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St. Mary's University

QUALITY MATTERS

Theme: University-Industry Collaboration (UIC): Prospects and Challenges in Ethiopia

A Quarterly Newsletter of the Center for Educational Improvement and Quality Assurance (CEIQA)

Vol. 18. No. 70 June 2024

IN THIS ISSUE

QUOTES OF THIS ISSUE

"Collaboration is the essence of life. The wind, bees and flowers work together to spread the pollen."

Amit Ray

"What is interesting about collaboration is the possibility for one plus one to equal three."

Rei Kawakubo

"I can do things you cannot, you can do things I cannot; together we can do great things."

Mother Teresa

If you have comments and suggestions on this issue or want to contribute to the next issue, please contact our office,
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This newsletter is published every three months by the Center for Educational Improvement and Quality Assurance (CEIQA) of St. Mary's University (SMU). The objective of the newsletter is to inform the SMU community as well as business and industry, government and non-government stakeholders and others about the activities and accomplishments of the institution in fostering quality education and research in the Ethiopian Higher Education setting.

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FROM THE EDITORIAL DESK

Dear Reader,

Welcome to this edition of Quality Matters, Vol. 18, No. 70, June 2024.

The present volume of the newsletter devotes to the collaboration between university and industry. Specifically, the prospects and challenges are discussed and elaborated in the Ethiopian context. The target area is one of the concerns of the FDRE Ministry of Education, the Higher Education Institutions and the manufacturing sector (industries). Globally, University- Industry Collaboration (UIC) has been identified as a drive for transformation that bridges between the academia and the business sector.

In the contents of this issue, the motivation for and a framework of UIC are discussed in the 'Research Corner' section. In the 'Interview' section, an expert and head of the Institutional Linkage and Technology Transfer under the FDRE Ministry of Education shares his professional insights and experiences on the target area. Major events of SMU are also presented in the 'News' section.

Good read!

RESEARCH CORNER

Motivations for UIC

University-industry collaboration refers to partnerships and interactions between academic institutions and businesses or industries. These collaborations can be motivated by various factors that benefit both parties. The following are some motivations for engaging in university-industry collaborations

A. Research and Innovation: Universities are often hubs of cutting-edge research and innovation. Industries collaborate with universities to access the expertise and knowledge of faculties and researchers, leading to the development of new technologies, products, and solutions.

B. Technology Transfer: Universities frequently produce valuable intellectual property through research endeavors. Collaboration with industries allows them to transfer this technology to the commercial sector, leading to the creation of marketable products or services.

C. Access to Talent: Industries benefit from access to a pool of talented students, graduates, and researchers. Collaborations provide opportunities to recruit skilled individuals for internships, cooperative programs, and full-time positions.

D. Skills Development: Collaborations can offer students and researchers practical experience, helping them gain real-world skills and insights. This benefits both parties: students gain industry-relevant knowledge and industries have access to a skilled workforce.

E. Market Insights: Universities can provide industries with valuable insights into emerging trends, market demands, and consumer behavior through their research activities. This information helps industries remain competitive and responsive to market changes.

F. Funding and Resources: Industries often provide financial support for research projects, which can help universities advance their research agenda. Collaboration can also lead to the sharing of resources, facilities, and equipment.

G. Networking and Partnerships: Collaborations allow both universities and industries to expand their professional networks. This could lead to new partnerships, collaborations, and business opportunities beyond the initial project.

H. Problem-Solving: Industries can bring real-world challenges to universities and seek innovative solutions from researchers and students. These collaborations foster creativity and problem-solving while addressing industry-specific issues.

I. Public relations and branching: Collaborations can enhance the public image and reputation of both universities and industries. Engaging in meaningful partnerships demonstrates a commitment to innovation and community engagement.

J. Long-term Research and Development: Some industries engage in long-term collaborations with universities to support ongoing research and development initiatives. This allows continuous innovation and progress.

K. Regulatory and Compliance Expertise: Industries in regulated sectors, such as healthcare or pharmaceuticals, may collaborate with universities to access expertise in navigating complex regulatory environments.

L. Social Impact: Collaborations can lead to research outcomes that address societal challenges, such as healthcare disparities, environmental sustainability, and social justice issues, contributing to positive social impact.

A Framework of UIC

The following framework is suggested by a study conducted by Awasthy and his colleagues (2020).

Several 'best practices' have been formulated for successful collaboration. Given below is a generic framework considering several aspects of the variety of interactions possible between universities and industry that can help improve the effectiveness of UIC (Awasthy and colleagues 2020). The proposed framework considers a comprehensive list of factors operating in a broad and wide context within the collaboration system. The underlying hypothesis for this framework is that creating an enabling environment will result in more effective collaborations.

1. Understand the Variety of Interactions

As a starting point, it is very important to understand the various kinds of interactions or relationships that are possible between universities and industry. Different types of interactions have different degrees of involvement and duration, and offer specific benefits. An understanding of the nature of those interactions will allow the stakeholders to make an informed decision about selecting a partnership suitable to the context.

2. Identify the Stakeholders

Observing the bigger picture of collaboration indicates the presence of several stakeholders. It is critical for engaging parties to identify a set of strategic partners to collaborate with. There is a need to establish a partner evaluation method in order to ensure the selection of partners who have genuine interest and commitment, and adequate resources to support the intended research project (Barnes et al., 2002). Characteristics to consider during the selection of a stakeholder are the relevance of the problem, complementary nature of resources and absorptive capacity of the firm in case of technology transfer. It is also important to consider prior experience with stakeholders, as earlier short-term successful partnerships are expected to lead to long-term strategic partnerships. Once the partners have been identified, there is a progress towards developing a shared vision.

3. Identify the motivation

Universities and industry have invariably different motivations for collaborating. It varies from problem-solving, resource-sharing or information/people access to skills development through education. It is important to identify motivations and common areas before co-working or collaborating. If the motivation is problem-solving, stakeholders should select a problem that possesses intellectual rigor and is motivating for both the partners. The problem should complement academic expertise and be relevant to the industry. Universities should also aim at selecting a generalizable problem within the partner organization, as it will have wider applicability leading to greater impact for the organization and the partnership.

4. Ensure Basic Partnership Characteristics

It is important to ensure some basic set of principles to work under. Stakeholders should identify a win-win situation and agree upon it and work under an agreed framework, ensure a long-term commitment. Long-term commitment is demonstrated by the level of engagement in the form of people and resources from each stakeholder from the beginning of interaction until the final phase. Extensive university support and industrial personnel participation in establishing the research agenda and reviewing the research progress and results should be ensured. Last but not least, government support and encouragement to collaboration can lead to the formation and success of collaborations.

5. Establish Efficient Communication

Company and university leaders must understand each other. Stakeholders should adopt measures to improve communication between them, such as being in regular contact to meet and talk regularly, engaging with the partner daily (if required) and utilizing various modes of communications such as mobile, digital media and face-to-face talks. Communication and monitoring need to be well

implemented for fostering communication, including the follow-through processes. Progress reports should be made available at various stages of collaboration. Communicating the benefits of the collaboration can stimulate future collaborations. Regular access to top management should also be provided for the successful collaboration.

6. Strengthen the Dissemination Strategy

Universities must work towards strengthening their dissemination strategy and to using elements of marketing for sharing the research results along with their rigor and relevance to attract new partners. They should use a variety of channels to enhance the dissemination of results, leading to improved industrial adoption of research such as increased contact with consumers of knowledge, validating the applicability of research results in a client-centric way and formally creating new positions as knowledge brokers in academia.

7. Address IP Concerns

It is advisable that the value of a partnership should be seen in terms of other benefits rather than getting hung up on intellectual property (IP). A common understanding must be developed among everyone about intellectual property. Partners should minimize constraints on information, and universities should not seek to overprotect IP to prevent IP from becoming a stumbling block. In some cases, stakeholders should agree to drop claims. Establishing shared and enforceable guidelines limiting disclosure restrictions, limiting conflicts of interest and agreeing on a clear IP framework will help in overcoming the legal barriers associated with UICs.

8. Adopt Policies to Encourage Collaboration

Successful collaborations need to be encouraged and supported by policy interventions. Policies should help in resolving institutional conflicts and filling role gaps at the university –industry interface. Policies must be revised to meet the changing features of the research environment. Universities should work towards the reduction of the financial/material costs of interaction and long-term development of industrially relevant academic R&D resources. Stakeholders should also participate in the processes of national policy formulation and influence it for increased benefits.

9. Adopt Strategy to Encourage Collaboration

Successful collaborations, often, are a result of the commitment of the partners shown by making collaboration a part of their strategy. Stakeholders need to listen to each other and seek ways to work together. This is facilitated by developing a clear strategy. A good strategy for collaboration will include deliberate and informed planning, identification of key contracts using environmental scanning, adopting a legal framework for cooperation and proper preparation. Strategies should aim at developing new partnerships and supporting existing projects to launch new opportunities.

10. Focus on Social Capital Resources

Social capital resources include trust, mutual obligations, common understanding, access to information and opportunities. The existence of mutual trust is an important factor leading to effective knowledge sharing between various stakeholders and contributing to the success of the collaborative venture. Individuals demonstrating entrepreneurial skills are believed to foster the network competence of an organization. Network competence significantly influences the effectiveness of collaboration activities.

11. Setup Rewards and Incentives

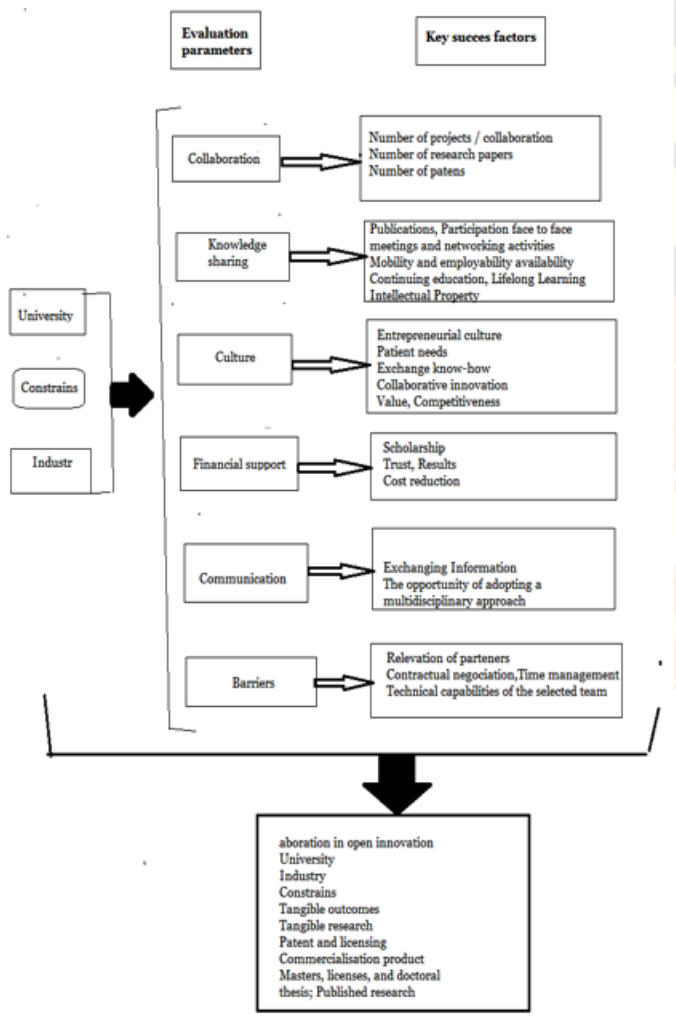
A new system of incentives should be created in universities to recognize the efforts of the academics participating in partnerships with industry. Rewards and incentives are expected to influence the motivations and level of engagement of individuals, leading to more effective collaborations.

12. Management of the Collaboration

It is important to manage collaborations. Adopting a framework to manage the collaboration process in a similar manner as the software development life cycle will help in monitoring, course-correction during the collaboration process and achieving the set goals.

13. Alumni Association

Universities need to maintain connection with their graduating students who would work in industry or become an entrepreneur in future. Connection with those students is an opportunity for university to discuss industry problems and understand ways of working together to solve those relevant problems. These alumni can become mentors for present cohort of students. 'By developing long-term relationships with the university, graduates help the university to re-learn' (Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand, 2017).



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INTERVIEW

Teshome Daniel
Head, Institutional Linkage (HETRIIL) and Technology Transfer,
FDRE Ministry of Education (MoE)

Ato Teshome Daniel started his tertiary education at Hawassa College of Teachers Education and got his diploma in teaching. Then, he earned his BSc degree in Public Health from Universal Medical College. He also graduated from Addis Ababa University with a master's degree in Public Health. Currently, he is a PhD candidate at Addis Ababa University specializing with 'Community Nutrition.' Ato Teshome has rich professional experiences in different organizations. He served as Urban Health Extension Supervisor employed for Addis Ababa Health Office for about a year. Besides, he worked as a General Manager in Ethiopian Food, Medicines, Health Care Administration and Control Authority of Nifas Silk Branch for more than three years. His duty as a Health Service Quality Coordinator was also a notable professional experience. Moreover, he was a researcher in the Ministry of Innovation and Technology and an Acting Director in the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. Since November 2021, Ato Teshome has been working as the head of Institutional Linkage and Technology Transfer, Ministry of Education. Among his responsibilities for the present employment include, leading institutional linkages, developing policies, supporting startups, conducting innovative research, and strategic planning.

Quality Matters (QMs): What are the major benefits of enhancing University-Industry Collaboration (UIC?

AtoTeshome: University-Industry Collaboration (UIC) presents tremendous potential for advancing Ethiopia's higher education and industrial development goals. By fostering structured partnerships between academic institutions and industry actors, UIC ensures that education and research are aligned with the real-world demands of the industry and technological advancement. It helps produce work-ready graduates through exposure to practical training, supports innovation and entrepreneurship, and accelerates the transfer of research and technology outputs into commercial and societal applications. From the industry's perspective, such collaboration enables access to technical expertise, cutting-edge research, technology, and a continuous supply of skilled labor. For the country at large, UIC contributes significantly to national competitiveness and inclusive economic development.

QMs: Has UIC been effectively implemented in Ethiopia? If not, why?

Ato Teshome: While Ethiopia has seen encouraging developments and pilot initiatives in UIC, implementation has not yet matured at the national level. Much of the collaboration remains informal or fragmented, often limited to personal networks or short-term projects. This is due to several systemic challenges. Misalignment between academic programs and industry needs, insufficient institutional mechanisms to support collaboration, and limited awareness among stakeholders of the potential benefits. Significant number of higher education institutions lack dedicated and well-resourced UIC offices, and industries often perceive universities primarily as suppliers of labor rather than strategic partners in innovation and sources of solutions for problem. The absence of structured incentives and follow-up mechanisms further hinders long-term collaboration.

QMs: What are the prospects and major challenges encountered in relation to the practice of UIC in Ethiopia?

Ato Teshome: The prospects for UIC in Ethiopia are increasingly promising. The government's renewed emphasis on industrialization, job creation, and science, technology, and innovation provides fertile ground for strengthening collaboration. The establishment of industrial parks and the expansion of technical education institutions also offer new platforms for partnership. However, challenges remain significant. These include limited funding for joint initiatives, lack of shared research agendas, weak coordination between stakeholders, and an underdeveloped system for intellectual property protection and technology transfer. Cultural differences between academia and industry; such as differing timelines, expectations, and languages of operation which create barriers to effective collaboration. Bridging these gaps will require deliberate and coordinated actions.

QMs: Has UIC been supported by appropriate policy in Ethiopia?

Ato Teshome: Yes, UIC is now supported by a robust legal framework. The Proclamation No. 1298/2023 on Higher Education, Technical and Vocational Training, Research Institutions and Industry Linkage represents a major advancement. This proclamation formally mandates the development of structured and mutually beneficial partnerships between universities, technical and vocational institutions, research centers, and industry. It provides a clear legal foundation for mechanisms such as internships, externships, joint applied research, consultancy services, and technology transfer. Importantly, it establishes a Linkage Council tasked with guiding strategic direction, evaluating performance, and ensuring stakeholder coordination. This legal instrument aligns directly with Ethiopia's broader national development agenda and the National Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy.

QMs: Has the MoE implemented a monitoring mechanism for the practice of UIC?

Ato Teshome: In line with the directives of the new proclamation, the Ministry of Education has taken steps to establish a formal monitoring and evaluation framework for UIC activities including establishment of sectoral industry forums and regional UIC coordination offices. This includes integrating UIC performance indicators into the annual plans and reports of universities and developing a digital tracking system to capture data on joint projects, training programs, and technology transfer activities. The Linkage Council, sectoral industry forums and the five regional coordination offices, once fully operational, will play a key role in overseeing implementation, identifying areas for improvement, and recognizing exemplary practices. In addition, the MoE has launched a reform initiative on UIC including research & technology output commercialization, and strengthening incubation centers. These developments mark an important shift toward evidence-based planning and continuous learning in the UIC ecosystem.

QMs: Has a sustainable scheme been arranged to share experiences and communicate best UIC practices?

Ato Teshome: There have been several efforts to create platforms for sharing UIC experiences, such as national innovation forums, regional consultation workshops, UIC forums, tech-expo and collaborative research showcases. However, these have largely been episodic rather than institutionalized. One of the most promising developments under Proclamation No. 1298/2023 is the establishment of the Linkage Council and it structures, which is expected to function as a permanent body for coordinating efforts, sharing best practices, and supporting stakeholders across sectors. This council will facilitate knowledge exchange, document successful models, and promote scalability, thereby ensuring a more sustainable and systematized approach to UIC in Ethiopia.

QMs: What lessons have been learned from the actual UIC practices in Ethiopia?

Ato Teshome: Practical experience with UIC has revealed several important lessons. Successful collaboration depends on having formal agreements, shared objectives, and accountability mechanisms. Institutions that have established dedicated UIC offices or focal units are generally more consistent and effective in managing relationships with industry partners. There is a clear need for intermediaries who can bridge the cultural and operational gaps between academia and industry. Moreover, the absence of incentive structures for faculty engagement and the lack of recognition for industry collaboration within academic performance evaluation systems hinder sustained participation. Importantly, meaningful collaboration is most likely when both parties recognize the value of mutual learning and innovation.

QMs: What do you suggest for effective implementation of UIC?

Ato Teshome: To implement UIC effectively, it is essential to fully operationalize the legal provisions of Proclamation No. 1298/2023. This includes activating the Linkage Council and ensuring that it has the mandate, resources, and institutional support needed to coordinate activities at the national level. Introducing the Linkage fund system to support Academia-Industry Partnership activities. Higher education Institutions and technical and vocational institutions should establish and strengthen UIC units, allocate adequate human and financial resources, and develop action plans based on stakeholder consultations. Joint funding mechanisms should be encouraged, and policies must incentivize faculty and industry personnel to engage in long-term collaboration. Finally, digital platforms for project matchmaking, performance monitoring, and communication should be established to promote transparency, efficiency, and accountability.

CAMPUS NEWS

An Agreement signed between SMU & IES for ISO 21001 Certification

St. Mary's University and Institute of Ethiopian Standards (IES) signed an agreement on technical supports for ISO 21001:2018 certification on Monday, April 7, 2025, at 2:00 P.M. at IES meeting hall. SMU's top management members Dr. Wondwosen Tamrat, Ato Tedla Haile, Ato Desalegn Berie together with the ISO steering committee members Ato Shegaw G/Medhin, Dr. Melaku Girma and Dr. Melku Tezera attended the event.

Prior to signing the agreement, Ato Mengistu Tefera, IES's Executive Officer for Training and Technical Support welcomed the SMU's team and explained that top management of a customer institution should be committed to successfully complete the ISO certification process. He shared his experience that about 75% of failure in the certification process attributed to lack of commitment from the management. He further discussed briefly the upcoming steps stipulated in the bilateral agreement. He told SMU's top management that the process undergoes a door to chair type of scrutiny in that everything will be monitored as per the target ISO-based management standard system.

Dr. Meseret Bekele, IES's Director General, appreciated SMU's top management for making ISO certification a priority, and was happy for being ready to sign the agreement for the technical supports. The Director General said that she heard a lot about St. Mary's University's long-standing commitment to maintain quality of its services, and informed it is among the well-organized higher education institutions in Ethiopia. Dr. Meseret witnessed that the top management's presence for the event of signing an agreement is an indicator of the institution's commitment to complete the process of ISO certification. She further remarked that if the process goes as planned, St. Mary's University shall be the first higher education institution in the country that will be certified for ISO 21001:2018. She also remarked that SMU's success to be accredited nationally as well as internationally is also a success to IES. Finally, Dr. Meseret underlined getting the certificate should not be the ultimate goal; rather after

being certified, SMU should update and continue improving its service standards.

On behalf of St.Mary's University, Dr. Wondwosen reflected that the university has been working hard to improve quality of education since long ago, even before the birth of HERQA and IES itself. He also confirmed that SMU's management members properly understand the importance of ISO standards and are committed to support throughout the process. Finally, the agreement between the two institutions on technical supports for the ISO 21001:2018 certification project was signed by Dr. Meseret, Bekele, Director General of IES and Dr. Wondwosen Tamrat, SMU's President.

Training on Internal Quality Assurance Practices

On April 5, 2025, a half-day training session focused on internal quality assurance practices was conducted for staff members from various units within the College of Open and Distance Learning (CODL). This training aimed to enhance the understanding and implementation of quality assurance measures among the participants.

The training was delivered by Ato Shegaw Gebremedihn, who is the head of the Center for Educational Improvement and Quality Assurance (CEIQA). He brought his expertise in educational quality assurance to the session, providing valuable insights into best practices and methodologies. The training involved 11 staff members from different units, indicating a collaborative effort to improve quality standards across the organization.

During the session, Ato Shegaw emphasized several key aspects of internal quality assurance. These included:

1. **Understanding Quality Assurance:** The trainer explained what internal quality assurance entails, including its importance in maintaining educational standards and improving institutional effectiveness.
2. **Best Practices:** Participants were introduced to various best practices in quality assurance that can be implemented within their respective units. This included strategies for monitoring and evaluating educational programs.
3. **ISO 200121 Standards:** A significant part of the training focused on the strides made by the university towards obtaining ISO 200121 certification in the near future. Ato Shegaw discussed what ISO 200121 entails, which is a standard that specifies requirements for a quality management system where an organization needs to demonstrate its ability to consistently provide products and services that meet customer and regulatory requirements.
4. **Implementation Strategies:** The trainer provided guidance on how staff can contribute to achieving these standards through effective internal processes and continuous improvement initiatives.

The half-day training session not only equipped CODL staff with essential knowledge about internal quality assurance practices but also aligned them with the university's strategic goals regarding ISO

certification. This initiative reflects a commitment to enhancing educational quality and ensuring compliance with international standards.

A Five-day Training Participation on ISO 21001:2018 certification process.

The Ethiopian Accreditation Services (EAS) conducted a five-day training, from March 7 to March 11, 2025, on ISO21001:2018 certification, in Adama town at Robi Hotel. The training was opened by Ato Wondwosen Andualem, deputy director general of Ethiopian Accreditation Service. In his opening speech, Ato Wondwosen capitalize on the need for ISO certifications in all fields so that Ethiopian organization could be competent enough to join international market.

Following the opening speech, Ato Zewdu Ayele, Accreditation Quality Manager of EAS, made a keynote speech.in his key note speech, he underlined that providing quality education is an indispensable task for educational organizations. At the same time international recognition is very helpful for organizations. EAS, cognizant of this issue has organized this ISO 21001:2018 certification training. Sixteen Participants of the training, were drawn from EAS, six polytechnic colleges and St. Mary's University. He went on to say that, during the training participants are expected to gain more knowledge about the ISO 21001:2018 certification process.

The trainer, Ato Zewdu Tesfaye, from Ethiopian Conformity and Assessment Enterprise (ECAE) gave a five-day training. The training mainly deals with the main principles of Educational Organization Management System (EOMS) and the main clauses.

The main principles of ISO21001:2018 are: Focus on learners, Visionary leadership, Engagement of people, Process approach, Improvement, Evidence-based decisions, Relationship management, Social responsibility, Accessibility, ethical conduct in education, and Data security and protection.

After a short notes on the main principles of the certification, the training was on the ten clauses of the ISO 21001:2018 certification. The ten clauses of the trainings are:

1. Scope
2. Normative reference,
3. Terms and definitions,
4. Context of the organization,
5. Leadership,
6. Planning,
7. Support,
8. Operation,
9. Performance evaluation, and
10. Improvement

During the discussion, on average, each clause took half a day. The trainer, Ato Zewdu, a senior expert in ISO certifications, has a very good experience in providing trainings for more than 10 years. As a result, the training, was more of discussion on each sub-clauses

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