

Quality Assessment In Higher Education: A Case Study In The University Of Gour Banga

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ABSTRACT

In today's volatile educational environment, Higher Education is facing many challenges like widespread economic, technological, and cultural changes and increased competition in social and political contexts. There is a need to revise and improve the service quality of education. India has one of the prevailing networks of higher education institutions in the world with 850 universities (as of April 2018) and 42,026 colleges. To measure service quality we are using SERVQUAL scale which brings out two major aspects to consider i.e. customer's expectation and customer's perception regarding the performance of the service provider. The main aim of this study is to examine the student's expectation and perception towards the service quality in Higher education and furthermore to understand how the students perceive the quality service provided by the University of Gour Banga.

Key Words: Service Quality, SERVQUAL, University of Gour Banga. Higher Education

I. Introduction

In the present competitive environment, service quality is often a key sustainable competitive differentiator. The education system is facing many challenges like widespread economic, technological, and cultural changes and increased competition in social and political contexts. In order to address the changing dynamics of education, there is a dire need to improve service quality in education. The central government is taking many measures to improve the quality of education in India. India's higher education segment is expected to increase to US\$ 35.03 billion by the year 2025. The investment in the education sector in India was around US\$ 91.7 billion in the year 2018 and is expected to reach US\$ 101.1 billion in the year 2019 (source: IBEF report/Industry/education sector). India has one of the most expanded networks of higher education institutions in the world with 850 universities (as of April 2018) and 42,026 colleges (source: University Grants Commission website). A total of 35.7 million people were enrolled in higher education institutes in 2016-17. Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education reached 25.2 percent in 2016-17 (source: IBEF report/Industry/education sector). Among all stakeholders in education students is the key stakeholder in education. Hence, institutes should place efforts to comprehend and meet or exceed their expectations in order to succeed in a competitive higher education environment. Measuring service quality of higher education is a vital issue. Hence assessment of service quality of education can contribute widely to improving the quality of education.

II. Comprehending quality in Higher education

Education is the means of gaining knowledge through various learning, teaching and studying process. In recent times quality has become one of the key terms in higher education. There are different connotations of 'quality in education'. According to the Education for All: Global Monitoring Report 2005 - The Quality Imperative (EFA: GMR), two principles characterize most attempts to define quality in education: the first identifies learners' cognitive development as the major explicit objective of all education systems. The second emphasizes education's role in promoting values and attitudes of responsible citizenship and in

nurturing creative and emotional development." Thus we can say the quality of education is the right impact in which the knowledge one has acquired is put to use precisely which helps in the development of students' intellect, their aspiration, and capabilities, as well as their social and self-identity. Universities are increasingly under tremendous pressure to maintain and improve their service quality. As per UGC guidelines, the university has to go through a scrupulous procedure of getting their university rated on a regular basis by quality assessment and accreditation agencies like NAAC(National Assessment and Accreditation Council). Quality assessment tools like SERVQUAL can be used can be adopted in the field of education, to diagnose a system and recognize the potential for improvement.

III. Review of Literature

Saud (2017) in his paper identified students as the essential target group recommended that the Romanian and Iraqi Universities should understand their requirements and continue the process of developing their educational plans and strengthen the programs adopted by the universities to increase the quality of educational services provided in institutions of higher education

Prakash and Muhammed (2016) in their study empirically proved that service quality plays a key role in envisaging student satisfaction and subsequently determining their behavioral intentions in two leading institutes of South India.

Yousapronpaibon (2014) in their paper they investigated service quality in higher education in Thailand. The paper provided a conceptual framework for the decision of students' quality assessment of higher educational institutes. The study found that higher education in Thailand did not meet the expectation of undergraduate students'. The gap analysis between showed that all scores for perceptions were lower than their expectations scores, indicating that there are a lot of service improvements efforts need to be fulfilled to enhance the service quality.

Annamdevula, Bellamkonda (2012) in their study recommended that it is useful to develop a measurement tool to evaluate service quality from the perspective of all internal and external customers. The study has concentrated on student only, but it is recognized that the education sector has other potential customers as a part of the whole education process who must be satisfied.

Hasan (2008) revealed that there is a positive relationship between service quality and student satisfaction. In the study, empathy ($r=0.640$) has the strongest relationship followed by assurance ($r=0.582$), tangibility ($r=0.568$), responsiveness ($r=0.555$) and reliability ($r=0.556$). In addition, the relationship between overall service quality and students' satisfaction is 0.653 meaning that the relationship is stronger than moderate

IV. Background of the study

The University of Gour Banga was established in the year 2008 in the district of Malda, West Bengal, India. Most of the student in this University hails from the district of Malda, Uttar Dinajpur, and Dakshin Dinajpur. The region's Graduate Enrolment Ratio of less than the state average and National average as well. At present, there are twenty-one PG departments running with near about two thousand five hundred enrolment and twenty-five General Degree colleges and thirty-four B. Ed colleges with an enrolment of one lakhs fifty thousand in the region.

SERVQUAL scale developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry is applied for measuring service quality in higher education. To measure service quality there are two major aspects to consider- the customer's expectation and customer's perception regarding the service provider's performance. The customer is considered to be satisfied when perceived performance surpasses the customer's expectations. If the expectations are not met, the customer will characteristically dissatisfied. These expectations and the resulting perception of performance can be analyzed along five dimensions: responsiveness, assurance, tangibles, empathy, and reliability.

1. Tangibles - the presence of physical facilities, library, laboratory equipment, personnel, etc
2. Reliability - Ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.
3. Responsiveness - willingness to help students, provide prompt service and transparency in official procedure
4. Assurance - courtesy and knowledge of personnel and ability to convey confidence and trust
5. Empathy – caring, individualized attention given to students.

V. Objectives of the study

The main aim of this study is

- To examine the student's expectation and perception towards the service quality of Higher education
- To understand how the students perceive the quality service provided by the University of Gour Banga.
- To highlight the gap between academicians' understanding and student understanding's of quality.
- The paper also tries to establish a relationship between service quality and students satisfaction.

VI. Research Methodology

A. Sample design and data collection-

The area of the study is measuring service quality provided by the University of Gour Banga situated in Malda, West Bengal. The population of this study is postgraduate students, M.Phil and Ph.D. scholars from different departments of the University of Gour Banga as the paper tries to measure service quality of the University of Gour Banga from the students' perspective. SERVQUAL model was adapted to measure service quality of the University of Gour Banga from students' point of view. Period of the study is from the year 2018 to 2019.

B. Questionnaire

The dimensions of service quality are Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy which are subdivided into 23 statements and questionnaire which were aimed at measuring service quality in the University of Gour Banga. A self-administered questionnaire survey was administered to collect empirical data from University students. As in the original model the 7-point Likert Scale was used to gather responses. The questionnaire ranges from strongly disagree coded as 1 and strongly agree as 7.

A convenience sampling was selected in order to collect quantitative data for the study, a total of 150 questionnaires were printed and distributed for the purpose of data analysis. A total of 127 questionnaires were received.

VII. Empirical Results and Analysis

Data analysis is done in two steps, the preliminary analysis, and the main analysis. The preliminary analysis involves mainly descriptive statistics to summarize data; the demographic characteristic of the respondents is outlined in order to simplify the understanding of the data.

Table1: Total Respondents

	Frequency	Percent
Valid Male	75	59.06
Female	52	40.94
Total	127	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2018-19, Result computed

Table 2: Classification of Respondent

	Frequency	Percent
Valid Masters	117	92.13
Mphil	5	3.94
PhD	4	3.15
Others(sent off)	1	0.79
Total	127	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2018, Results computed

VIII. Discussion of the result

Table 3 presents the analysis involves calculating the mean and standard deviation of each expectation and perception of students. As we can see that mean of Expectation ranges from 5.61 to 6.31 which is considered very high in 7-point Likert scale.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics on Dimensions

Dimensions	Item No.	Expectation		Perception	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Tangibles	Q1	5.7664	1.32166	4.5514	1.54940
	Q2	5.7383	1.25395	4.9907	1.61651
	Q3	5.8411	1.23739	4.9439	1.38613
	Q4	5.9252	1.30095	5.1308	1.54849
	Q5	5.7664	1.46390	4.4393	1.85908
Reliability	Q6	5.8598	1.17721	4.8879	1.59200
	Q7	5.7850	1.25914	4.9159	1.48019
	Q8	5.4953	1.21604	4.8972	1.43366
	Q9	5.6075	1.30136	4.5514	1.60913
	Q10	5.7944	1.15529	5.0000	1.53574
Responsiveness	Q11	6.0654	1.10121	5.1776	1.47183
	Q12	5.7383	1.17631	4.7383	1.51929
	Q13	6.0841	1.01052	5.3364	1.46625
	Q14	5.6822	1.17841	4.5981	1.80596
	Q15	5.9907	1.01401	4.9813	1.46649
Assurance	Q16	6.0280	1.12818	5.3458	1.42155
	Q17	6.3084	.96555	5.5047	1.55025
	Q18	5.8411	1.09156	5.3962	1.41205
	Q19	5.9252	1.15498	5.5981	1.36575
	Q20	6.0187	1.16539	5.2617	1.53780
Empathy	Q21	5.9439	1.06250	5.2991	1.42891
	Q22	6.0841	1.10847	5.4486	1.34749
	Q23	6.0467	1.06738	5.4486	1.42242
Valid N (listwise)					

Source: Field Survey, 2018-19, Result Computed

To identify the service quality gaps calculation is made by subtracting the perception (P) score from expectation (E) scores for each dimension i.e. Gap Analysis=P-E.

Gap analysis of each dimension of the service quality shows a negative score which indicates that the service which was provided to the student was below their expectation. In other words, the gap between expectations and perceptions is where quality improvement is necessary. Quality is assessed when expectations are subtracted from perceptions. Gap analysis is presented in the below Table

Table 4: Gap Analysis

Dimensions	Expectations	Perceptions	Gap
Tangibles	5.81	4.81	-1.00
Reliability	5.71	4.85	-0.86
Responsiveness	5.91	4.97	-0.95
Assurance	6.02	5.42	-0.60
Empathy	6.02	5.40	-0.63

TOTAL GAP	5.90	5.09	-0.81
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Source: Field Survey, 2018-19, Result computed

In the above table, students' expectations of the service and their perception of the service which was provided to them are compared. Generally, the average mean of the five dimensions at the scale of expectations is higher than averages of the five dimensions on the scale of perceptions. Usually, the service recipient has a higher expectation from the service provider. Total gap is -0.81, while the most negative gap is for dimension Tangibles (-1.00) and the least negative gap is for the dimension Assurance (-0.60). Dimension tangibles show highest negative gap which implies that improvement of infrastructure and physical facilities like Library, Laboratory equipment and technologies is necessary. A least negative gap in dimension assurance and it implies that students perceive that courtesy and knowledge of personnel and ability to convey confidence and trust. This leads to the conclusion that the qualities of human resources (faculty and administrative staff) are perceived to be good quality which is an important factor for higher educational institutes. The negative gap is seen in all five dimensions it indicates that students are dissatisfied with University and a systematic approach or a quality improvement program needs to be developed by the University. The low negative gap should not apprehend the stakeholders of the university as it is seen that it is human nature to have more expectation from the service provider but there is always the scope of improvement.

IX. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to empirically establish and validate the relationship between service quality and student satisfaction. Empirical analysis demonstrates the usefulness of the approach in gathering student's perception, analyzing them and suggesting various ways to improve service quality. The result of should be used as an input in planning and defining strategy for service quality enhancement. It is recommended that university should continue to improve Physical facilities of the University like rich Library, better hostel facility, infrastructure, etc also it is recommended that university should develop valid and reliable measures of service quality and introduced it into the internal quality assurance procedures. Since students are the primary customer in higher education sector the study has concentrated on student customer only, but it is identified that education sector has other potential customers as a part of whole education process who must be satisfied

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