisfaction

There was no definition of a process entirely dedicated to ethics. Rather, ethical aspects are linked to the procedures themselves.

Indeed they decided to integrate procedures such as

- o Document control;
- o Training and raising awareness of the personnel;
- o Supplier control;
- o Internal auditing;
- o Management review and continuous improvement;
- o Nonconformity and corrective action.

The content of these procedures was divided into two main paragraphs:

the first paragraph is about quality management, while the second deals with ethical issues.

Thus, for example, suppliers are evaluated on the basis of their ability to meet the requirements of the orders as well as their compliance to a specific ethical code. The latter will be sent to the supplier for it to be signed.

Quality and ethics will equally affect the supplier's final evaluation.

As a result, a supplier may be rejected because he did not sign for acceptance the ethical code even though he provides high-quality products/services.

However, the truly innovative document in the integrated model is the Ethical Code.

It contains 8 social requirements (Crane, Matten, 2003) that employees have to comply with inside the office (Discrimination, Remuneration, Working hours, Forced Labour, Child Labour, Trade Union relationship and Freedom of Association, Health and Safety management, Disciplinary Practices). The Ethical Code integrates also typical quality management processes such as nonconformities (personnel claims, bad services, customers' claims, etc.) and document control.

As for the Ethical Code, the team has made it possible for employees to complain, even anonymously, by means of complaints examined by both the quality and ethical manager and the workers' representative.

If the employee is not satisfied with the reply, he can complain directly to the third certification body or indeed, to SAI (Social Accountability International) in New York, the body that devised the SA 8000 standard.

It is important to note that the management flows of the ethical complaints and service nonconformities are the same, as they prescribe:

- Registration to an integrated form;
- Analysis to spot causes;
- Preventive/corrective measures to settle the issue;
- Examination of the effectiveness of measures taken.

Ethical as well as quality complaints coming from outside stakeholders (such as customers, other SNS organisations, trade unions, local bodies, the Toscana Regional Government, professional group associations, etc) are processed likewise.

After drafting the integrated procedures - those concerning the ISO 9001 management system and the ethical code - all employees were briefed about them, so that they could be implemented. Therefore, experimentation of the model based on a truly deductive approach started off. Employees' constant advice and information were used to upgrade the contents of the model's documents.

For instance, important suggestions about nonconformities management were gathered that resulted in simpler forms.

After a few months, the team, backed by the TQM consultant, carried out some internal audits in order to measure the system's application, in the process gathering further information that translated into preventive/corrective measures.

According to this model, the auditing is carried out in an integrated way, i.e. by the trained team themselves who use a check list having the same structure and, obviously, customised contents according to the process and the social/ethical features.

Finally, the model consists in an integrated process of management review leading to an analysis of all indicators/objectives from the viewpoints of both quality and ethics, that results in a later issuing of integrated upgrading plans.

This model has been ISO-9001, SA-8000 certified by a third accredited body that is at present keeping a periodical audit on the system.

### **Conclusions**

The model created by SNS and later certified by a third body has met the expectations of SNS itself and has proved suited to be exported to other realities having a interest in integrating quality and ethics.

The model was tried out by involving the employees from the start, which shows that the key to success lies in a strong integration of both organisation and documentation.

Indeed, to manage the model

- Only one quality and ethical manager was appointed;
- Only one manual was drafted;
- Objectives and indicators contained in only one policy were defined;
- The greatest number of procedures were integrated;
- The management review and the audits are carried out on the whole system at the same time.

Finally, the ethical code, a document typically concerning ethics only, was integrated with quality processes such as inside-and-outside complaints management and document control.

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