

Quality Assurance best practices in Academic libraries.

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ABSTRACT

Higher educational libraries play a vital role in Indian research libraries activities. The complexity of the 21st century world has speeded up the pace of evolution, and those who cannot learn adapt and change simply will not survive. In this research paper have mention best practices implementation for improving the ideas and knowledge outcome of the activities. Library is the Heart and Brain a great educational institutions.

Keywords: Quality Assurance, Best Practices, Academic Library, Higher education, NAAC

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of information society has given enough impetus to the service sector to improve their services and library being in this domain have not fallen back. The impact of Information Communication Technologies has been more significant and visible in libraries as information access has been globalized.[1] However, it calls for continues development process as learning and acquisition of new skill is becoming a lifelong activity in the life of individual and libraries provides supportive role in this regard.[2] To be on the move the libraries have to maintain the standards and quality in the services they offer to their user and the profile and images of the libraries largely depends on the quality of services given by them.[3]

The National Accreditation and Assessment Council (NAAC) strive for quality and excellence in higher education and advocates for enhancing the role of library and information services in improving the academic environment.[4]

Today high-tech learning environment, the library as a learning resource is taking up increasingly more academic space as time in the life of a learner. Thus, the NAAC has identified the set of best practices in library and information services, with the help of a few case presentations from a few selected libraries of the accredited universities and colleges.[5] A best practice may be innovative and be a philosophy, policy, strategy, program, process or practice that solves a problem or create new opportunities.

What is Quality?

Quality is a vague concept, used in relation to various every day things. But is it possible to say exactly what is meant when speaking about the quality of the library and information science? Although quality is not an easy concept, the meaning of it can be agreed upon and there is an accepted way of describing what quality is.[6] The organization of IFLA has published some indicators of the quality for Academic Libraries, they are:

- ◆ Relevance in collection development
- ◆ Degree of satisfaction
- ◆ Hours open
- ◆ Delay between order and availability on shelves
- ◆ Percentage of requested items obtained

Academic and professional libraries all over the world display great variation in organizational, financial and technical condition quality is a relative term related to all these factors.[7]

Managing Quality in an Academic library

In a service organization like an academic library, customer satisfaction means, fulfilling expectations. Librarian must find out what readers want and what they did not want, so librarian concentrates 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 type 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.

Why is Quality so important?

For year, quality has been important for industry. Quality is now seen also as one of the important means for public organization, which are not competitive economically, but can compete with the quality of their services and products.

Quality aims at satisfying the users but Quality should also be improved in order to find key success factors, to ensure the better availability of resources etc.

Quality is like a two sided coin

One side of the coin is the user with his or her expectations and other side is the work done in the libraries for producing services and products of high quality. This work done is important, because it entails the promise for quality. But, are the expectations of the user as regards quality and the promise given by the qualitative work process always met. [8]

Work processes in meaning information

The libraries always have taken care of the quality of the vary central tasks. The library and information services use cataloging guidelines to make uniform catalogue of book and journals and other material acquired. This had assured even quality of the catalogues. The catalogues are kept in order according to same rules. The self order is based on the classification system that each library users. So quality is controlled and assured by the guidelines prepared for these work processes. But this does not mean that the total quality of same library and information services is managed well. [8]

The quality assurance issues & its concern in Higher Education

The Bologna reform led to an in-depth reform of the higher education system in many European countries and provided impetus for national standards and guidelines which serve dasriteria for obligatory institutional/program accreditation by external bodies. Since, in the year2000 the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) hasbeen promoting European cooperation in the field of QA in higher education.

Among its responsibilities is the design and distribution of standard and guidelines that would support the quality in the European HE area (Standards, 2015). Quality Assurance is a generic term that embraces narrowly defined regulatory requirements and good practice under a common umbrella of diverse European local contexts. [9] The basic principles guiding internal quality assurance strategies are:

- a) Responsibility of Universities for internal quality assurance;
- b) Encouragement of internal quality culture, diversity and innovation;
- c) Efficient organizational structures;
- d) Transparency;
- e) Accountability for public and private funding;
- f) Inclusion of general social and individual learners' interests in the quality of higher education.

In Croatia the process of structural reform of educational programs involves three levels of authority: control by the state external assessment and control by the accreditation system and implementation and quality assurance by the management of the higher education institutions.

The approach to the QA issues in HE institutions experienced up to now a number of critical studies that mainly relate to the following issues –

- I. QA system is complex;
- II. Detailed accreditation criteria lead often to misunderstandings;
- III. Varying interpretations create a need for counselling, which is quite difficult to get;
- IV. Additional resources necessary to underpin the reform were not granted;
- V. Costs for preparing documentation for program accreditation are high;
- VI. Efforts spent in preparation are perceived by academics involved as enormously time consuming; vii) Benefit/cost ratio is estimated to be small by many of the reform managers.

Although critical observation on the success of "Bologna process" indicate that the review of the achievements as well as of the failures should be carried out in each of the countries involved, it is

obvious that higher education libraries or professional libraries have made a significant step forward in embracing the quality assurance.

The changes in quality assurance practices in libraries

In academic libraries environment the assessment was defined as documenting "observed, reported, or otherwise quantified changes and attitudes and skills" (Hernon, Dugan and Schwartz, 2006) by library users, students and teachers/researchers primarily. These investigations have been usually carried on by researchers or professionals interested in management of change or design of standards that will encourage the high level of performance. Traditional ways of looking at planning was directed towards inputs, processes and outputs. Today, since the academic libraries are exposed to the critical observations of accreditation agencies and their expert' teams, according to Evans experience, accrediting agencies would like to become familiar with libraries' plans and processes they employ to carry out relevant QA activities (Evans, Alire, 2013). Among the most important issues are: library's goals in relation to the university's goals, how the learning outcomes correspond with library collection management policy, is the library with its services an optimal support for learning outcomes, etc. A wise academic library's management would seek to select the best possible approach in Quality Assurance procedures of the whole higher education institutions to prove the importance of the investment in and development of library services. From the other side, Quality Assurance procedures provoke the academic library to meet the requirements of the external body appointed to evaluate the performance of the university observed and all its parts with a special attention towards the vision and mission statements, plans and procedures. The ENQA standards and guidelines (Standards, 2015) recommend that besides the teachers, students should be provided with a range of resources that vary from physical resources such as libraries or computing facilities to personal support in the form of tutors, counsellors, and other advisers. Learning resources and other support mechanisms such as ICT play an important role in the process of education and they should strive to constantly improve their services from the

professional point of view, the library management will trend to examine.[9,10]

How to assure the Quality of all function?

Some system is needed for assuring quality. The system must cover all important functions and work process of the organization. ISO has produced several standards for the development of the quality system, meant to describe how total quality is managed.

Quality management is comprised of three steps:

- ♦ Planning (what we want to do)
- ♦ Controlled (what we are already doing)
- ♦ Improvement (Show to improve what we are doing)

Best practices for Academic Libraries:

A best practice in simply terms is known as the practice which paves the way for enhancing an existing function, and helps in effective implementation, or use of the process. A practice qualifies to a 'Best Practice' status if it resulted in high value impact on any aspect of educational activity in an institution.[11] It is different from standard practice in that it is value-added practice listed below. Development of infrastructure with available resources.

- ♦ Computerization of library with standard digital software
- ♦ Inclusion of sufficient information about the library in the institution prospectus.
- ♦ Compiling student / teacher attendance statistics and locating the same on the notice board.
- ♦ Displaying news paper clipping on the notice board periodically.
- ♦ Career / Employment information services.
- ♦ Internet facilities to different user groups.
- ♦ Information literacy programs.
- ♦ Suggestion box and timely response.
- ♦ Displaying new arrivals and circulating a list of those to academic department.
- ♦ Conducting book exhibition on different occasions.
- ♦ Organising book talks.
- ♦ Instituting annual best user award for students.
- ♦ Organizing competitions annually.
- ♦ Conducting user's surveys periodically.

- ♦ Formation of academic library committee.
- ♦ Collection of periodicals
- ♦ Collection on non documentary resources, such as CD's, Audio Cassettes etc.
- ♦ Collection of bound periodicals and annual reports.
- ♦ Collection of students Projects

CONCLUSION

Academic library play a vital role in higher education and research activities. For this they need to be smarter, faster more innovative and more agile. The complexity of the twenty first century has speed up the pace of evolution and those who cannot learn adapt and change simply will not survive. The realities of the current library situation indicate that quality improvement is essential not only for survival but for facing major changes and growth required for the libraries of today and tomorrow. The library and information services have entered into electronic era, some decades ago and the best practices integrating the technological advances will be important to libraries to bring the services to their user's desktop and even at their homes and working places. Change is a way of life whether it is of the individual or institution. Change should bring in new and innovative ideas and practices in library and information service. A positive mind of change for change an adoption of new techniques will bring in a sea of change in library and information services.

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