Application of total quality management in the academic library

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ABSTRACT

In 21st Century Total Quality Management is primary requirement of any service providing organization. Students are now demanding quality service for their monies worth. The managers of quality must have an intention to assess the product; sound knowledge of product features and characteristics; customer preferences and resources. All academic library staff must receive training, including skill training; on the job guidance; retraining. Well-trained staff are the competitive weapon for better quality service in an academic library. The successful personnel management includes the following: Job Analysis, Job Evaluation, Staffing, Recruitment and Selection, Tests, etc. A planned, proactive process approach to facilitate change by aligning people with processes and technology to achieve an organization's vision and performance objectives.

Key Words: Total Quality Management (TQM), Common Communication Format (CCF), Academic Library, Customer, Evaluation.

INTRODUCTION

The application computers and TQM in Library serve as panacea for all the existing ills of libraries. The Computerization of various sections viz., acquisition, classification and cataloguing and the circulation and use of the reading materials besides making provision for information and retrieval systems. The successful personnel management includes the following: Job Analysis, Job Evaluation, Staffing, Recruitment and Selection, Tests, etc. A planned, proactive process approach to facilitate change by aligning people with processes and technology to achieve an organization's vision and performance objectives. During the digital era, the role of library professional is to perform the total quality management very effectively to satisfy the requirements of users (Ramamoorthy G, Chinnaian S and Ramprasath,R, 2009)

QUALITY

Quality is often used synonymously with excellence. However, for proper quality management, defining quality and its measurement are essential. Quality has been defined variedly in different contexts. There is wide range of definitions or approaches to quality, describing the relative nature of the concept in the context of higher education. Some of the definitions are discussed here.

Green and Harvey (1993) identified five different approaches to quality in higher education. These are, quality :

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· in terms of exceptional (high standards);

· in terms of consistency;

· as fitness for purpose (meeting stated purposes);

· as value for money; and

· as transformative (transformation of the participant).

Nunan and Calvert (1992) point out that "The term quality defies any definition which will be universally accepted. When it is linked to performance, quality implies evaluation for comparative purposes; 'measures' of quality involve norms and standards and judgments of quality are assisted through use of norm or criterion referenced indicators. Where measurement focuses on the student as a product of education, quality is seen as `value-based' by the process of education. When the emphasis is management of quality, attention focuses on strategies for achieving or improving quality."

GARVIN (1988) IDENTIFIED FIVE APPROACHES TO DEFINE QUALITY

· Transcendent approach (Quality always exists)

· Product based approach (Products meeting high quality standards)

· User based approach (quality to meet user's requirements)

· Manufacturing-based approach

· Value-based approach.

In the context of Information Systems, Quality pertains to:

· Performance of the system,

· Quality and Quantity of the Document Store,

· Quality of Information Products judged in terms of defined norms or criteria,

· User satisfaction in terms of value for money spent (cost-benefit) and value for information content (cost-effectiveness). Therefore, the Quality Management Strategies should integrate these various approaches for achieving improved Quality Information Services.

ISO 8420 defines quality as : 'The totality of features and characteristics of a product, process of service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs.' However, there are certain limitations to this approach. The usefulness of user-based quality definition is dependent on how well the user or customer is informed about opportunities and limitations of a product or service offered. User satisfaction level may also vary in terms of value for money and value for information content received.

In the value-based definition, quality is defined in terms of costs and prices. Thus, a quality product is one that provides conformance at an acceptable price or cost. Peter Brophy (1993) defines it as: "Quality is … . the closest fit to user' needs that resources permit."

The managers of quality must have an intention to assess the product; sound knowledge of product features and characteristics; customer preferences and resources.

QUALITY CONTROL

Although the demarcating line between the terms 'Quality Control' and 'Quality Assessment' is very narrow, some scientists attempted to draw a line of distinction between these terms.

Tannock (1992) states that quality control "Consists merely of the operational techniques and activities that are used to fulfill requirements for quality, usually interpreted to mean conformance to the required specifications."

QUALITY ASSURANCE

Carley and Waldron (1984) defines quality assurance as "planned, deliberate actions or activities instigated and carried out with the intent and purpose of maintaining and improving the quality of learning for participants."

While the above definition provided a general understanding of the concept, it does not explain the unique nature of quality assurance.

According to Frazer (1992), "a university which takes quality assurance seriously emerges as a self-critical community of students, teachers, support staff and senior managers each contributing to and striving for continued improvement."

The observation of various definitions of quality assurance as expressed in the literature of higher education reveals that Quality Assurance is a continuing, active and integrative process for maintaining and improving quality rather than simply a system of evaluation and checking for errors.

TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT (TQM)

Total Quality Management takes an integrative approach for assuring quality in an organisation. The four basic principles explain the nature of Total Quality Management.

· Delight the customer.

What service would delight the customer ?

What are the requirements of the customer ?

· Management by fact.

Knowing the current quality standards of the product is the first step in the process of improvement.

Knowledge of facts at all levels is an essential aspect of continuous improvement.

· People-based Management.

Systems, standards and technology themselves will not provide quality. People must understand what to do, how to do and must be ready to review the progress of their own work, for continuous improvement of quality.

· TQM is aimed at continuous improvement.

QUALITY STANDARDS

Within quality management, a variety of quality management standards, evaluation forms and schemes for self-appraisal have evolved. These standards are practice-oriented tools whose basic function is to create and sustain confidence in a customer-supplier relationship and provide a systematic approach to quality management.

The ISO 9000 series of standards is widely used as the most recent international standards for quality management. In the LIS Sector, the Common Communication Format (CCF) evolved as the bibliographic format.

MANAGING QUALITY IN AN ACADEMIC LIBRARY

In a service organization like an academic library the customer satisfaction means fulfilling expectations. Librarians must find out what readers want and concentrate upon providing it. Designing an appropriate service means asking

· Who are the customers?

· What do they want?

· What can the organization provide?

In a library there are basically two types of customer: those who are in a hurry and those who want to kill time. An academic library has to identify these and serve them accordingly.

MANAGING CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS

The expectations that the customers bring to a library have a critical effect upon their perceptions of quality. It is better to acquire a reputation for one or two factors which are important to customers and to concentrate upon developing those.

Service delivery is like a theoretical performance. If customers are to gain maximum benefit from a service, they must know how to use it. So, properly planned user education is a must for an academic library.

Support systems should reflect customers' priorities. It is important to find out which services can be automated without losing the personal touch.

Getting feedback from the user is important to ascertain the quality of service. Regular users of an academic library can be given a questionnaire to get feedback from them for improving service.

The circulation desk staff are the front line staff who play a critical role is an academic library because they represent the library; first deal with inquiries/crises; manage the reader interface. Public services staff must be carefully-appointed and be given periodic training to keep up-to-date.

All academic library staff must receive training, including skill training; on the job guidance; retraining. Well-trained staff are the competitive weapon for better quality service in an academic library.

Teamwork plays a vital role in giving better quality service. People have to develop a culture and commitment towards quality service in an academic library. (Siraj Nissa Begum, 2003)

ISO 9000 Series Steps towards TQM in Academic Library

ISO 9000 has an internationally accepted certificate that accredits an organization for its quality management systems and procedures. ISO 9004-2:1992 has guidelines for services and was issued by ISO to establish and implement a quality system within a service organization such as an educational institution.(Siraj Nissa Begum, 2003)

CONCLUSION

In today's competitive age, Total Quality Management is primary requirement of any service providing organization. Students are now demanding quality service for their monies worth. There is therefore the need for library managers to re-examine their traditional role and adopt an entirely new culture which would satisfy the ever-increasing demand for improved and quality service to the clientele.

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