

Libraries: Transforming the Educational Process through Total Quality Management (TQM)

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Abstract

The need for transformation in all spheres of life is imperative. In this information society which information is the vehicle that drives the process of transformation, ensuring success and the library is the custodian of this information. The education process is not an exception. It relies heavily on the delivery of accurate, timely, comprehensive and relevant information to attain its values. Educational process has metamorphosed from single discipline to interdisciplinary and the multidisciplinary approaches thus requiring a change in paradigm in the way information practitioners bring information to drive the process, to suit new philosophies for a successful transformation. To do this, Total Quality Management of information is needed and libraries are to set benchmarks for monitoring users' satisfaction, clarify, new tasks and functions and change paradigm from planning activities for information dissemination to planning for result and providing direction to avert user frustration. In this paper, concepts are defined and benchmarks for monitoring are stated. Suggestions are given which border on service quality and the adoption of Total Quality Management (TQM). Among the recommendations proffered is the users' need to acquire ending skills such as knowledge of information sources, knowledge of information search strategies and knowledge of retrieval devices.

Keywords: Quality Management, Ending Skills, Databases, Internet, Search Engines, and User Satisfaction Benchmarks

Introduction

Technological innovations have completely altered ways in which information services are carried out. At whatever level and with whatever method: whether traditional or technological, one thing that is common is the desire to offer quality service and fulfil library Science Law 4 (save the time of the reader, user). Every user deserves to have his needed information at the time required otherwise it becomes useless as the desire for information is satiable. Once the purpose for which it was desired is overtaken, such information becomes useless. To take up this topic, certain concepts need to be defined.

Quality

Quality denotes a degree of excellence of something. It means performance upon expectation and fit for functions. Tech Quality Pedia; (2020.). Quality service is conceptualized as a comparison of perceived expectations of a service with perceived performance. Quality is the state of continually meeting customers/clients needs or what it takes to satisfy the client. It is in particular; an attribute of a product or service being attractive to its user. Ifidon and Ifidon

(2007) see quality as the act of delivering the right product or services which are fit for the purpose required by the customer at the right time and place. This agrees with Library Science law 4 which says, “Save the Time of the Reader”. Information in itself has value only when utilized, and a library user who needs information must be given the information at the right time without too much stress as the desire for information diminishes when not given in time. Jacob (2018) defined quality as the conformance to customer expectation, in this case information user satisfaction. Quality is the totality of features and characteristics of product that bears an ability to satisfy given needs (American Society for Quality, 2023). Quality requires continuous improvement, hence educational transformation. Today every society is undergoing changes, both negative and positive. A positive change of attaining educational values is the thrust of this paper. The educational process has evolved from single discipline to interdisciplinary and then to multidisciplinary approaches and purposes being for teaching, learning and research. This requires also a shift in paradigm in the way information practitioners deliver information and drive the educational process, to suit new philosophies for a successful transformation.

PROQC International represented quality in Figure 1.

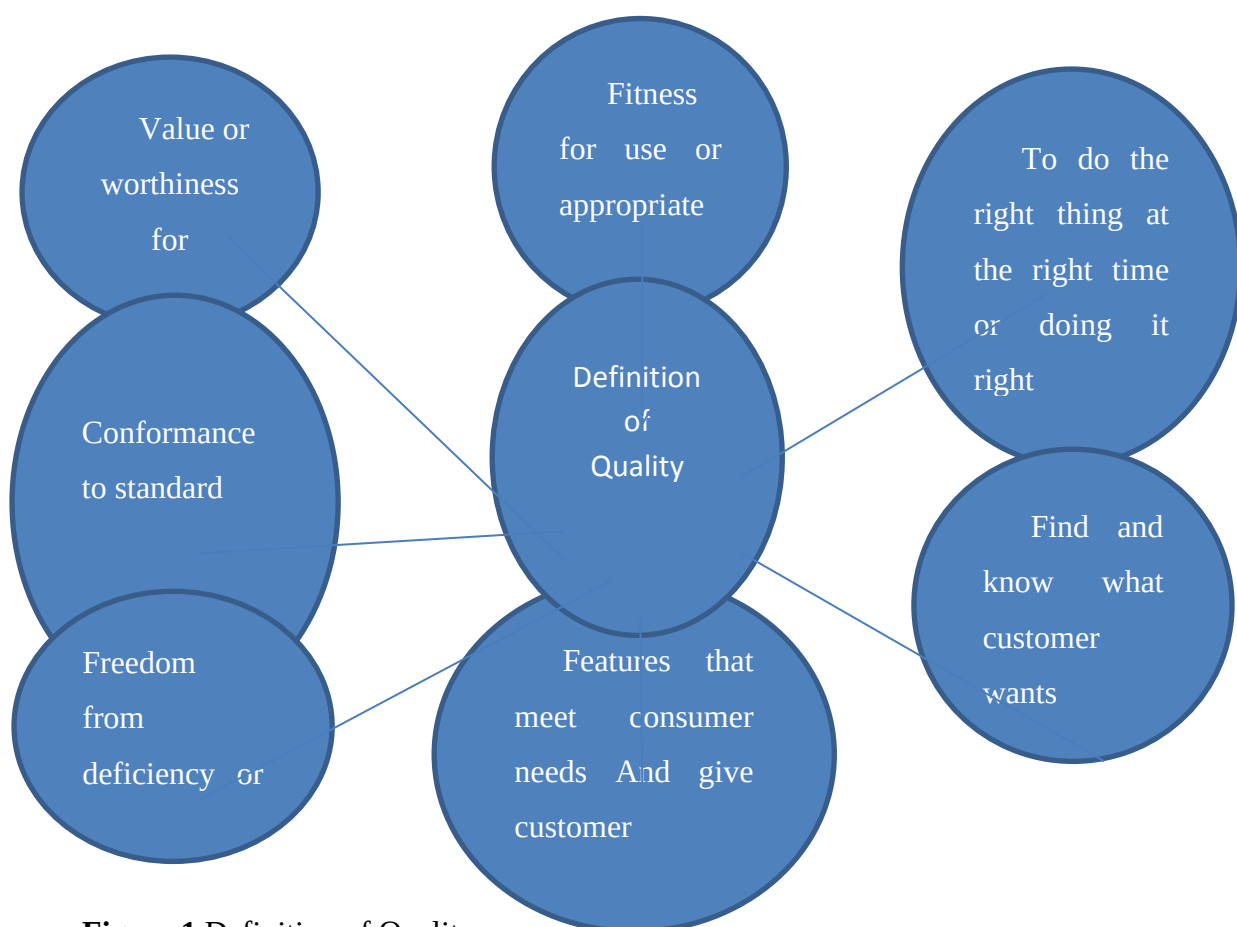


Figure.1 Definition of Quality,

Source: PROQC International (2015) <http://www.meriam.webster.com>

This shows that for any service or product to be said to have quality must be fit for its intended use, conform to standard, response to customer needs and have value or worthiness. The idea of quality in relation to library service is not new. So much has been done and even researched into quality assurance in information service delivery. Today the education process has become very complex and multidisciplinary, thus placing higher demands on the information rendered in libraries for the purpose of research and assignment. This corroborates with Lal (2018) who posited that “products are produced in the interest of the users”. So product managers, in this case librarians, should ensure that they produce only quality products, viz-a-viz quality information that perfectly meets the needs of the present day information users (Jacob, 2018). This level of service is what satisfies today's information user and researcher when the library uses ICT to ensure that the researcher is not just directed to a book to read, but is linked to multiple resources around the globe, linked to other researchers with the common interest also across in their works.

Educational Transformation (ET)

Educational transformation refers to systematic changes in the prevailing educational model. Transforming education means empowering learners with knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to be resilient, adaptable and prepared for certain future while contributing to human and planetary well-being as well as sustainable development. This will ensure or instil in learners' life-long learning; and remote learning through harnessing digital technologies. This involves employing innovation in technology.

A survey or National Education Response to COVID-19 school closure suggested steps to be taken to transform education to address learning processes (NERC, 2022). Stock taking, it maintained was required to ensure Sustainable Development Goal 4. This recommended learning recovery and educational transformation which involves transforming teaching, and transforming learning and research thus placing huge responsibilities on libraries as information providers. They must offer quality service which is conceptualized as a comparison of perceived expectation of a service with perceived performance (Tech Quality Pedia, 2020). Quality of service determines continued use of such services. Today's user is not just a recipient of knowledge but a user and contributor to knowledge. To be able to contribute to knowledge, a researcher needs to have access to quantitative information which must be accurate, up to date and comprehensive enough to cater for his research needs and most of all delivered in today's technological approaches. This will in turn offer total quality assurance.

Total Quality Management

Total Quality Management is a management approach which provides long term success, by proving unparalleled customer satisfaction through the constant delivery of IT services. According to Lal (2018) the concept of Total Quality Management (TQM) is a management philosophy embracing all activities through which the need of an information user

or the objective of its institutions is satisfied in the most efficient and cost-effective ways which continues to drive for improvement. He went on to enumerate 14 steps of QA to include:

- i. Creating constancy of purpose
- ii. Adopting new philosophies which believe in the quality and move to undergo transformation.

The educational process is also evolving and therefore librarians as information managers must equip learners with evolving skills for information retrieval to enhance the education process. The growing complexity requires that for the learner to be effective, he must acquire certain skills which librarians need to put them through in the new dispensation. Such skills include knowledge of modern sources of information, knowledge of search strategies and knowledge of retrieval devices which will enable them access and retrieve information for their education independently.

Librarians can actualise the dream of their libraries as well as that of the parent institutions using Total Quality Management (TQM) through the following steps as enumerated by Lal (2018);

1. Create constancy of purpose
2. Adopt new philosophies, which believe in the quality and move to undergo transformation.
3. Inspect product and services for the purpose of identifying ways of improvement.
4. Improve existing products and services
5. Institute training and retraining
6. Managers should seek to discover barriers
7. Drive out fears of appraisal from staff
8. Managers to learn new ways of maturing staff
9. Remove barriers to pride on workmanship.

Paradigm Shift: Time has come when information users in the academic setting require apt, accurate, comprehensive, and timely information from the libraries. The traditional libraries tried to provide this but with a lot of difficulty and time consumption. Libraries, if they must promote the educational transformation process, need to move to the electronic media where information is comprehensive and accurate especially using specific professional databases like Libri, AJOL, JSTOR, HINARI etc. to educate their patrons respecting the 4th law of Library Science and save the time of the researcher. Today, libraries can make the researcher access information real-time and get shared opinions from other locations through teleconferencing and making contributions. This involves a user machine interface; and multiple users can access the same online resources simultaneously. The above has implication for training on computer systems and its utilisation for the purpose of obtaining library system aims. However, there are challenges associated with the educational system. Specifically, the educational system is faced with these challenges of information management;

1. Poor quality of information including lack of consistency, duplication and out-dated information.
2. Limited resources for deploying and managing information effectively
3. Increase number of user information needs
4. Complex issues attendant on today's interdisciplinary education
5. Lack of clarity around library strategies and directions
6. Apathy on the part of library staff
7. Difficulty in changing work practices and processes.
8. Researcher attitude and plagiarism.

The last issue can be addressed through sensitization and retraining of library staff of academic libraries. According to Udofia (2008) “as long as libraries lag behind in ICT adoption, our researchers will continue to be poorly informed, scholarly incapacitated and academically obsolete. Librarianship today entails shared responsibility for the purpose of quality control. This involves working hand in hand with the faculty to know modern biases and multidisciplinary tendencies.

Total Quality Management in turn has an extensive long-term effect to transform all services of the library in order to produce best practices and services that can satisfy user needs for the purpose of either learning or research. Indeed, it is the process of management of CHANGE, since TQM is value based i.e. information services as it satisfies the user in his particular circumstances.

In the library settings Lal (2018) stated that TQM can help promote library services in the following ways:

- i. Create service brochures and information kits
- ii. Conduct user survey about library services
- iii. Improve signage
- iv. Increase hours of operation
- v. Provide convenient material return
- vi. Use flexibility in staff assignment
- vii. Track complaints
- viii. Publicise new services

To achieve the transformation of the educational process, the library has to set priority tasks for itself in “using a well-planned, coordinated and systematic set of services calculated to bring about user satisfaction” (Ifidon & Ifidon, 2007).

For instance, the purposes of the academic library are:

1. Reskilling librarians with modern information management skills and competencies necessary for making them become knowledge workers in a global economy.
2. Operating with the institutions’ vision statement for the academic library to be a centre of academic excellence by utilising the available resources for training, research, community service, sustainable development and mission statement.

3. Diligently pursuing scholarship and deploying its output for human capacity development with active participation in information and communication technology.

Internet

One major advantage of the internet is the ability to provide information to remote locations where learners do not necessarily need to go to the physical library. This answers to the “implement a REACH all effort wherever they are”. Ensuring the right to education policy is captured in regulatory framework and going out for Education Management Information System for disaggregated and real-time information. The above can be handled using TOTAL QUALITY MANGEMENT (TQM) of information.

Databases

A database is a systematic collection of data. A database, according Peterson (2023) is systematic or organised collection of related information that is stored in such a way that it can be easily accessed, retrieved, managed and updated. He describes it’ like a library that houses a wide range of books from different genres’. They are also seen as the bedrock of academic success. To meet up with global trends, educational system is advancing both in content and pedagogy and of late, shifting to technological methods of impartation of knowledge. However, it is discovered that many still stick to resources which are limited in content and coverage as well as have limitations in currency. This therefore demands librarians’ intervention. Vandi (2023) study in North-East Nigeria regretted the underutilization of databases in spite of its known usefulness. Students and lecturers need to take advantage of such rich resources using ProQuest, eBrary and others to enhance their research output.

Libraries’ Roles

To achieve the above, libraries need to reskill staff, reconsolidate, repackaging and redesign their services as stated above; and participate actively in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) adoption. Today's library users are observed to be digitally motivated. Therefore, to transform the educational process, these activities need to be put in place; resetting objectives for establishment; precisely defining what must be accomplished to transform the educational process which includes clarifying new tasks and functions to suit modern-day teaching, learning, and research; setting benchmarks for monitoring and assessing performance, changing from merely planning activities for information dissemination to planning for result and providing direction to avert frustration on the part of library users. Udofia,(2010)

Clarifying Tasks and Functions

This involves reskilling librarians who will in turn change their mood of service from traditional to digital service as today’s users love to be digitally driven in their information search and this will bring about transcending proximity reducing the world to a global village.

They should enhance collaboration and provide wider exposure to knowledge in the user's area of concentration.

Setting Benchmark for Monitoring and Measuring Performance

Today's digital procedures of information delivery make room for feedback via the internet as against the previous traditional methods. With the use of Internet, feedback is attained thus making the libraries know whether they have been able to serve the lecturers (teaching), student (learning), and research effectively. Such benchmarks require also the use of checklists that will contain the following services and their procedures. Ifidon and Ifidon (2007) provided this checklist for feedback.

Table 1 Checklist for Measuring Performance

1	Using automation for tracking circulation services	Always/Never
2	Using KOHA for easy access to global resource	
3	Using email for reference services	
4	Using online services for research	
5	Using search engines for compelling reading lists	
6	Using Union catalogue for interlibrary lending	
7	Using database for abstracting and indexing services	
8	Using Usenet for sharing current content of internet	
9	Using CD-ROM searching for relevant area content	
10	Using library database for searching local content	

Source: Ifidon and Ifidon (2007)

Table 2 Benchmark for Users' Satisfaction – Staff Skilfulness

		YES	NO
1	Staff competence in accessing the WWW for information		
2	Staff competence in accessing the email		
3	Staff competence in CD-ROM search		
4	Staff competence in using specialised search engines		
5	Staff ownership of personal computers		
6	Staff attitude towards users		

Source: (Ifidon and Ifidon, 2007)

Staff Attitude

The 21st century is characterised by information overload and this can constitute frustration to the researcher, learner and teacher. The ability to access, sieve, utilize, evaluate becomes a process. Librarians attitude on their part to promote the education process must possess also attitudes which Udofia (2010) listed as staff demeanour and staff responsiveness. She went further to define attitude as “a person's tendency to feel or behave in a particular

manner towards an object, a person, or an organization”; opining that staff responsiveness and staff demeanour greatly enhance library use and user satisfaction and are therefore compelling. Where these are put in place, the learning process is highly effective. Positive attitude of librarians will not only grant access to information for research and study and teaching purposes but will promote easy access as they will find time to give digital literacy to users. Huang, Liaw and Lai (2022) listed good library attributes to include appreciation of user’s needs, and manifestation of intellectual curiosity, driven by craze for new knowledge. Staff demeanour will carry back users to the library where accurate and appropriate information is still stored. The quality of staff responsiveness depicts the ability to adjust to external influence such as the changing nature of education and learning.

In the words of Gideon F. *et al*, (2016) discussing librarians’ personal needs asserted that the need to add value to their production and services by access, through helping users navigate the universe of information, content development, instruction, search services and reference assistance.

Conclusion

The library is a key participant in the education process from the elementary to tertiary level. At any level, the target is to promote the educational process through the dissemination of accurate, comprehensiveness and up-to-date information. It is noticed that the traditional methods no longer suffice today's teaching, learning and research processes. Therefore, for libraries to remain relevant in the educational transformation process, they must focus on TQM by both rebranding librarians and their services through training, clarifying their new tasks, setting benchmarks for assessment of performance and imparting information retrieval skills to educators and researchers to be able to navigate the ICT world and get their needed information independently.

Recommendations

In view of the conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Libraries should adopt Public/Private partnership to source for more funds to be able to equip and stock libraries.
- ii. Librarians should be apt to rebrand themselves and shun apathy to information technologies that have grown to the cloud if they must be relevant to educational transformation process.
- iii. Training library users, in this case, lecturers, learners and researchers in the new skills of information retrieval is imperative if the education process must transform.
- iv. Government, whether federal or state, should implement their library policies to enhance global competitiveness.
- v. Librarians must adopt attitudinal change paying much attention to their responsiveness and demeanour.

- vi. Users need to acquire knowledge of source information, knowledge of search strategies and knowledge of retrieval devices.

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