

**HIGH SCHOOL QUALITY AND STUDENT
SATISFACTION OF SEMESTA BOARDING SCHOOL**

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ABSTRACT

In light of the imminent rise in tuition fees, High School funding cuts and fears of declining student numbers, gaining a sustainable competitive advantage in the higher education (Secondary Education) sector is at the forefront of many high schools' agendas. In what can be categorised as an extremely intangible service sector, one way that a High School can differentiate their service offering from the competition is through the provision of excellent service quality. This study investigates perceptions of service quality by Importance Performance Analysis method (IPA) at the Semesta Bilingual Boarding High School of Semarang Central Java, collecting viewpoints from 9, 10, 11 and 12 grade students from different academic year groups.

This study provides High School (Secondary School) service management with a 'snapshot' of the current provision of service quality at the Semesta Bilingual Boarding School. It also offers suggestions that could be implemented to improve service quality, given the limited resources available to management. Due to the dynamic nature of service quality, it is essential to conduct further research to build on this study, in order to ensure that the Semesta High School remains competitive in what is an increasingly turbulent environment

Key Words

Quality Quality Management System Customer Satisfaction Service Quality Counselor
Teacher Mentor Service Important Performance Analysis Customer Satisfaction

1.1 Background of problem

Students (customer) satisfaction assessment is vital in determining service quality in private education sector . Private education sector (Private schools) are increasingly realizing that they are part of the service industry and are putting greater emphasis on student satisfaction as they face many competitive pressures. On the one hand, student satisfaction has been related to recruitment and retention and academic success.

The service sector has grown considerably since the 1970s and services are now playing an increasingly important role in the economy of many nations (Abdullah, 2006a). People surely believe that good schooling offers a highway to a brighter future, and

abundant research evidence shows that education is indeed closely linked to future success in the labour market (Heckman, 2000), better physical and mental health (Chevalier and Feinstein, 2006; Grossman 2005; Blanchflower and Oswald, 2004), and other „positive“ adult-life outcomes

In conjunction to this trend, the construct of service quality has become an extremely topical issue within the services literature (Baron *et al.*, 2009). The provision of good service quality is commonly associated with increased profitability, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, customer retention, customer attraction and positive word of mouth (Abdullah, 2006a; Nadiri *et al.*, 2009; Voss *et al.*, 2007).

In consideration of these apparent relationships, it is no surprise that there is great interest in the measurement of service quality (Abdullah, 2006a). Despite the realisation of its importance, many researchers have found it difficult to properly define and measure service quality (Giese and Cote, 2000; Parasuraman *et al.*, 1998) due to the unique characteristics of services, specifically, intangibility, inseparability, perishability and lack of ownership (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1985). Economists and other researchers have usually assumed (for reasons of simplicity or lack of alternative data) that schools are

chosen on the basis of average test scores (achievements on university accepting exam).

1.2 Problem Statement

Many schools have attempted to measure student satisfaction in order to gauge the quality of the education provided to pupils(students) and to discover ways of improving the schools (Brown, Cheng, Yau, & Ziegler 1992; Hecht, O'Connell, Michael, Klass, & Dwyer,1992; Henderson, 1993; Pederson & Wilk, 1993). In light of the imminent rise in tuition fees, and fears of declining pupil numbers,gaining a sustainable competitive advantage in the private high school education sector is at the forefront of many private school' agendas. In what can be categorized as an extremely intangible service sector, one way that a private school can differentiate their service offering from the competition is through the provision ofexcellent service quality. This study investigates perceptions of service quality at the Semesta Bilingual Boarding School, collecting viewpoints from junior high school and senior high school pupils from different academic year and both male and female pupil's groups. Increasing students' satisfaction is considered one way of improving the quality of the schools . This notion is consistent with the basic tenets of the Quality Movement, a systemic approach to improving goods and services based on satisfying the consumer (American Association of School Administrators, 1992; Deming, 1982; Dobyys & Crawford-Mason, 1991).

This study provides High School service management with a 'snapshot' of the current provision of service quality at the Semesta Bilingual Boarding School. It also offers suggestions that could be implemented to improve service quality, given the limited resources available to management. Due to the dynamic nature of service quality, it is essential to conduct further research to build on this study, in order to ensure that the High School remains competitive in what is an increasingly turbulent environment.

1.3. Research Objectives and Questions

The fundamental purpose of this study is to investigate students' perceptions of service quality at the Semesta Bilingual Boarding School.

Accordingly, the following objectives can be proposed:

_ To identify the most and least influential characteristics of service quality as perceived by students (pupils) studying at the Semesta Bilingual Boarding School.

_ To determine whether dissimilarities exist in students' perceptions of service quality across different academic year groups.

_ To provide suggestions to High School service management in an attempt to improve the service quality provided to students.

The study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. In terms of importance and performance, how do students perceive different characteristics of service quality at the Semesta Bilingual Boarding School?
2. Do discrepancies exist between students' perceptions of service quality across different grades?

Findings to the research questions listed above enable the final research question to be answered:

3. How can service management at the Semesta Bilingual Boarding School improve the level of service quality provided to students?

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the relevant literature relating to the construct of service quality – a heavily researched component of the services marketing literature (Baron *et al.*, 2009). In particular, it seeks to unravel and critically analyse the relevant theories, models and concepts from key authors in the subject field, whilst addressing the role played by service quality in a high school education context. The importance of service quality in the education requires additional research. Up to now, academic efforts on the topic of service quality, there is not an agreement in service quality in the business and also in education. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to provide a conceptual framework of service quality for education. To understand the topics better, this chapter provides a review of the current literature in the field of service management and quality. The issues are presented next in this chapter. First, this chapter included a discussion of the concept of services in education. Second, this chapter discusses the basic concepts, dimensions, and several measurement methods of service quality and management. Third, the conceptual differences and causal relationships among service quality, customer satisfaction are discussed. The literature review is divided into three sections: the Nature of Services (Section 2.2.), the Construct of Service Quality (Section 2.3) and Measuring Service Quality

The Importance of Services

Service industries have dominated most Western industrialized economies. It has been increasing each day. There are several studies which shows the growth of the service sector.

The continued growth of the service industry is expected due to the following reasons: (a) movement to the information age, (b) a shift to an industrialized economy, (c) an aging population, (d) longer life expectancies, (e) increased leisure time, (f) higher per capita income, (g) changing social and cultural values, and (h) advances in product technology (Kurtz & Clow, 1998).

Gronroos (1990) clarified service management with four elements and these are were: (a) to understand the utility of the value customers receive by consuming or using the offerings from the organization and how services alone or together with physical goods or other kinds of tangibles contribute to this utility, that is, to understand how the concept of total quality is perceived in customer relationships and how it changes over time, (b) to understand how the organization will be able to produce and deliver this utility or quality, (c) to understand how the organization should be developed and managed so that the intended utility or quality is achieved, and (d) make the organization function so that this utility or quality is achieved and the objectives of the parties involved are met.

Services versus Goods

For a long time, international trade has been solely associated with the commerce of manufactured goods, but services has in fact become increasingly traded over time, and today goods and services represent two equally important components of the world trade. Accordingly, the international trade literature has recently begun exploring trade in services in a bid to understand the patterns of this new form of trade.

In the past, marketing literature fundamentally focused on the manufacturing of tangible goods, discounting services and treating them like goods because of the difficulty in defining and measuring a service (see e.g. Shostack, 1977).

However, Gronroos (1978) suggests that services should not be treated as physical goods.

Nonetheless, ambiguity still exists today, since services and goods share much of the conceptual underpinning of quality (Palmer, 2011). Despite this, services tend to pose much greater problems in the understanding of customers' needs and expectations than goods, which form the basis for evaluation (Palmer, 2011).

Service Quality in the Education Industry

Quality experts believe that, 'measuring customer satisfaction at an educational establishment might be regarded by educators as one of the greatest challenges of the quality movement.

In the education and in the other industries, service quality hadn't been recognized as a main research theme until 1980s. The satisfaction and the maintenance of customer's make the service quality important.

"Quality has become a dynamic concept that has constantly to adapt to a world whose societies are undergoing profound social and economic transformation. Encouragement for future-oriented thinking and anticipation is gaining importance. Old notions of quality are no longer enough despite the different contexts there are many common elements in the pursuit of a quality education, which should equip all people, women and men, to be fully participating members of their own communities and also citizens of the world" (Ministerial Round Table on Quality Education, UNESCO, 2003, p. 1).

The Construct of Service Quality

1. Importance

Service quality has been a prominent research topic for many service marketers and researchers over the last three decades. Baron *et al.*, (2009, p. 167) maintain that:

“Service quality is the single most researched area in services marketing to date.”

The reason for the vast interest in service quality is obvious; poor quality places the firm at a disadvantage to the rest of the competition, potentially driving away dissatisfied customers (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2011).

Organisations are operating in extremely tough environments, and service managers now realise that improving service quality is crucial for gaining a competitive advantage (Baron *et al.*, 2009; Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). Where there is competition, the quality of the service experience becomes an important factor in buyer decision-making (Cuthbert, 1996a).

Accordingly, service quality is particularly important for organisational growth and differentiating one service experience from another (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985).

The Relationship between Service Quality and Satisfaction

The terms ‘service quality’ and ‘satisfaction’ are often used in an interchangeable manner (Palmer, 2011), causing difficulty when attempting to distinguish between the two theoretical concepts. Like service quality, customer satisfaction is an abstract and ambiguous concept (Munteanu *et al.*, 2010) and many researchers have attempted to develop a consensus definition for this construct (Giese and Cote, 2000). Satisfaction has been defined as the perception of pleasurable fulfilment of a service (Oliver, 1999). In contrast, Athiyaman (1997) argues that satisfaction is the result of the evaluation of a specific transaction or consumption experience. Despite this,

measuring customer satisfaction provides organisations with one way to ascertain the success of a product following its introduction to its market (Munteanu *et al.*, 2010).

Customer satisfaction, quality and retention are global issues that affect all organizations, companies, educational institutions be it large or small, profit or nonprofit, global or local.

RESEARCH METHOD

3.1 Introduction

The previous parts presented a literature review of previous works and studies and conceptual framework of this study. The methodology and research techniques adopted to answer the research questions proposed in Chapter 1. This study's basic aim is to provide student's satisfaction by expanding the quality for high school education. The ethical issues concerning the research are evaluated and the chapter concludes with a summary, which attempts to review the methodology and offer improvements for future research. In today's global world, service industry is dominant in developed countries and also service industry has become more intense sector in the developed countries. Basic concepts of service quality keep on changing.

Two main alterations are;

a) Changing of connection from interior of performance (such as; productivity rate

– teacher and profit productivity-)connection to exterior of performance (such as;

service quality, customer behavior, customer satisfaction and loyalty)

b) Construction focalization is changing to process focalization. For this reason, marketing experts and managers focus on production and consumption because of relating with customer's satisfaction. Lately, education sector has become a more intense industry in service sector. However, all of education institutions have the same quality and the service quality makes them different from each other. To have an excellent service quality, education institutions should struggle for 'no-error'. To improve 'no-error' service quality and customer satisfaction there must be exertion. The aim of this study is to determine the important factors of service quality in education sector and to evaluate the effect of service quality on customer satisfaction (students and their families). This study is more different in many ways than the previous studies. Firstly, it is studied that the relationship between service quality and the customer satisfaction and we tried understand the problem in private high school educational sector. Secondly, all items in questionnaire are prepared by top managers of the school considering previous literature studies and using several focus group studies. And lastly; we tried make IPA model by using, 18 questions in 5 multiple choice of IPA Questionare .

The Research Process: Focus Groups

The purpose of the study is to investigate students' perceptions of service quality so that suggestions can be provided to service management at the Semesta Bilingual Boarding School. In addition, the study is cross-sectional, focusing on determining whether perceptions change over the course of a student's degree (i.e. Year 1 through to Year 3). Each of the focus groups (classes and different year groups) conducted same questions , students Apart from one of the focus groups leave the school for various reasons approximately 9% of students left .

Sample

Data for this study was collected from 9th , 10th , 11th and 12th grades from students using a questionnaire. This questionnaire that includes 18 questions was applied on approximately 100 -110 male and female students. The participants for each focus group (each year group from 9th class up to 12th class) were selected using convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique that is used to obtain a sample of convenient elements at the researcher's own discretion (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). In addition, convenience sampling is the least expensive and least time consuming of all sampling techniques (Malhotra and Birks, 2007). The researcher acknowledges that convenience sampling may not be representative of a definable population (Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2010). Therefore, the researcher appreciates the boundaries of the study and the potential bias attached to the results in the conclusion of the study.

Data Analysis Techniques

Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) was used to profile the data for each academic year group. IPA is one of the most useful forms of analysis in marketing research, combining information about customer perceptions and importance ratings (Zeithaml *et al.*, 2009). In this instance, IPA was used to link perceptions of importance with perceptions of performance for different service quality characteristics, as perceived by students.

The data were then mapped out onto simple to read matrices that management can use at to establish what service quality characteristics need addressing, which need maintaining and which need de-emphasising. For instance, a characteristic that was perceived extremely important but performed poorly would be considered as a problematic area that management needed to address.

Cartesian Diagram (Importance Performance Matrix)

