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Gap Model of Service Quality in Higher Education

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Abstract: *In India, the service sector plays a significant role to contribute in the economic development. Higher education sector is an important tool for the development of a nation. Study of quality of service in higher education and students' satisfaction is essential to all the institutions to make effective plans for the development the education programs. The Study focuses the higher education system and problem faced by students as well as institutions. Moreover how the gaps are to be fulfilled by using revised SERVQUAL model which was originally developed by Parasuraman et al (1985). It is concluded that researcher has suggested the SERVQUAL model to measure the service quality and fill the gaps in all areas of service.*

Keywords: *Higher Education, Service Quality, Conceptual Model, SERVQUAL and SERVPERF, Dimensions, Service Quality Gaps.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Now days, the service sector plays a vital role to contribute in the economic development. Higher education sector is an important tool for the development of a nation. Study of quality of service in higher education and students' satisfaction is essential to all the institutions to make effective plans for the development of programs. The education is the prestigious one and it always reward in various aspects like improve the knowledge, skill behavioral etc. The quality service in higher education will provide more enjoyment and creativeness to the presents students as well as forthcoming generation.

The satisfaction is not only providing quality education but also provide the peaceful environment. The perfect educational environment is very essential to satisfy the thought of the students and capable to develop the skills. The capable and effective education in quality will gives satisfaction and effective educational personality. The effective administration and management of a higher education will satisfy the students and also facilitates the students with quality and personality grooming and they will give their maximum output. So the students satisfactions are always depend upon the quality of service provided by the institutions. However, many of institutions couldn't fulfill the expectation of the students. Some time they failed to give the quality of service to the students depends upon environment and career planning of the students.

II. HIGHER EDUCATION

According to the free dictionary.com higher education defined as "the education beyond the secondary level especially education at the college or university level". In India, system of higher education is the world's third largest in terms of students next to China and USA. India has advantage because english is the primary language for higher education and research. India's educational institutions edify approximately 11percent of students in higher education as compared to 20 percent in China. University Grand Commission (UGC) plays a governing body, which put into effort its standards, advice the government, coordinates the various universities and colleges at centre and state level. However, at present the word class institutes in India are limited. Most of the Indian colleges and universities lack in their infrastructure facilities and also high research facilities under investment in library information technology, laboratories and classrooms which make very difficult to provide top

quality instruction in cutting edge research. If we want to speed up one path development, institutions have to fill the gap according to the changing environment.

The higher education often plays a crucial role directly and indirectly to the growth of a nation and also produces the, doctors, engineers, auditors, teachers and skilled persons etc. The national growth and development is not implies in higher education system but social development also. According to changing environmental situation it is necessary to change the curriculum and to increase the quality of higher education in India. There are so many institutions are playing an important role to examine and evaluate the higher education system in India viz. National Assessments Accreditation Council (NAAC), National Board of Accreditation (NBA), UGC, AICTE etc which have been implemented for measuring the quality of service in various aspects. These are the institution having power to measure the system of educational institutions in India. In India all the universities, colleges have been running based on the criteria fixed by the above said institutions.

III. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

For this study two objectives have been framed

1. To describe the Significance of Service Quality in Higher Education.
2. To focus the Conceptual Model of Service Quality.

IV. SERVICE QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The economic growth of a country is totally based on their education, especially in higher education. Because higher education plays a vital role and ability to provide an overall climate, culture and economic change of a country. The higher education provides knowledge to face the challenging task in the economy. To face such type of challenging task, it is necessary to conform that higher education must be very quality in sense, the service quality will be assure through the quality dimension i.e., academic resources Competence, Attitude, Content, Reliability and Responsiveness and Assurance and Empathy.

Higher education systems are influenced by student demand, financial problems, employment opportunities and the increase of global innovations based on knowledge and research. This transformation displays differences in developed and developing countries. However, the lack of sufficient higher education institutions and the absence of qualified faculty in many of these institutions do not seem adequate in closing the gap between developed and developing countries. For this reason, The World Bank, which saw primary education as a priority in the 1980's and 1990's, now suggests to countries that have not developed their higher education sufficiently that they prioritize the quality of higher education. The fact that the number of higher education institutions in a country is high but it doesn't provide high quality of education. For this reason, higher education faces the responsibility to enhance student satisfaction and training individuals who have suitable mutual interests. Therefore, it may be stated that the main purpose of higher education institutions is to satisfy the students according to changing environment because they have to survive in the society.

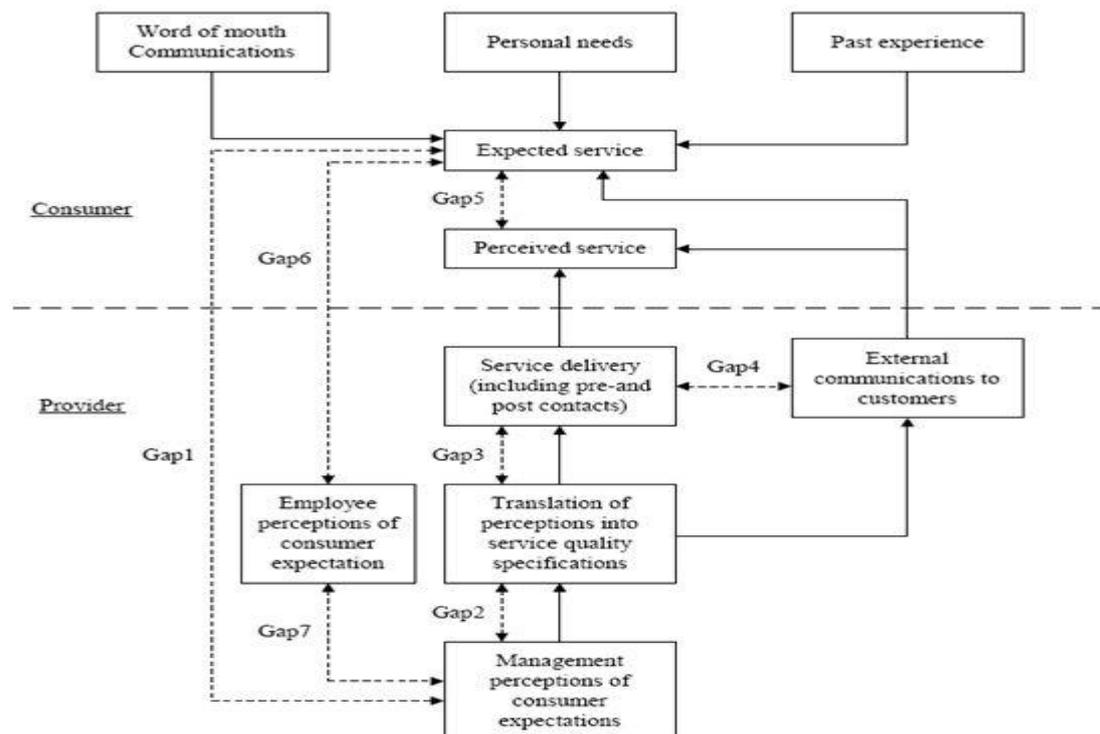
There are several models used to measure service quality. The most frequently used service quality scales are SERVQUAL and SERVPERF. SERVQUAL and SERVPERF measure the functional quality. Functional quality includes qualification of human relations in organizations and a keyword of this relation is communication. Using functional quality to measure service quality is important but not sufficient for an educational organization. Students are not usually seen as customers at universities. For this reason, different models of service quality have been developed at universities. If the institutions have to provide quality of service, they should fill the gap according to expectations of the students. Many of researchers have suggested that among the various service quality models, SERVQUAL model is widely used to identify the gaps and measure the quality of service in various dimensions.

Moreover, the study also focuses the gap model of service quality which was developed by Parasuraman et.al.1985.

V. GAP MODEL OF SERVICE QUALITY

There are seven major gaps in the service quality concept, which are shown in figure 1. The model is an extension of Parasuraman et al (1985). According to the following explanation (ASI quality system, 1992; Curry, 1999; Luk and Layton 2002), the three important gaps, which are more associated with the external customers viz Gap1, Gap5, and Gap6 since they have a direct relationship with customers.

- **Gap1: customer's expectations versus management perceptions:** as a result of the lack of a marketing research orientation, inadequate upward communication and too many layers of management.
- **Gap2: management perceptions versus service specification:** as a result of inadequate commitment to service quality, a perception of unfeasibility, inadequate task standardization and an absence of goal setting.
- **Gap3: service specifications versus service delivery:** as a result of role ambiguity and conflict, poor employee,-job fit and poor technology-job fit, inappropriate supervisory control systems, lack of perceived control and lack of teamwork.
- **Gap4: service delivery versus external communication:** as a result of inadequate horizontal communications and propensity to over-promise.
- **Gap5: the discrepancy between customer expectations and their perceptions of the service delivered:** as a result of the influences exerted from the customer side and the shortfalls (gaps) on the part of the service provider. In this case, customer expectations are influenced by the extent of personal needs, word of mouth recommendation and past service experiences.
- **Gap6: the discrepancy between customer expectations and employees' perceptions:** as a result of the differences in the understanding of customer expectations by front-line service providers.
- **Gap7: the discrepancy between employee's perceptions and management perceptions:** as a result of the differences in the understanding of customer expectations between managers and service providers.



Source: Model of Service Quality Gaps (Parusraman et al., 1985; Curry 19-99; luk and Layton, 2002)

According to brown and bond (1995), the gap model is one of the best received and most heuristically valuable contributions to the services literature". The model identifies seven key discrepancies or gaps relating to managerial perceptions of service quality, and tasks associated with service delivery customers. The first six gaps (gap1, gap2, gap3, gap4, gap5, gap6 and gap7) are indentified as functions of the way in which service is delivered, whereas gap5 pertains to the customer and as such is considered to be the true measure of service quality. The gap on which the SERVQUAL methodology has influence is gap5. In following, the SERVQUAL approach is demonstrated.

VI. SERVQUAL INSTRUMENTS

The current measurement of perceived service quality can be traced to the research of Parasuraman, et al. 1985, 1986, 1988, 1991, 1993, 1994, and 1999). The originally identified ten determinants of service quality (1985), viz., Access, Communication, Competence, Courtesy, Credibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Security, Tangibles and Understanding were subsequently developed as SERVQUAL (1988), which recasts the 10 determinants into five specific components. Later SERVQUAL was revised in 1991 by replacing "should" word by "would" and in 1994 by reducing the total number of items to 21, but five dimensional structure remaining the same.

Parusraman et al., (1985) postulated that customers generally use ten dimensions when evaluating perceived service quality. The ten service quality determinants are:

- Tangibles- appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication materials.
- Reliability-ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.
- Responsiveness- willingness to help customers and provide prompt service.
- Competence- possession of the required skills and knowledge to perform the service.
- Courtesy- politeness, respect, consideration, and friendliness.
- Credibility- trustworthiness, believability, honesty of the service provider.
- Security- freedom from danger, risk or doubt.
- Access- approachability and ease of contact.
- Communication- keeping customers informed in language they can understand and listening to them.
- Understanding the customer- making the effort to know customers and their needs.

However, in a subsequent study, Zeithamal et al (1990) the number of dimensions were reduced to five. The five suggested service quality dimensions are:

- Tangibles (physical facilities, equipment, appearance of personnel)
- Reliability (ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately)
- Responsiveness (willingness to help and provide prompt service)
- Assurance (knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire confidence)
- Empathy (caring, individualized attention the firm provides its customers)

VII. RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

In India, educational institutions are facing so many problems which are related to quality of service expected by the students. The education institution must give equal education opportunities to the students but no such type of equalization is given to all students irrespective of economic status, geographical, gender etc. The unequalization of education creates the problems like unemployment. In order to solve the problems, proper planning should be implemented to make common education system throughout India and eradicate discrimination between the rural and urban area.

The study concluded that before institutions are going to solve the problem, they should identify the needs and wants of the students according to the recent trends. If the institutions want to identify needs and wants, they have to collect the information from the students to fill the gaps. Hence, the SERVQUAL instrument is very useful to collect the information from the students as well as institutions. Therefore, the researcher has suggested the SERVQUAL model to measure the higher education service and also fill the gaps at various levels.

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The author is a first class post graduate in Commerce from Bharathidasan University, Trichy and has obtained M.Phil degree in Commerce from Periyar University, Salem and a Ph.D in Commerce from Bharathiar University, Coimbatore. She has specialized in Services Marketing for her Doctoral degree. She has put in about seven years of experience as faculty in Commerce. Now she is working as Assistant Professor of Commerce, teaching Under -Graduate and Post-Graduate students and research scholar on various subjects of Commerce, viz., Marketing, Income Tax Law, Company Law and Financial Accounting. She has published books and research articles at national and international level and also she has participated in several seminars and workshops and presented papers.