

Concept Paper for National Quality Circle Forum*

Preamble:

Even though the term Quality means different things to different people, it is precisely defined as measurable conformance to a set of technical specifications. Today, Quality means best practices, continuous improvement, tapping the full power of knowledge and making environment around us and ourselves better. Yet, in another approach, Quality is said to be the result of integration and coordination of a series of activities in several interrelated key components of Quality Infrastructure such as Standards, Technical Regulations, Metrology, Testing, Quality Assessment or Conformity Assessment, Certification and Accreditation etc. In the present context of global free and open trade regime, quality and nothing but quality counts. Only the finest product and services with assured quality can survive against the stiff competition in the domestic as well as in international market. And, quality can only be assured when there is a well-developed Quality Infrastructure in place. An effective quality infrastructure ensures that it has the access to international standards and technical regulations; guaranteed measurement that is traceable to international standards like SI units; and a system of accreditation in testing, inspections and certifications including documented conformity assessment procedures. Certification does cover both product and system such as Quality Management System (QMS), Environmental Management System (EMS), Hygienic and Safety Management System (HACCP), Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) etc.

Analysis:

At present, Nepal does not own sufficiently developed Quality Infrastructure in general. And, this is why Nepal has not been in position to keep pace with quality requirements and conformity assessments for export and also to compete with imported items in the domestic market. In consequence, Nepalese products are quite often detained at the border custom post for quality and safety check; are rejected for import because of non compliance and failure to show the documented proof of conformity to safety and quality requirements of importing countries as per current international practices. On the other hand, Nepalese products are not very well accepted by domestic consumers, as they do not have faith in prevailing national quality control, testing and certification procedures. Therefore, Nepal must make an immediate jump from conventional quality culture to current international practices if it is to keep pace with current WTO trade regime at large and to take advantage of being WTO member. In order to establish effective Quality Infrastructure following attributes are of immediate concern.

- National Quality Policy has to be formulated and then be institutionalized.
- National Quality Council has to be established in order to initiate Accreditation and to regulate Conformity Assessment Bodies.
- Quality Culture has to be promoted in organizations, be it in public or in private by developing quality based management approach like quality circle and adaptation of Deming's principle of Plan, Do, Check and Act (PDCA) etc.

* Prepared by Poorna Prasad Manandhar for the valuable comments from concerned personnel.

- Mandatory implementation of GHP, GMP, and HACCP in food and drug manufacturing establishments.
- Laboratory and testing facilities at private and public have to be put into system accreditation as per ISO 17025 for reliable and authentic testing.
- Harmonization of standards and technical regulation with international standards has to be carried out effectively.
- National Conformity Assessment Policy has to be institutionalized.
- National Metrology Center has to be established in order to enhance effective, reliable and guaranteed measurement, which is traceable to international standards.
- Effective functioning of national information and inquiry services for international standards and technical regulations has to be practiced.
- Documented Conformity Assessment Procedure as per international practice has to be put into practice.
- Proficiency Testing Program has to be run regularly and widely with the development of national Certified Reference Material.

Need:

All of these above mentioned attributes are not to be addressed by any single entity and are the responsibility of the multiple institutions. Indeed, Nepal Bureau of Standards and Metrology plays the most important role. However, there are some other Quality Infrastructure service providers in food, drug, health and phytosanitary sectors. Fragmented and uncoordinated system to address different components of Quality Infrastructure is prevailing. There is no umbrella organization to take care of Quality Infrastructure components. Institutionalized cooperation and coordination among Quality Infrastructure service providers and also private organizations are not in place. It is therefore envisaged that a national quality circle forum should be formed in order to work as a push group or a catalyst and to provide venue for the inter-linkage and coordination among relevant stakeholders, be it a public or private organization. This forum shall be a very small group to begin with, comprising those national experts or professionals who are very much interested, dedicated and committed for the development of Quality Infrastructure in Nepal. The circle will be independent, non-political, non-profit, non-stock and purely technical. The group will be named as Nepalese Standards, Metrology, Testing, and Quality Circle Forum and will be registered as Society with Company Registrar's Office of Government of Nepal.

Objective: Establishment of Nepalese Standards, Metrology, Testing and Quality Circle Forum. In short it will be pronounced as "Nepalese SMTQ Forum".

Goal: To attain excellence in quality of Nepalese goods and services for the protection of human and environment and to promote for global competitiveness.

Purpose:

1. To serve as national working group that will effectively interlink and facilitate coordination among different organizations that are engaged in quality

- infrastructure; to work and advocate for unified and internationally recognized Nepalese Quality Infrastructure.
2. To identify the technical infrastructure and services that are needed and the support for their development.
 3. To provide venue for the exchange and dissemination of information and ideas, which are relevant for the development of effective SMTQ services in general.
 4. To provide assistance to strengthen technical capabilities and expertise of the members of the circle.
 5. To operate as a non-profit, non-stock, non-political and purely independent organization to pursue the above mentioned goal and purposes.

Plan of Action:

1. Formation of the SMTQ Circle Forum
2. Preparation of by-laws
3. Registration as society
4. Development of yearly work plan
 - a) Initiation to set up Quality Council in Nepal and then to establishment of National Accreditation Board for Certification and Inspection bodies.
 - b) Coordinate to develop effective quality infrastructure elements at the national level in accordance with the present international practice.
 - c) Develop information and promotion tools that target decision makers and general public.
 - d) Conduct workshop and seminar as awareness campaign on effective quality infrastructure.
5. Establishment of good relation with PTB of Germany and other such agencies for the necessary help.

Out put:

- Enhance the development of effective Quality Infrastructure (SMTQ and Certification as per international practice will be in place
- Calibration facilities traceable to International Standard will be developed.
- Test results of Nepalese test houses and certificates rendered by Nepalese certifying bodies will have international recognition.
- Nepalese products will have a smooth access to the external market.
- Nepalese products will have its own secured place in the domestic market.
- Domestic consumers will have full confidence in the quality of Nepalese produces.
- Quality circle or Forum will be effectively working in the manufacturing establishments to ensure the quality of their produces.
- Nepalese manufacturers will have better access to information on standards, technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures of their trading partners.
- Awareness on quality will be raised among manufacturing establishments, test houses, certifying bodies, consumers and related higher authorities in the government.