



Festschrift in Honour of Dr. Namita B. Khot

# INNOVATIVE BEST PRACTICES AND LIBRARY SERVICES IN LIBRARIANSHIP

ग्रंथपालनातील सर्वोत्तम नाविन्यपूर्ण उपक्रम आणि ग्रंथालयीन सेवा



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**Library Services in Librarianship**

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## Effective Applications of Kaizen in the Libraries

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### Abstract :

*The article discusses the usefulness and applications of Kaizen methodology in the libraries. The article gives an oversight about the meaning, definition, elements and processes of Kaizen. Kaizen is a Japanese philosophy that has been adopted by many of the manufacturing, business and service organizations in the world at large level. Library is a service providing agency. The effective use of the Kaizen method in libraries can definitely help librarians to improve their library services and get better results. Furthermore, the flow of the application process and obstacles to implementation of Kaizen in the libraries are discussed here.*

**Keywords:** Kaizen, Lean, Libraries, Library Applications, Library Services

### 1. Introduction:

The manufacturing, business and service sector in the world has witnessed radical changes in the beginning of 21st century. The services sector of India remains the engine of growth for India's economy and contributed 53% to India's Gross Value Added at current prices in until January 2022 (IBEF, 2022). Many organizations face the challenges due to advent in technologies and processes as well as to fulfill the versatile demand of their patrons in this changing scenario. To survive in this competitive world, every organization is searching for new ideas, innovative techniques, and processes and trying to make the products and services better than others. The existing systems and processes are not able to achieve the goals set by the organization. Therefore, it has become inevitable for the organizations as well as for individuals to transform or "change" existing processes. It is also applicable for the libraries also as they are service agencies and provide useful services to their patrons. Effective use of "Kaizen" in the library operations may improve the quality of services and create a pleasant and satisfying environment in the libraries.

### 2. About Kaizen:

Kaizen (改善, カイゼン) is a Japanese word. "Kai" means change and "Zen" means good. It means adopting change for obtaining good results. The goal of the Kaizen is to improve processes and reduce wastage. *Kaizen is a continuous process that breaks down the main process into small processes.*

The teamwork, individual discipline, improved morale, quality circles and improvement suggestions are major elements of the Kaizen. Kaizen is known for systematic and continuous efforts taken by each employee- Manager to Lower Staff in the organization. It helps employees in completing their work in the most economical, easiest, effective and time-saving way. Kaizen recommends standardizing improved practices so everyone can use it in the work system for obtaining good results.

**2.1 Origin of Kaizen:** Kaizen was firstly introduced in Toyota Corporation- Japanese manufacturing industry (Wikipedia). Its origins were found during post-World War II in the Japanese group of workers engaged in preventing defects at Toyota. These groups of workers were known as Quality Circles. Kaizen was brought to the West and popularized by Masaaki Imai via his book *Kaizen: The Key to Japan's Competitive Success in 1986* (Daniel, 2021)

**2.2 Definition of Kaizen :** According to Masaaki Imai, Founder of Kaizen Institute, “Kaizen means improvement. Moreover, it means continuing improvement in personal life, home life, social life, and working life. When applied to the workplace, Kaizen means continuing improvement involving everyone – managers and workers alike.” (*What Is KAIZENTM, n.d.*).

Kaizen is used for continuous improvement in work processes of every sector such as manufacturing, businesses and services like in the library service sector as well.

**2.3 How Kaizen Works? :** Kaizen works on the core principle- *Change is for Good* and its belief that everything can be improved. The improvement cycle includes involving employees, identifying problems, finding solutions, executing them out and measuring and analyzing the end results regularly. If the results obtained after the completion of the process are as expected, then the planned measures are accepted further. This process is ongoing continuously. The Kaizen Prize is awarded to an employee who finds an innovative solution to a problem.

### **3. Related Studies :**

The studies done related to the application of Kaizen in the libraries are summarized as follows:

**Nagy (2020)** identified Kaizen strategies, its origins, features and applications in libraries. Researcher conducted a comparative study of requirements of Kaizen strategy and its availability in Assiut University libraries. The comparison was made between the accredited libraries and the non-accredited by the researcher. Researchers tried to find out the view of librarians regarding the dimensions of Kaizen strategy requirements such as General, formulation, implementation and evaluation requirements.

**Nobis (2020)** the Head of Science Information Services explained the strategies for increasing library usage through Kaizen- continuous improvement at University of Cambridge, UK

**Doll and Stark (2018)** explained a Lean process of improving and sustaining libraries using the Kaizen Lean philosophy in Michigan Technological University. They introduced three lean improvement projects- Workshop, Kaizen and Just do it and developed “Continuous Improvement Model” for expanding the library services

**McCulloch (2016)**, Head of Circulation Services, University of Waterloo shared the library's Kaizen experiments. The staff of the library applied their creativity for solving the problem using the Kaizen Lean system.

**Ahmad et al. (2016)** investigated the applications of Kaizen Lean principles and techniques used in the University Library in Malaysia to stabilize the financial problems and to satisfy the customer and fulfill their needs. The aim of the study was to identify the lean management approach at the academic libraries and analyze the technique that can be used.

**Maidhili et al. (2014)** discussed the Kaizen and 5'S strategies for improvement in library space management. They explained the different aspects of the 5'S, Kaizen and PDCA cycle. The study

revealed that 5'S engages people by using standards and discipline.

**Kumbar (2012)** shared the experience of usage of Kaizen for enhancing the quality of school library services. Researcher found that Kaizen ensures effective communication between head, management and librarian and it fosters teamwork and personal discipline

**Hubor (2011)** showed how to apply Kaizen- Lean principles in libraries and described different strategies for reducing costs and improving the library services and practices

**Martin (1993)** described processes and procedures of the Total Quality Management concept of Kaizen for the identification of priorities for improvement in academic libraries.

#### 4. Kaizen and the Libraries :

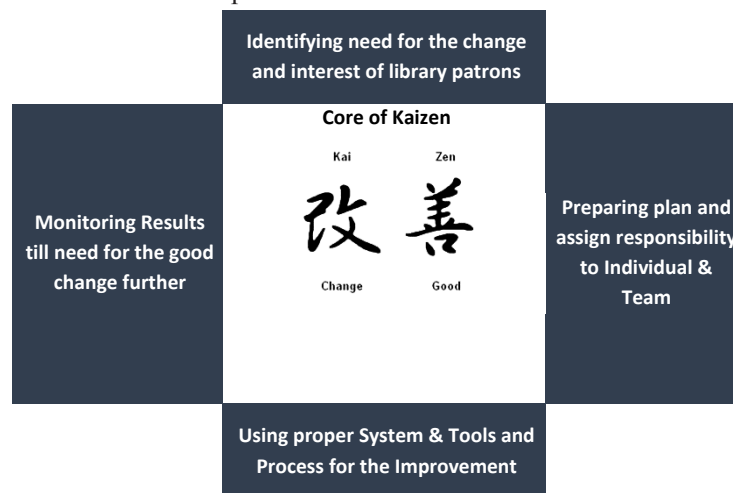
Libraries are service providing agencies. As the demands of library users are continuously changing, libraries also have to change their working systems accordingly. Kaizen philosophy always seeks change for the better future. So, the implementation of Kaizen strategies in the library work system can obtain best results.

##### 4.1 Applications of Kaizen in the Libraries:

Libraries have to always come up with new tricks to provide better services to the users and implement them. It is a continuous cycle. Kaizen also refers to continuous improvement. The efficient use of Kaizen enables libraries to make quality enhancements in their services.

The following steps/ practices should be adopted for obtaining good and sustainable results and effective application of Kaizen in the libraries:

- a) At the first, identify the need of library patrons and their interest
- b) Convey the need of change among higher authorities and library staff
- c) The goals, objectives and purpose of change should be clearly stated
- d) The change proposed must be a good in nature and fruitful for the library
- e) Commitment of executive operational staff is most important to achieve the results
- f) Find most suitable solution on problem and prepare plan accordingly
- g) Assign responsibility to each employee and make teams/ Kaizen circles
- h) Be transparent and monitor the results
- i) Standardize the successful processes



**Fig. 5 Kaizen Process in the Library**

#### **4.2 Obstacles in Applications of Kaizen in the Libraries:**

Here are some common obstacles when applying the Kaizen process to a library:

- a) Lack of interest of administrative authorities towards Kaizen
- b) Lack of commitment by management authorities
- c) Lack of clarity of purpose of making change
- d) Lack of vision and guiding principles
- e) Adverse work culture of organization
- f) Improper planning for implementing Kaizen strategies
- g) Insufficient budget and financial barriers
- h) Failure to identify the needs of the reader
- i) Lack of enthusiasm and spirit of library staff
- j) Negative approach or wrong perception of library staff for adopting new things
- k) Lack of response to investigation to problems
- l) Inadequate training to library staff
- m) The mindset of not learning new things, techniques, methods
- n) Lack of communication and coordination between managerial and executive staff
- o) Insufficient tools and equipment
- p) Running multiple tasks at a time in insufficient manpower
- q) Staff ignorance of how to use tools and equipment
- r) Use of non-standard tools
- s) Ignorance to auditing and assessment processes
- t) Absence of feedback mechanism

It is most important to consider all the factors related to the library for the successful implementation of Kaizen in the library. Convincing the people, from the management to the actual executors, why there is a need for Kaizen, increases the involvement of each person and good results can be achieved.

#### **5. Conclusion:**

The libraries are service providing support agencies. They are always trying to provide better services for its users. It seems that the technology and the demand of library patrons is being changed day by day. The libraries must accept the change to survive in this situation. They must seek new ideas, tools, innovate new methodologies to offer best services. The Japanese people and their techniques are known for their commitment and best quality and are accepted by manufacturing, business and service industries. The libraries are service providing agencies. Applying the principles and strategies of Kaizen in the libraries will be definitely beneficial for the organization and libraries itself. So, every library and librarians should adopt and implement the Kaizen in their routine for the better future ahead.

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