QUALITY CIRCLE: AN EVOLUTIONARY TOOL FOR LIBRARIES

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Abstract: *Enough evidence as case studies has been reported till date on the usage of quality circle in many manufacturing organization for drawing cost saving or quality improvement goals. It has been the utmost goal of enterprises with no surprises to that. But in this paper the author proposes his opinion on applying quality circle in an academic library, a service organization. It argues that the concept encourages employee participation as well as promotes teamwork and motivates people to contribute towards organizational effectiveness through group processes. This paper tries to project a method from the parlance of management for anticipating the relative improvement of quality of services by improving the level of consciousness among all constituents so as to enhance their effectiveness and competence. The study will drive great yield to the practitioners and the users of the quality circle technique.*

***Keywords:** Quality Management, Quality Circle, Library Service, Customer Service*

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1.   INTRODUCTION

The libraries have transformed drastically from storehouses for books and journals to the power houses of knowledge and information since the middle of the 20th century. The information and communication technology is responsible for this revolution. The very existences of libraries are dependable on users' satisfaction. Users are getting satisfied when the library is able to rise to his or her expectation or meet the actual needs. A quality service is said to be one, which satisfy the users' expectation resulting a good experience. Throughout the history, libraries were mainly concerned with collection development and processing (Thakuria 2007). The library professionals give less concern to quality in product and services. It is not thought of great importance to check whether the users are satisfied or not.

The library being a service organization, its prime objective is to provide the right documents, information and services to its users. Only the users' satisfaction survey will facilitate the assessment of their satisfaction with products and services offered. There are various methods, tools and techniques to measure, control and improve the quality of library services. Quality measurement and evaluation assumes great importance in modern libraries as it brings immense benefits to the library as well as user community.

Quality Circle is one of the useful concepts that can be adopted in library department of any educational institute. Several universities, colleges and junior colleges have used quality circles to bring in effectiveness in areas of residential life (Keller 1987), student learning support (Wilkinson 1989) and college administration (Montano 1999).

2.   CONCEPT OF QUALITY CIRCLE:

"A Quality Circle is volunteer group composed of members who meet to talk about workplace and service improvements and make presentations to their management with their ideas". These are related especially to the quality of output or services in order to improve the performance of the organization and motivate employees. This group carries on continuously as a part of organization-wide control activities, self and mutual developments and control and improvement within the workplace utilizing quality control techniques with all the members participating. Generally six to twelve volunteers from the same work area make up a circle (Abo-Alhol et. al., 2005). The members receive training in problem solving, statistical quality control and group processes. Quality Circle generally

recommends solutions for quality and services which may be implemented by the management. Thus Quality Circle is not merely a suggestion system or a quality control group but extends beyond that because its activities are more comprehensive. Furthermore, it is not a taskforce because it can be made a permanent feature of the organization or a department.

3. IMPLEMENTATION STEPS FOR QUALITY CIRCLES

3.1. Quality circle formation

In the first step a Quality circle team, consisting of 6 to 12 volunteers, is formed in an institute. Roles and responsibilities of each member are as follows: The steering committee is formed form the department, library in this case, in which quality circles technique is to be implemented by taking self as a facilitator (Lawler and Mohrman, 1985). After steering committee is formed the group leader and deputy group leader are selected from the same department. After the selection of group leader worker are invited to join the quality circle voluntarily who work as quality circle member.

3.2. Brain storming session

In the next step of meetings the brain storming session is conducted to find out the views of the quality circle members about the problems they face in daily routine. In brain storming session each member is free to talk about the problems in the library which staff and students face regularly. These problems are listed down for further discussion.

3.3. Problem Identification

In next step a problem identification sheet is given to each member of the quality circle which consists of the general problems listed down by the circle members. In this sheet each of the members of the quality circle have to give the rating to the problem, out of 10, depending upon the severity of the problem in his own view. After all members have given ratings to the listed problem a total of the points given to each problem are made and problem with highest points is selected.

3.4. Ishikawa diagram

In next step Ishikawa diagram based on views given by the quality circle members is constructed. Based on Ishikawa diagram the main cause for the problem is identified and discussed with the quality circle members (Shewhart, 1931 and 1939).

3.5. Recommendation

In next step based on the problems identified, solutions are find out with the discussion with quality circle members and best possible solution is recommended to solve that main problem.

3.6. Implementation

In next step recommended solution is implemented in the library and results are found out by comparing present and previous position.

4.   QUALITY CIRCLES: BENEFITS

The most important benefits of the quality circles are their effect on people's attitude and behavior. Other beneficial effects are:

- Quality circles enable the individual to improve personal capabilities (Shewhart, 1939).
- Quality circle increases the individual self respect.
- Quality circle helps volunteers change certain personality characteristics. Circles help workers develop the potential to become the supervisors of the future.
- Quality circles increase the respect of the supervisor for the workers. "As a result of circles, I find that I talk more with workers on the line."
- Quality circles increase workers' understanding of the difficulties faced by supervisors.
- Quality circles increase management's respect for workers.
- Quality circle changes some workers' negative attitudes.
- Quality circles reduce conflict stemming from the working environment.

5.   CONCLUSION

Quality circle tools and methodology have evolved utilizing various domains associated with process improvement. It provides a comprehensive and flexible system for maximizing satisfaction. It is like sowing good quality seeds for better tomorrow. It has been considered as a revolutionary approach to improvement. This paper illustrates the key ingredients of quality circle approach. Use of this approach in academic libraries will make libraries an effective and more productive with less effort and less complaints. Institutes that wish to accelerate development of their own quality program can utilize the evolutionary methodology explained in this paper to understand their current level of evolution and to

implement focused actions that can quickly move them past their competition. Among the benefits of the quality circle it is clear that along with the quality and process improvement, quality circle also works as an administrative tool that focuses more on personnel development, increased motivational level, better understanding of process, skill up gradation, and increased decision making skill of members. Therefore it can be concluded that quality circle can also be stated as an evolutionary tool for service organization like libraries. The further study of quality circle intangible benefits in conjunction with the different quality tools is recommended.

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