

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SERVICE QUALITY AND STUDENT SATISFACTION IN HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR: A CASE STUDY ON THE UNDERGRADUATE SECTOR OF XIAMEN UNIVERSITY OF CHINA

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this research are to study the relationship between the overall service quality and student satisfaction, and to study the relationship between the sub variables of service quality, as nonacademic aspects, academic aspects, teaching methods, industry links, program issues, reputation, access, and cost, and student satisfaction of undergraduate students in Xiamen University of China. 22 undergraduate students from each of the 19 faculties of undergraduate program were surveyed. Totally 397 questionnaires out of 418 were valid and usable. The result showed that the overall service quality and its eight sub variables are all positively related to student satisfaction of undergraduate students in Xiamen University of China.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, higher education is driven toward commercial competition by the development of global education markets. A university has to focus on what society values in the skills and the competencies of its graduates, as well as the evaluation of educational experience of its students. Students are the “customers” of university, they are the consumers of educational service, and they decide from which university to get this service. Thus, it becomes important to identify the determinants of service quality from the standpoint of students being the primary customers. According to Seymour (1993), developing satisfied customers should be a primary goal of higher education. Thus, focusing on enhancing customer satisfaction at universities is crucial in developing customer value and reaching the strategic objectives of universities more effectively.

This study focused on the undergraduate sector in Xiamen University of China, which has 2,337 full-time faculty and professional researchers, now has a total enrollment of over 37,000 full-time students on campus, including 20,466 undergraduates, 14,227 master students, 2,352 doctoral students, and over 2,000 international students. The major objectives of this study are:

(1) To study the relationship between overall service quality and student satisfaction of the undergraduate students of Xiamen University of China.

(2) To study the relationship between sub variables (nonacademic aspects, academic aspects, teaching methods, industry links, program issues, reputation, access, cost) of service quality and student satisfaction of the undergraduate students in Xiamen University of China.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Service Quality in Higher Education

Service quality is the exclusivity of experiences students engage in as part of their whole-person development. Firdaus (2005) designed HEdPERF (Higher Education Performance) which categorized 5 determinants of service quality in higher education. They are non-academic aspects, academic aspects, reputation, access, and program issues. Non-academic aspects refer to aspects that are essential to enable students to fulfill their study obligation, and relate to duties carried out by non-academic staff. Academic aspects refer to aspects include positive attitudes, good communication skills, sufficient con-