TQM: An Over View in Academic Libraries

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Abstract

Total Quality Management (TQM) has been the focus of much attention in management literature in recent years. There has been a steady increase in the amount of material dealing with its application to the service sector but very little that relates to application of TQM to libraries. This paper discusses the different issues relating to TQM and its implication on in the field of library science. How contemporary total quality management related to library science is discussed in brief & the possibilities that may be used to make this managerial approach more successful in the library field is also discussed.

Introduction

Library, the heart of any educational system, is also the part and parcel of total system aimed at achieving the institutional goals. Information is considered as social commodity to be utilized. Influence of ICT and computer networks, have made the libraries of technological institutions, global villages. There is the change in the system of providing information services. The conventional methods of providing services have now been replaced by ICT and seriously guided by total quality management tools and techniques.

What is TQM

Customer's needs are to be identified and their problems are to be solved and continuous satisfaction ensured. The library should focus on providing the best services possible and be willing to change to serve its customers. To determine if changes need to be made, a library administrator might ask the following questions:

1. What are our niche markets?
2. What do the customers come in for?
3. How can I look at the efficiency of the library?
4. How do we serve the current customers that exist today?

TQM is defined as both philosophy and set of guiding principles that represent the foundations of a continuously improving organization. It is the application of qualitative methods and human resources to improve all the processes within an organization and exceed customer needs now and in the future. TQM integrates fundamental management techniques, existing improvements and technical tools under a disciplined approach.

Basic Laws or Approaches of TQM

TQM requires six basic concepts:
- A committed and involved management to provide long term top-to-bottom organizational support.
- An unwavering focus on the customer both internally and externally.
- Effective involvement and utilization of the entire work force.
- Continuous improvement of the business and production process.

These concepts outline an excellent way to run an organization.

Tools for TQM

Libraries and information centers are applying at their disposal, many quality tools for continuous improvement in the process of output. Some of them are as follows:

Flow Chart

It is a graphical presentation of a sequence of activities and decisions. It is a device of planning and control and valuable tool for increasing efficiency, reducing cost and eliminating the waste, unnecessary steps or delay.

Cause and Effect Analysis

This tool considers environment, material resources, human resources methods adopted to process the work and actual output through machines or manual. During examination time, the need of the users are more and to satisfy the users, more reading materials are purchased and increased working hours of library is also considered.

Histogram

A type of chart shows whether the repeated measurement of a given quality characteristic conforms to a standard bell-shaped curve and deviation needs for corrective action.

Benchmarking

It is a process of maintaining the standards; the practice of benchmarking is for identifying, studying and building upon the best practices in one's library or in the total libraries.

Control Chart
Statistical control of repetitive operations help employees to keep quality measurement within an acceptable range.

Relationship between Library Science and TQM

Attribute Comparative	TQM	Library Science
Definition	Customer oriented	User oriented
Priorities	First among equals of service & cost	User & Service
Decisions	Long term	Long term
Emphasis	Prevention	Prevention like anticipation of demand
Errors	System	System/Techniques
Responsibility	Everyone	Library Personnal
Problem solving	Teams	Professionals' teams
Procurement	Life cycle costs, Partnership	User centric (cost is implicit)
Manager's Role	Delegate, coach	Delegate Assistance

TQM in Libraries
Among the service industries such as Airlines, Banking institutions, Insurance Companies and Health care providers, Libraries are the last to adopt TQM practices. For a long time, Librarians saw themselves as keepers of knowledge rather than active agents in information transfer. Though the main aim/objective of libraries is to satisfy the users, the library professionals often forget that. But today's libraries are pushed to a position where they have to provide quality services to its users, to justify their existence. So, now libraries are also started adopting TQM practices following other kinds of service industries.

Benefits of TQM in Libraries
If implemented carefully, quality management principles yield positive benefits libraries such as:
- Incremental changes lead to continuous improvement – quick solutions may yield only partial results.
- Forces library managers to develop leadership skills interested of replaying on power within position to obtain results.
- Increase staff participation in decision-making, thus increasing the feeling of "Ownership" of decisions and directions once charted.
- Improves the level of training given to staff, thus increasing skills.
- Helps break down barriers between library departments and improves Communication within the organization.
- Provides a method of improving services to users in a period to similar resources

Possibilities of TQM in Libraries

The rapid growth of the library-focused TQM electronic discussion lists and TQM related articles in the library professional literature illustrates the interest of Library field in TQM and its various processes. A large number of libraries are at least considering if not actually implementing, this new-user oriented, teamwork-based process for continuous quality improvement.

Let us discuss, how the quality of library operations and services will be improved by implementing TQM. For example, let us see how the quality of acquisition service can be improved by TQM. Acquisition is one of the basic activities of a library. The process of ordering and acquiring the selected materials are known as acquisition.

How TQM will help in improving the quality of acquisition function? A total quality tool. 'Flow chart' will considerably improve the quality of acquisition.

In any acquisition system, one has to follow the following steps, to acquire a document. (For convenience purpose, the flow chart is not drawn with standard flow chart symbols, instead steps are written)

1. Receiving the suggestion for a document
2. Checking the bibliographic data with
    a. Trade catalogue
    b. Books in print

3. Check its availability within the library
    a. by checking the catalogue
    b. by checking with the already ordered documents list

4. Determine its cost
    a. from the standard sources
    b. from the vendors
    c. from the publishers

5. Get the invoice, if required
6. Determine whether the fund is available
    If the answer is yes go to step 7
    If the answer is no then wait till the fund is available or try to get the extra fund
7. Select the vendor
    a. based on vendor rating studies
    b. based on other methods

8. Place an order
    a. with certain conditions
    b. without any condition
    c. if there will be any advance payment then clear the payment from accounts department and enter the details in file

9. Send reminders if the document is not received in time
10. If the vendor is taking long time or unable to provide the document then cancel

the order and repeat steps 7 and 8
11. After receiving the document
    a.   check its bibliographic data
    b.   check its cost
    c.   settle the payment if it is due

12. Enter the details in access register

The acquisition section staff member can easily understand the steps involved in the process with the help of a flow char, drawn based on the above steps. Now one can check till which stage the process has come. And with a flow chart one can determine where the problem occurs, if any, and why it occurs.
Like this we can attempt to develop flow charts for many of the library functions.

Let us take, another example, discharging of a document. The flow chart for that function will have the following steps.

1.   Document returned by the user
2.   Look for charge-out card
3.   Check whether the document is overdue?
a.   if yes collect fine or send notice
b.   if no go to step 4

4.   Check whether any other user reserved that document
    a.   if yes, notify the user and place on hold shell
    b.   if no, discharge the document and pass it on to shelving

Like flow charts, there are other total quality tools, such as fish-bone diagram, pare to analysis, control chart , which will help in identifying and solving the problems of library operations and thus improves the quality of the functions.

Conclusion
Libraries are apt places to implement TQM. Libraries are service organizations dedicated to their users (customers). By formulating a strategic plan, and following it with a commitment to continuous quality improvement, library managers can transform and improve their organizations.

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