

RESEARCH PAPER

Services quality assessment of Indian Higher Education Institutes

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ABSTRACT

Higher education in India is governed by the University Grants Commission, which enforces its standards, advises the government and helps co-ordinate between the centre and the state. In India higher education institutions are looking forward of improvements in service quality to satisfy the expectations of their students and the society. Hence, education is a part of service sector and managing services is difficult than managing the goods. India must use the market driven more and more to improve quality in education and largely in the private professional education system, with the state ensuring public assessment so parents and students decide which institutes are of adequate quality to pursue the degree. Here research has tried to identify satisfaction of students from educational institutes. Data were collected from BBA students by undertaking quota sampling method with the help of adapted SERVQUAL statements of expectations only. Here this adapted tool comprises of tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy aspect of services. Here descriptive statistics were used to report analysis. Present research contributes to the existing pool of knowledge on the relationship between demographic variables of respondents and their expectations and perception of services, other than teaching, from higher education.

KEY WORDS : Higher Education Institutes, Services quality, SERVQUAL

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Higher education is education provided by universities and other institutions that award academic degrees, such as university colleges, self-finance affiliated college. As per the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), Higher Educational Services include education services leading to a university degree or equivalent. Such education services are provided by universities or specialized professional schools. In Indian system the Higher Education is shared responsibility of both the Centre and the States. The co-ordination and determination of

standards in institutions is the constitutional duty of the Central Government.

The Central Government provides grants to University Grant Commission (UGC) and establishes Central Universities in the country. The Central Government is also responsible for declaring educational institutions as “deemed-to-be University” on the recommendation of the UGC.

At present, the main constituents of University or University level Institutions are Central Universities, State Universities, Deemed-to-be Universities, University-level institutions and State approved Private University.

In India higher education institutions are looking forward of improvements in teaching service quality to satisfy the expectations of their students and the society. Managing services is difficult than managing the goods.

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India must now move on four fronts: and one of them is, it must use the market more and more to improve quality in the largely private professional education system, with the state ensuring public assessment so parents and students decide which institutes are of adequate quality to survive (Naushad Forbes, 2014). Hence, it is necessary to understand that service processes which are different from manufacturing processes, especially due to their intangible nature and the direct participation of clients. Every company is Aiming to make clients loyal, and so companies have made every effort to meet their needs and exceed their expectations. The main thing to make them loyal or satisfied is to provide them better quality services. And how to assess the quality of intangible and perishable is big question but the SERVQUAL scale is one of the tools that can help in this sense. Education services have very particular characteristics; the SERVQUAL model must be adapted according to the most important determining factors proposed by Parasuraman *et al.* (1985). These are reliability, tangibility, responsibility, security and empathy.

The overall scenario of higher education in India does not match with the global Quality standards. Hence, there is enough justification for an increased assessment of the quality of the country's educational institutions. According to Oliver (apud Salomi and Miguel, 2005), SERVQUAL is the method that assesses client satisfaction as a result of the difference between expectation and the performance obtained. According to Zeithaml *et al.* (1990), SERVQUAL is universal and can be applied to any service organization to assess the quality of services provided.

Measuring the quality of a service can be a very difficult exercise. Unlike product where there are specific specifications such as length, depth, width, weight, colour etc. a service can have numerous intangible or qualitative specifications. In addition there is there expectation of the customer with regards the service, which can vary considerably based on a range of factors such as prior experience, personal needs and what other people may have told them. As a way of trying to measure service quality, researchers have developed a methodology known as SERVQUAL – a perceived service quality questionnaire survey methodology.

SERVQUAL examines five dimensions of service quality; reliability - The organization's (college's) ability to perform the promised service dependably and

accurately, responsiveness-The organizations (college's) willingness to help customers (students) and provide prompt service, assurance - The knowledge and courtesy of the organization's (college's) employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence in customers (students), empathy - The caring individual attention the organization (college) provides its customers (students), tangible - The appearance of the organization's (college's) physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication materials.

For each dimension of service quality above, SERVQUAL measures both the expectation and perception of the service on a scale of 1 to 7, it comprises of 22 questions in total. In this total 21 statements were taken. Then, each of the five dimensions is weighted according to customer importance and the score for each dimension multiplied by the weighting. Following this, the gap score for each dimension is calculated by subtracting the Expectation score from the perception score. A negative gap score indicates that the actual service (the perceived score) was less than what was expected (the expectation score).

The gap score is a reliable indication of each of the five dimensions of service quality. Using SERVQUAL, service providers can obtain an indication of the level of quality of their service provision and highlight areas requiring improvement.

The main objective of this research study was to assess services quality of higher education institutes, with special reference to BBA colleges of south Gujarat region that are affiliated to VNSGU. Secondary objectives are, to assess the various dimensions of service quality higher education institutes, with special reference to BBA colleges of south Gujarat and the relative importance of each of the dimensions in influencing students' perception of service quality. This research also investigates satisfaction level among students who come from different background *i.e.* family income per annum, family composition, their medium of schooling, as well as of different colleges and of different area and these are helpful to form my secondary objectives.

Review of literature is the most useful and simple method of formulating the research problem. The researches done by previous researchers are reviewed and their usefulness is evaluated to serve as basis for further research. Thus, researcher reviews and builds upon the work of others. The reviews that are collected

by the researcher should give an insight into the field under study. The reviews must explain the need and scope of the study under consideration.

Zeithaml (1988) was to provide a brief definition of service quality. In line with the propositions put forward by Gronroos (1984); Smith and Houston (1982) and Parasuraman *et al.* (1985 and 1988) posited and operationalized service quality as a difference between consumer expectations of 'what they want' and their perceptions of 'what they get.' Based on this conceptualization and operationalization, they proposed a service quality measurement scale called 'SERVQUAL.' The SERVQUAL scale constitutes an important landmark in the service quality literature and has been extensively applied in different service settings.

Arshan (2004), conducted research with SERVQUAL and model of service quality gaps. SERVQUAL methodology as an analytical approach for evaluating the difference between customers' expectations and perceptions of quality was also studied. While this research provides some perspectives to the field of service quality, it is believed that there are a number of things that should be done to confirm the demonstrated methodologies as well as to expand the use of SERVQUAL in design and improvement of quality services.

Prajapati (2006) in their study have found out that the delivery of information *i.e.* knowledge transmission in the case of Management Education Institutes (MEI) is intangible in nature. Therefore, the inputs in terms of delivery of this knowledge - faculty, equipment and the entire environment and infrastructure are very important for quality. A gap was found between the quality rendered by faculty and service provider and quality required by students. The perceptual characteristics depend on the students' perceptions, which include dimensions of service quality based on the SERVQUAL and other service quality instruments. The study encompassed Business Schools in Mumbai as perceived by students are evaluated.

Arambewela and Hall (2006 and 2008) found that their study investigated the relationship between the SERVQUAL constructs of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles and the country of origin and satisfaction among four groups of postgraduate business students from Asia studying in Australia. The findings indicated that all SERVQUAL constructs had an impact on student satisfaction level, though there were

variances in the impact of each construct. It was clear however, that the tangibles construct was the most significant in forming satisfaction among all groups of students as confirmed by previous studies on student satisfaction.

Stodnick and Rogers (2008) claimed that above mentioned research was the first to apply the SERVQUAL scale to measure student perceptions of service quality in a classroom setting. Although the scale itself is well established, the application of it to the classroom and its success empowers this report's success. The findings suggested that the SERVQUAL scale is reliable and exhibits both convergent and divergent validity. In fact as per this research, in terms of scale development, SERVQUAL performed better than a traditional student evaluation scale, the Brightman scale.

Khodayari and Khodayari (2011) proposed that perceived service quality reflects the difference between consumer expectations and perceptions which depends on the size and direction of the four gaps related to the delivery of service quality on the providers' side. SERVQUAL can trace the trend of customer relative importance, expectation, and perception, if applied periodically and it is able to identify specific area of excellence and weaknesses. Also it is able to prioritize area of service weaknesses. The results of this research show that there is a gap between student's perceptions and student's expectations and among factors and dimensions of the SERVQUAL model, reliability, tangibility, responsiveness, assurance and empathy are important for students.

Morales and Calderon (1999) found that delivering quality service has become an important goal for most business schools. This study found that the service quality can be measured with a four dimension scale where reliability-empathy is the most important for professional students. In practice the importance of this dimension points to the need for strong management emphasis on service dependability and demonstration of personalized interest when interacting with professional students. Although the result of this study provide valuable insight into the relationship of student satisfaction with business school services, one obvious limitation is its external validity.

From the above literature review, after referring numbers of research it can be said that because of its nature it is very difficult to assess the quality of services

but its' not impossible to do so. These all research works came on the conclusion that quality of services can be measured or assessed. Further regarding education sector, the literature review itself pointing out that it is not something that one can assess whether its certain practices are profitable or not. So again to assess the quality of education services is tougher than that of any normal services, because for any profit making services firm the quality is directly related with its profit but in case of education its' not so. Then also looking to current scenario its' very important for all educational institutes to remain foot step ahead for better contribution to the society. So here main question comes that how is the services quality offered by higher education institutes with special reference to BBA colleges of south Gujarat that are affiliated to VNSGU?

METHODOLOGY

This was a descriptive research because according to Hair *et al.* (1995), the descriptive research is applicable when a researcher look to answers to the how, what, who, when and where. Total 780, from each of the college total 30 sample were taken, 10 from FYBBA, 10 from SYBBA, 10 from TYBBA. Total 26 colleges were surveyed. In this research quota sampling method was used to collect samples. Quota sampling is a method for selecting survey participants on non-probability basis. In quota sampling, a population is first segmented into mutually exclusive sub-groups, just as in stratified sampling that was done with FY, SY, and TY BBA. Then judgment is used to select the subjects or units from each segment based on a specified proportion. This study was based on primary data. To examine the research objective and hypothesis primary data was collected through survey. While conducting survey though personal contacts with students, structural questionnaire was used as a survey tool that is modified SERVEQUAL scale containing 21 statements.

As SERVQUAL examines five dimensions of service

quality, the hypotheses are:

- H₀₁: There is no significant difference in satisfaction level between male and female students of BBA colleges on various dimensions of services and overall service of education as a whole.
- H₀₂: There is no significant difference in satisfaction level among students who come from different family composition on various dimensions of services and overall service of education as a whole.
- H₀₃: There is no significant difference in satisfaction level among students who attended different medium of instruction at school level on various dimensions of services and overall service of education as a whole.
- H₀₄: There is no significant difference in satisfaction level among students who come from different income group on various dimensions of services and overall service of education as a whole.
- H₀₅: There is no significant difference in satisfaction level among students of FY, SY and TYBBA on various dimensions of services and overall service of education as a whole.
- H₀₆: There is no significant difference in satisfaction level among students of different cities on various dimensions of services and overall service of education as a whole.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Collected data was primarily analyzed with methodology of SERVQUAL, then for testing the reliability of data Cronbach alpha is used which gave 0.780 alpha value for expectations statements and for perceived statements 0.656 alpha value which indicates that data has good consistency as it is reliable to process on. In this study as it's a quota sample study, it contains 33.33 per cent respondents from each year of study. In this study 13.7 per cent respondents were belong to below 2 lakh annual family income, 44.5 per cent respondents from 2 to 5 lakh annual family income, 32.1 per cent

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for all dimensions (P-E)

Satisfaction (P-E)	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Tangible (P-E)	780	-4.00	4.00	-.1619	1.33
Reliability (P-E)	780	-6.00	3.75	-.1394	1.37
Responsiveness (P-E)	780	-3.00	4.75	-.0478	1.33
Assurance (P-E)	780	-4.75	3.50	-.1897	1.32
Empathy (P-E)	780	-4.20	3.40	-.2228	1.16

respondents were belong to 5 to 10 Lakh annual family income while 9.7 per cent respondents were from more than 10 lakh annual family income. In this study, maximum respondents, 57.7 per cent respondent were belonging to Surat city, as 30 samples were drawn from each of 15 different BBA colleges of Surat. 11.5 per cent respondents from Valsad, 7.7 per cent respondents from Navsari and Bharuch each, while 3.8 per cent respondents from each of the town namely Bardoli, Ankleshwar, Vapi and Mandavi.

The SERVQUAL analysis is as follows; where (P-E) represents satisfaction of students by deducting expectations from perception of services quality. Table 1 shows the satisfaction of students for different dimensions of SERVQUAL which is calculated as perceived minus expectations, mean value of tangibility (P-E) is -0.1619, mean value of reliability (P-E) is -0.1394, mean value of responsiveness (P-E) is -0.0478, mean value of assurance (P-E) is -0.1897 and mean value of empathy (P-E) is -0.2228.

Normality test :

It is suggested that in case of sample size is greater than 100 go with Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality. To test normality null hypothesis is

H_0 = Distribution is normal

H_1 = Distribution is not normal

Table 2 shows that for sample size of 780 Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality produces p value of 0.000 for all dimensions irrespective of expectations and perceptions. It means that here Null hypotheses is rejected. So it can be concluded that data distribution is

not normal. So in upcoming section non-parametric test would be used.

Hypotheses testing :

H_{01} : There is no significant difference in satisfaction level between male and female students of BBA colleges on various dimensions of services and overall service of education as a whole.

H_{02} : There is no significant difference in satisfaction level among students who come from different family composition on various dimensions of services and overall service of education as a whole.

The normality test Table 2 shows data follows non-normal pattern, hence, Mann Whitney test is applied and result shows.

Table 3 shows mean rank of 361 male and 419 female, the calculated value of Mann Whitney U test is 73953.500, 74016.500, 74751.500, 75477.500, 73744.500 and it's associated p value is 0.592, 0.607, 0.779, 0.961, and 0.547, respectively for tangible, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy, hence, it can be concluded that the hypotheses H_{01} is fail to reject so there is no significant difference in satisfaction level between male and female students of BBA colleges on various dimensions of services and overall service of education as a whole. For family composition also, for 297 nuclear and 483 joint family result shows the hypotheses H_{02} is fail to reject so there is no significant difference in satisfaction level among students who come from different family composition on various dimensions of services and overall service of education as a whole.

H_{03} : There is no significant difference in satisfaction

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Average of tangibility (E)	.077	780	.000	.978	780	.000
Average of reliability (E)	.100	780	.000	.971	780	.000
Average of responsiveness (E)	.113	780	.000	.968	780	.000
Average of assurance (E)	.073	780	.000	.974	780	.000
Average of empathy (E)	.069	780	.000	.991	780	.000
Average of tangibility (P)	.075	780	.000	.988	780	.000
Average of reliability (P)	.063	780	.000	.984	780	.000
Average of responsiveness (P)	.074	780	.000	.987	780	.000
Average of assurance (P)	.083	780	.000	.983	780	.000
Average of empathy (P)	.075	780	.000	.991	780	.000
Lilliefors significance correction						

level among students who come from different income group on various dimensions of services and overall service of education as a whole.

H₀₄: There is no significant difference in satisfaction level among students who attended different medium of instruction at school level on various dimensions of services and overall service of education as a whole.

H₀₅: There is no significant difference in satisfaction level among students of FY, SY and TYBBA on various dimensions of services and overall service of education as a whole.

H₀₆: There is no significant difference in satisfaction level among students of different cities on various dimensions of services and overall service of education as a whole.

Table 4 shows for annual family income the calculated value of Chi-square test is 0.444, 0.140, 7.773, 6.278 and 1.831 and it's associated p value is 0.931, 0.987, 0.051, 0.099 and 0.608, respectively for tangible, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy, hence, it can

be concluded that the hypotheses H₀₃ is fail to reject so there is no significant difference in satisfaction level among students who come from different income group on various dimensions of services and overall service of education as a whole. In case of medium of instruction at school level for reliability and empathy p values, 0.011 and .007, respectively shows there is significant difference in satisfaction level among students who attended different medium of instruction at school level while for rest all dimensions p value shows for H₀₄ there is no significant difference in satisfaction level among students who attended different medium of instruction at school level on rest dimensions of services. In case of year of study p value shows H₀₅ is fail to reject so there is no significant difference in satisfaction level among students of FY, SY and TYBBA on various dimensions of services and overall service of education as a whole. In case of students of different cities, p value for responsiveness dimension 0.000 shows hypotheses is rejected for that particular dimension so there is significant difference in satisfaction level among students

Table 3 : Mann whitney test statistics^a

Grouping variable		Tangible (P-E)	Reliability (P-E)	Responsiveness (P-E)	Assurance (P-E)	Empathy (P-E)
Gender	Mann-Whitney U	73953.500	74016.500	74751.500	75477.500	73744.500
	Asymp. Sig. (2-Tailed)	.592	.607	.779	.961	.547
Family composition	Mann-Whitney U	65838.000	66152.000	67274.000	69773.000	71341.000
	Asymp. Sig. (2-Tailed)	.053	.068	.144	.522	.900

Table 4 : Kruskal Wallis test statistics^{a,B}

Grouping variable		Tangible (P-E)	Reliability (P-E)	Responsiveness (P-E)	Assurance (P-E)	Empathy (P-E)
Family annual income	Chi-square	.446	.140	7.773	6.278	1.831
	Df	3	3	3	3	3
	Asymp. sig.	.931	.987	.051	.099	.608
Medium of instructions at school level	Chi-square	.943	9.107	5.192	4.111	9.788
	Df	2	2	2	2	2
	Asymp. sig.	.624	.011	.075	.128	.007
Year of study in college	Chi-square	.470	.254	.150	.003	.026
	Df	1	1	1	1	1
	Asymp. sig.	.493	.614	.698	.953	.872
City/town	Chi-square	8.036	11.517	37.953	4.756	4.118
	Df	7	7	7	7	7
	Asymp. sig.	.329	.118	.000	.690	.766

a. Kruskal Wallis test

b. Grouping variable: As per mentioned in column

of different cities on responsiveness dimension while for rest all dimension p value shows there is no significant difference in satisfaction level among students of different cities on various dimensions of services and overall service of education as a whole.

Finally, the research concludes that there is negative satisfaction level for each dimension of services of higher education, means they are highly dissatisfied with reliability aspect of higher education followed by tangibility aspect. Further the hypotheses testing reveals that there is a no significant difference in the overall satisfaction level of boys and girls. Even for the all five dimensions this remains the same. Moreover, there is no significant difference in the overall satisfaction between students belong to joint family and nuclear family. And that too for each dimensions also, the result is same. Surprisingly there is a significant difference in the overall satisfaction among students come from school having different medium of instructions namely Gujarati, Hindi and English. This result remains the same for empathy and reliability dimensions of services as there is significant difference in overall satisfaction among students come from school having different medium of instructions, while for rest three dimensions students are there is no significant difference in the overall satisfaction among students come from school having different medium of instructions. Additionally difference is also found in their satisfaction level among students come from different group of family income. Further there is no significant difference in the overall satisfaction among students of FY, SY and TY BBA. And the result is same for all dimensions of services. Further there is no significant difference in satisfaction level among students of different cities on various dimensions of services except responsiveness and overall service of education as a whole. So from this study we can conclude that there is still much more expectations are there by youth from higher education institutes and at present they seem to be failing in it. Similar work related to the present investigation was also carried out by Cullen *et al.* (2003) Elliott and Shin (2002); Ford *et al.* (1999); Gronroos (1984); Guolla (1999); Harvey and Knight (1996); Michael Stodnick (2008); Parasuraman *et al.* (1988) and Prajaptai (2006).

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