

# INFORMATION NEEDS AND INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOR OF QUALITY ASSURANCE SECTOR OFFICERS: CASE STUDY IN MALAYSIAN QUALIFICATION AGENCY (MQA)

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**Abstract:** *This study focused on the information needs, access and use quality assurance (QA) officers working in QA sector of MQA. It explored several aspects of information seeking behavior, such as information needs, reasons for seeking information, sources of information, barriers in accessing and gaining information, and access to information facilities. A total of 65 questionnaires were distributed to all officers working in QA sector of MQA. Filled-in questionnaires were returned with an overall response rate of 77 percent. The findings indicated that the most required information was current QA programs process status. Other important information needed were MQA code of practice and guidelines on good practice, and details of application. In addition, the study also revealed that all divisions shared three types of information among top ten ranking of needed information. On the other hand, problem solving and decision making were the most chosen reasons for seeking information. While, MQA databases and MQA guideline books were the main sources of information. The majorities of officers (82%) have ever faced difficulties to access and use information and unavailability of information was the main barriers reported. It was noted that 30% of officers have never visited MQA Resource Center. Meanwhile, Higher Education Institution (PD IPT) database was the most highly utilized by officers. Finally, most officers required information skill training to enhance their information seeking ability. Recommendations are made on the basis of the findings.*

**Keywords:** *Information needs, information seeking behavior, Malaysian Qualification Agency, quality assurance officer.*

## INTRODUCTION

Information as a crucial commodity is needed by all jobs, professions and organizations for competitive advantage and as a critical resource in the operation and management of organizations. Timely availability of relevant information is vital for effective performance of managerial functions such as planning, organizing, leading, and controlling. All organizations require relevant information to make quality decisions and to solve problems in order to make profit. To be successful, any project requires efficient management of human and material resources. This cannot be done unless accurate, timely, and relevant information is available to decision makers. Therefore, the systematic management of information is regarded as important in organization. One of the main reasons for seeking information is to solve problems. Information seeking behaviors can be defined as a way in which an individual apply his/her knowledge and methods in relation to a given information

environment. It is, therefore regarded as essentially a process of interaction between the user and the rest of the information system. (Manda, Paul(1991). The term information seeking often serves as an umbrella overarching a set of related concepts and issues. In the simplest terms, information seeking involves the search, retrieval, recognition, and application of meaningful content (Kingrey, KP, 2002). However, among the difficulties in managing and providing information services effectively is information overload which makes it difficult to organize and access. This study focused on the information needs, access and use by quality assurance (QA) officers attached to the QA sector of MQA. Several aspects of information seeking behavior, such as information needs, reasons for seeking information, sources of information, barriers in accessing and gaining information, and access to information facilities are explored.

Several problems have been identified as the barriers that prevent effective and efficient services in meeting the information needs and information seeking behavior of the personnel of organizations. There is a lack of ability and skill or inefficient among the staff in searching information to satisfy their jobs requirement (1999); lack of knowledgeable and skilled information personnel to manage information and information system (Malek-Mohammadi as cited in Pezeshki-Rad and Zamani 2005); and the lack of training on information seeking skill (Salina Zawawi and Shaheen Majid 2001). The library is not fully utilized as the main reference center for information (Erskine May (Boulton, 1989, p. 195) as cited in Alemna and Skouby 2000); The existence of barriers to access information in organization (Pettigrew, 1996 as cited in Pezeshki-Rad and Zamani 2005) posed another problem while the information systems available does not fully support the core business needs and lack of client friendliness (Pezeshki-Rad and Zamani 2005).

The objectives of the study are to identify information needs of QA sector officers (Marcella and Baxter 1999), (Alemna and Skouby 2000), (Silvio 2006), (Shanmugam 1999), (Salina Zawawi and Shaheen Majid 2001); to understand why quality assurance sector officers seek information (Pezeshki-Rad and Zamani 2005), (Silvio 2006), (Shanmugam 1999); to identify quality assurance sector officers' sources (Alemna and Skouby 2000), (Silvio 2006) or channels chosen to satisfy their information needs (Pezeshki-Rad and Zamani 2005), (Shanmugam 1999); and to identify the organization-related barriers that prevented officers from access, seeking and using information (Pezeshki-Rad and Zamani 2005), (Shanmugam 1999)

This study use questionnaire survey approach for data collection. The research only focused on information needs and information seeking behavior of officers in one sector in MQA. The Quality Assurance Sector officers are those who currently working in quality assurance sector of MQA and holding grade 41 and above.

## **BACKGROUND OF ORGANIZATION**

The Malaysian Qualification Agency (MQA) was formerly known as Lembaga Akreditasi Negara (LAN) or National Accreditation Board, Malaysia. It was established in order to guarantee the healthy growth of private higher education in Malaysia. LAN, which was officially established in May 15, 1997 as a QA body was responsible for private higher education system (National Accreditation Board 2005).

MQA was formed as a new entity which merges the National Accreditation Board (LAN) and the Quality Assurance Division, Ministry of Higher Education (QAD). This entity is

responsible for QA of higher education for both the public and the private sectors. It was established on 1 November 2007 and came into force by virtue of the MQA Act, 2007. The main role of the MQA is to implement the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF) as a basis for QA of higher education and as the reference point for the criteria and standards for national qualifications. The MQA is responsible for monitoring and overseeing the QA practices and accreditation of national higher education.

## Literature Review

Many studies have been conducted on the information needs and information seeking behavior of various groups of people. An early study of information need in the field of information science in 1966 by Menzel (1966, as stated in Shailendra and Prakash 2008) was published in the *Annual Review of Information Science & Technology (ARIST)*. Basically, in investigating this subject matter, there were three kinds of terms used by scholars in their research title. Those terms are “information needs”, “information seeking behavior” and “information needs and information seeking behavior.” Shailendra and Prakash (2008), investigated the information needs of Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) of Delhi. The study which was dependant on non-documentary sources of information, was aimed to find out the information sources used by them. The results of this research showed that only a few MLAs were aware of the usefulness of library/information services. They are dependant on non-documentary sources of information.

A study was carried out to determine the information needs of small-scale business community at Chisokone Market in the city of Kitwe in Zambia (Banda, Mutula, and Grand 2004). The study sought to find out the information needs of the business community; the types of businesses carried out, the different service providers, and the problems faced by small scale business community in seeking for information and the demographic characteristics of the community. The results of the study showed that most of the information needs were related to marketing, sources of supplies, management skills, and credit/loan facilities. According to Petr (2004), in his study on the information needs of Romany minority and their awareness of those needs indicated that Romany people obtained information mostly from television, radio and through talk with other people. Most of the sample does not use any kind of a library. The study also explored the presence of library services for these minority group in the area of Baranya (Eastern Croatia).

Meanwhile, a study on information-seeking behaviour of International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) law faculty members found out that respondents used various sources for acquiring the needed information (Shaheen Majid and Gava Mugeraa Kassim 2000). Books were ranked as the most important source for teaching and research purposes, followed by law reports and statutes. Respondents preferred to first consult their personal collection before resorting to other information providing sources and agencies. The Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) and CD-ROM were the most frequently used IT-based sources and facilities. E-mail was the most popular among the Internet-based services and applications. The increase in information available on the Web has affected information seeking behavior. Innumerable types of information, in a large variety of containers and in many different locations, are all available in one place. (Siddiqui, Sadaf, 2011). Abels (2004) 2 mentioned that the frequency of use of the Internet in 1998-2000 had greatly increased.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study involved all officers within the grade of 41 and above who were attached to the quality assurance sector in MQA. According to information given through e-mail by human resource officer (Rosnani Ramli, 2009), the total population of officers working in QA sector were 65. All of them were included in the survey and a questionnaire was distributed to all of them. The data was collected through questionnaires that were distributed to all quality assurance officers working in quality assurance sector, MQA. Questionnaire was personally administered whereby it was distributed and collected personally to respondents. Questionnaires distributed within three days beginning from 19<sup>th</sup> until 21<sup>st</sup> January 2009). Questionnaires collected from 19<sup>th</sup> until 27<sup>th</sup> January 2009).

50 officers filled-in and returned the questionnaires and this constituted 77 percent of the total population of QA officers. MQA internal memo (2008) was referred to in order to understand the nature of work and function of each division involved in the survey. This was to ensure that all elements included in the questionnaire will be accurate and suitable with the condition of the organization. Personal interview was also conducted with one IT officer (Nor Fazilah Omar 2008) in order to gain information regarding the databases that were currently available in MQA.

This study employed Descriptive Analysis to analyze the research data in order to understand how frequently variables investigated occur (frequencies). All the data analyzed use frequency test analysis. Another method used to analyse data was using cross tabulation test analysis, as a guidance for the researcher during conducting this case study.

### **Demographic Profile**

15 (30%) males and 35 (70%) females were involved in this study and 17 (34%) of them aged between 20-29 years old. While, 29 (58%) of them aged between 30-44 years old. Finally, 2 (4%) of them aged between 45-54 years old and another 2 (4%) aged 55 and above. In terms of division, 12 (24%) respondents or (4 (8%) officers from each division) came from Institutional Audit, QA Coordination, and Accreditation (Science & Medical) divisions. While 18 (36%) respondents or (6 (12%) officers from each division) came from Standard & Qualification Reference, Accreditation (Engineering & Environmental Building), and Accreditation (Arts & Humanities) divisions. Lastly 15 (30%) officers came from Accreditation (Social Sciences) division and 5 (10%) of officers from Accreditation (IT & Multimedia) division. 20 (40%) of officers have been working in the organization for 1-4 years. Whereas, 21 (42%) of officers have been working for 5-8 years. Eventually, 9 (18%) of officers have been working for 9-12 years.

With regards to the level of education, 43 (86%) respondents have the Bachelors degree qualification while, 7 (14%) possessed Masters Degree qualification. 44 (88%) officers were under the grade 41-44 categories, 3 (6%) of officers working in grade 48-52 while, 3 (6%) of officers working in grade 54-JUSA C.

### **Information Needs**

In order to investigate the information needed of all QA sector officers, two documents were referred, namely internal memos (Syed Ahmad Hussein, 2008) and MQA web site. 27 items were identified as the most important and frequently requested by QA officers. The results were ranked according to descending order, based on very frequently information needed.

First and second very frequently needed information were “Current QA programs process status” and “Using/Browsing MQA databases.” Each item was selected by 27 (54%) officers. Another important information needed by respondents were “MQA code of practice and guideline on good practice,” “Details of application (entry requirement/ credit hours/articulation, etc.),” and “MQA standards and program criteria.” Each item was chosen by 26 (52%) officers. Another essentials information selected by officers were “QA documents and files” with 24 (48%) respondents, “Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF)” with 23 (46%) respondents, “Malaysian Qualifications Register (MQR)” with 20 (40%) respondents, “Details of panel of experts” with 18 (36%) respondents, and “Ministry/ Government policies” with 17 (34%) respondents. Details result can be referred in table 1.

This study also investigated the information needs according to division to determine any pattern of similarities or differences among divisions. This finding was important for management to ensure adequate information is provided to all staff in the division. However, only top ten most needed information of all division were listed. Comparison and contrast were only based on this information.

**Table 1: Information needs of QA sector officers**

No	Information /Scale	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Very Frequently
1.	Current QA programs process status			6(12%)	17(34%)	27(54%)
2.	Using/Browsing MQA databases			6(12%)	17(34%)	27(54%)
3.	MQA code of practice and guideline on good practice			3(6%)	21(42%)	26(52%)
4.	Details of application (entry requirement/ credit hours/ articulation, etc.)		2(4%)	4(8%)	18(36%)	26(52%)
5.	MQA standards & program criteria	1(2%)		8(16%)	15(30%)	26(52%)
6.	QA documents and files		1(2%)	7(14%)	18(36%)	24(48%)
7.	Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF)			2(4%)	25(50%)	23(46%)
8.	Malaysian Qualifications Register (MQR)			14(28%)	16(32%)	20(40%)
9.	Details of panel of experts		4(8%)	6(12%)	22(44%)	18(36%)
10.	Ministry/Government policies		3(6%)	8(16%)	22(44%)	17(34%)

No	Information /Scale	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Very Frequently
11.	Previous decisions on certain issues		1(2%)	5(10%)	28(56%)	16(32%)
12.	Benchmarking of QA practice		7(14%)	9(18%)	18(36%)	16(32%)
13.	Previous QA programs achievement status		1(2%)	8(16%)	25(50%)	16(32%)
14.	Formats (Working paper/ Correspondence/ Document, etc.)		2(4%)	10(20%)	23(46%)	15(30%)
15.	Entertaining client	2(4%)	2(4%)	11(22%)	20 (40%)	15(30%)
16.	QA application procedure		1(2%)	14(28%)	21(42%)	14(28%)
17.	Reports (annual report/ panel report, etc.)		10(20%)	10(20%)	16(32%)	14(28%)
18.	Comparison of QA practice		8 (16%)	14(28%)	16(32%)	12(24%)
19.	Details of MQA staff (telephone/ email)		2 (4%)	16(32%)	21(42%)	11(22%)
20.	International QA best practice	1(2%)	8(16%)	15(30%)	15(30%)	11(22%)
21.	Forms (visit/ claim/ accreditation)		6(12%)	13(26%)	21(42%)	10(20%)
22.	Consultancy procedure and process (clinic for Higher Education Institution)	1(2%)	4 (8%)	18(36%)	17(34%)	10(20%)
23.	Presentation materials	1(2%)	6(12%)	16(32%)	22(44%)	5(10%)
24.	Research/Working papers	3(6%)	9(18%)	17(34%)	16(32%)	5(10%)
25.	Flight schedule	2(4%)	15(30%)	19(38%)	9(18%)	5(10%)
26.	Transportation booking	2(4%)	11(22%)	23(46%)	10(20%)	5(8%)
27.	Hotels, Educational Institution and Conference/ Seminar Venue	3(6%)	6(12%)	21(42%)	16(32%)	5(8%)

### Reasons for seeking for information

There were seven reasons for seeking information given to respondents. The findings indicated that very frequently the reasons used for seeking information according to ranking were as follows: "Problem Solving" with 32 (64%), "Decision Making" with 30 (60%), "Entertaining inquiries from (Customer, Management, Ministry, etc.)" with 26 (52%), "Knowledge enhancing" with 23 (46%), "Getting idea for discussion or meeting" and

“Planning for (project/ seminar/ training/ presentation/ guideline/ work process, etc.)” with 16 (32%) for each of them. Last rank was “Competition against other officers” with 7 (14%). Detailed lists of the findings is indicated in table 2.

**Table 2: Reasons for seeking for information**

No	Reasons /Scale	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Very Frequently
1.	Problem Solving			2(4%)	16(32%)	32(64%)
2.	Decision Making			2(4%)	18(36%)	30(60%)
3.	Entertaining inquiries from (Customer, Management, Ministry, etc.)		1(2%)	1(2%)	22(44%)	26(52%)
4.	Knowledge enhancing		1(2%)	5(10%)	21(42%)	23(46%)
5.	Getting idea for discussion or meeting		2(4%)	7(14%)	25(50%)	16(32%)
6.	Planning for (project/ seminar/ training/ presentation/ guideline/ work process, etc.)		1(2%)	17(34%)	16(32%)	16(32%)
7.	Competition against other officers	14(28%)	9(18%)	12(24%)	8(16%)	7(14%)

Comparison that was made between the grade of service and frequency for seeking information using cross tabulation method revealed useful information. Officers in grade 48-52 used information for problem solving very frequently with 2 (66.7%) followed by officers worked in grade 41-44 with 29 (65.9%) and lastly officers of grade 54-JUSA C with 1 (33.3%). On the other hand, in terms of decision-making, officers in grade 54-JUSA C and 48-52 ranked first and second with 2 (66.7%) for each of them, while grade 41-44 officers ranked third with 26 (59.1%).

### Sources of information

There were 21 sources of information frequently used by QA sector officers. Findings indicated that the most preferred source was “MQA Databases” with 31 (62%). Second favorite source of information was “MQA Guideline books” with 24 (48%). Third, “Colleagues” with 22 (44%). Forth to sixth were “Internet, Personal files, and Personal memory” with 20 (40%) respondents for each of source. Seventh, “Email” with 18 (36%). Eighth, “MQA intranet” with 17 (34%), Ninth, “MQA circular” with 15 (30%) and finally “MQA Seminars/Conferences” with 11 (22%). Complete list of result shown in table 3.

Cross tabulation analysis on selected variable also revealed other interesting findings. Those who worked longer in the organization referred to colleague less frequent as compared to those who were new in the organization. Officers who served between 9-12 years responded with 2 (22.2%), those with 5-8 years, 7 (33.3%) and those who served 1-4 years, 13 (65%). In addition, personal memory was used very frequently as a source of information by senior officers who have worked between 9-12 years with 4 (44.4%),

compared to another two groups of officers who used it less frequently, with 8 (40%) for those who served the organization between 1-4 years, with 8 (38.1%) for those worked between 5-8 years. Personal files were also used very frequently as a source of information by senior officers who worked between 9-12 years with 4 (44.4%), compared to another two groups of officers that used it less frequently with 9 (42.9%) for those who served between 5-8 years and 7 (35%) for those serving between 1-4 years.

**Table 3: Sources of information**

No.	Sources/ Scale	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Very Frequently
1.	MQA Databases			3(6%)	16(32%)	31(62%)
2.	MQA Guideline books			3(6%)	23(46%)	24(48%)
3.	Colleagues			7(14%)	21(42%)	22(44%)
4.	Internet		2(4%)	11(22%)	17(34%)	20(40%)
5.	Personal files	1(2%)	1(2%)	13(26%)	15(30%)	20(40%)
6.	Personal memory	1(2%)	1(2%)	14(28%)	14(28%)	20(40%)
7.	Email		1(2%)	10(20%)	20(40%)	18(36%)
8.	MQA intranet		4(8%)	8(16%)	21(42%)	17(34%)
9.	MQA circular	1(2%)		10(20%)	24(48%)	15(30%)
10.	MQA Seminars/ Conferences	1(2%)	2(4%)	11(22%)	25(50%)	11(22%)
11.	External circular (Ministry etc)	1(2%)	5(10%)	15(30%)	20(40%)	9(18%)
12.	Acts		11(22%)	17(34%)	13(26%)	9(18%)
13.	External experts (Lecturers, Professional etc.)		9(18%)	13(26%)	20(40%)	8(16%)
14.	MQA Brochure/ pamphlets	2(4%)	2(4%)	14(28%)	25(50%)	7(14%)
15.	External Seminars/ Conferences	4(8%)	8(16%)	18(36%)	15(30%)	5(10%)
16.	MQA Resource Center	4(8%)	12(24%)	14(28%)	15(30%)	5(10%)
17.	External Guideline books	4(8%)	3(6%)	18(36%)	21(42%)	3(6%)
18.	External Brochure/ pamphlets	3(6%)	11(22%)	18(36%)	16(32%)	2(4%)
19.	Newspaper	4(8%)	9(18%)	22(44%)	13(26%)	2(4%)
20.	External officers from other Government departments and agencies	2(4%)	7(14%)	27(54%)	12(24%)	2(4%)
21.	Journal article	3(6%)	10(20%)	24(48%)	13(26%)	



## Barriers in accessing and gaining information

### *Experience difficulties to access and use information in organization*

41 (82%) respondents admitted that they have never faced difficulties in accessing and using information in the organization. On the other hand, 9 respondents (18%) mentioned that they have never faced any problem in getting information in the organization. Analyzing the data, using cross tabulation method revealed a hidden pattern. The male percentage that has never faced difficulties in accessing and using information were larger with 14 (93%) compared to female with 27 (77.1%). In terms of the age group, all officers within the age group of 55 and above and 44-54 responded "Yes" to this question with 2 (100%) respondents for each group. On the other hand, the percentage of the remaining two groups that responded "Yes" were 24 (82.8%) for those within age 30-44 years old and 13 (76.5%) for those within the age of 20-29 years old.

### *Barriers prevented from accessing and using information in organization*

Ten most popular barriers that contributed to the problem in accessing and using information in organization were identified. "Unavailability of information" was ranked first with 34 (68%) respondents agreeing with it as a barrier. Second, was "Inadequate" information with 33 (66%) respondents. Third, "Inaccessibility of information" with 32 (64%), fourth, "Lack of time" with 30 (60%). Fifth, was "Inadequate resource center reference materials/facilities" with 25 (50%) while he sixth, "Complexity of databases" with 22 (44%). Seventh, was the "Limited access to server/internet service" with 18 (36%). Eighth and ninth, was the "Lack of information seeking skill" and "Lack of assistance from resource center officer" with 14 (28%) respondents for each of them. Finally, the "Lack of assistance from IT officer" was another barrier to access, with 7 (14%) respondents. The result also indicated that the IT officers have provided a very good service to QA officers since most respondents or 37 (74%) did not choose it as the main barrier. Details of the findings are illustrated in table 4.

**Table 4: Barriers in accessing and using information in organization**

No.	Barriers/Response	Yes	No	Not Sure
1.	Unavailability of information	34(68%)	14(28%)	2(4%)
2.	Inadequate information	33(66%)	17(34%)	
3.	Inaccessibility of information	32(64%)	16(32%)	2(4%)
4.	Lack of time	30(60%)	18(36%)	2(4%)
5.	Inadequate resource center reference materials/facilities	25(50%)	18(36%)	7(14%)
6.	Complexity of databases	22(44%)	25(50%)	3(6%)
7.	Limited access to server/Internet service	18(36%)	30(60%)	2(4%)
8.	Lack of information seeking skill	14(28%)	31(62%)	5(10%)

No.	Barriers/Response	Yes	No	Not Sure
9.	Lack of assistance from resource center officer	14(28%)	32(64%)	4(8%)
10.	Lack of assistance from IT officer	7(14%)	37(74%)	6(12%)

### Access to current information facilities

Frequency of using the facilities offered by the MQA resource center 15 (30%) of the respondents replied that they have never used the facilities offered by MQA Resource Center. On the other hand, 13 (26%) officers noted that they used it yearly, 12 (24%) used it monthly, and 10 (20%) used it weekly. The total percentage of the resource center usage was 70 %. However, the percentage of those who never visited it was the biggest out of four options. This result indicated that there is an urgent need to look back at the resource center on various aspects to make it more attractive to the officers to utilize it.

Cross tabulation analysis of this variable with other variables revealed additional information. Male officers used the resource center more frequently whereby 7 (46.7%) visited weekly compared to female with 3 (8.6%) only. With regards to the age group, officers whose age was between 30-44 used the resource center weekly and more frequently with 8 (27.6%), followed by those between 20-29 of age with 2 (11.8%). Those officers, aged 55-above used it monthly with 1 (50%), and officers, aged between 45-54 ranked last who used it yearly, that is 1 (50%).

### Frequency of access and use of databases available in the organization

Ten databases were identified being used by QA sector officers. Out of these databases, the "Higher Education Institution (PDIPT)" database was the most frequently used with 37 (74%) respondents. Next is the "Panel of Expert (PDAPP)" database with 28 (56%) officers. Then, the "Malaysian Qualifications Register (MQR)" was used by 16 (32%) respondents. Next, "Files Borrowing System (Accreditation)" and "MQA intranet" databases, with 12 (24%) for each of them. Then, "Staff directory (E-Directory)" with 10 (20%) and "E-Center (Resource Center)" with 3 (6%). Then, the E-IMS (stationeries booking), with 2 (4%), and finally, the "Short Course and Driver Booking System" database with 1 (2%) for each of them and the overall results is shown in table 5.

**Table 5: Frequency of access and use of MQA databases**

No.	Databases/ Scale	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Very Frequently
1.	Higher Education Institution (PDIPT)		2(4%)	3(6%)	8(16%)	37(74%)
2.	Panel of Expert (PDAPP)	4(8%)	4(8%)	6(12%)	8(16%)	28(56%)
3.	Malaysian Qualifications Register (MQR)	1(2%)	3(6%)	11(22%)	19(38%)	16(32%)

No.	Databases/ Scale	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Very Frequently
4.	Files Borrowing System (Accreditation)	7(14%)	12(24%)	9(18%)	10(20%)	12(24%)
5.	MQA intranet		2(4%)	13(26%)	23(46%)	12(24%)
6.	Staff directory (E-Directory)	3(6%)	4(8%)	21(42%)	12(24%)	10(20%)
7.	E-Center (Resource Center)	11(22%)	14(28%)	10(20%)	12(24%)	3(6%)
8.	E-IMS (stationeries booking)	14(28%)	14(28%)	18(36%)	2(4%)	2(4%)
9.	Short Course	10(20%)	18(36%)	14(28%)	7(14%)	1(2%)
10.	Driver Booking System	16(32%)	12(24%)	14(28%)	7(14%)	1(2%)

Cross tabulation analysis indicated that female officers accessed the databases more compared to male officers for top three very frequently accessed databases. 28 (80%) accessed for "Higher Education Institution (PDIPT)" database, 21 (60%) for "Panel of Expert (PDAPP)" database, and 12 (34.3%) respondents for "Malaysian Qualifications Register (MQR)" database. Young officers, aged between 20-29 accessed databases more frequently compare to senior officers. They accessed the "Higher Education Institution (PDIPT)" database with 15 (88.2%), "Panel of Expert (PDAPP)" database with 11 (64.7%), and "Malaysian Qualifications Register (MQR)" database with 7 (41.2%). Newly worked officers between 1-4 years accessed databases more frequently compare to other group with 18 (90%) for "Higher Education Institution (PDIPT)" database, with 14 (70%) for "Panel of Expert (PDAPP)" database, and 10 (50%) for "Malaysian Qualifications Register (MQR)" database.

### Recommendation and Discussion

Several recommendations were identified from this study in order to enhance information use and access in MQA that could be reviewed seriously by MQA management. One of the points raised was the provision of training in information skills, especially in information searching. This was as crucial to improve information use and access. This skill teaches officers to become information literate. Officers will be given exposure to various kinds of information available nowadays whether online or offline information. Officers also will be assisting to search and select information from various sources. That is because not all information available especially in internet is reliable. Officers should be able to judge the internet information from several aspects like its accuracy, authority, reliability, and currency (Smith 1997). Resource center must be managed by professional officer that has qualification in library science or in resource center management. This is important since only expert can handle resource center professionally in order to attract officers to visit it.

Based on the respondents'. As revealed by table 6, feedback several recommendations could be made to improve information use and access in the organization. It would be useful to link all databases in one portal for easier access by the users. At the same time reference materials in resource center should be increased and more online journals should

be subscribed. It would also be advised to improve Higher Education Institution (PDIPT) database in term of searching and filtering facility in order to ensure its smoothness and to avoid “hang”; while improving Panel of Expert (PDAPP) database. In consonant with the requirements of the officers, databases that record all standard format of correspondences, documents and drafts, and record list of paper works. should be made available, . Eight recommendations were given to be chosen by respondents. Out of that, 48 (96%) agreed that they need “Information skill training”. Whereas, 46 (92%) asked for resource center reference materials to be increased. Next, 44 (88%) of respondents required IT skill training. 40 (80%) of respondents agreed that databases facilities need to be improved.

39 (78%) respondents noted that resource center facilities should be improved. 28 (56%) officers agreed that organization should hire professional resource center officer. This is important to ensure that resource center in govern by a qualified officer. 26 (52%) of respondents response that library skill was required. Lastly, 24 (48%) of officers agreed that organization should has professional information manager. Details of results as in table 6.

**Table 6: Recommendation to improve information access and use**

No.	Recommendation	Yes	No	Not Sure
1.	Provide information skill training	48(96%)	1(2%)	1(2%)
2.	Increase resource center reference materials	46(92%)	1(2%)	3(6%)
3.	Provide IT skill training	44(88%)	3(6%)	3(6%)
4.	Improve databases facilities	40(80%)	3(6%)	7(14%)
5.	Improve resource center facilities	39(78%)	4(8%)	7(14%)
6.	Hire professional resource center officer	28(56%)	14(28%)	8(16%)
7.	Provide library skill training	26(52%)	13(26%)	11(22%)
8.	Hire professional information manager	24(48%)	18(36%)	8(16%)

**CONCLUSION**

This study revealed the information needs of the officers in the quality assurance organization and their information searching behavior. Hence, the management can plan strategically on how to fulfill those needs, provide comprehensive information facilities, and prepare proper training to staff. In this information age information is regarded as power and it should be managed effectively as a commodity to gain competitive advantage against their competitors. Accurate, reliable, authoritative, and authentic information will enable management to make the best problem-solving and decision-making process. Other aspects of information provision could be investigated in order to enhance the organization information use, access, storage and retrieval. Therefore, management should work closely and exchange of information with various parties like universities, other government organizations, private organizations, and NGOs in order to gain more understanding regarding information management in organization.

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