

Understanding the Essentials of Total Quality Management (TQM) for Library and Information Management in Academic Settings

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Abstract

TQM is a holistic and systems approach aimed at satisfying the customer requirements on a continual basis by involving everyone in the system, and at a lower cost. It has three basic principles : i) customer driven instead of generator driven, ii) focus on processes rather than be preoccupied with results, and iii) total involvement of staff. The authors have enumerated the characteristics of TQM. In the changing information environment, the academic libraries have to adopt TQM for their survival. Benefits of TQM for academic libraries and barriers for its implementation are also provided. Quality is a very important tool for application of TQM in academic libraries which can be measured, managed and improved by measuring rod of customer satisfaction.

Introduction

Total Quality Management (TQM) has become a hot topic in business and academic circles in late 1980s and early 1990s. Business managers are trying to figure out how to do it, while academicians are trying to determine what it actually is. None of them completely agree upon either the definition of TQM or how to put the concept into practice. Many describe it as a miraculous and universal cure for all organisational maladies.

Defining Total Quality Management (TQM)

TQM is a way of managing to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, flexibility and competitiveness of a business as a whole and it involves whole organisation getting organised and committed to quality in each department, each activity and each person at each level¹.

TQM is a management philosophy used by organisations that seek to improve product and service quality and increase customer satisfaction by restructuring traditional management practices².

TQM is a holistic and systems approach aimed at satisfying the customer requirements on a continual basis (quality first time, every time, all the time) by involving everyone in the system, and at a lower cost (management). TQM has one objective, i.e., continuous improvement what the Japanese prefer to call 'Kaizen' a philosophy of total life (5-S keys). TQM has three basic principles :

- i) Customer driven instead of generator driven.
- ii) Focus on processes rather than be preoccupied with results.
- iii) Total involvement of staff, i.e., to use workers heads in addition to their hands³.

In line with this approach Quality has been very aptly explained as : (i) a strategy to survive in a competitive era, (ii) a key to globalization, (iii) a path to excellence, and (iv) an eternal philosophy of continuous learning⁴.

Characteristics of TQM

In view of TQM definition following characteristics can be inferred.

- TQM is a management philosophy to guide the librarians in meeting the challenges of the time.
- TQM starts at the top management of library.
- TQM calls for strategic planning based on vision, mission, goals and objectives of academic libraries.
- TQM calls for every one to be skilled and knowledgeable (HRD).
- TQM requires organisation wide involvement.
- TQM requires quality as a strategic priority along with other priorities.
- TQM promotes teamwork.
- TQM focuses on the users.
- TQM recognises internal and external users of the library.
- TQM aims to instill a "prevention not an inspection" ethic.
- TQM is a process and activities based approach.

- TQM emphasises the importance of measurement through the measuring rod of user satisfaction.
- TQM reduces total cost of meeting user requirements.
- TQM is a disciplined, continuous and system approach.

Understanding total Quality - The 5 Ps

Total quality in libraries cover the entire gamut of library activities. There is nothing that does not fall within its purview. It encompasses not just the results aspect but also the quality of people and the quality of processes. It is an emotional experience for the user. Quality is an attribute of a product or service that can be improved. Total quality is a dynamic state associated with product (catalogue, current contents, accession lists, bibliographics), provision of service, processes, people and place (environment) that meet and exceed user expectations⁹.

Need for TQM in Academic Libraries

Academic libraries are traditional information enclaves based on traditional quality standard (ACRL) and have not been able to project the image of the library more than traditional book lending service and healthy image of profession to the public. We need to evaluate our performance on all fronts against the yardsticks of user satisfaction, who is after all the reason for the existence of the whole system. Journey to successful TQM must be accepted if we have to survive. Moreover philosophical foundations of TQM are based on wonderful body of knowledge, which are essential to know and practised if we hope to live not just moment to moment but for pride of workmanship.

Need of the hour in the midst of dramatically changing information environment is to adopt a complex and integrated intervention (TQM) which encompasses both the transactional and transformational strategies¹⁰ so as to provide right information to right users at right time and at right cost. Our services and products are underutilised because they are generator driven. There is an urgent need to understand the process of identifying expressed, unexpressed and dormant information needs. This process would discover, as a by product several ideas, tools, methods and techniques of satisfying the users needs. TQM can meet all the requirements of information gathering to dissemination operation¹¹.

Research libraries are in the midst of a major paradigm shift because of digitised reading materials coupled with transforming nature of information technology tools. Ownership is complemented by access and

a new need emerges for managing the information and knowledge that comes from both. It is necessary to think of new paradigm.

Competition for resources, rising expectation of users, increasing complexity of information and provision from a variety of new providers, escalating costs and increasing fees have enhanced the operational transparency and accountability of academic libraries. Moreover, increasing awareness and consciousness of staff and user about good and bad, right and privileges has made the situation more grim and complex to handle. TQM may be the answer "To do more with less"¹².

Benefit of TQM for Academic Libraries

1. TQM reduces bureaucracy, empower staff and create a team base culture, which is keenly desired and suited for mechanistic, hierarchical organisational structures like university libraries. Librarian's role becomes one of support and coaching.
2. TQM helps in gauging users needs and expectations in a proactive way and equip the librarians to provide more and better services with the same resources efficiently and effectively, resulting increased user satisfaction and loyalty.
3. TQM is an evolutionary process and can easily be incorporated into the already existing management system of libraries.
4. Brainstorming exercise helps to know what functions are necessary to the efficient operation of a library and who should perform these, resulting increased employee involvement and dedication.
5. Reduction in user complaint and gain a competitive advantage over other information providers.
6. TQM helps in breaking down intersectional barriers / status in a library and promotes cooperation and teamwork instead of competition.
7. In TQM quality is a high profile management tool. Its implementation in libraries improves the image of the library staff and helps in public relations and marketing.
8. TQM ensures consistent qualitative library and information services to the users and defines user satisfaction issues.
9. TQM ensures a non-threatening environment for open debate for problem solving, for change, for H.R.D. and clearly indicates power, responsibility and accountability of each employee.
10. Empowered staff members develop a sense of self determination; a sense of meaning; a sense of competence; a sense of impact and become more effective, innovative, transformational and charismatic.

Barriers for TQM Implementation

1. Soft role model of Indian work culture.
2. TQM vocabulary or barrier of language, e.g., customer, quality control, total quality and management send up red flags in academic and service environment.
3. Commitment barrier; Fundamental cultural changes cannot be accomplished overnight.
4. We are accustomed to solve problems quickly and do not want to be impatient with long process.
5. Senior professionals in libraries are afraid of turning over their services and practices to the uninformed whims of users.
6. Top management is not willing to share information and power with subordinates.

Conclusion

Quality is a very important tool for application of TQM in academic libraries which can be measured, managed and improved by measuring rod of customer satisfaction and through user surveys, suggestions, complaints. Library culture depends to a large extent on leader behaviour towards staff.

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on development policy should enable the library to provide efficient and prompt services to its users. The print on paper is slowly shifting to electronic publishing. The new medium will become more efficient in terms of storage, maintenance and accessing even from remote places. The print-on-paper will stay and is not likely to be replaced all together with the electronic / digital documents but the trend is shifting rapidly towards electronic storage and access. In view of this trend, the libraries require to shift their attention towards developing electronic documents selectively and access to electronic information sources using network facilities. The collection development in libraries should concentrate on network-based resources and sharing of resources to enable wider use of information resources to serve the users. It is necessary to know the features of electronic publishing along with the conventional publishing in collection development.

Electronic Publishing (EP) is the publication process where the manuscripts are submitted in electronic form, edited, printed and

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