MEASURING SERVICE QUALITY EXPECTATIONS AND PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

High education is growing quality and every day is more encountered with the global process. The importance of the quality of educating services has been recently improved. This study was accomplished with the goal of determination of the gap of the quality of educating services by the students’ point of view in Rasht universities. At this gradual study, there were the sample researches of 384 students which have been selected randomly. Collection of the data was accomplished by the questionnaires. The questionnaire has five dimensions of quality service including guarantee, answering, agreement, confidence and notice: By using this questionnaire the students’ perception of the present situation and their expectation of an desirable situation of the quality of educating services was determined and by subtracting of marks of the perception and expectation of the students, the gap of the quality of the educating services has been obtained in different dimensions. The results showed that on the basis of the students’ ideas, the gap of quality exists on each part of five dimensions of the service and the whole phrases related to each dimension. The most important gap of the service s quality were observed on the dimension of a noticeable factors (-1/66), and after it has been answering (-1/27), Agreement (-1/26), guarantee (-1/2) and confidence (-1/15), dimensions has been observed in order. The observed difference has been statistically expressive in different dimensions of educating qualities between the gap of the quality (P=0/00). On the basis of the results, students, expectations, of the present situation are more than their perception and in none of these dimensions has been met their expectations Therefore we need more effort in planning to promote the quality of the educating services in order to meet the students’ expectation and those dimensions which have more gap should be placed at preference.

Key words: Quality, Educating services, Student, Rasht universities.
1. Introduction

Review of current developments in educational system shows that higher education should pay to maintain and improve the quality in addition to consider crises of quantitative increase and financial constraints. Various evidence indicate that these systems can deal with tasks and goals, therefore, identification of the determinants of service quality in terms of students' expectations and perceptions that are considered first customers Of these centers is of great importance. (Abdullah, 2008)

Therefore, continuous attention to improving the quality of education and research seems necessary, and avoiding the use of scientific methods in evaluating and improving quality of education and research, will be followed by Inadequate utilization of intellectual capital and weak policy in the field of research and investigation. (Noorossana, 2008). Hence, the need to find ways that we can increase the quality of education is more specified than before. In this regard, the evaluation of service quality is considered among the steps in developing quality improvement program (Kobrai & Roudbari, 2005). The concept of quality in education is not easy to define. Complexity of the training process and formation of quality is unknown in this process, so these make it difficult to define.

Some experts believe that quality concept, are without shape and therefore cannot be measured. (Ivancevich, 2001) Some people Focus on quality measures (Teaching and student experience) (Marsh and Roche, 1993) for example, "Chapman", knows the quality of education standards, as the level of student development. (Chapman and Wilson, 1999)

Baker defines quality as total outcomes of a course. He thought when a course can be recognized as qualitative course that outcomes have achieved such as:

create a certain level of ability at the maximum possible satisfy the technical requirements and meet of career development needs. (Baker, 1999)

Anyway Despite extensive efforts for illustration of the quality in higher education institutions, still achieving a framework that general agreement be existed on it, has not been realized. (Banderia, 2003) These conflicting meanings of quality of education have led to the use of different methods to measure the quality of in higher education. (Tam, 2001)

Nevertheless for several years, academic researchers, measured service quality by using one-dimensional scales while one-dimensional scales was not suitable for measuring a multidimensional concept Like quality. (Adee and Bernie, 2006) Finally Parasorman et al. could provide a multidimensional scale to measure service quality. This is called SERVQUAL model. SERVQUAL model is developed models to measure service quality in public sector. This model is an effort to measure service quality where: Quality of Service is used as a necessity to understand customer, his expectations and the quality of expected service. This model helps that customer be able to compare the service is provided
by different organizations. Measurement of service quality is performed in order to properly understand the services that organizations must provide and whether these services is relevant to customer expectations or not and also comparison of quality services of an organizations with other organizations. These measurements specify degree of discrepancy between customer expectations and service organizations. (Cheung, el.al., 2010)

Generally, this tools, measures Customer perceptions in five dimensions of service. These dimensions include:

- Reliability: personnel competent to induce a sense of confidence to the customer
- Accountability: willingness to cooperate and help the customer
- Ensuring: ability to serve reliable
- Having empathy: especially dealing with each customer according to their mood so that customers are satisfied is to understand their organization
- Tangible factors: terms of service delivery environment and physical environment, including facilities, equipment, personnel and communication channels (Padma, 2009)

Generally basis of definition of service quality is expectations and customer perceptions of service (Gallifa, el.al, 2010) This tool contrary to the measures proposed by several authors, still had remained as the most practical model for measuring service quality (Mehr Ali Zadeh, 2006).

In most studies, by local researchers, including: Nasrin Bayazidi, 2009 in a study entitled "Relationship between quality of educational services and academic performance technical – engineering and literature and Human Sciences, University of Kurdistan," (Bayazidi, 2009), Teymur Agha mullahi, 2008 in a study entitled "Quality gap of educational services to students in Hormozgan University of Medical Sciences", (Aghamolaei, 2008), Ali Kebraiaee, 2005 in a study entitled "Quality gap of educational services at Zahedan University of Medical Sciences: Students Viewpoints about Current and Optimal Condition"(Kebriayaee, 1384).Massoud Badri 2005 using this model "Quality postal services to the Islamic Republic of Iran" (Badri, 2005).

In the present study also researcher attempts to respond to following question by using SERVQUAL model in the University of Rasht Whether is there a gap between expectations and perceptions of students of Service Quality ? And how is the order of priority of factors affecting the services?

2. Methodology

This study is a cross-sectional and its population consists of all students in 2009 to 2010 academic year in universities of Rasht (Including the public, Azad and Payam Noor). Respondents are consisted of 28312 students that researchers by using stratified random sampling have attempted to obtain a sample of the population.

So students were studied that they had completed at least one semester. The sample size were extracted by Morgan tables , Which was comprised of 384 students and of these 86 samples,.
were related to Payame Noor University, 156 Sample of Azad University and 142 samples of Guilan University. Data were collected by using questionnaires. This questionnaire was prepared by the method SERVQUAL by Kebriyae, for students' perception and expectation measurement about quality of Educational services was used which include 27 pairs of the corresponding question and its reliability and validity was confirmed, scale reliability coefficients were obtained as follows.

Table 1: Cronbach's alpha coefficients related to service quality Dimensions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>The alpha coefficient</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Truste</td>
<td>0/875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response</td>
<td>0/868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>0/772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>0/759</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tangible factors</td>
<td>0/863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Quality</td>
<td>0/861</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and finally, in order to compare the perceptions and expectations of students in each of the dimensions of educational services and also Comparison of each dimensions paired t-tests were used and to compare the perceptions, expectations and quality gap in educational services the University of one-way analysis of variance and also to rank the factors affecting quality of service the Friedman test was used.

3. Findings

In the present study first by using descriptive statistics, demographic data were analyzed. Based on observations obtained from questionnaires above results were obtained. About Students grades was observed that 3/27 percent the first year, 2/30 percent the second year, 8/25 of the third year, 7/16 Percent in the fourth or higher. That of this number 5/49 percent were male respondents and 5/50 percent of respondents were women. That of Whole half had high school degree, 7/74% had BA Education; 7/22 percent had MA degree and 5/0% had PhD degree. Their ages range includes: 1/59% of respondents 22-18 years, 3/38 Percent 30 to 22 years, 3/2 per cent of 45-31 year and 3/0 per cent were aged 45 and more. Then in order to evaluate the service quality gap in each of the dimensions of quality in Rasht University, average level of service expected is displayed by students with E, average level of service is displayed P, average Customer satisfaction levels is displayed with S.
and $S$ levels were calculated from the following equation:

$$S = p - E$$

If $p$ is not equal to $E$ or it may be lower; gap will be created between customer expectations and experienced Services and will lead to customer dissatisfaction ($S > 0$). Of reviewing perceived scores average, expected and the quality gap of educational services from Students perspective in Rasht it becomes clear that:

First "all the raised questions about the quality of educational services there is in average level of perceived service less than expected and negative gap quality. Largest gap is related to "visual beauty and physical facilities (buildings, classrooms, chairs, etc.)." with $S = -2/016$ from tangibles dimension service and smallest gap is related to "behavior with respect to professors" with $Q = -0/888$ from empathy dimension. Second, "the results show educational service in five dimensions, there is a quality gap and this gap is negative. The lowest average gap (-1/15) is related to dimension of reliability and most gap is in dimension of tangible service quality (-1/63)

And then in order to compare the average of perception, expected and the quality gap of educational services in Gilan University, Payam Noor and Azad of Rasht one-way analysis of variance Test, Tukey was used. Comparison of perception and expectation of Gilan University, Azad of Rasht and Payam Noor showed that there is no significant difference In the anticipation of existing quality of educational services ($p < 0/0005$), But the conception of the educational services quality, has Statistically significant difference with each other. In terms of the average level of student expectations, Gilan University is located in the first rank, Azad University of Rasht was second And Payame Noor University of Rasht was at the third level. The quality gap of educational services in the five dimensions Between students in three Gilan University, Azad of Rasht and Payam Noor showed that there was statistically significant difference in the all these dimensions among students of three universities ($P = 0/292$). Order of ratings of quality gap of educational services is divided into five dimensions that are listed in Table 2. As can be seen top gap of quality of educational services in University Gilan and the smallest gap is in Azad University of Rasht. Also in terms of ensuring and empathy Azad University of Rasht, dimensions of reliability and tangibility of service Payame Noor University of Rasht and in terms of responsiveness dimension Gilan University has the lowest level of service quality gap.

Table 2: Average comparison of level of expectations understandings

Quality gap of educational services for students of Gilan University, Azad of Rasht and Payam Noor.
And by using t test (paired comparison)  The hypothesis that are there gaps between expectations and perceptions of students Service Quality were analyzed.

Hypothesis H0: University students’ perceptions of service quality in Rasht At least equal to their expectations. H0: M1 ≥ M2

Hypothesis H1: Perceived service quality of university students in Rasht is less than their expectations. H1: M1 <M2

As can be seen in Table 3, obtained T values with 383 degrees of freedom is equal to -31/477 which is smaller than amount of t of the table in 5% Alpha level (-1/645) .Due to the significant level for the t, since there is strong evidence to reject the null hypothesis, therefore, the null hypothesis (H0) rejected and the hypothesis ( H1) is accepted .This means that students' perceptions of the quality of educational services Rasht is lower than their expectations. It is noteworthy that the low perception of service quality of universities students in Rasht compared to their expectations, are consistent with the results of Kebriyae. In research conducted by Kebriyae overall quality gap in educational services at University Medical Sciences of Zahedan has been- 1/49

Table 3: Results of t-test to statistical analysis the respondents about the the quality of services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gilan University</th>
<th>Azad University of Rasht</th>
<th>Payam Noor University of Rasht</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>4/14</td>
<td>2/85</td>
<td>-0/85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4/006</td>
<td>2/64</td>
<td>-1/35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Results of t-test to statistical analysis the respondents about the the quality of services
And finally Ranking Factors Affecting Quality of Service according to Friedman test was performed the degree of importance of the five dimensions of service quality are as follows:

Table 4: Friedman test results for the five dimensions of service quality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tangible Factors</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So the five dimensions of service quality of the most important to least important (in terms of respondents), based on the average ranking include:
- Tangible factors
- Empathy
- Reliability
- ensuring
- Accountability

4. Discussion and conclusions
As the results show, generally, in Rasht Universities there was a negative quality gap in all dimensions of educational services. Negative gap indicates that students' perceptions of the situation are beyond their expectations. Lowest average gap was observed in the quality assurance and the highest service quality gap was in the tangible factors. From reviewing average of service quality gap separating 3 Guilan Universities, Azad University of Rasht and Payam Noor University of Rasht can also be concluded that the three mentioned Universities, the most gap was related to tangible factors but in Guilan University the least average was related to empathy dimension gap and then other two universities was related to reliability. The results also showed that students' expectations of the quality of educational services at three investigated universities does not have statistically significant difference and are the same.
But between students' perceptions of the quality of educational services, there is significant difference. To point out students' expectations of service quality, Guilan University in the first rank, Azad University of Rasht second and Payam Noor University of Rasht is located at the third level. While the average educational level of students' perception of service quality is contrary, Azad University of Rasht in the first place, Gilan University in second and Payam Noor of Rasht is located in third place. This study, like other research and studies faced with limitations. Some of these limitations can be pointed. Some students did not believe in these things and hence attracting their cooperation was difficult.
to some extent. Also it seems that some people had too much conservativeness in answering questions and marked intermediates more. Meanwhile, using Questionnaires is considered as a limitation. This means that questionnaire investigate the attitude of the people, not the reality, this fact can be considered as a limitation. According to the summary and conclusions of the research findings now suggestions, can be presented in order to overcome the problems and shortcomings and finally "in order to improve the service quality of Rasht universities. These suggestions include:

Due to the lack of resources faced by the managers this deficiency is the major barrier to the implementation of quality programs, service quality gap analysis, enables management to addition To avoid compromising quality, allocate the available limited financial resources in best way to improve organizational performance in the area that has the greatest effect on students' views. Also this assessment is necessary to reduce costs. Thus, according to the findings, we can put five these dimensions into five priority groups for allocating resources and the efforts of universities, in order to eliminate or reduce the gap quality. In such way that tangible factors Dimension in all three universities be placed in the highest priority and empathy in Guilan University and assuring dimension in Azad University of Rasht and Payam Noor be located in the lowest priority. If such priorities be applied, and initially be paid in dimension that has more gap, along with reduction in gap in these dimension, the quality of other dimensions from Students Perspective will also improve Because, according to some experts, existence of defects and gap(and conversely increasing quality) in one dimension, has increasing effect. This means that causes poor quality (Or increasing quality) in other dimensions from perspective of recipients of service. In general, in terms of majority of students in all dimensions of educational services, there was a negative quality gap. Therefore, it is recommended that for reducing this gaps Customer service training workshops be held and to communicate with them and technical workshops be held to improve the skills of employees, and especially workshops for faculty members, in order to apply further modern educational methods suggestion system is used effectively. Adequate and timely information in conducting activities to improve the quality of educational services and other measures should be done. The literature on service quality different models be existed for measuring the quality of and obviously each model. Also from own view it depicting the atmosphere

In the present study
with the approach of Servqual,
Quality Services of Rasht University
Has been measured
Certainly other models and approaches that can be Applied
Such as:
1 - Strategic Assessment Model BSC
2 - SWOT Analysis
3 - Value Chain
4 - Method Portfolio
5 - DEA

with the same data and variables and compared to the desired outcome. It is worth noting each of these models can be complementary to other and finally, strategic models can be offered.

5. References


