

## **Total Quality Management in Libraries**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Total Quality Management is a term that has mostly been used in the manufacturing sector since its inception in the 1970s. Starting from Japan from where the philosophy originated to the contemporary world, Total Quality Management as a concept and a practice has travelled both geographically and temporally. This study extends the concept of TQM to the service sector. It then narrows it down to the particular context of libraries. The study tries to assess the benefits and identify methods of implementing the idea in library management. It is expected that TQM would enable libraries to become efficient service providers.

**Key Words :** Quality, Management, Library, Service sector

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **“Quality and quality management”:**

Quality is an important term for customers it serves to specify criteria for judging products and services provided by suppliers. While the term is primarily used to assess the level of satisfaction of customers; quality itself may mean more as it may be related to intrinsic nature of product. Its meaning may be enlarged with context of use. Some definitions of the term “quality” which try to capture its different aspects are given below.

O’Neil (1994) has defined TQM as “a system that introduces and uses customer driven concepts, processes and tools, and continuously seeks to measure its success at meeting customer needs and improve upon its processes. It involves total organization participation and customer focus”<sup>1</sup>.

Robbins has said that “Total Quality Management is really a philosophy of management that is driven by customer needs and expectation”<sup>2</sup>.

W. Edwards Deming, TQM expert, defines quality as “A predictable degree of uniformity and dependability at low cost and suited to market”<sup>3</sup>.

According to Joseph M Juran “Quality is fitness for use or purpose”<sup>4</sup>

ISO 9000:2000 defines it as “Quality is the degree to which a set of inherent characteristics fulfills requirements”.

In such definitions one must interpret quality by looking at subsidiary terms. For instance *degree* means that quality can be judged with adjectives such as poor, good, and excellent. *Inherent* means a constituent or characteristic that exists in an entity. *Characteristics denote* feature, of something or someone that may be quantitative or qualitative. Requirement is a necessity or expectation that is demanded or imposed as an obligation.

Some other aspects of TQM includes procedures such as customer surveys, flow-charting work processes, analyzing the data, brainstorming solutions, developing performance standards (benchmarks) and selecting and implementing solutions. Emphasis is on process not product, and change occurs through a series of incremental steps, rather than an overnight transformation. The implementation of TQM therefore requires a long-term commitment.

**Total Quality Management (TQM):**

Total Quality Management can be understood as a philosophy which informs the development of a technique or a specific management approach that focuses on the constant quality improvement of an organization, system or procedure.

The concept of Total Quality Management may be understood by dissecting and inspecting each term that goes into the making of the phrase.

**Total:** Total immediately implies the involvement of each rung of the system in the process of achieving TQM. Total Quality can only be achieved when every member of the organization (irrespective of their position and function) is involved to serve this ideal.

**Quality:** As has been defined already, quality refers to the degree of excellence of the service provided to customers. It should fulfill their needs and be cost effective for both the company and the customer.

**Management:** Management implies effective handling and systematic interactions. Management is an important aspect of the concept because TQM requires the involvement of the entire organization. It therefore demands impeccable management from the top. Managers should be able to achieve an optimum utilization of resources available.

**The three basic concepts comprising TQM are:**

**Quality control:**

This is the central aspect and includes all activities that work towards maintaining a minimum desired level of quality. It implies continuous search for ways and methods to improve quality for maximum customer satisfaction at the lowest possible cost. Collecting feedback from customers and initiating effective remedial actions are two important ways of ensuring quality control. Some other prominent steps that help in quality control are

- Assessing and fixing quality standards
- Creating and managing an effective production system to achieve the desired standard
- Constant evaluation

**Employee participation:**

Employee participation implies appropriate involvement of all employees in the decision making processes. This helps in motivating employees by creating an inclusive environment. It also ensures that the quality standards are checked and maintained at each and every

step, by experts at that stage of production.

**Customer satisfaction:**

Customer satisfaction is the ultimate ground upon which the success and reputation of any enterprise rests. It is of primary importance then that customer satisfaction is taken care of. It helps in customer retention and also in an increase in the number of customers. It further strengthens the foundation of the enterprise. Conversely customer dissatisfaction can be a heavy price a system may have to pay. It must be avoided at all costs.

**Background of TQM:**

The usage of the term Total Quality Management can be traced back to the mid 1980s. Then it gathered rapid momentum and by late 1980s it was a recognized terminology of quality related language. The concept of TQM originated in and spread from Japan. But it is difficult to confine the term to a particular region or a specific date in history. TQM has continuously evolved as a philosophy. An important researcher is Armand V. Feigenbaum. He wrote a multi-edition book “*Total Quality Control*. One may also mention Kaoru Ishikawa who wrote “*What Is Total Quality Control? The Japanese Way*”. These authors certainly are the pioneers in developing the concept. There are other important contributors such as Phillip B. Crosby, W. Edwards Deming and Joseph M. Juran. They contributed greatly in giving shape to various dimensions of the concept, sometimes without specifically using the conventional terminology.

Profit-based ventures imbibed the philosophy and practices of TQM much before the concept came to the world of libraries and used by librarians. One of the premises of TQM is customer satisfaction. Since libraries involve public dealing and interaction with customers. TQM is a fitting management approach for this sphere.

**Benefits of TQM:**

TQM management system has immediate benefits for producer as well as customer it also has wider reaching benefits for society. Some of them are:-

1. TQM implies a continuous improvement of the product, organization and system. It is a process orientated approach towards continuous quality improvement. Hence overall quality of the product or services gets better.
2. The market condition is usually volatile and TQM helps one to cope with it. One may make most of the

ever changing market situation.

3. TQM involves totality in quality management implying that at every level, employees are also engaged in the decision making process. This provides an inclusive environment for them. Employees get motivated to perform better hence improving the overall quality of the product and service. It encourages evaluation at every stage of production.

4. The involvement of employees offers a chance for teamwork. The team spirit strengthens their mutual relations as well as positively impacts on quality of the service.

5. The ultimate goal of TQM is customer satisfaction which is important for any institution as customers are the most crucial pillar.

6. TQM values employees along with customers and therefore various steps are taken to satisfy employees who are seen as internal counter part of customers.

7. TQM enhances productivity through constant survey of market demands and its quest to meet them.

Benefits of TQM for libraries have been identified by Jurow and Barnard (1993), they include the removal of internal barriers, the concept of “internal customer”<sup>5</sup> and the goal of continuous improvement. Possible obstacle to its implementation are cumbersome business jargon, there is need for long term commitment, focus on process analysis and ways to counter resistance of professionals to customer input.

### **Key elements of TQM:**

There are four basic components of TQM:

1. People
2. Appropriate technology
3. Problem solving tools and procedure
4. Continuous improvement
7. TQM Principles

The recent ISO 9001:2015 standard is specifies seven quality management principles:

1. Customer focus;
2. Leadership;
3. Engagement of people;
4. Process approach;
5. Improvement;
6. Evidence-based decision making;
7. Relationship management.

ISO 9001:2015 considers each of the above. It specifies requirements for products, services and systems to get the above benefits.

### **Customer Focus:**

TQM stands by the ideal of customer satisfaction. Catering to customer needs and satisfying the customer is the most important goal of the entire philosophy. Hence customer focus becomes mandatory in any venture of the institution.

### **Leadership:**

TQM requires exemplary leadership from the top which trickles down to all levels of the institution to provide the desired results. Leadership by top management is indispensable. TQM involves every employee of the institution and is therefore a massive effort which needs proper systematic approach to yield the desired results.

### **Engagement of People:**

TQM requires that all levels of the institution are made to function in coordination with each other. This involvement of all employees demands a certain level of dedication and competence on their part. Participation of employees is achieved by reward and recognition systems as well as by regular training and education programs. They assist the employees in self improvement and directly affect the quality of their services.

### **Process approach:**

Required result may be achieved efficiently when a process is chalked out for the activities of the organization. Benefits of following the process approach are:

- Reduced cost and time involved through effective use of resources
- Improved, consistent and predictable results
- Opportunities for goal oriented interventions.

### **Improvement:**

The core philosophy of TQM relies on the idea of improvement which is an ongoing process in any institution. In keeping with this, the quality of the product is a direct outcome of the quality of the process. Therefore to achieve the ultimate aim of product improvement, it is imperative to focus on each stage of the process of its production.

### **Evidence-based decision making:**

The statistical analysis of manufacturing data is an important part of TQM. Facts and analysis provide the basis for planning, review and performance tracking. In turn it leads to improvement of operations and reliable

comparison of performance with competitors. The TQM approach is based on the use of objective data and provides a rational rather than an emotional basis for decision-making. The statistical approach to process management in manufacture recognizes that most problems are system-related and are not necessarily caused by particular temperament of employees.

#### **Relationship Management:**

In TQM facts and analysis are the basis on which planning is done. Objective quantitative data allows employees to work in a more rational way rather than taking an emotional approach. Objectivity and statistical approach also enables one to identify problems within the system rather than looking at problems as being caused by particular employees.

#### **Relationship between Library Science and TQM:**

From the inception of the concept of TQM it has been used in industry. Only recently has the philosophy has been viewed in the context of libraries. TQM approach may be relatively new for libraries but it is very well suited to the institution. A library is an organisation which is service-oriented, just like most industries. A library exists to spread knowledge and information. It satisfies demands of customers and in this way it becomes a service provider. Since TQM is also user oriented, its application in the sphere of libraries is very fitting. It also aids in enhancing the functioning of a library and helps it to give optimum service to its users by eliminating inefficiency and ensuring quality.

#### **Requirements for Implementing TQM in Libraries:**

Proper Infrastructure: TQM implies totality in terms of quality and therefore infrastructure is an important aspect to improve services offered by libraries. Proper infrastructure that is sensitive to the requirements and needs of all kinds of users must be set up in libraries to ensure effective implementation of TQM.

#### **User Education:**

World-class facilities often fall short of meeting the customer's requirements. The reason is lack of familiarity of the user with these services or their inability to make optimum use of them. For this reason user education becomes a basic requirement for TQM so that customers are able to extract maximum benefits from services set up for them. In order to ensure this, user participation

can be stimulated through organisation of regular seminars, workshops and lectures.

#### **Trained Staff:**

TQM can function fully in an environment where the staff involved is well accustomed with its requirements and is fully trained to fulfil them. Library staff must also undergo rigorous training to ensure the smooth and effective operation of a library through TQM. It is also important for the staff to be able to communicate well with users so that optimum service is delivered under TQM model.

#### **User Studies:**

TQM is an approach which prioritises the user or customer above everything else. Keeping this in mind, TQM can be most effective if regular user studies are conducted through feedback taken at regular intervals from the users. Feedback helps the library do away with hindrances met in the user experiences and also enables the system to mould itself according to the needs of users. Feedback from users also brings in a diversity of opinion which enhances the quality of services provided in libraries by making them suitable for diverse needs.

#### **Implementation of TQM will lead to:**

- Systematic identification of activities necessary to obtain desired result
- Establishing clear responsibility and accountability for managing key activities
- Analysing and measuring key activities
- Identifying the interfaces of key activities within themselves and between the external functions of the organization
- Evaluating risks, consequences and impact of activities on customers, suppliers and other interested parties.

#### **Conclusion:**

This study explores the multiple benefits that the philosophy of TQM is expected to have in the institution of library. It is a relatively new concept for libraries and also for the service sector *per se*. TQM is not a method with rigid rules for blind implementation. It is flexible to be for any and every library. It requires continuous evaluation and improvement to work well in libraries. It is imperative, therefore, for the library staff to study and analyze other libraries which follow this method and learn

from their experience. TQM is also a long-term program for any library and therefore demands persistence and patience from the staff as well as necessary training.

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