



Total Quality Management And Its Application In Libraries: An Overview

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Abstract

In the present dynamic world Total Quality Management (TQM) has become one of the most indispensable structures for strengthening the service quality of various sectors including libraries. In this age of information technology, there has been changes in libraries regarding dissemination of quality information and giving importance to user satisfaction as well. There is a strong requirement for assessing the quality of libraries. For effective implementation of quality management in libraries there is a need to understand the application of appropriate quality management concepts and techniques. This paper explores an overview of the implementation of TQM in libraries, showing the benefits and challenges faced in implementing this in libraries. The study also discusses the concept, definitions and principles of TQM.

Keywords: Total Quality Management, Libraries, Quality Management, User Satisfaction, Quality Enhancement.

Introduction

Total Quality Management (TQM) is basically a management concept and approach that focuses on inserting awareness regarding quality in all organisational processes. This concept was developed by W. Edward Deming and was initially implemented in Japan after World War II to aid in the country's economic recovery. Although it was developed in the manufacturing sector, the principles of TQM have gradually been recognised in the service-related sector as well including libraries. It aims to improve the quality of library services to satisfy user needs. Libraries encounter quite a few challenges like lack of space, shortage of budgets, introduction of new technologies, varied user needs. With the rapid advancements in information technology, user expectations are evolving unpredictably, necessitating enhanced service quality. Here, by adopting TQM, libraries become more flexible and accessible, replacing traditional service methods with ICT solutions. They can deliver their services much more effectively.

Quality

Quality is essential in every aspect of life. The term quality encompasses various meanings from conventional to strategic interpretations. The traditional or the conventional meaning of quality refers to attributes like appearance, functionality, reliability and others. In a strategic sense, quality is concerned with fulfilling customer needs. Manufacturers achieve quality when it consistently meets customer or user specifications. Thus, quality doesn't always equate to being good, reliable or durable, it simply means delivering what the customer desires. We can call it a qualitative product if the customer is satisfied. According to P. F. Druker, quality in a product or service isn't determined by what the supplier includes, it's defined by what the customer receives and is willing to pay for. Therefore, the quality of any organisation mainly depends on user or customer satisfaction. The quality of libraries is linked to their services, products and staff. Skilled staff can elevate any basic library into an excellent one by providing quality services.

Defining Total Quality Management (TQM)

Total Quality Management is a management-based approach on the belief that every employee should constantly enhance their skills to deliver products and services that customers highly value. TQM emphasizes on data-driven decisions, collaboration among teams and strong relationships with suppliers to ensure efficiency in organizational operations.

Cambridge Dictionary defines TQM as “the involvement of all of a company's managers and employees in making sure that its products and services are all of a high standard and exactly as designed”.

According to C.H. Saisravan, “TQM is a management philosophy used by organisations that seek to improve product and service quality and increase customer satisfaction by restructuring traditional management practices”.

In the words of V. Van Vliet, Total Quality Management is a comprehensive and systematic approach to organizational management that emphasizes constant quality enhancement of products and services through continuous feedback.

Principles of Total Quality Management

Some of the principles on which TQM is based upon can be applied in library services. These are as follows:

- **User Focus:** The primary purpose of the library is to serve the users. Priority should be given in satisfying user needs by delivering relevant documents. For this, regular feedback is necessary that includes doing surveys, group focus, etc.
- **Continuous Development:** TQM promotes continuous enhancement of products, services and processes. Libraries can make development by engaging staff in the innovation process by identifying the field for improvement and apply solutions.
- **Staff Engagement:** Staff involvement should be there at all levels to promote accountability and improvement. Empowered staffs make quality contribution to library services.
- **Strong Leadership:** Strong leadership is necessary to maintain quality culture. Leaders should point out the importance of TQM and take initiatives to improve the service.
- **Decision Making:** Decision Making relies on proper data and its analysis. Libraries should make use of user analytics, feedbacks, etc to make informed choices.
- **Interconnected Process:** Libraries must identify their services as interconnected process in order to find out the areas of ineffectiveness and probable improvements.
- **Leadership Obligation:** Strong leadership is necessary for enhancing a culture of quality. It is the duty of the leaders to emphasise the significance of TQM and support initiatives focused on improving the services.
- **Systematic Approach to Management:** Incorporating quality management into an organisation, strategic framework helps to ensure that quality objectives are in tune with the institution's overall goals.

Relevance of Total Quality Management in Libraries

Total Quality Management (TQM) is essential for libraries and information centres as it offers a structured method for improving service quality and operational efficiency. By focusing on customer needs, TQM helps libraries prioritize user expectations that results in greater user satisfaction. Engaging all employees in the improvement process promotes a collaborative atmosphere where librarians, administrative staff and technical personnel participate in decision-making and problem-solving. This comprehensive approach enhances processes like cataloguing, information retrieval and user support, leading to more efficient and effective services.

TQM fosters a unified system in which various departments collaborate toward shared goals, improving consistency and coordination. Libraries can coordinate with their mission by embracing a strategic and systematic approach and facilitating a continuous quality enhancement. The principle of continuous improvement motivates libraries to consistently seek feedback, stay current with technological developments and adopt best practices, ensuring they remain adapted to evolving user needs. Further, fact-based decision making enables libraries to utilize data and metrics to effectively guide their improvement initiatives. Here are some of the benefits of the implementation of TQM in libraries:

- **Enhanced User Satisfaction:** The main purpose of a library is to serve its users effectively. Libraries with TQM implement feedback mechanism through surveys, suggestion box and direct communication in order to gain insights into user needs and preferences. This feedback helps to make service adjustments, collections development and program offerings, ultimately leading to enhanced user satisfaction.
- **Improved Service Quality:** TQM helps in improving the quality of the service delivered. In libraries TQM helps in refining and analysing the process of acquisition, cataloguing, circulation and reference service. For answering inquiries, adoption of standardised procedures leads to reduced response time with accurate information dissemination.
- **Promote Employee Engagement:** TQM encourages total employee involvement in the quality improvement process. Libraries can infuse a sense of responsibility and ownership among the staffs by engaging them in decision making process. This leads to increase in morale and innovative solutions. Regular and continuous training helps the library staff to achieve their organisational goals.
- **Data-Based Decision Making:** In the present age of information, libraries have access to large amount of data. TQM helps in making informed decisions by collecting this data. Libraries analyse the data on several aspects like usage statistics, user satisfaction and take feedback to know the current trends and make prudent decisions accordingly regarding collection, service and outreach activities. Data-based decision making helps libraries to remain aligned to evolving user needs.
- **Efficient Operations:** TQM helps libraries to critically examine their operations like acquisition, cataloguing, circulation, etc. By doing this, libraries can identify the areas with deficiencies and the probable areas for improvement. Applying Lean principles, which emphasize reducing waste and enhancing value, can greatly improve operations, resulting in cost savings and better allocation of resources.
- **Better Public Relation:** Quality serves as a prominent management tool in TQM. Its implementation in libraries improves the reputation of the library staff and support better public relations.

Challenges in Implementing TQM in Libraries

In spite of benefits, implementation of TQM in libraries faces several challenges like

- ◆ **Resistance to Change:** Staff members may be reluctant to adopt new practices and innovations or changes in their day-to-day activities.
- ◆ **Limited Resources:** Limited budget and lack of adequate staff can hamper the functioning of an organisation including staff training and implementation of policies.
- ◆ **Balancing Tradition with Innovations:** Libraries sometimes struggle to maintain traditional values while adopting new modern practices.
- ◆ **Lack of Co-ordination:** People at the top of the management level are sometimes unwilling to share information and responsibility with their subordinates.
- ◆ **Inadequate Training:** Lack of proper training on TQM principle and practices can hamper the effective implementation of the process.
- ◆ **Lack of Measurement Tools:** Without proper measurement tools or mechanisms to access the quality, it becomes very difficult to trace the progress and the probable areas for improvement.

Conclusion

Total Quality Management provides an overall approach for libraries to boost their service, increase operational efficiency and foster strong connections with their users. Libraries should be seen as service organizations focused on meeting the needs of their users. For this, it's essential to invest in the development of library professionals through regular training sessions, seminars, conferences and workshops, fostering a qualitative transformation in the work culture. With the rapid increase of user needs, the quality of service must be enhanced in order to meet the demands. Libraries by adopting and adhering to TQM principles, can provide better quality services, promote collaboration among libraries and remain flexible to changing technological environment. The ongoing push towards better quality and excellence allows libraries to adapt to the changing needs of their user communities and sustain their important role in giving access to information and knowledge.

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