

## **Kaizen System: A Strategy for Quality Management of Libraries and Information Centres**

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### **Abstract :**

Kaizen means going on to make improvements without thinking whether such improvement is needed or not. The basic purpose of Kaizen is to go towards root cause of any problem and to remove it permanently. It helps to remove lack of efficiency and help people change their attitude for self-development. It results in qualitative development of products and services. Costs are minimized. Competitive advantage can be achieved and the professional caliber and competence can be improved. This article throws light on the use of Kaizen system for bringing about qualitative change in Libraries and information centres. The article describes Use of Kaizen in Libraries for quality and value issues, Explores the devices of kaizen for its use and application in LIS and outlines the 5 S's in management of libraries and information centers.

**Key Words:** Kaizen, Management of Libraries, Qualitative Change, Library Services, 5 S's

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### **1. Introduction:**

The word Kaizen means "continuous improvement". It comes from the Japanese words "kai" which means "change" or "to correct" and "zen" which means "good". It means Kaizen is related with making good ( or better or best) change as also to correct the thing for betterment ( Improvement).It is a Japanese system of improvement that is applied to every aspect of human life as also at home , business and professional level. It is a system that involves every employee from top to bottom level where everyone is expected to suggest improvements regularly and are not limited to a specific area. It results in improvement of productivity, procedures, practices, safety, efficiency and effectiveness through economic utilization of resources by minimizing wastes. Kaizen brings a little or big change at every time, at each step, at each place for the purpose of betterment of environment as well as self-development.

### **2. Meaning of Kaizen:**

Wherever, whenever and at whatever time we go, the deliberate and continuous habit of avoiding waste is called Kaizen.

We can make many changes in our daily life and work through continuous through continuous thinking and positive attitude. The Changes made with an attitude for good, easy and simple work by low efforts, with low tension in low time and by low expenditure means 'Kaizen'.

A very small but continuous change helps to remove causes behind any problem. It further leads to Zero base management. Everyone is striving for change affecting the working environment positively. This is referred to as "Total Employee Involvement Scheme." Employees are freed from any restrictions on them for bringing out change in their work. The changes are reported in the meetings of all. The superiors listen to the subordinates with an intension of motivation. The marks are given for the improvements. The name of the employee who makes the changes is conveyed to all. More marks are given to those who brings out change through 'group work' .The person who brings out change rather than only suggesting change is given more marks. It spreads the good thoughts and team spirit. The complaints are wel- come in Kaizen culture and those are removed through group interactions It further leads to constant improvements. The further steps of such kaizen culture are Total

Quality Control( TQC),Total Productive Maintenance (TPM) , Just in Time (JIT) which are implemented collectively or on by one.

### 3. Elements of Kaizen:

The elements of kaizen are:

- 3.1. Quality Circle
- 3.2. Total Productive Maintenance
- 3.3. Five 'S' Process Viz.seiri, seiton, seiso, seiketsu, and shitsuke.
- 3.4. Just- in- Time (JIT)
- 3.5. Total Quality Control.

#### 3.1. Quality Circle:

A **quality circle** is a volunteer group consisting of workers, usually under the leadership of their supervisor who are trained to identify, analyze and solve work-related problems and present their solutions to management. It helps to improve the performance of the organization, and motivate and enrich the work of employees. It further facilitates division of work, creating harmony among workers and high work performance.

In libraries and information centres, quality circles help to improve the professional caliber and competence, improve information services and products, improvement in library environment and various processes related with library activities. Participative management technique in a library system in which small teams of employees voluntarily come together to define and solve a quality or performance related problem is strongly supported by quality circles. Since library work is carried out at various sections of the library. The effective use of quality circles will certainly enhance the performance of sections and ultimately the library system as a whole.

#### 3.2. Total Productive Maintenance (TPM):

**Total productive maintenance (TPM)** is a method for use of improved machines through better utilization of maintenance and production resources. It is a management process developed for improving productivity of organization by making processes more reliable with least waste of resources. It helps to maintain the organization or equipment in good condition. With effective TPM, we can minimize the unexpected failure of the machines and equipments.

In Libraries and Information systems, for effective TPM, the employees at each section are trained to perform many of the day-to-day tasks of simple maintenance and fault-finding. They are guided by technical expert (an engineer or maintenance technician). They understand the machinery and identify potential problems, before they can impact any process. This helps to decrease downtime and reduce costs of production.

It helps to identify issues as soon as possible and plan to prevent any issues before occurrence. One motto is "zero error, zero work-related accident, and zero loss".

To implement TPM, all the sections in the library should work jointly with the goal of continuous improvement of all sectional works with operational conditions, within a library system; by stimulating the daily awareness of all employees.

An accurate and practical implementation of TPM in Libraries and information centres will improve information services and products within the library, where:

- 1) a clear library culture is designed to continuously improve the efficiency of all the sections of the library system
- 2) a standardized and systematic approach is used, where all possibilities for readers satisfaction are known and/or implemented.
- 3) all departments, influencing productivity, will be involved to move from a reactive- to a predictive mindset.
- 4) a transparent library system in reaching zero losses.
- 5) steps are taken as a constant process, not as a quick menu.

In Libraries, TPM is essential to provide practical and transparent ingredients to reach operational excellence.

### 3.3. Five 'S' Process Viz. Seiri, Seiton, Seiso, Seiketsu, and Shitsuke.

For effective management for libraries, there should be place for everything and everything should be at proper place. The management techniques like classification, cataloguing and shelf arrangement makes it possible. But application of 5 S's i.e. Seiri, Seiton, Seiso, Seiketsu, and Shitsuke can further greatly contribute towards obtaining highest level of cleanliness by keeping all the things in the libraries at most appropriate places. It is a structured programme and strategic approach for achievement of total organization, cleanliness, orderliness, standardization and discipline in the library and Information system. A well organised library system with effective information storage and retrieval results in reader's satisfaction. It encourages the morale of library staff and promotes a sense of belongingness at work place. It is explained below:

Table given below shows what these individual 5 S's mean. These are: Sort, Set (in place), Shine, Standardize, and Sustain.

| Japanese Term   | English Equivalent | Meaning in Japanese Context   |
|-----------------|--------------------|---|
| <b>Seiri</b>    | Tidiness           | Throw away all rubbish and unrelated materials in the workplace               |
| <b>Seiton</b>   | Orderliness        | Set everything in proper place for quick retrieval and storage                |
| <b>Seiso</b>    | Cleanliness        | Clean the workplace; everyone should be a janitor                             |
| <b>Seiketsu</b> | Standardization    | Standardize the way of maintaining cleanliness                                |
| <b>Shitsuke</b> | Discipline         | Practice 'Five S' daily - make it a way of life; this also means 'commitment' |

#### 3.3.1. Seiri (Sort):

It refers to the act of throwing away unwanted, unneeded, unnecessary and unrelated materials in workplace. It is the plan for clearly distinguishing the needed items from unneeded items and eliminating the latter. It results in keeping only the things which are related to work.

It is more applicable in libraries where the collection of books becomes outdated over a long period of time because of continuous research and developments and needs to be replaced by latest, nascent and current contents. The manual processes are being replaced by computerised one. Because of seiri, the effective use of space in libraries, careful purchasing of reading materials, equipments and necessary items as well as simplification of various processes, methods and techniques is greatly facilitated.

#### 3.3.2. Seiton (Orderliness):

Seiton means to keep everything in correct order to get it as and when needed without waste of time and again putting it back at its proper place to get it again. In other words, it helps to keep needed items in the correct place to allow for easy and immediate retrieval and also to put it back at proper place when its use is over. This ensures efficiency. The work flow becomes efficient, smooth and without any obstacle and the worker becomes productive. The correct place and position of every tool, item, machine or material is decided carefully in relation to how the work will be carried out and who is going to make use of it for what purpose.

In libraries and information centres, every book should be at proper place and there should be proper place for everything. This greatly facilitates 'retrieval of information' in shortest possible time. Getting the required information in short time (i.e. high response time) and after the use of it, restoring and putting it back at its proper place to get it again is called 'Seiton' which is of immense value in management of information and knowledge . In

the same way, the orderliness among various sections of libraries is essential for smooth functioning of libraries. e.g. OPAC should be nearer to circulation section, or stack section should be nearer to circulation section to keep order about library functions since these are inter-related.

### **3.3.3. Seiso (Cleanliness):**

This 'S' states that 'everyone is a janitor'. It is related with cleanliness of everything and everyone is responsible for the task of cleanliness. Seiso consists of cleaning up the workplace and giving it a healthy look to create elevating atmosphere at the workplace. Cleaning must be done by everyone in the organization, from subordinates to superiors. Assigning every area of the workplace to a person or group of persons for cleaning is a good idea so that no area should be left unclear. Everyone should see the 'workplace' through the eyes of a visitor and always think of its cleanliness to make a good impression of the workplace.

In Libraries and information centers, cleanliness is of much importance for preservation and conservation of reading material. Cleanliness of reading material, sections of the library, information products as well as total library system as a whole should be clean which will contribute to create elevating atmosphere where both the readers and staff will get their satisfaction.

### **3.3.4. Seiketsu (Standardization)**

Over a period of time, the above mentioned 3 S's i.e. **Seiri** (sorting), **Seiton** (orderliness) and **Seiso** (cleanliness) became ineffective if these are not made habitual in changing circumstances. The fourth step of "5S", or seiketsu, is meant for standardization and is an effective way for maintaining cleanliness in an organisation. It consists of defining the standards by which personnel must measure and maintain 'cleanliness'. If this stage is not followed, it will lead to the institution to the previous stage and hence there is a need to make checking of all the 5S's.

In libraries and information centers, standardization is required to provide qualitative services to readers by proper maintenance of reading materials. Standardized furniture and equipments are required for maintaining cleanliness in libraries.

### **3.3.5. Shitsuke (Discipline):**

The last step of "5S" i.e. Shitsuke, means 'Discipline.' It denotes commitment to maintain orderliness and to practice the first 4 S as a way of life through control over them. It emphasizes on elimination of bad habits and constant best practices for good results. Once discipline is achieved, personnel voluntarily observe cleanliness and orderliness at all times. At this stage, there is no need of reminder by management for cleanliness, orderliness to be maintained by personnel in an organisation.

In libraries, it is expected that there should be proper place for everything and everything should have proper place. The application of 5 S's to libraries helps to fulfill this expectation to a greater extent. Organizing training courses for staff, educating and motivating the library staff to adopt above techniques is included in 'Shitsuke'.

### **3.4. Just in Time (JIT):**

Structural habit comes through knowledge, skill and mind power. Providing like things in required quantity at any time is the motto of Just in Time (JIT) supply. Otherwise the customer (reader) will not come to you in future. Just What? Just When? and Just How much? is the series of questions that enables us to provide only required things at right time in right quantity to consumers. It helps to overcome the lacunas in the system and to concentrate on the efforts required for further development. For this purpose Total Productive Maintenance (TPM), 5 S's, Total Quality Control (TQC) etc. are required.

In libraries, readers need to be satisfied. Providing right information in right time with right quantity i.e. Just-in-time service to readers will help to achieve reader's satisfaction.

This approach helps to bring about further necessary developments of library services and activities by removing lacunas in library system.

### **3.5. Total Quality Control (TQC):**

Application of quality management principles to all areas of organization from design to delivery instead of confirming them only to production activities is called total quality control. TQC does not relate only with making available the products and services, rather it is a management approach to improve quality and performance to meet customer expectations. TQC helps to integrate all quality related functions and processes throughout the organisation. It involves 'Plan, Do, Check, and Action (P-D-C-A)'.

According to Dr. Ishikawa *"to practice quality control is to develop, design, produce and a service a quality product which is most economical, most useful and always satisfactory to the consumer. To meet this goal,, everyone in the company must participate in and promote quality control, including top executives , all divisions, within the company and all employees"* (Ishikawa,2003).

In libraries, TQC is required for various library services and daily routine activities by making continuous efforts for improving quality and performance. PDCA approach is much helpful for participative management of all sections of library for the satisfaction of all readers.

### **4. Conclusion:**

5 S's and their application in libraries seems to be very simple task. The system is very simple and easier, but putting it to work is very difficult because it involves the task of making all the human resources to do the 5 things on regular basis. But its application in libraries develops the working culture, manages the changes in libraries and contributes for constant development and progress. Hence, adoption of kaizen and application of 5 S's in libraries and information centers will certainly contribute towards libraries to be self disciplined, self sufficient and making the system with effective working environment in libraries carrying all the activities for the development of people and nation. In Libraries, removing the problem from the root , improvement of information products and services, improving the work performance, changing the attitude for betterment , staying in competitive world through adopting new changes for facing new challenges is all possible through application of kaizen as a permanent strategy for quality management in libraries and information centers.

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