

Total Quality Management in Academic Libraries – Best Practices

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Abstract: Quality Management is one of the management challenges in libraries. The quality of the service provided makes the difference between academic libraries and other information service providers. There are a variety of quality management projects – mainly in public –libraries in Germany of which some will be introduced in this paper. Best practices in two academic libraries reveal how Total Quality Management (TQM) can be implemented and established in the day-to-day management of libraries successfully. A modern leadership style – for example the transformational leadership – is required for the implementation of Quality Management in a library becoming an effective strategic goal and a management philosophy.

Keywords: Total Quality Management, Quality Management Project, Quality Management Coordinator, Quality Management Group, Complaint Management, Process Optimization, Performance Indicators, Leadership, Transformational Leadership, Academic Library

1. Introduction: Quality Makes the Difference

Nowadays academic libraries need to be ahead of other information service providers to ensure their existence. They need to know their users' needs and wishes, have to work effectively and efficiently, and especially should be able to anticipate the future of information services and management.

For all this **quality** should be one of their **strategic goals!**

But it is not always necessary to introduce a Quality Management System completely and to get certified. A first step might be the implementation of a complaint management system or to analyse and improve separated operational key processes.

This paper introduces some examples of quality management projects in Germany and explains the first steps of Quality Management in two academic libraries. A special focus is given to a leadership style recommended when implementing Total Quality Management in libraries.

2. Quality Management Projects in Germany

There are quite a few Quality Management Projects in Germany, such as:

- The EFQM-based certificate **“Excellent Library”**, a project which started in 2008 as a cooperation between Stuttgart Media University (HdM) and the specialist department for public libraries in Stuttgart together with seven pilot libraries, of which three are certified by now (Vonhof, 2011).
- The EU-funded quality management project (which also started in 2008) **“Establishment of a QM-Network of Public Libraries in Sachsen-Anhalt”** of 20 libraries of the federal state Sachsen-Anhalt, where quality criteria were developed for the future quality norm for public libraries in Sachsen-Anhalt (Landesverband Sachsen-Anhalt im Deutschen Bibliotheksverband e. V., 2012).
- The quality assurance and certification procedures for public libraries in the federal state Niedersachsen to reach a certification and with this the seal of quality **“Library with Quality and Seal”**, a project of the government together with the municipal library centre Niedersachsen with 23 certified libraries so far (Büchereizentrale Niedersachsen, 2012).
- The section **“Quality Management”** of the consortium of art and museum libraries which offers since 2007 a Quality Management System with round about 80 subject-specific quality standards for libraries (AKMB, 2012).

3. Quality Management in the Medical Library of the University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf

The Medical Library is a division of the University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf with 30 employees working on 24,5 positions.

The Medical Center’s top management decided for the ISO 9001 certification for its Medical Library in 2009.

Furthermore, the idea of Quality Management in this library was deepened through two theses supported by the Hamburg University of Applied Sciences (HAW Hamburg) at the department “Information”:

- In 2010 a diploma thesis „Concept for the Implementation of a Complaint Management for the Medical Library of the University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf”.
- In 2011/2012 a bachelor thesis „Performance Indicators for the Quality Management system of the Medical Library of the University Medical Center“.

The certification process at the library demonstrates what can be achieved in a very short time period when the implementation of Quality Management is followed through.

Excerpts from the two theses will show what can be done to gain a Total Quality Management approach.

3.1 DIN EN ISO 9001 certification

This library had a period of nine months to implement a Quality Management System and to prepare every document needed for the Quality Manual. For this a Quality Management Coordinator who is responsible for the Quality Management in the library was appointed by the director and a Quality Management Group was established (s. Fig. 1).

The Quality Management Group consists of four members. Everyone of the library staff – independent of the department or team and of the status as certified or as assistant librarian – can be a member of this group. The only precondition is to be in the group for at least one year. This project group is now a fixed working group which meets every second month to discuss working processes and complaints of users.

To be prepared for the external audits in connection with the certification process and to know what was needed to be done during the nine months an internal audit with the support through an “external” expert of the university hospital, working in the department “Quality Management”, was held.

The library wasn't ignoring quality before the process – as no other library does – so that they could represent some of their older projects, such as the implementation of an e-learning platform and the “Medi-Treff”, a medical training centre for the individual skills and competences of the Medical Faculty of Hamburg University, which is now located in the Medical Library.

New was the Quality Manual, for which every project and every working process needs to be described in detail and with data flow diagrams as well as an annual Quality Development Plan with the quality goals for the following years (s. Fig. 1).

After nine months the Medical Library was, as part of the University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf, certified.

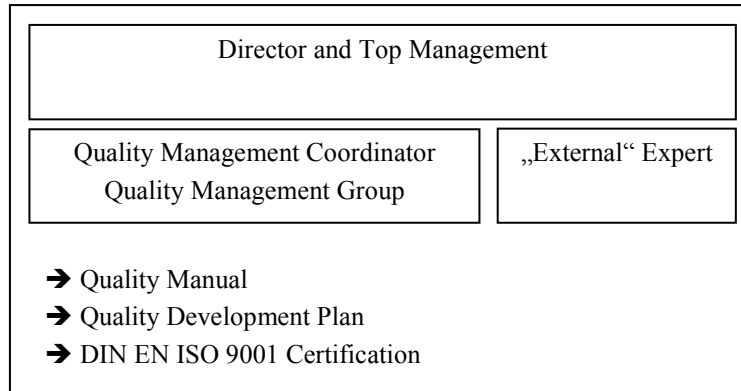


Fig. 1 Quality Management Organisation and Output

3.2 Complaint Management

Even without a professional Complaint Management problems and complaints from users are recognized by every member of staff and will be dealt with as soon as possible. But as there are no special channels implemented for the users to hand in their problems and complaints there is no possibility for a comprehensive documentation of the different problems and complaints for a later analysis and evaluation.

A new concept was developed by a student from the Hamburg University of Applied Sciences (HAW Hamburg), department Information, as his diploma thesis.

One aspect of this concept is the establishment of a contact person for Complaint Management for the members of staff as well as the users. Also complaints service points both physical in the library and virtual on the homepage are intended. This should be followed by the publication of information concerning the Complaint Management on the homepage.

For the complaints and wishes of the users of this library a comments and complaints card was designed as can be seen in Fig. 2.



Fig. 2 Comments and Complaints Card for the Medical Library (Bocklage, 2012)

After a complaint manager has been appointed the next step will be the implementation of software to collect and manage the user’s complaints.

3.3 Performance Indicators

To improve their quality management this library submitted a request to the department “Information” at the Hamburg University of Applied Sciences (HAW Hamburg) for a bachelor thesis. First step was a workshop with the library’s management and the Quality Management Coordinator to discuss the quality goals of the library. In reference to these goals recommendations for performance indicators were made, such as “Number of document downloads” and “Percentage of unsuccessful document requests” (Gyaurova, 2012).

4. Quality Management in the University Library of the Helmut-Schmidt-University

In the University Library of the Helmut-Schmidt-University – University of the Federal Armed Forces 45 employees are working on 34 positions.

As a new aspect of this library’s Quality Management a project for a Quality Management based process optimization was started and the first process to be analysed was “Monograph Acquisitions”.

The complete process was described in detail and with a data flow diagram as can be seen in Fig. 3.

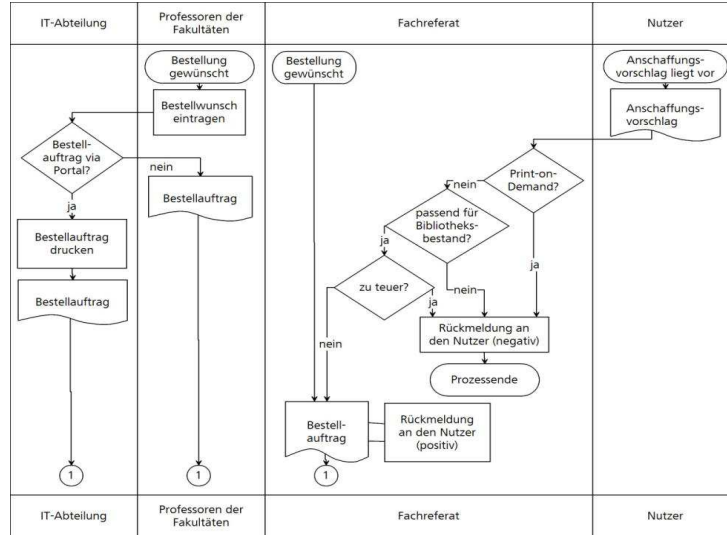


Fig. 3 Part of the data flow diagram of the process “Monograph Acquisitions” (Schumann, 2011)

This process analysis included that the staff needed to fill out a process slip to find out how long the complete process „Monograph Acquisitions“ as well as parts of it took (s. Fig. 4). These results were analysed and gave first ideas for the optimization of the process.

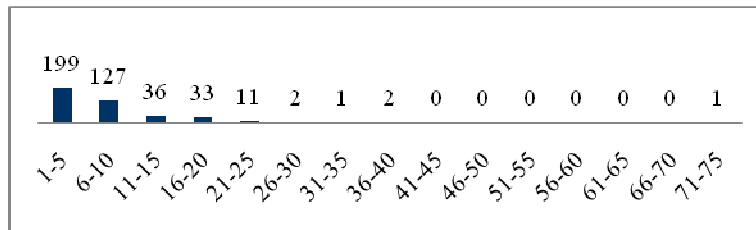


Fig. 4 Frequency distribution in numbers of the process time of the process “Monograph Acquisitions” in days (Schumann, 2011)

A process optimisation project might raise concerns and fears with employees. As a consequence the working style and even processes might be adjusted during the time of the project leading to distorted results.

Potential solutions might be:

- to talk about “process recording” instead of “optimization” or “quality management” in the first step (Schumann, 2011),
- the intensive communication about the benefit of the process analysis,

- the integration of the team members from each affected department as experts for this process, and
- to engage an external expert as a neutral person.

5. Conclusions: Transformational Leaders for TQM

Quality Management is a sensible subject, as people have – amongst others – to describe their job and everyday tasks in detail so that everybody can see what they are doing (or not?) throughout their working time. Team leaders as well as a Quality Management Coordinator and an external consultant (s. chapter 3.1) have to establish trust and demonstrate an open interest in the work of those that are asked to support the quality management process. Members of staff are experts in their field of work and have to be respected in this.

Team leaders should be role models for their team members and in this role be the first to give detailed information about their own working processes. They should also present and accomplish their ideas about changes which help to develop higher quality openly. Also they should be the first to work in the new processes and ask their team members to follow them to give them a chance to see how good the new working processes are. For sure, they have to be convinced of the changes and their beneficial impact on quality themselves.

Team leaders operating on the basis of the Transformational Leadership Style will be successful in Quality Management, as they know the importance of (Podsakoff/ MacKenzie / Moorman / Fetter, 1990):

- Identifying and articulating a Vision,
- Providing an Appropriate Model,
- Fostering the Acceptance of Group Goals,
- High Performance Expectations, and
- Intellectual Stimulation.

Fig. 5 illustrates how the Transformational Leadership Style supports the implementation of Quality Management in a library.

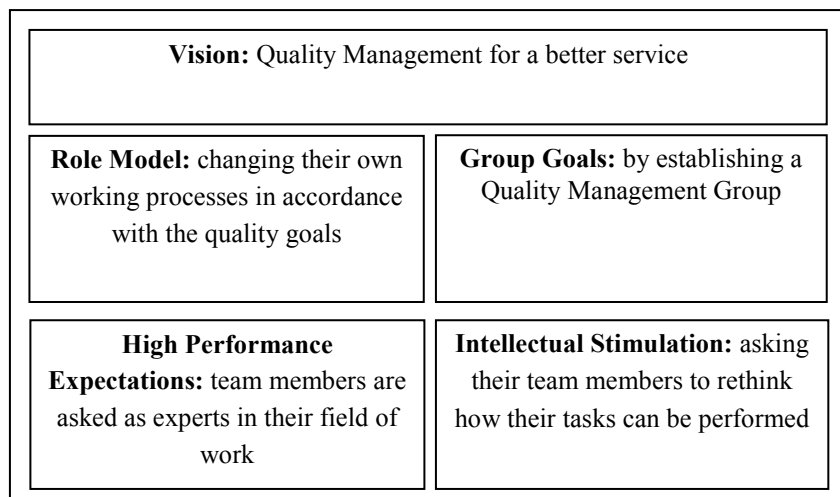


Fig. 5 Aspects of Transformational Leadership in accordance to Quality Management

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