APPLICATION OF ISO STANDARDS FOR QUALITY EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN LIBRARY SERVICES

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Standards are found to be essential for Quality maintenance and Quality assurance while rendering services. Customer needs are becoming more and more stringent now a days on account of the introduction of IT based services in libraries. To gain confidence of the customers/students and to achieve customer delight, libraries and library schools are adopting ISO Standards. Paper highlights some basic considerations of the Quality Management System and aspects of ISO 9001-2000 standards. Explains how standards will be useful to improve the level of education and training. Also points out various advantages of the quality procedures prescribed in the standard and the process of quality audit / assessment.

Introduction

To serve in this competitive world, we are required to implement quality management that delivers an edge in productivity, profitability and performance. The ISO 9000 is a series of standards for building, operating and documenting quality management system. The main purpose of ISO is to provide international standardization to facilitate world-wide exchange of goods and services.

While coming to the realm of education and training in the schools of library and information science (LIS), of late, it has become in fact more and more technology oriented due to the application of information and communication technology in extending library services. Few decades back library users were asking for books, but now they are found demanding for the retrieval of answers for queries which are rather expected to be precise, relevant and up-to-date. It has become tedious for the professional librarians to provide comprehensive, relevant and current information at the minimum loss of time. They have to overcome the barriers of overabundance of literature, scatter of literature and sea page of literature. On the other hand, librarians have to bear in mind the shrinking budgetary provisions. Every year there is going to be escalation of subscription prices of journals/books and conversion of the foreign exchange rates. To offset these constraints and to increase the effectiveness of information services, libraries have started relying upon information and communication technology to a great extent.

The use of information and communication technology necessitates heavy investment on establishment and maintenance. The users demand expeditious retrieval of information and constant up-dation of technology. Therefore, day-by-day the customer needs are becoming more and more stringent, and on account of this there is felt need to rely upon standards for quality maintenance. The standards provide:

- Procedures for maintenance of quality in education and services
- Strategy for constant evaluation of performance of teaching and training
- Guidelines for improving competency of the staff through training and updating
    - skills
- Opportunity for the evaluation of the customer satisfaction (ie students'
    - satisfaction)
- Opportunity for the continual improvement in the system's overall performance.
- Systematic steps for maintenance of gadgets and operations

The mission of ISO is to provide international standardization to facilitate world-wide exchange of goods and services. While serving in the competitive world there is need to implement quality management that delivers an edge in productivity and performance. This will ultimately create satisfaction in the minds of customers which is very much expected of the modern library services.

The concept of improvement in performance has gained momentum on account of the Japanese techniques of "Khaisen Approach", which aims at day-to-day improvement in the organization. Whatever may be the situation today, there should be commitment, cooperation, and contribution from every staff for improvement of the system, let it be to a slight extent, ex: erecting a panel of painting on the wall, placing a flower pot at the right place. Team work and leadership both are required and emphasized here for sustenance of quality education. By quality they mean the totality of characteristics and features of a product or service that bears its ability to satisfy the stated or implied needs of the customers.

Juran (Daleda;1999) defines quality as "the fitness of the product for use". It emphasis the relationship between the customer and the product / service, and this relationship is constructive only if the products and services correspond to the overall needs of the user, price, delivery date and fitness for use.

Why 'quality' and 'customer delight' in information service?

Achieving customer delight means serving the customer beyond his expectations. For instance, a customer normally expects one or two years of warranty while purchasing a T.V. set. If the manufacturer extends five to fix years of warranty and free annual check up, the customer will be delighted at the offer. Here, all those activities of an organization which intend to gain appreciation of its customers beyond their expectations is the attempt to achieve the aspect of 'delight'.

To be more precise, the need of quality assurance is to provide confidence to the library management regarding the quality of services being achieved and sustained. Secondly, to provide confidence to the library users that the intended or expected quality is being delivered in the services of information products. Thirdly, in order to achieve and sustain the quality of products and services to meet continually the users spelt or implicit information needs.

Need for Quality education in LIS

Day-by-day, there is an increasing trend in the application of information and communication Technology (ICT) to the sphere of library and information science. This was not there about two decades ago. On account of the increased automation and digitization of information processing, storage and retrieval, the professionals have to constantly update their knowledge and skills and practice technology based information services. Even the syllabi of library and information studies have been subjected to constant revisions adopting ICT aspects to a great extent. On account of this, users expect precise and

timely retrieval of information though overabundance of sources are being generated today. The ICT has an edge over all conventional means and methods practiced during the past. The following are some of the major aspects than can be seen in the curriculum of LIS, as well as, in the practice in library and information centers.

- CD-ROM databases and workstations
- Multimedia library
- Internet browsing centers with leased line connectivity
- Library management software
- Web designing and web hosting
- On-line full text journals
- Content page services / abstracting services and digital dissertation
- Bar coding and inventory
- Media centres
- Video conferencing
- E-Journals
- E-learning, E-publishing, data mining and wearhousing
- Installing and managing : CD-server, mail server, snap server, networking and data security, tele-fax, ATM technology etc.

There is really a special emphasis for hands on experience and learning skills, unlike the past in the profession. Professionals have to compete in their own way with people from other disciplines such as information technology, computer application, electronics and communication and the like. This necessitates the appropriate knowledge and practical skills in order to deliver quality services and generate qualitative products. One of the means of achieving the quality and excellence in information service is to go for ISO certification related to quality management system. ISO 9000 is a series of standards for buildings, operating and documentary quality management system.

The demands of the students are becoming more and more stringent on account of mechanized information processing and retrieval. And when these students are employed in libraries they will be expected to install, maintain and improve the IT based services. More than anything, the faculty of the LIS schools have to be systematic in their training approach and meet the needs of their students convincingly. Therefore, the following are the main purposes of going for quality management system.

- To provide confidence to the management regarding quality being achieved and sustained.
- To provide confidence to the students that the intended quality is being achieved in imparting education and training
- To achieve and sustain quality of education to meet continually the stated or implied needs of students.

Apart from the above three needs, the faculty will be subjected to regular up-dation and evaluation of competency. The faculty will get international recognition as they are trained in adopting and monitoring quality techniques. Some of the important advantages of going for ISO are indicated below.

- Waste disappears from the system
- Products/services works better and lost longer
- Eliminates the process of assessment by the external agencies/corporate bodies (customers)
- People love their jobs and their organization as well

- Helps to identify and clearly study the weaknesses of the system and inefficiency of the staff

While applying the standard, the organizations policy and objective statements must be clearly defined, free form discrepancy. It is the policy and objectives that makes every faculty of LIS to determine what alternative steps to be initiated for achieving quality in education and ultimately the satisfaction of the students. By going for ISO procedures or in the process of ISO movement, the LIS schools become more and more.

- Technology oriented
- Student oriented
- Revenue oriented, and
- Faculty orientated

Once the procedures are determined by compiling quality manual and procedure manual, the system becomes convinced of the elimination of the following five undesirables. They are commonly known in the industrial sphere as 5 'R's.

Eliminates 5 'R' s -

- Rejects
- Reworks
- Recalls
- Returns
- Regrets

Application of standards for quality education

The revision of the course curriculum can be applied and seen here how it works. When the syllabi are designed which happen to be the most important aspects in education during product realization, careful attention be given to the response of the students. Due importance be given to the views and opinions of the subject experts drawn from the field of information technologies, computer science and service providers from the field of database management and electronic products/services. The quality management system necessitates the need for application of certain principles. There are a set of eight principles which need to be adopted for achieving quality in performance. They are:

- Student focused organization
- Development of leadership qualities
- Involvement of the staff
- Process approach
- Systems approach
- Continual improvement
- Factual approach to decision making
- Mutually beneficial supplier relationship/relationship with service providers.

The level of quality cannot be determined by the implementation of ISO 9000 or other quality system, when compared to other similar organization. For instance, Hyundi, Celo, Opel Astra, Muruti are certified companies for quality assurance and management but the level of quality of products varies from one another. Here, it is certain that they have maintained minimum level of performance/quality and there is consistency and uniformity in the quality of products/services delivered.

There are quite a number of quality systems or quality control techniques that can be adopted to the organization as a whole or any sub system of the organization. A section or department of LIS school can go for certification. It is also suggested to achieve quality part by part when the organization is too huge to manage and control. Some of the popular quality control techniques are:

- 6 – sigma
- CE-Mark (Hygiene and safety)
- Bench Marking
- CMM Technique
- Statistical technique (SQC)

What affects the quality management or certification is the inadequate budget and apathy on the part of top management. As of the year beginning 2000 there were more than. 350000 ISO certified companies across 150 countries. The percentage of companies that was withdrawn from accreditation was just 2.7, comprising 9860 companies.

Authority and responsibility will have to be clearly fixed in the ISO procedures. Each staff has his own duties and responsibilities to be discharged in a specific way which will be evaluated through customer feed back. Otherwise, everyone thinks that anyone can do the job. In fact, it may be an easy, simple job that anyone can do it. Ultimately, no one does it. Therefore, there is need to fix authority and responsibility as per the ISO procedures.

There are no dictatorial terms or Claus is in ISO 9000. All are imposed/determined by you ie the company which is going for accreditation. In fact it is you who is going to define policy and objectives. It is you who is going to fix the duties and responsibilities. It is you who is going to determine the quality of product/service. It is you who is going to give assurance to your students/customers.

The quality performance assessors are concerned with verification for conformances. In the course of seeking conformances, they may come across non-conformances, between what you say and what you do.. Noticing the non-conformities you have to initiate appropriate measures for prevention of defects or apply corrective measures, verify the result and close the issue of non-conformances.

Performance auditing is not a fault-finding mission, rather it is a fact-finding exercise to identify demerits of the system and its procedures in extending services. Fault –finding mission focuses usually on who is responsible? And finally ends up in accusations, fear/panic, escaping tendencies, defensive attitude, bitterness and vengeance, and melancholy. Rarely does it add to corrective steps to be initiated.

Quality audit

Auditing a quality system is like holding a dove in your hand. Squeeze it too much, it is likely to die; hold it loosely, it is likely to fly away. Auditors are usually trained for positive attitude / positive approach-- they appraise conformities and give credit to the system supervisors and the employees. Where competency is required for auditing, in the case of a software manufacturing company, a subject specialists will accompany the auditor/s. Non-conformances are classified, into three categories. Critical, Major and Minor. There will be observations in addition to these three which can be set right in a day or two. Those lapses which may cause injury, and where there is risk to the life of an individual staff or customer, they are noted as critical non-conformances.

Those non-conformances that affect objectives to a great extent are classified as major ones Ex: Lapse in coverage of the portions, absence of internet facility, lack of classification schedules for practice.

The minor ones are usually lack of systematic arrangement of books in the library , lapse in conducting user orientation lectures for students, lack of reading facilities in the reading room, improper filing of newspapers.

The observations will be with reference to wrong filing of records, delay in the tractability of records, lack of cleanliness and so forth, which can be corrected immediately.

N.S. Bhat (2007) suggests for a moderate path to follow unlike the strict adherence as in Six-Sigma certification. ISO helps the libraries to easily identify and clearly study the system weaknesses and inefficiency of the staff. The aim of extending quality service and achieving customer delight brings revenue to the library and work culture in the organization and finally creates public image which brings appreciation for the staff, who also feel ultimately delighted

A case study with regard to the library attached to the Centre for Information Science and Technology (CIST), University of Mysore needs to be depicted here. The responses were obtained from 260 - 280 students who were studying in CIST. Based on the feedback rating, the below given table and bar diagram depict the improvement in the performance, starting from 2004 to the present. The feedback rating was obtained as to the performance on the following three aspects.

a) Rating on reading and Internet browsing facility.
b) Performance of library staff in rendering needed information and reference services.
c) Rating on the information sources available in the library holding.

Table 1. **Continual improvement in library management and readers services**

Years	**Feed back on readings and Internet browsing facility**	**Feedback rating on performance of library staff**	**Feedback rating on adequacy of information sources**
2004	60%	62%	63%
2005	62%	62%	65%
2006	65%	62%	66%
2007	69%	68%	69%
2008	70%	69%	72%

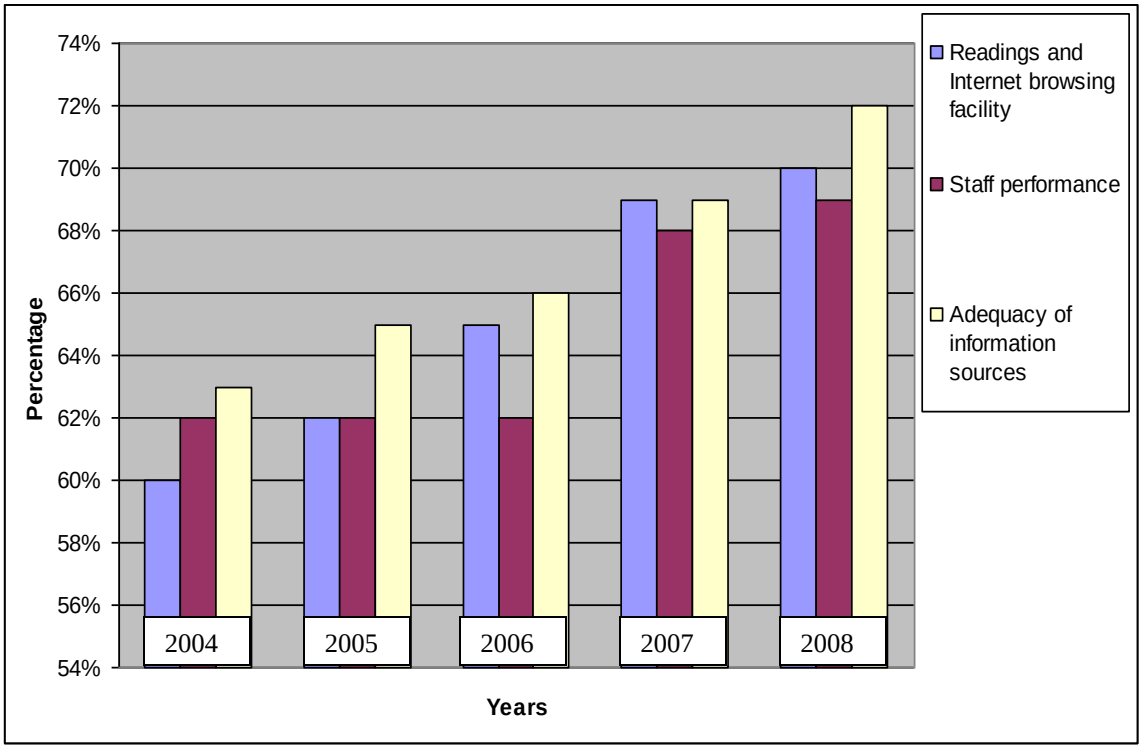

Figure 1. **Continual improvement in library management and readers services**

The diagram with the statistics helps the institution to track the record of continual improvement. This vindicates how the ISO standard 9001- 2000 is useful in extending quality services and further helps in improving the performance of the library on continual basis.

Conclusion

Adopting the standards for quality management helps the schools of LIS to identify weakness in the education system and study the reasons analytically. Further, the QMS gives confidence to the students, as well as, faculty that there is quality in the process of providing education and training. The fixing of duties and responsibilities eliminates anxiety from the individual faculty or management whether or not the part work will be attended to in time or not. Above all, there will be continuous feed-back from the students which helps the management to set the things in right order applying corrective and preventive actions.

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