

Knowledge and Implementation of Quality Circle in an Academic Library in the Philippines

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ABSTRACT

Librarians are indispensable assets of the library. They continue to explore new management techniques to enhance their resources and services. They adopt business management approaches, theories, principles, and practices in academic libraries which serve as bases for pioneering library management. These practices lead to creative delivery of services to customers and innovative means of support to faculty in their delivery of classroom instruction. An example of these is the application of quality circles within the library organization.

The study aimed to determine the level of knowledge and implementation of Quality Circle in academic libraries in response to the changing needs of millennial users of Saint Mary's University (Philippines) Learning Resource Center. It made use of quantitative and qualitative method of research through the researcher-made survey questionnaire, interview and documentary analysis. Data were gathered from 10 professional registered librarians from the university. The study found that librarians were knowledgeable and familiar about the objectives and characteristics of quality circle and there was a high level of implementation. It is then recommended that the academic librarians should continue to innovate the use of quality circle in the library.

Keywords: Academic Libraries, Library Benchmarking, Library Management, Quality Circle In Libraries, Trends In Libraries

INTRODUCTION

Academic libraries continue to improve their traditional services which aim to provide and disseminate information to the right users in the right format at the right time. Pursuant to this, librarians continue to explore new management approaches, theories and principles to catalyze positive changes particularly in their delivery of services and improvements of resources. Such management innovations will lead to achieving quality education among students who are the recipients of such innovative library services.

Library managers continuously seek and find ways to improve the library. One way to do this is through employee empowerment and work satisfaction. Over the passage of time, they have adopted a number of management approaches that can help solve problems within the library and enhance library services so as to

attract more users and increase employee productivity. One management approach that library managers have adopted is the Quality Circle (QC). This management concept is not new in the field of librarianship and may have been used in some academic libraries unknowingly. The challenge lies on the knowledge, skills and willingness of librarians to take risks and adopt changes.

QC is an organizational option aimed at helping employees in all levels to achieve greater job satisfaction and increase productivity and product quality (Barlow and Dale, 1983); gives a number of benefits like improvement in organizational performance, product quality, and relationship within the organization (Majumbar and Manoha, 2011); supports the organization which uses traditional system to manage in as much as the traditional

management tool is not effective in providing new solution to the new problems (Rohilla and Chaudhary, 2016); encourages participative decision making and not a prepackaged solution to a problem (Mourey and Mansfield, 1984); and offers an opportunity for the personnel to suggest ideas for solving work related problems and identify themselves within the organization and put in their best efforts for better library services, with the changing diverse needs and demands of the users in this knowledge society (Konnur and Joshi (2009). It is believed that quality circle is an important and effective tool used to solve problems in the organization at different levels.

Thus, the study focused on the knowledge and implementation of QC to determine its potential as a library management technique to improve the library organization and bring out the full potentials of academic librarians in response to the changing needs of millennial users of Saint Mary’s University Learning Resource Center (SMULRC). Specifically, it aimed to answer the following: 1. What is the level of knowledge of academic librarians on the objectives and characteristics of quality circle in SMULRC?; and 2. What is the level of implementation of quality circle in SMULRC?

Table1. *The Level of Knowledge of Academic Librarians on the Objectives of Quality Circle*

Objectives of Quality Circle	Median	Interpretation
It improves library services.	1	Strongly Agree
It improves policies and procedures.	1	Strongly Agree
It develops the professional growth of the librarians.	1	Strongly Agree
It develops the personal growth of the librarians.	1	Strongly Agree
It improves communication.	2	Agree
It promotes morale of the employees.	1	Strongly Agree
It creates a happy workplace.	2	Agree
It develops librarian’s sense of involvement in the decision making processes.	1	Strongly Agree
It encourages teamwork.	1	Strongly Agree
It improves customer’s satisfaction.	1	Strongly Agree

Scale: 1 - Strongly Agree 2 – Agree 3 - Strongly Disagree 4 - Disagree

Table 1 shows that the academic librarians “strongly agreed” that quality circle: 1) improves library policies and procedures, and services; 2) develops the personal and professional growth of librarians; 3) develops the librarian’s sense of involvement in the decision making processes; 4) promotes teamwork and employee morale, and 5) improves customer’s satisfaction. Meanwhile, they simply “agreed” that quality circle improves communication and creates a happy workplace.

This finding conforms with the study of Gregerman (1979, as cited by Mourey and

METHODOLOGY

The study made use of quantitative and qualitative type of research in determining the level of knowledge and implementation of quality circle at University Learning Resource Center (ULRC), Saint Mary’s University, Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya. Data were gathered from 10 registered professional librarians in the university through the use of survey questionnaire and interview conducted in second semester of schoolyear 2017-2018. Descriptive statistics such as frequency and median were used to describe the data gathered. Interview and documentary analysis were explored to further deepen the analysis and interpretation of data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Academic Librarians Knowledge on the Objectives of Quality Circle

Librarians need to revitalize their management skills in their workplace as they face challenges specifically in carrying their tasks and responsibilities to their millennial users. Being equipped with knowledge and skills like quality circle in management is an edge to advance their library resources and services.

Mansfield, 1984) that the employees benefit from quality circle because it: 1) develops a team atmosphere; 2) provides an easy exchange of ideas; 3) helps inter-group cooperation and relationships; 4) reduces problems; 5) provides a better understanding of job requirements; 6) gives a lift to the spirit and improves self-confidence; 7) helps to develop leadership; 8) results in better communications between supervisors and workers; 9) provides a means for bringing problems to light; 10) provides an opportunity to interact with support groups; and 11) gives an opportunity for frank and open discussions through regularly scheduled

meetings in rooms outside the regular work area. This is further corroborated by the study of Lees & Dale (1989) that quality circles have been proven as effective means of improving service quality, communication and staff morale.

In this study, the academic librarians recognize the values and benefits of quality circle in the library.

The Academic Librarians Knowledge on the Characteristics of Quality Circle.

According to Devi & Mani (2009), “quality circle is an integrated system constituting small groups of people from same or similar work areas, who voluntarily offer to meet in order to identify, analyze and solve problems, which may lead to improvement in their total performance and enrichment of their work life”.

Table2. *The Level of Knowledge of Academic Librarians on the Characteristics of Quality Circle*

Characteristics of Quality Circle	Median	Interpretation
It is a voluntary group	2	Agree
It has no pressure on employees to join	2	Agree
It is generally small in size	2	Agree
Its meeting is held once a week.	2	Agree
Its members meet during working hours.	2	Agree
Its conduct of meeting is usually fixed.	2	Agree
Its meeting has its own agenda.	1	Strongly Agree
It focuses on its own problems and takes corrective actions.	2	Agree
Its members experienced a sensed of autonomy	1	Strongly Agree
It is participative in nature	1	Strongly Agree

Scale: 1 - Strongly Agree 2 – Agree 3 - Strongly Disagree 4 - Disagree

The table revealed that the academic librarians of SMU LRC “strongly agreed” that the characteristics of quality circle are the following: 1) It has its own agenda; 2) Its members experienced a sensed of autonomy; and 3) It is participative in nature. On the other hand, they only “agreed” on the following: 1) It is a voluntary group; 2) It has no pressure on employees to join; 3) It is generally small in size; 4) Its meeting is held once a week; 5) Its members meet during working hours; 6) Its conduct of meeting is usually fixed; and 7) It focuses on its own problems and takes corrective actions. This means that librarians are familiar about the characteristics of quality circle which may have been already in practice in the library.

These findings are affirmed in the study of Welekar & Kulkarni (2013) which stated that Quality Circle is “primarily based upon recognition of value of the worker as a human being, as someone who willingly put efforts to

improve the job, his wisdom, intelligence, experience, attitude and feelings”.

The Implementation of Quality Circle in the Academic Library.

Setting up a quality assurance system is a good starting point for library service, but successful provision of quality services hinges on the implementation. According to Konnur & Joshi (2009), QC consists of a “small group of employees who genuinely care about others, preferably doing similar work, meeting voluntarily with a leader on a regular basis, to identify problems, analyze the causes, recommend their solutions to management and wherever possible, implement solutions” Also, the management’s commitment to service excellence depends on the establishment of a formalized quality assurance system, cultivation of staff commitment, understanding and educating the customers, and developing and sharing best practices among the library staff (Chim, 2007).

Table3. *The Level of Implementation on Quality Circle in an Academic Library*

	Median	Interpretation
There is a constitution that embodies the by-laws of the Quality Circle	2	High
There is a particular number of librarians that form the Quality Circle	2	High
The members of the Quality Circle are permanent unless they leave their work.	2	High
The members of Quality Circle discuss the problem and, then, prepare a list of alternative solutions.	1	Very High
Each alternative solution presented by the members of the Quality Circle is being evaluated.	2	High
Members of the Quality Circle agree on the basis of consensus for the final	1	Very High

solution on a problem.		
The final solution agreed upon by the members of the Quality Circle is presented to the administration either in oral or in written form.	2	High
The administration evaluates the presented solution by the members of the Quality Circle	2	High
Presentation of solutions to the administration helps to improve the communication between administration and the library.	2	High
The suggestion or solution approved by the management is being practice in the workplace	2	High

Scale: 1 – Very High 2 – High 3 - Low 4 – Very Low

Table 3 revealed that there is a “very high” level of implementation on quality circle in the SMULRC on the following: 1) Members of the QC agree on the basis of consensus for the final solution on a problem; and 2) The members of Quality Circle discuss the problem and, then, prepare a list of alternative solutions.

On the other hand, the librarians reported that there is “high” level of implementation on the following: 1) There is a constitution that embodies the by-laws of the Quality Circle; 2) There is a particular number of librarians that form the Quality Circle; 3) The members of the Quality Circle are permanent unless they leave their work; 4) Each alternative solution presented by the members of the Quality Circle is being evaluated; 5) The final solution agreed upon by the members of the Quality Circle is presented to the administration either in oral or in written form; 6) The administration evaluates the presented solution by the members of the Quality Circle; 7) Presentation of solutions to the administration helps to improve the communication between administration and the library; and 8) The suggestion or solution approved by the management is being practice in the workplace. This means that quality circle has been implemented and used by the librarians in the SMULRC as a library management tool.

This finding conforms to the study of Barlow & Dale (1983) that QC can be formed with success. Whether the implementation of it is part of short- or long-term planning, the rules remain the same and the philosophy remains unaltered that “A quality circle is composed of a small group of employees who genuinely care about others, preferably doing similar work, meeting voluntarily with a leader on a regular basis, to identify problems, analyze the causes, recommend their solutions to management and, wherever possible, implement solutions”.

However, Isaac (1989) viewed that there is a need for a clear commitment from top management, together with a proper

organizational climate and favorable attitudes for successful implementation of a QC program.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based from documentary analysis, random observation and interview, quality circle had been modified. The size ranges from three to six librarians due to their limited number in academic libraries. Some of them are also members in other quality circles. The quality circle is either formal or informal which is established every school year to pass on the leadership. Its function depends on the nature or purpose such as to create and implement projects or activities. Generally, it has specific regular meeting. The call for a meeting depends on the need to resolve a problem or a case. The members of the QC discuss the problems, suggest alternative solutions, and agree on the basis of consensus for the final solution on a problem.

Academic librarians are very much aware of the management techniques or approaches that are applicable in libraries and they are continuously making extra efforts on improving their resources and services through innovative or breakthrough management theories, principles and practices. They are knowledgeable and familiar about the objectives and characteristics of quality circle. Also, there is a high level of implementation on quality circle in the SMULRC.

Therefore, it is recommended that the librarians should continue to maintain the high level of implementation of quality circle and the librarians should continue to find ways on how to enhance and strengthen the use of quality circle in the SMULRC.

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