Assessing the Quality of Education in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract: Education without quality cannot be imagined. There have been many a attempts to gauge the quality level in the education sector worldwide. The education sector is expanding rapidly in Saudi Arabia. Ascertaining quality in the education system is important, otherwise the purpose would fail. This study attempts to assess the quality of education being imparted in one of new universities if Saudi Arabia. SERVQUAL is one of the most common scales widely used to assess the level of quality. The result indicates that the sampled college is doing pretty well in terms of delivering quality education. For further improvement a relook at the systems of the college may be done.

INTRODUCTION

For any product or service today quality is a buzz word. Most of the product and services differentiate themselves on the basis of quality. Every business is putting lot of efforts and resources to achieve higher standards of quality. Even awareness among customers is very high regarding quality. Like any other sector quality is important even for education sector. There is a need to create quality standards for education sector also. Today just like any other sectors there is a lot of competition among education institutions, there is a need for all institutions to excel in their respective field. This is a sector on which future of next generations depend, future of the country depends, future of the whole world depends.

In recent years we have seen a huge gap between the educational standards of developed and developing countries. For a developing country like KSA it becomes even more important to focus more aggressively on education quality, if it really wants to compete in the world market. Educational institutions need to focus on research, innovation to create new ideas, concepts and products. There is an urgent need to revamp the whole education sector to make it more linked to the industry and markets. There is a need for education sector to work closely with industries to bring in innovations. Service quality standards must be developed and adhered closely to bring a lasting change. There is need to make education more relevant and more interesting for the students. There is a need to bring in changes with the changing environment.

Many obsolete practices are still being followed in many institutes; many new techniques which can give better learning are not being implemented. There is a huge scope to improvement in quality sector.

Recently KSA has gone in for a rapid and huge expansion in education sector. A large chunk of the countries budget has been allocated to the education sector. But, still there is a problem that in KSA universities are trying to imitate the curriculum the content of western countries. There is a need to bring about changes from school level. To compete globally there is need to focus more on English level. Right now students are not studying English at school level, suddenly at university level they are being asked to study in English from foreign teachers. It is difficult for most of the students to grasp things, learning is very low. If higher education is to imparted in English, then students must study English from preschool level. There is a need to develop a new system from scratch as per Saudi requirements, according to Saudi environment. This should be done at the earliest because, education is an highly dynamic in nature. In this respect there is a huge pressure on instiututes of higher education to deliver. There is need to develop quality standards and guide line for Schools, Colleges and Universities, as per Saudi environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the broad definitions of education was given by Hirst and Peters (1970) they describe education as "the development of desirable qualities in people". In a study conducted by Yuki and Kameyama (2013), teacher'savailability and availability of resources in the schools, the parents involvement in schooling and supervision/monitoring of schools, is an important reason for good learning outcomes. This will also avoid conflict between expansion of enrollment and learning quality."As per the studyconducted by Gauthier and Dembele (2004), pedagogical researches conducted in past many years show that, what teachers does in the class is by any doubt the key educational factor in student learning and understanding. Ramsden (2006), has a different view regarding education quality, according to him, Research output has been considered as a main Performance indicators in higher education teaching function of universities and colleges have been mostly ignored. A study conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina, by Donlagic, S and Fazlic S (2015), as used SERVQUAL to access service quality in higher education, According to the finding of this study there is a difference in expectations of the students and their perception, a negative gap exists. Anderson, E (1995), in her study has suggested that SERVQUAL has been primarily designed to analyze service gap and it should be able to quantify this gap, i.e. the difference between customer expectations and perception. According to her study the difference between expectations of the customers of what the quality of the service provide be and what is the perception of customer for the actual quality as it is received by him, the difference between the two is called service gap.

According to Alhudaithy, A I (2014), there has been a very fast and rapid expansion of education sector in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. But, still this sector is facing many challenges. It is still not able to fulfill the need of workplace. According to him there is an urgent need address the issue of quality in education sector. According to a study conducted by Otaibi, S A A et al (2016), Implementation of quality, in higher education institutes in Saudi Arabia very different compared to other parts of the world. There is a need to conduct further studies based on SERVQUAL in countries like Saudi Arabia. Randheer, K (2015), has tried to modify SERVQUAL to fit to Saudi higher education sector. Firdaus (2006), had developed a modified SERRVUAL and named it as HEdPERF, to measure quality in Higher education sector, in his study Randheer, K, has further modified this scale and has added dimension of Arab culture (CUL), and the new tool has been named as CUL-HEdPREV.

There is a need to Link SERVQUAL model with factors that affect students Satisfaction. Oliveira and Ferreira (2009), feel that, In developing countries there is very serious quality problem with their higher education system. It is important to invest in quality tools and system, to change system. According to Ramakrishnan and Ravindran (2012), today college are becoming student oriented. Now it's very important to know students perceptions. A case study conducted by Hasan, HFA et. al (2006), in Malaysia, the study focused on private higher education institutions, according to this study, Higher education institutions, that are trying to get competitive advantage for the future, will have to start looking for effective and innovative methods to attract and retain students. Similar finding are given by Letcher, D W and Neves, J S (2010), in theirstudy conducted USA between 2004 and 2008. According to this study higher education institutes are now understanding that they are part of service sector, and due to competitive pressure are now giving lot of importance to student satisfaction. In this study they have tried to find out factors that have impact on student satisfaction. Study conducted by Feyzabadi, V Y el al (2015), in Kerman, Iran, has some very interesting findings. According to this there exists a huge gap between students expectation and hence the satisfaction level of students is very low. According to this study improvements are required across all the five dimension of SERVQUAL. Almost similar results can be seen in an another study conducted by Aghamolaei T and Zare S (2008). This study was conducted in Hormozgan University, here also the finding s are quite similar to earlier study. On all dimensions of SERVQUAL there is a negative gap between expectation and perceptions, which means there is a need to improve quality across all the five dimensions of SERVQUAL. Another study conducted by Chopra, R *et al.* (2014), in Haryana India. This study also has almost similar results, here also a significant negative gap exists in the perception and expectations for the service quality in education. This negative gap is indicating a sense of displeasure amongst the students. A study was conducted in Malaysia, on perspectives of international students by Shekarchizadeh, A el al (2011). Aim of this study was to understand the service quality expectations and perception, of international students who are studying in different Malaysian universities. A modified SERVQUAL instrument was used on 522 students. The results show that there exists a negative gap between expectations and perception, which suggests that most of the students feel that their expectations were not met and they are dissatisfied with the quality of education, being provided to them. Nabilou, B and Zavareh, D K (2014) had conducted a study in Urmia University, SERVQUAL was used to understand the gap that exits between service expectations and perception. The study find that overall 80% of expectations were not met. A negative gap exists on al dimensions of SERVQUAL. According to study conducted by Shank, M D *et al.* (2008), expectations of students from university services are much higher that those of professors.

Another study was conducted on Indian higher education Sector by Annamdevula, M and Bellomkonda, RS (2012), in this study, an modified version of SERVQUAL has been developed, which has been names as HiEdQUAL, HiEdQUAL is basically a measuring scale , which has been developed to measure quality of higher education.The scale has 27 items which are divided under five factors. A similar study was conducted in Turkey by Atrek, B (2012), this study suggest that SERVQAUAL dimension cannot be applied to all services, and each service needs a different SERVQUAL. In this study with original dimension of SERVQUAL few more dimensions have been added to make develop SERVQUAL scale for higher education. Study conducted in Sao Paula, Brazil by Oliveira, O J D and Ferreira, E C (2009). They were able to successfully apply SERVQUAL with high degree of applicability, without any modifications. The study suggest that SERVQUAL can be adopted to higher education services. In a study conducted in Albama, by Cerri, S (2012), have used a modified SERVQUAL scale to measure the quality in higher

education. In this scale the basic dimensions were kept same as proposed by Parasuraman *et al.* (1991). The scale was changed or modified wordings and some of the statement were re worded, to make them more suitable for service quality in higher education. In his study Cuthbert, P F (1996), has tried to check the validity of SERVQUAL for higher education sector, in his study he has compared the results of factor analysis with SERVQUAL. What he found out that SERVQUAL model he had used there was a lack of focus, according to his possible source of error could be complex service experience. In his study he has recommended that service quality in higher education should be revisited, and an sector specific instrument for course managers should be created. Similar results can be seen in the study conducted by Galloway, L(1998), this study, which was conducted in De Montfort University, UK. According to this study which is basically a case study in educational administration, suggests that SERVQUAL dimension are not right for this service. As per the author of this study, analysis of perception-expectation gap has established that by considering expectations, it has degraded the predictive capacity of the data. Because, of this there is a poor correlation with satisfaction and quality.

DATA AND ANALYSIS

This study was done in College of Business Administration of Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University of Saudi Arabia. A questionnaire was developed on the dimensions of SERVQUAl. It constituted on 22 statements, 2 statements on tangibility, 5 statements on reliability, 4 on responsibility, 4 on assurance and 5 on empathy. A total of 350 questionnaires were administered but only 207 were considered for study as the remaining were having incomplete responses. The questionnaire was based on 5 point Likert scale, with 1 being strongly agree and 5 being strongly disagree.

The gap scores are given in the table below. The good thing is that for all the dimensions of SERVQUAL, the perceived scores are higher than the expected scores.

	perceived	expected	gap
tangibility	2.75	2.72	0.03
reliability	2.83	2	0.83
responsibility	2.81	2.47	0.34
assurance	2.81	2.11	0.7
empathy	2.49	2.22	0.27

To further study the reasons of satisfaction/dis satisfaction a set of hypotheses were tested. The idea here was to study the separately the role of faculty, non-teaching staff and the systems of the college. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) is done using SPSS. Hypothesis have been taken as significant when the p value was found to be less than 0.05 The hypothesis which were found significant arte stated below:

There is a significant difference between satisfaction with teaching faculty and the perceived reliability scores

There is a significant difference between satisfaction with teaching faculty and the perceived assurance scores

There is a significant difference between satisfaction with non-teaching staff and the perceived reliability scores

There is a significant difference between satisfaction with non-teaching staff and the perceived responsibility scores

There is a significant difference between satisfaction with non-teaching staff and the perceived empathy scores

There is a significant difference between satisfaction with the system and the perceived tangibility scores

There is a significant difference between satisfaction with the system and the perceived reliability scores

There is a significant difference between satisfaction with the system and the perceived responsibility scores

There is a significant difference between satisfaction with the system and the perceived assurance scores

There is a significant difference between satisfaction with the system and the perceived empathy scores

CONCLUSION

The above analysis shows that the students of CBAK are generally satisfied with the College. In order to further improve upon analysis of variance of the perceived scores was done with respect to the faculty, staff and the systems in the college. A significant difference in terms of satisfaction with faculty was found with in reliability and assurance. For non-teaching staff the difference in satisfaction was in terms of empathy, responsibility and reliability. But for the systems of the College there was a significant difference in satisfaction with respect to all the dimensions of SERVQUAL. As a policy recommendation the College should review the systems to improve upon the satisfaction of the students.

Appendix Tables

Faculty

		Sum of Squares	*df*	*Mean Square*	*F*	*Sig.*
			ANOVA			
tangibility	Between Groups	1.31	2	0.653	1.146	0.319
	Within Groups	173	304	0.57		
	Total	175	306			
reliability	Between Groups	10.6	2	5.304	8.44	0
	Within Groups	191	304	0.628		
	Total	202	306			
responsibility	Between Groups	2.83	2	1.412	2.221	0.11
	Within Groups	193	304	0.636		
	Total	196	306			
assurance	Between Groups	4.48	2	2.238	3.228	0.041
	Within Groups	211	304	0.693		
	Total	215	306			
empathy	Between Groups	2.68	2	1.338	2.431	0.09
	Within Groups	167	304	0.55		
	Total	170	306			

Staff

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
		ANOVA				
tangibility	Between Groups	2.1	2	1.05	1.849	0.159
	Within Groups	173	304	0.567		
	Total	175	306			
reliability	Between Groups	6.44	2	3.22	5.015	0.007
	Within Groups	195	304	0.642		
	Total	202	306			
responsibility	Between Groups	7.22	2	3.608	5.805	0.003
	Within Groups	189	304	0.622		
	Total	196	306			
assurance	Between Groups	1.35	2	0.674	0.958	0.385
	Within Groups	214	304	0.704		
	Total	215	306			
empathy	Between Groups	4.85	2	2.424	4.462	0.012
	Within Groups	165	304	0.543		
	Total	170	306			

Systems

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
		ANOVA				
tangibility	Between Groups	3.65	2	1.822	3.24	0.041
	Within Groups	171	304	0.562		
	Total	175	306			
reliability	Between Groups	14.7	2	7.355	11.96	0
	Within Groups	187	304	0.615		
	Total	202	306			
responsibility	Between Groups	10.3	2	5.162	8.445	0
	Within Groups	186	304	0.611		
	Total	196	306			
assurance	Between Groups	6.91	2	3.453	5.038	0.007
	Within Groups	208	304	0.685		
	Total	215	306			
empathy	Between Groups	3.51	2	1.755	3.204	0.042
	Within Groups	167	304	0.548		
	Total	170	306			

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