

Total Quality Management of University Libraries in India

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Abstract

Total Quality Management (TQM) is a system of continuous improvement employing participative management and centred on the needs of customers. TQM principles are yet to be applied in the libraries of India. It involves management responsibility, personnel and material sources and a quality system structure. The author discusses how the Quality Circle, a new approach to library management, can be adopted to achieve success in the library operations and programmes. Implementation of TQM in the university libraries is discussed and a TQM-MODEL is suggested to bring a total quality approach for a customer-focused library. TQM aims at introducing a new cultural change which is likely to bring about greater participation of the employees in information management activities in the university libraries.

Introduction

Instead of just trying to 'do better' in an undefined, intensive way, continuous improvement can enable university libraries to set measurable goals based on qualitative performance indicators and monitor progress towards those goals. This is the motto behind the Total Quality Management (TQM) in libraries. It is "a system of continuous improvement employing participative management and centred on the needs of customers". The concept of TQM presupposes employees involvement; problem solving teams; statistical methods; long term goals and thinking; analysis of the problems; continuous sharpening of quality performances leading to excellence.

TQM embodies certain values and approaches common to university and research libraries today, yet several of its defined and most extraordinary elements such as continuous improvement, customer-focused planning, quality tools and measurement are yet to be applied to libraries. There are few fundamental concepts of TQM which attract special attention. These are the concepts largely unfamiliar to libraries but seem to have strong potential to offer new insights and strategies in

library management. They are : breaking down interdepartmental barriers, the internal customers and continuous improvement. University libraries basically hierarchial organisations, tend to divide staff and functions into different technical units to fulfill the overall mission of providing information for their users. By working together on problem-solving tools and techniques the skill of the staff grows and they learn to participate in issues affecting other departments and gain a larger sense of organisational purpose.

Quality Management in Library and Information Service

A quality system, specially in case of service organisations like libraries, has three key aspects such as :

- Management responsibility
- Personnel and material resources and
- Quality system structure.

Management is responsible for establishing a policy for service quality and customer satisfaction. Quality policy should be developed to create a quality circle and quality culture. Quality policy should be promulgated, understood, implemented and maintained.

Quality Circle

Quality circle is a management technique and a new approach for managing people and other resources in such a way as to achieve success in library programmes. This requires the library manager to adopt a philosophy in day-to-day operations which envisages (a) management does not know all the problems; (b) management is even less likely to know the solutions; (c) the employee is the expert and the closest to the problem; and (d) employees often have solutions if they are asked for them.

A quality circle brings together co-workers who have different jobs, backgrounds, prejudices and personalities. Quality circles are small groups consist of seven or eight members, who join voluntarily, meet regularly on a weekly basis, to discuss, learn and then apply techniques for identifying, analysing and solving problems affecting their work in a library. More than one circle may be operational within a library. Meetings which generally last for one hour, permit members to :

- Identify a theme problem;
- Receive technical training;

- Analyse a problem;
- Prepare recommendations for implementing a solution;
- Present recommendations to the management.

The problems addressed are not restricted to those dealing with quality but may be in any area that influences, directly or indirectly, the output of the work unit, such as safety, job structure or flow of information. Among the members of the group is a facilitator who serves as the expert. The circle works on one problem at a time and proposes solutions and action plans which are presented to management for approval.

Techniques of Quality Circle

Many of the techniques used in Quality circles are familiar to most library managers. Some of the more commonly used techniques are :

- Problem identification through Brainstorming or Nominal Group Technique.
- Data collection and Display.
- Data Analysis - Force Field or Cause and Effect.
- Group Dynamics.
- Leadership.
- Communication.

TQM Implementation in University Libraries

To start with TQM

It is not desirable to think TQM as too analytical in approach, rather it is a holistic one to the management of organisation. It is not a goal in

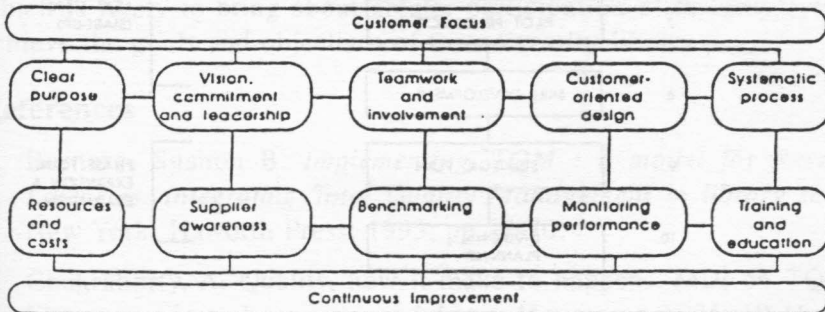


Fig.1 : Total Quality Management

itself; rather TQM is a long term and organisation-wide process. It may be expensive to implement initially but will prove economic in the long run. The key concepts of TQM must always have a focus on the customer and continuous improvement and influence other components of TQM (Fig 1).

TQM seeks to go beyond meeting expressed needs of the customer and try to address the wants of the customer that was unknown thereby innovating and improving the services being offered. Delighting to customer is a watch word in TQM.

A Model for University Libraries

The Model presented here (Fig 2) illustrates a comprehensive, systematic process of integrating TQM into a university library environment, beginning with exploration by top management. After the decision to introduce TQM has been made, the process which follows is commonly referred to as "implementation".

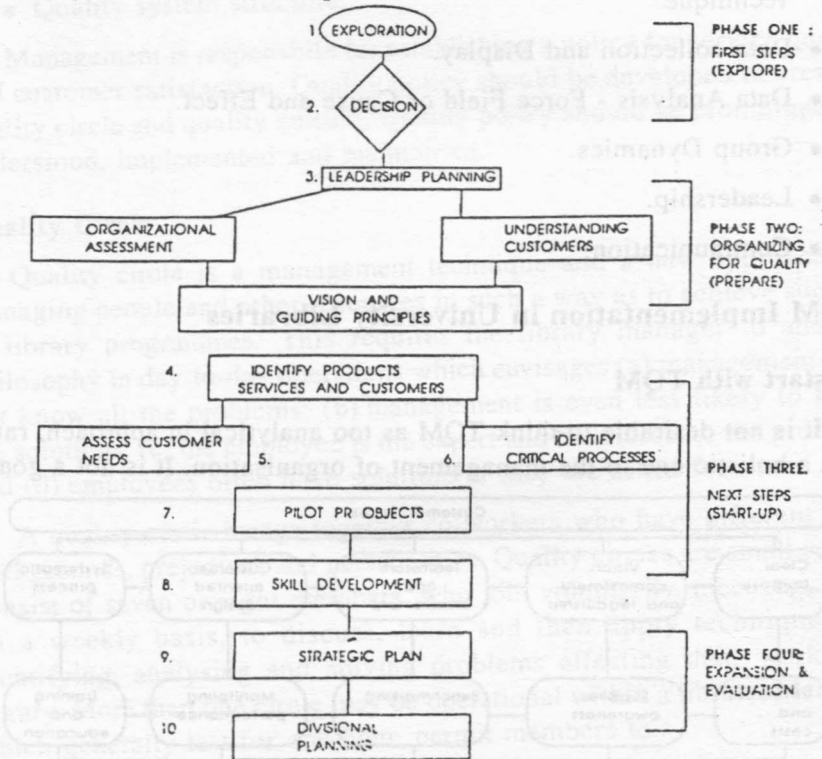


Fig.2 : TQM Library Implimentation Model

TQM developed and implemented in manufacturing and corporate sectors required initially a holistic change. In libraries a more integrative approach is possible. For example the TQM elements such as participative management, staff training and development and responsive service users are already established concepts in university libraries. As a result these libraries are in a position to expand and improve upon principles they already value and employ, while introducing new approaches to planning, problem solving, and envisioning, future customer services and needs.

Hence while implementing TQM in university libraries; we may think in terms of adopting a total quality approach or creating a quality, customer-focused library.

Although the model proposes the implementation process in four phases and ten steps, this does not mean that these steps and activities must be strictly sequential or all that are mandatory. Rather the model presents the various issues, elements and processes that would comprise a comprehensive TQM-based transition. While adopting quality management a library may undertake same activities concurrently in a different order.

Conclusion

The university libraries will have to witness drastic changes during the next decade, while entering to new mellenium. The library automation has already taken place and there will be emphasis on online bibliographic searches. The library managers shall continue to look to the business literature and to adopt management trends and practices to find ways in the competitive environment. Strategic planning is necessary to study the users of information, those who are described as customers or buyers of information.

The whole process of TQM aims at introducing a new cultural change which is likely to bring about greater participation of the employees to achieve the goals and objectives of the university library.

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