A Longitudinal Study on the Students’ Satisfaction Index

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Abstract

This study is a report of an ongoing research project of Assumption University in the attempt to examine the quality of performance offered to the undergraduate students. One dimension of educational quality is the ability to respond to students’ needs. This is an important contribution to the overall image of the university. Hence, it is important to track their satisfaction level, in other words, university should examine whether the university could match the expectations of the students. This research project’s objective was to compare the expectations and perceptions of students. Gaps between expectations and perceptions were measured to calculate the Students’ Satisfaction Index representing the satisfaction level of one of the major stakeholders of the university. Instruction and lecturer, curriculum, supporting service, facility, and overall image aspects were measured based on the criteria and standards imposed by the government. The aspects were summarized into the overall aspect. The index was measured annually in order to keep track of the changes in the satisfaction level of the students toward the performance of the university. Data were collected from 2855 undergraduate students in 2009, 2290 undergraduate students in 2010, and 3175 undergraduate students in 2011. Satisfaction index scores (perception minus expectation) were calculated and compared over the years. Data were compared and contrasted among students in different level of study and faculties.

INTRODUCTION

Stakeholder is becoming an important issue during the past decade. The power of the management is skeptical with the evidence like the Enron scandal and misconducts in many organizations. The public is questioning the role and integrity of organizations especially the big ones (Ferrell, Thorne, Ferrell, 2011). The misconducts of the management affect not only their shareholders but also employees, customers and the community. The unfaithful trades rip off customers for the profits of the organization. The swindle creates loss to the shareholders. In the current era, all types of organization should pay careful attention to balancing the gain and lose for all relevant stakeholders. In the context of a higher education institution, there are various stakeholders ranging from the government, administrators, teachers, students, the business community, the economy, and etc. Palmer & Hartley (2009) supported that an important aspect organizations should consider is the customer satisfaction. Organizations have an important duty to satisfy customers by delivering products and services in accordance to the promises. Hampton (1993) suggested that students’ satisfaction could be used as the indicator for professional service quality of an educational institution. A study of stakeholders’ expectation and experience is important for universities to gauge the quality of their operations. Assumption University (AU) has performed a survey of stakeholders’ satisfaction starting from 2009. This paper investigates the satisfaction of undergraduate students group in the instruction, curriculum, support services, facilities, and reputation of the university. Undergraduates’ expectation and experience were compared and categorized by level of study in order to track the increase or decrease of satisfaction over time.

LITERATURE

Service quality and customer satisfaction

Keller (2008) explained that consumers evaluate a brand by judging the product or service performance as well as assessing the feeling derived from the organization. Educational institutions should emphasize on meeting or exceeding the students’ needs (DeShields, Kara, and Kaynak, 2005). Satisfied students would spread positive information (DeShields, Kara, and Kaynak, 2005). The delivery of service influences the assessment of the consumers towards an organization. Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry (1990) reported that consumers assessed quality of service via the comparison of their expectations and actual service received by the service providers. The consumers concluded a service is good if they receive a service better than they had expected and vice versa. The authors’