INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMPUTER APPLICATION & MANAGEMENT

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REVIEW OF LITERATURE

NEED/IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

OBJECTIVES

HYPOTHESES

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS

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APPENDIX/ANNEXURE

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BOOKS

- Bowersox, Donald J., Closs, David J., (1996), "Logistical Management." Tata McGraw, Hill, New Delhi.
- Hunker, H.L. and A.J. Wright (1963), "Factors of Industrial Location in Ohio" Ohio State University, Nigeria.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO BOOKS

- Sharma T., Kwatra, G. (2008) Effectiveness of Social Advertising: A Study of Selected Campaigns, Corporate Social Responsibility, Edited by David Crowther & Nicholas Capaldi, Ashgate Research Companion to Corporate Social Responsibility, Chapter 15, pp 287-303.

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- Schemenner, R.W., Huber, J.C. and Cook, R.L. (1987), "Geographic Differences and the Location of New Manufacturing Facilities," Journal of Urban Economics, Vol. 21, No. 1, pp. 83-104.

CONFERENCE PAPERS

- Garg, Sambhav (2011): "Business Ethics" Paper presented at the Annual International Conference for the All India Management Association, New Delhi, India, 19–22 June.

UNPUBLISHED DISSERTATIONS AND THESES

- Kumar S. (2011): "Customer Value: A Comparative Study of Rural and Urban Customers," Thesis, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra.

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- Garg, Bhavet (2011): Towards a New Natural Gas Policy, Political Weekly, Viewed on January 01, 2012 http://epw.in/user/viewabstract.jsp

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SERVICE QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Higher education today is undergoing a more radical transformation than perhaps any other aspect of our culture. Technological, economic, sociological, and governmental forces are altering education dramatically, impacting its institutions, teachers, students, funding sources, and basic function in society. To unlock potential and helping talented people to gain advanced training whatever their background requires customer-centric approach to education. During the mid-1980s and late 1990s, overcrowded classes, inadequate library & laboratory facilities and little student's services have been the norms in most of the institutions. Rarely has an institution responded by creating remedial program for inadequately prepared students. But now colleges and universities have initiated restructuring and reengineering their operating processes to cut costs and become more efficient while responding to increased competition. Higher education customers are demanding more attention and immediate service. Proactive institutes are now adjusting their practices by refocusing their efforts externally. In the following article the author has made an effort to find out various service quality dimensions used by the institutions due to the increased competition in the field of higher education.

KEYWORDS

Higher education, learning facilities, service quality, students.

SERVICE QUALITY AND HIGHER EDUCTION

Even though successful completion and enhancement of students' education are the reasons for existence of higher educational institutions, college administrators tend to focus disproportionately more time on programs for attracting and admitting students. Satisfying the admitted students is also important for retention. Admitting students has been always an important activity for the higher educational institutions. However, the rapid expansion of colleges and universities, significant increases in college education costs combined with demographic shifts in the population may force colleges to think differently about the role of student satisfaction for their survival (Kotler and Fox, 1995). Keaveney and Young (1997) have focused on testing a modified version of the Student Satisfaction and Retention Model which incorporated a comprehensive set of independent variables and self-reported experiential assessments to predict experience, which in turn related to the student satisfaction and retention. Keaveney and Young (1997), attitude predict behavior intentions, which in turn predict actual behavior. Using this theoretical support, the student satisfaction and retention model assumes that student satisfaction leads to intentions to stay which in turn leads to student retention. Different from the previous research studies, this model incorporates a comprehensive set of independent variables that are hypothesized to predict student satisfaction and retention. It also incorporates a set of self-reported outcome assessment variables, which provide information about students' evaluations of the programs offered by the institute beyond satisfaction and retention. Therefore, it is argued that the student satisfaction and retention model is a more comprehensive retention model which considers the impact of a unique set of variables to explain student retention for higher educational institutions.

SERVICE QUALITY DIMENSIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Parasuraman, Zeithmal, and Berry (1990) examine the relationship between the quality dimensions and the students' satisfaction in higher education. Furthermore, this study is also examine critical factors in service quality dimensions (Reliability, Courses, Tangibles, Lectures, Study Materials, Responsiveness, Access, Assurance, and Empathy) that contributes most to the satisfaction of the students. This study was conducted using a set of questionnaire to 200 Bachelor Degree students form two private higher education institutions to identify service quality dimensions that were considered important by students. The responses were submitted to a qualitative cluster analysis: that is, the responses were stored into what appeared to be homogenous categories and definition was written for each category. The results of this exercise are as:

Reliability: Ability to perform the service dependably and accurately.

Course: The focus is on content of courses.

Tangibles: Appearance of physical facilities and provision of appropriate equipment.

Lectures: The focus is on presentation and organization of lectures.

Study Materials: Provision for appropriate study materials.

Responsiveness: Willingness to help students; provide prompt feedback on assignments.

Access: Approachability and ease of contact.

Assurance: Inspiring full confidence among students.

Empathy: Understanding the feelings and situation of students and motivate them.

In order to determine the importance of each of these dimensions to the students, a convenience sample of students was asked to rate of importance of each dimension along a five-place scale ranging from 'most important' to 'least important'. And it was found that values of five dimensions (Reliability, Tangibility, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy) are greater than the others.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective of the study is to examine the importance of various service quality dimensions, the higher educational institutes are attached to.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design of the study is exploratory cum descriptive. The research is exploratory due to the fact that the field of higher education has not been deeply touched by the earlier researcher. Therefore, in this case, extensive preliminary work needs to be done to gain familiarity with the phenomena in the situation to understand what is occurring, before developing a model and setting up a rigorous design for comprehensive investigation. The study is descriptive because the area of research that has been chosen by the researcher explains the attributes, which are associated with service quality implication in the field of higher education. To fulfill the objective of the study a questionnaire was prepared for students. The questionnaires related to students (N=400) was put forwarded to respondents of different higher educational institutes and observations are presented in the form of tables. The research has been carried out in the NCR region comprising the state of Haryana, UP, & Delhi as NCR has emerged as a prominent center higher education. Further, to solve the purpose of the study both descriptive as well as inferential statistical techniques were applied. In the descriptive, Means and Standard Deviation were calculated and to test the significance level of the difference between Means of the criterion variables Mann-Whitney Test and Karl Pearson's Coefficient of Correlation (r) were applied.

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RESULTS OF SURVEY

For the purpose of examining importance of service quality dimensions different learning facilities and soft-skills development activities offered by the institutes to students have been identified by the author and presented to respondents in the form of a questionnaire. In the questionnaire respondents were asked to indicate their opinions on a five-point likert scale and the results are presented in the form of Tables.

LEARNING FACILITIES

Learning facilities are basic requirements of any course. The more an institute will be able to provide these facilities to students effectively and efficiently the more it will be able to satisfy its students and maintaining good relationships with them and thus having a good market image. Institutes are aware of the fact that learning facilities are foremost reasons for any student to take admission in any institute. So for any institute it become important to provide these facilities in the same way as projected. In the survey, at attempt has been made to gain insight into different learning facilities offered by different management institute to students for developing connected and lifelong learning and presented in the Table 1.1. It may be noted that out of different learning facilities qualified and experienced staff has the top value (Mean = 4.00, Std. Dev. = 1.155), and then focus more on case studies (Mean =3.87, Std. Dev. = 1.160), spacious, airy, well lit classes (Mean = 3.84, Std. Dev. = 1.051), vast collection of books/journals in library (Mean = 3.77, Std. Dev. = 1.103), ideal students/faculty ratio (Mean = 3.74, Std. Dev. = 1.081), modern audio and visual system in the classes (Mean = 3.69, Std. Dev. = 1.229), flexibility of choice opting for specialization (Mean = 3.66, Std. Dev. = 1.146), promote industry-institute interaction (Mean = 3.66, Std. Dev. = 1.225), emphasis to develop entrepreneurship (Mean = 3.62, Std. Dev. = 1.337), work stations are on Local Area Network (Mean = 3.53, Std. Dev. = 1.320), e-journal facility in the library (Mean = 3.4, Std. Dev. = 1.353), internet Based Instruction (Mean = 3.37, Std. Dev. = 1.31), and emphasis on early IT training (Mean = 3.27, Std. Dev. = 1.318).

TABLE 1.1: KEY LEARNING FACILITIES OFFERED TO STUDENTS (Number of Respondents = 400)

S. No.	Variables	Mean Scores	Standard Deviation
1	Ideal students/faculty ratio (15:1)	3.74	1.081
2	Qualified and experienced faculty/staff	4	1.155
3	Modern audio and visual systems in classes	3.69	1.229
4	Spacious, airy, well lit classes	3.84	1.051
5	Vast collection of books/journals in library	3.77	1.103
6	E-journal facility in the library	3.4	1.353
7	Work stations are on Local Area Network	3.53	1.32
8	Internet Based Instruction	3.37	1.31
9	Emphasis on early IT training	3.27	1.318
10	Emphasis to develop entrepreneurship	3.62	1.337
11	Flexibility of choice while opting for specialization	3.66	1.146
12	Focus on discussing case studies	3.87	1.16
13	Promote industry-institute interaction	3.66	1.225

Source: Computed on the basis of Field Data

Standard deviation value of some of the learning facilities such as ideal students/faculty ratio (1.081), spacious, airy, well lit classes (1.051), vast collection of books/journals in library (1.103), qualified and experienced staff (1.155) indicate that there is consistency in the opinions of respondents, where as in case of e-journal facility (1.353), emphasis to develop entrepreneurship (1.337), emphasis on early IT training (1.318) there is divergence of opinion among the respondents.

Students (N=400) were asked to indicate their opinion about various learning facilities which college is providing or offering to them. From responses it has come out that about 71% students feel that institute is having an ideal students/faculty ratio which is one the most important strategic way of maintaining relationships with students. As competition is growing among management institutes so it is basic requirement that an institute should have an ideal students and faculty ratio. As far as management course is concerned, the ratio is 15:1, it means for every fifteen students there should be one faculty member. Nearly 4/5th of the students are in agreement that institute is having well qualified and experienced faculty to teach, rest either disagree or did not have a clear opinion. In this case also, response is encouraging just due to the fact that only having sufficient number of faculty members does not mean that students will be satisfied but it is also very important institutes make it sure that faculty is qualified and experienced also. Among respondents 69% are in opinion that classrooms are provided with modern audio and visual systems including LCD projectors. It has become one of the basic requirements in management institutes these days and institutes do understand this fact and using latest technological tool for classroom teaching so that it could have a better impact on the students' learning.

About 78% students stated that classrooms are spacious, airy, well lit and echo-proof to facilitate teaching and learning process. In management institutes traditional classrooms are hardly found and it is due increasing competition among private or self-financed institutes as every institute tries to project itself as a better service provider than other institutes. About 3/4 students agreed that institute is having vast collection of books, periodicals, journals, review articles on various subjects in the library. An institute which is having a library filled with different titles of books and other required printed material it will be able to enhance knowledge of its students. In many institutes it was noticed that proper focus is given to maintain the library but still there is lack of sufficient number of titles of books and quality journals. Nearly 63% students stated that institute is having e-journal facility in library. The question was an extension part of previous question and in this case also it was found that along with printed journals and magazines in library many institutes have made available e-journals facility for their students for better access of information and data. About 65% students indicated that all the work stations are on Local Area Network with round the clock, high speed internet facility. Technology has become an integral part of any course these days and so is the management education. Most of the institutes have agreed on the growing importance of technology in management education and making efforts to make it an integral part of student's learning. Nearly 3/5th students revealed that they are provided internet based instructions. It has become possible due to use of technological resources such as e-mail, website, etc. These days students put their queries thought internet and they receive answer through internet by faculty members and in the same way if institutes wants to provide some information to students then e-mail or website are used. Nearly half of the students stated that in management institutes focus given on providing early IT training to students while rest of the students disagree or did not have clear opinion. Institutes' know growing importance of technology in every field whether it is education or business world and a student should be familiar with common technological resources or tools. So, keeping this thing in view students are provided early IT training rather they are having such subjects in their curriculum which are based on information technology and help them in training program. Nearly 65% of the respondents are in agreement that emphasis is given to enhance entrepreneurship skills among students. Institutes try to prepare their students in such a way that after passing out they will be job provider rather than job seeker, so efforts are made to develop entrepreneurship skills among students through different subjects and workshops. Majority of the respondents stated that they are provided flexibility of choice while opting for specialization. When a student wants to opt for specialization then in most of the institute he/she is given open choice to choose any of the specialization among different ones in which he/she is more interested. If students are not able to decide which specialization is better for them then senior faculty members guide them. Among respondents 3/4 respondents stated that faculty focus on discussing case studies/conducting workshops in every subject to enhance decision making skills of students. Case study is a practice which enhances decision making skills of students and workshop is a practice which enhances practical approach of students. From the study it was found that in many institutes practical approach of students is developed by conducting workshops in different subjects and decisions making skills of the students are sharpen by discussing case study in the classroom and asking case studies to them in the examination also. Nearly 68% students stated that institute promotes industry-institute interaction while rest either disagree or did not have a clear opinion.

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Every institute wishes that its students should be placed in some organization after passing out from institute. From students' responses it was found that institutes know the importance of interaction with industry and its long term impact. Institutes also agree with the point that a better placed student is the best advertising mean for any institute. So, efforts are made to promote interaction between institute and industry. To what extent management institutes get success in their efforts is another issue. From the result of survey, it is evident that in most of the cases response of students is positive and this is due to reason that institutes are well aware of the fact it will help in maintaining better relationships with students and developing a better brand image in the marketplace.

In the study, at attempt has also been made to gain insight into major learning facilities used by different management institute to have connected and lifelong learning approach with students and to identify relationship among the means values of learning facilities and average of key learning facilities coefficient of correlation has been calculated and results are presented in Table 1.2.

TABLE 1.2: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DETERMINANTS OF KEY LEARNING FACILITIES AND AVERAGE OF KEY LEARNING FACILITIES (Number of Respondents = 400)

S. No.	Variables	Mean Scores	Standard Deviation	r value
1	Ideal students/faculty ratio (15:1)	3.74	1.081	0.942**
2	Qualified and experienced faculty/staff	4	1.155	0.983**
3	Modern audio and visual systems in classes	3.69	1.229	0.954**
4	Vast collection of books/journals in library	3.77	1.103	0.978**
5	Flexibility of choice while opting for specialization	3.66	1.146	0.952**
6	Focus on discussing case studies	3.87	1.16	0.972**

Notes: r-value indicates value of Karl Pearson's Coefficient of Correlation.
** indicates Correlation is significant at 1% level.

Source: Computed on the basis of Field Data

Higher value of 'r' (Towards +1.000) indicates that such variables are more focused by the management institutes for better relationship management with the students while less value of 'r'(Towards 0.0) indicates that such variables are less focused**.** The test results indicate that there is significant and positive correlations in relation to various learning facilities such as, qualified and experienced staff (r = 0.983), focus more on case studies (r = 0.972), vast collection of books/journals in library (r = 0.978), ideal students/faculty ratio (r = 0.942), modern audio and visual system in the classes (r = 0.954), and flexibility of choice opting for specialization (r = 0.952).

ACTIVITIES RELATED TO IMPROVE SOFT SKILLS AMONG STUDENTS

In management institutes improving soft skills among students is one of the major concerns. Institutes make a number of efforts to achieve this objective. The institutes are also aware that such acts help to attract new students, make existing students more loyal to institute and maintaining good relationships with students. Keeping this in view, the researcher has asked respondents (N=400) to indicate about various efforts made by their respective institutes. A number of activities which are used by management institute to enhance soft skill among students were identified through literature survey and listed in questionnaire. Respondents were asked to indicate their opinion about the level of significance management institutes are attached to listed activities (Table 1.3).

TABLE 1.3: SOFT SKILLS DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES FOR STUDENTS (Number of Respondents = 400)

S. No.	Variables	Mean Scores	Standard Deviation
1	Guest lecture from sr. executives from industry	3.14	1.233
2	Guest lectures from sr. faculty (outside institute)	3	1.162
3	Provision for Personality Development Classes	3.64	1.182
4	Conducting seminar, quiz contests	3.56	1.336
5	Conducting national & international conferences	3.09	1.479
6	Promoting students to conduct cultural events	3.81	1.12

Source: Computed on the basis of Field Data

Results of the survey indicated that promoting students to conduct cultural events (Mean = 3.81, Std. Dev. = 1.12), conducting personality development classes (Mean = 3.64, Std. Dev. = 1.182), and conducting seminar, quiz contests (Mean = 3.56, Std. Dev. = 1.336), are used moderately by the institutes while conducting guest lectures form sr. executive from industry (Mean = 3.14, Std. Dev. = 1.233), conducting national & international conferences (Mean = 3.09, Std. Dev. = 1.479), and conducting guest lectures from sr. faculty members outside from the institute (Mean = 3, Std. Dev. = 1.162), received lowest rankings from the respondents.

About different mentioned indicators in questionnaire, 4/5th respondents are in agreement that guest lectures by senior executives from industry are conducted in the institute where 77% respondents stated that institute also focus on conducting guest lectures by senior faculty members outside from institutes such as senior faculty members from some of university or any other reputed management institutes. The reason for conducting guest lectures by senior executives from industry and senior faculty members from different management institutes is that it is highly beneficial for students to interact with such senior people from different field, knowing about their views and experience. Students also get a chance to share their own experience and doubts and try to find out a solution if there is any. Nearly, 3/4 students agreed that they are having regular personality development classes in their institute. Now-a-days due to competition level among management institutes, every institute is making effort to satisfy its students to the maximum. Traditionally faculty members themselves conduct such classes but now management institutes invite specialized people to conduct personality development classes for students.

As far as conducting seminars and quiz-contests are concerned around 64% students responded in favour while 1/3rd did not agree with that or not having any clear opinion. This is an area where students get a chance to perform at a challenging platform and showing their worth along with that they also get a chance to interact with students of different institutes. Focusing on conducting national and international conferences is also one of the areas through which soft-skills can be enhanced among students. Among respondents, 52% of the respondents are in agreement where as 48% respondents did not agree with it or not having any clear opinion. In this case responses are not encouraging as a management institute needs expertise for this, in addition experts from various fields are needed to invite and therefore, every institute is not able to manage such conferences. Managing cultural activities within the institute also develop confidence and presentation skills among participants. In this regard 3/4 students are in agreement that they are motivated to conduct and participate in such activities. Results of the survey indicated that institutes make serious efforts to increase soft skills among students and in most of the cases response of students is very positive. From survey, the researcher find out that management institutes are aware that students give a lot of importance to such activities, they also make regular request to conduct such activities or allowing them to participate in such acts taking place in other institutes. So, making efforts to increase the soft skills among students help in making better relationships with students and increasing their satisfaction level.

In the study, at attempt has also been made to gain insight into the major soft skills development activities used by different management institutes to have connected and lifelong learning approach with students. To identify the relationship among the means values of key soft-skills development activities and average of key soft-skills development activities coefficient of correlation has been calculated. Higher value of 'r' (Towards +1.000) indicates that such variables are more focused by the management institutes for better relationship management with the students while less value of 'r'(Towards 0.0) indicates that such variables are less focused and results are presented in the Table 1.4.

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TABLE 1.4: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DETERMINANTS OF KEY SOFT SKILLS DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES AND AVERAGE OF KEY SOFT SKILLS DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES FOR STUDENTS
(Number of Respondents = 400)

S. No.	Variables	Mean Scores	Standard Deviation	r value
1	Guest lecture from sr. executives from industry	3.14	1.233	0.985**
2	Guest lectures from sr. faculty (outside institute)	3	1.162	0.978**
3	Provision for Personality Development Classes	3.64	1.182	0.965**
4	Conducting seminars, quiz contests	3.56	1.336	0.987**

Notes: r-value indicates value of Karl Pearson's Coefficient of Correlation.
** indicates Correlation is significant at 1% level.

Source: Computed on the basis of Field Data

The test results indicate that there is significant and positive correlation in relation to some of soft-skill development activities such as, conducting personality development classes (r = 0.965), conducting seminars, quiz contests (r = 0.987), conducting guest lectures form senior executives from industry (r = 0.985), and conducting guest lectures from senior faculty members outside from the institute (r = 0.978).

CONCLUSION

Service quality assurance in higher education is the activity that aims at maintaining and raising the level education, e.g. research, assessing acceptability, recruitment, appointment procedure and different mechanisms and systems. The aim of service quality assurance in higher education is to guarantee the improvement of standards and quality in higher education in order to make higher education meet the needs of students, employers and financiers. Higher educational institutes are putting their efforts to provide maximum service quality to students in education system but still there is a lot more focus required.

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