



## SERVICE QUALITY MEASUREMENT OF TRAINING INSTITUTE

**Khambhati Rupal K.**

S.R.Luthra Institute of Management, Surat, Gujrat, India

Corresponding Authors' Email: khambhatirk@gmail.com

**ABSTRACT**

Educational institutes are starving for the sustainability due to various new and new institutes coming up with various courses. Gaining competitive advantage has become a major concern for the educational institutes. They have to offer excellent service quality in order to attract more and more students. Also, they must continuously check for the quality of the services provided from the students' perspectives. The study aims at assessment of quality of services provided by a training institute. The study uses well known service quality model SERVQUAL. It is found that the demographic factors have relatively significant impact on the dimensions of service quality.

**KEYWORDS:** SERVQUAL Model, excellent service quality, liberalization, Globalization,

**INTRODUCTION**

Post liberalization, education sector is opening up, especially the higher education sector. Globalization creates a marketplace where only the best provider of the service would survive. Indian educational institutes are left with no option except improving its quality (Sharma and Kaur, 2004). Education is being driven toward commercial competition imposed by economic forces (Seymour, 1992). This competition is the result of the development of global education markets and less of governmental funds which forces public organizations to search for finance from other resources (Freeman, 1993). To remain competitive, academic institutions need to continuously innovate their structure and find new ways of delivering the services more effectively to their customers. According to Stone (2005), in extremely competitive environment, students have become more astute in the selection of the educational institute and more demanding of the colleges and universities they opt for. Therefore, it is important for institutes to understand their expectations. A constant research and analysis is a necessary to improve education service quality (Stone, 2005). Customer orientation and adoption of total quality management concepts are the basic requirements of the today's educational institutes.

**LITERATURE REVIEW****Service quality**

Service quality is a multi-dimensional concept (Naser A. J., 2002), it means different things to different people (Bennington & Cummane, 1998). The concept of service quality has been developed by various researchers: Nordic view (by Gronroos, 1984) and the American view (by Parasuraman et al., 1985). The Nordic view describes service quality in two dimensions: Functional quality (the manner in which the service is delivered) and Technical quality (technical accurateness of the medical procedures and diagnoses) (Donabedian, 1980). American school of

thoughts explains service quality as the difference between the overall gap in the perception and expectation of service delivery (Parasuraman et al., 1985, 1988, 1991, and 1994). Parasuraman et al., 1985 have developed a service quality model with ten dimensions which were then reduced to five dimensions of tangibility (physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication materials), reliability (ability to perform the promised services dependably and accurately), responsiveness (willingness of service providers to help customers and provide prompt service), empathy (the provision of caring and individualized attention to customers) and assurance (knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence) (Parasuraman et al., 1988, 1991). Many studies have been done on service quality assessment (Harvey and Green, 1993; McDougall and Levesque, 1994; Mohr and Bitner, 1995; Dabholkar et al., 1996; Owlia and Aspinwall, 1996; Srikanthan and Dalrymple, 2003; Sahney et al., 2006.).

The SERVQUAL model framework has been applied to many areas like retail store (Dabholkar et al., 1996), hotel (Ingram and Daskalais, 1999), hospitals (Babakus & Mangold, 1989), a dental school patient clinic, business school placement centre, tire store and acute care hospital (Carman, 1990), a utility company (Babakus & Boller, 1992), banking, pest control, dry cleaning and fast food (Cronin & Taylor, 1992), and banking industries (Angur et al., 1999).

**Service quality in higher education**

Quality in education has been defined differently by researchers such as "value addition in education" (Feigenbaum, 1951), "conformance of education output to planned goals, specifications and requirements" (Gilmore, 1974; Crosby, 1979), "defect avoidance in education process" (Crosby, 1979) and "excellence in education" (Peters and Waterman, 1982). According to Parasuraman et al. (1985) quality in education is "meeting or exceeding

customer's expectations of education". Reynolds (1986) and Tang and Zairi (1998) defined it as "fitness for purpose." It is the "Fitness of educational outcome and experience for use" (Juran, 1988). According to Gordon and Partigon (1993) service quality in education is "The success with which an institution provides educational environments that enable students effectively to achieve valuable learning goals including appropriate academic standards." Allen and Davis (1991) and Holdford and Patkar (2003) concluded that educational service quality as a student's overall evaluation of services received as part of their educational experience.

The service quality in educational institutes have been evaluated by various researchers for various academic programs such as university computer labs (Hughey, Chawla & Khan, 2003); MBA (Rapert, Smith, Velliquette & Garretson, 2004); teachers and courses (Clewes, 2003; Mustafa & Chiang, 2006); engineering (Sakthivel & Raju, 2006) and additional services like registration and advising (Abouchedid & Nasser, 2002). Oldfield and Baron (2000) have used SERVQUAL to measure students' perceptions of service quality in a university in the UK. According to the study the students' perceived service quality has three dimensions: 1) Requisite elements which are essential to fulfill study obligations, 2) Acceptable elements that are desirable but not essential to students and 3) functional elements which possess a practical nature. Hughey et al. (2003) have used SERVQUAL model to measure quality of university computer labs. A 22 item scale was used and they found three dimensions: staff, service and professionalism. Authors concluded that the instrument is also reliable over time and can be used across a wide range of service environments. O'Neill (2003) has studied the application of SERVQUAL with 21 items in a university orientation setting. Three factors were extracted: contact (a combination of responsiveness and assurance), empathy and logistics (a combination of tangibility and reliability). Negative mean scores of P minus E indicted that the expectations of the students are not fulfilled. SERVQUAL was used by Tan and Kek (2004) to the field of engineering in two local universities. The study concluded that there was a large negative service quality gaps because of higher level of expectations and lower perception. Also, the foreign students perceived the service quality higher than the local students. Sahney, Banwet, and Karunes (2004) suggested that SERVQUAL model is uni-dimensional. They have used the model to assess student perceptions of service quality in the higher education in India. Arambewela and Hall (2006) measured international education satisfaction in five universities in Victoria, Australia with 36 items. According to this study for students of China, India and Thailand, quality of teaching is the most important variable in the reliability construct while for Indonesian student, quality of lecture material is most important. For all students, responsiveness was the most important factor for service quality. In a study to investigate expectations and perceptions of service quality among post graduate Chinese students at a management school in the UK, Barnes (2007) used modified SERVQUAL with 42 items. It was concluded that the SERVQUAL instrument is suitable in Chinese post graduate context. The students

had high expectations in terms of willingness of staff to help the student, providing punctual service, providing academic guidance and having appropriate knowledge to answer questions of students (Barnes, 2007).

#### **Need to study service quality in education system**

It is necessary for any educational institutes to monitor the quality of their services and also to have commitment for continuous improvements in order to respond to the needs of their customers. Thus, identification of the service quality dimensions has become necessary. There are two ways to assess service quality, one can be from the service provider's perspective and another can be from the customer's perspective. As the customers are going to actually use the services, it is better to consider their views of the quality of services provided. Education system directly deals with the societal development, so it is important that the system provides quality services to the students. Assessment of the educational institutes' quality might help the authorities to target the areas in which improvements are required. Also, it may help the providers to know students' views about a particular institute. Keeping this in mind, the current study aims at measuring service quality at a training institute and assess dependency of service quality dimensions on demographic factors like age, gender and qualification.

#### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The present study uses the popular SERVQUAL model (developed by Parasuraman et al., 1985, 1988) with five service quality dimensions: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, empathy and assurance. Total of 25 items were considered on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree) for the questionnaire. A total of 82 students were selected conveniently as samples from the information technology training institute in Surat.

#### **HYPOTHESES**

Two separate types of hypotheses (for expectations and for perceived performance) were formed.

##### **(I) Expectation Hypotheses**

###### **Age**

H<sub>0</sub>: Expectations for tangibles are independent of Age

H<sub>1</sub>: Expectations for tangibles are not independent of Age  
Similarly for other dimensions Responsiveness, reliability, empathy and assurance, hypotheses can be formed.

###### **Gender**

H<sub>0</sub>: Expectations for tangibles are independent of Gender

H<sub>1</sub>: Expectations for tangibles are not independent of Gender

Similarly for other dimensions Responsiveness, reliability, empathy and assurance, hypotheses can be formed.

###### **Qualification**

H<sub>0</sub>: Expectations for tangibles are independent of Qualification

H<sub>1</sub>: Expectations for tangibles are not independent of Qualification

Similarly for other dimensions Responsiveness, reliability, empathy and assurance, hypotheses can be formed.

**(II) Perceived performance hypothesis:****Age:**

H<sub>0</sub>: Perceived performance for tangibles are independent of age

H<sub>1</sub>: Perceived performances for tangibles are not independent of age

Similarly for other dimensions Responsiveness, reliability, empathy and assurance, hypotheses can be formed.

**Gender**

H<sub>0</sub>: Perceived performance for tangibles are independent of gender

H<sub>1</sub>: Perceived performances for tangibles are not independent of gender

Similarly for other dimensions Responsiveness, reliability, empathy and assurance, hypotheses can be formed.

**Qualification**

H<sub>0</sub>: Perceived performance for tangibles are independent of qualification

H<sub>1</sub>: Perceived performances for tangibles are not independent of qualification

Similarly for other dimensions Responsiveness, reliability, empathy and assurance, hypotheses can be formed.

**ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS**

As mentioned earlier, there were 82 respondents and the details are given in table 1. Majority of the students were graduates with the age of 21 to 23 years.

**Table 1:** Profile of respondents

Particulars	No. of respondents
<b>Age (in years)</b>	
18 – 20	12
21 – 23	62
24 – 26	7
More than 26	1
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	48
Female	34
<b>Qualification</b>	
Up to 12 <sup>th</sup>	9
Graduation	71
Post Graduation	2

The gap scores of P – E were calculated for all statements and mean gap score was derived (Table 2).

**Table 2 :** (Perception - Expectation) and Mean Values

Sr. No.	Questions	P – E	MEAN
1	Availability of educational equipments	-76	-0.927
2	Educational Facilities	-68	-0.829
3	Staff appearance	-16	-0.195
4	Facilities needed	-70	-0.854
5	Relationship with students	-45	-0.549
6	Interest to solve students' problem	-39	-0.476
7	Willingness to help students	-38	-0.463
8	Providing relevant Information	-54	-0.659
9	Prepared for responding to students' needs	-66	-0.805
10	Convenient working hours	-108	-1.317
11	Safe and reliable service	-126	-1.537
12	Sufficient knowledge of staff	-60	-0.732
13	Skills and abilities	-45	-0.549
14	Knowledge to perform educational service	-66	-0.805
15	Reliable Behaviour	-52	-0.634
16	Creating peaceful environment	-115	-1.402
17	Personal attention to students	+1	+0.0122
18	Respect to students' feedback	-87	-1.060
19	Listens students comments	-57	-0.695
20	Responds students patiently	-26	-0.317
21	Keep promises	-176	-2.146
22	Provide service without mistakes	-132	-1.610
23	Confronting all students equally	-18	-0.220
24	Giving service at determined time	-132	-1.609
25	Speed in operation	-169	-2.060

The positive values of mean of P – E indicate that the expectations of students were met where as negative values indicate that the expectations were not met with the perceived performance. From table 2, for all dimensions, the service quality expectations have not met with the

perceived performance except one variable of personal attention.

Table 3 provides chi square values for age, gender and education with the five dimensions of tangibles, responsiveness, reliability, empathy and assurance.

**Table 3** Chi square values

	Factors	p – value for Expected Performance	p – value for Perceived Performance
AGE	Tangible	0.0	0.088
	Responsiveness	0.721	0.173
	Reliability	0.014	0.891
	Empathy	0.629	0.488
	Assurance	0.317	0.689
GENDER	Tangible	0.362	0.548
	Responsiveness	0.446	0.877
	Reliability	0.352	0.658
	Empathy	0.010	0.287
	Assurance	0.188	0.406
QUALIFICATION	Tangible	0.364	0.584
	Responsiveness	0.884	0.628
	Reliability	0.975	0.054
	Empathy	0.574	0.0
	Assurance	0.529	0.011

From table 3, it can be said that, the null hypotheses for expectations: responsiveness, empathy and assurance are not rejected. That means, expectations of respondents do not depend on their age. Whereas for tangibles and reliability, the expectation null Hypotheses are rejected. So it can be said that the expectations of respondents for these dimensions depend on age. Similarly for perception hypotheses, for all the dimensions, H0 are not rejected, meaning perceived performances do not depend on age.

For expectations: responsiveness, assurance, reliability and tangibles are not rejected. Meaning expectations of respondents do not depend on the gender. Whereas for empathy, the expectation null hypotheses are rejected. So it can be said that the expectations of respondents for empathy is depend on gender. For perception, for all the dimensions, H0 are not rejected, meaning perceived performance do not depend on gender.

For expectation, for all the dimensions (empathy, reliability, responsiveness, tangible and assurance), H0 are not rejected, meaning expected performance do not depend on qualification. It can be said that, the null hypotheses for perception: tangibles, responsiveness and reliability are accepted. That means perceived performance do not depend on the qualifications. Whereas for empathy and assurance null hypotheses rejected. Meaning perceived performance of respondents for empathy and assurance depends on qualifications.

**CONCLUSION**

It can be concluded from the study that the expectations of the students are not met with the perceived performance of the training institute. The institute should try to improve upon the quality of the services provided to the students. Expectations for tangibility, reliability depend on age whereas expectations for empathy depend on gender. Perceived performance do not depend on age and gender, whereas perceived performance for empathy and assurance depends on qualifications.

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