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Total Quality Management and Libraries

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Abstract

This paper presents concept of Quality, Quality and users Needs, Total Quality Management, Basic concepts of Total Quality Management, Characteristics of Total Quality Management, Key elements in Total Quality Management and Total Quality Management in Libraries.

1.Introduction

Total Quality Management was initially used in manufacturing organizations but now it is being adopted by service organization, such as Airlines, Banking Institutions, Insurance Companies and health care providers. However the libraries are just started to adopt Total Quality Management. Prevailing conditions are forcing libraries to adopt the basics of Total Quality Management. If the libraries did not pay attention to users' needs and did not provide value added services, the need for the libraries would decline in the years ahead.

What is Total Quality Management?

S.Thakur defines the Total Quality Management is a concept which make quality the responsibility of all people within an organization. All the persons involved are expected to contribute to the overall improvement of quality. TQM is the preferred method to increase the user satisfaction. It reduces the defects of the organization and increases the productivity.

Jurow and Barnard defines Total Quality Management is a system of continuous improvement employing participative management and centered on the needs of users.

Concept of Quality

Quality is not what procedures define but it is what the customer's require. There was a time when the quality of libraries or library services were defined in terms of stock size, available resources and the mere number of services provided by them.For a user inquiring about particular information receiving the required information is the outcome and the way user is treated by the reference librarian is the process. The performance of the service provides is measured against customers expectations. If the provider exceeds their expectations, the service is evaluated as high in quality.

Quality and Users Needs

Users needs also keep changing with time, so are their requirements changing needs lead to the change in strategy towards achieving the goals of user satisfaction. That is why it is called that quality is a journey, not the destination, and it can be built upon only through the continuous improvement process. Meeting changing requirements of the users with time requires updating of libraries on continuous basis in terms of its resources, equipment, facilities. A library functions under certain constraints like financial, personnel management policies, type / nature of the library, etc, and for a library it is never possible to satisfy the users from all walks of society. Therefore, it is essential to segment of users on the basis of

their literature / information needs and to decide upon the group of users to which the library wants to provide quality services.

Basic Concepts of TQM

Joseph Juran Guru of TQM Professed steps to Quality improvement.
- Build awareness of the need and opportunity for improvement.
- Set goals for improvement
- Organize to reach the goals.
- Provide training
- Carryout projects to solve problems
- Report progress
- Give recognition
- Communicate results
- Keep score
- Maintain momentum in improvement

Characteristics of TQM

The following are the main characteristics of TQM
1 To become user driven rather than self-focused.
2 To concentrate on process rather than to be preoccupied with results.
3 Use of workers heads in addition to their hands.
4 External and Internal alignment.
5 Total involvement, continuous improvement and leadership commitment.

Key Elements in Total Quality Management Process
- Focusing on users expectations.
- Developing a quality measurement system.
- Identification of Root causes.
- Developing a communication system.
- Employee motivation.
- Training for quality.
- Implementing quality improvement.

Total Quality Management in Libraries

Total Quality Management in library services requires change in the mental frame of the employees as well as the executives of the library, customer segmentation in terms of their needs, service strategy to each user segment within library constraints and last but not the least, support from the top management of the library.

Total Quality Management requires a changed attitude of employees towards their work. Each employee has to contribute his or her best for achieving the objectives of the library, which in turn are derive by the objectives of the library. Everyone has to work to meet and exceed user's requirements for literature and information. A circulation Assistant/employee is expected in the Total Quality Management Framework not just to issue and receive back the documents, but to satisfy all the circulation related demands of the users in terms of the process and the outcome.

An Information Officer is expected to delight the information searchers by providing pin-pointed information in the least possible time in the form most appropriate to the user. Successful implementation of Total Quality Management also requires user segmentation based on their literature / information needs. It requires deciding on the customers to whom a library aims to serve, assessing their needs, and deciding on the services the library has to provide to each segment of users, keeping in mind its limitations in terms of finance, staff, documents and databases.

Support from top management is a must for the successful implementation of Total Quality Management. Top management may include the members of the library committee as well as head of the library or information unit. Their role is to formulate quality policy based on the missions and objectives of the library and to communicate the policy to all the members of the library. They have to arrange for the education and training of the shop floor workers as well as the middle management and have to promote and supports participative activities like quality circles, suggestion schemes and team work and the like.

Conclusion

Total Quality Management concept is to achieve excellence. It does not demand to do different things. It simply demands to do things differently. In a library with Total Quality Management, the employees have to do the same job as they were doing previously, but the way will be different.

However, implementation of Total Quality Management in libraries will provide a vital link for managerial decisions makers. Further, the staff becomes proactive rather than reactive, and they no longer simply react to an administrative mandate asking them to produce results, justify their worth, and relate what they do to their host organizations and their strategies.

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