

# A Service Quality Framework for Higher Education from the Perspective of Service Dominant Logic

Najwa Zulkefli and Lorna Uden

FCET

Staffordshire University,  
The Octagon, Beaconside,  
Stafford, AT 18 OAD

**Abstract.** Despite progress made through research and debate, there is still no universal consensus on how best to manage quality within Higher Education Institution (HEI). The key reason is that quality is a complex and multi-faceted construct, particularly in HEI. Quality of service offered cannot be directly observed before consumption. This makes comparing universities extremely difficult, or practically impossible. The aim of this study is to develop a conceptual framework for measuring service quality in HEI by applying the emerging concept of service dominant logic. This paper provides a new paradigm for the measurement of service quality in Higher education based on the emerging discipline of service science. It describes a framework that we have proposed that can be used to measure the quality of service in HEI. The framework is developed through the co-creation of value between students and the staffs.

## 1 Introduction

Service quality in higher education has been the subject of considerable interest and debate by both practitioners and researchers in recent years. For universities to remain competitive, it is important to actively monitor the quality of the services they offer and to commit to continuous improvements for students and the revenue they generate. The issue of service excellence is becoming particularly important because it has a major influence on students' purchasing intentions and, as a result, constitutes an essential competitive factor. Recent report by the Higher Education Policy Institute (Bekhradnia et al., 2006) confirms that non-EU overseas respondents were considerably less satisfied than others with the value for money received on their course. Against this background, it is clearly important for universities to understand what students' value in their university experience, including those from overseas.

There is a great need for universities to develop valid and consistent measures of students' perceptions of service quality in order to gain a better understanding of the quality issues that impact on students' experiences (O'Neill and Palmer,

2004; Joseph et al., 2005). The challenges are: to determine how students evaluate university's service quality, to identify the dimensions that students use as reference points for their evaluations, and to establish the relative importance of each of those dimensions.

Most of the existing service quality measurement tools (i.e. SERVQUAL, SERVPERF, TQM, and Balanced Scorecard) were developed during good-centered economy. Methodologies developed at that time to measure and assessing service quality are considered to be less appropriate to be applied to current service economy that is more customer-centric and market-driven. Although both provider and customer are aware of the implication of good service quality may provide positive impact for both parties but still number of problems encountered. First, both parties could not reach mutual agreement or understanding of what makes good service quality. Second, it is very difficult to determine the impact of service quality to customer satisfaction as well as to supplier's performance. Thirdly, the difficulty to identify which dimensions of service quality are seem to be important and suitable for all sector of service. These tools neglected the crucial concept of current service-based economy, the co-creation of value. For that reason, this study intends to develop an alternative tool that measures customer satisfaction in HEI by applying the main concept of SDL, which is value co-creation.

In order to design a framework that can be used to measure the quality of HE service, we need to define the variables that consumers use in their evaluations of service quality. This paper provides a new paradigm for the measurement of service quality in Higher education based on the emerging discipline of service science. It de-scribes a framework that we have proposed that can be used to measure the quality of service in Higher Education Institution (HEI). The framework is developed through the co-creation of value between students and the staffs. To do this, we used a case study to show how the co-creation of value can be achieved. , The study aims to investigate relationship between service quality dimensions from existing measurement tools and students satisfactions as well as integrate the critical factor that believe to be important in the current concept of service quality measurement. This paper begins with a review of the importance of service quality for HEI. Subsequent section reviews service dominant logic and why it is needed to revise the former service quality models. The next section describes a case study showing how the framework was developed. Subsequent section discusses the evaluation of the framework. The paper concludes with suggestions for further research.

## **2 Service Quality in Higher Education Institutions**

The nature of competition in education differs from the standard market solution. Scholars and governmental agencies have come up with numerous methods and indicators for estimating the "quality" of universities, it is important to bear in mind the purpose and possible personal biases of report-writers. One could simply rely on official accreditations, which correspond to international standards, and leave the issue of quality-aside. Education is concerned with experience good"