

## **The Relationship Between Service Quality, Marketing Mix And Univeristy Reputation On Student Satisfaction At University In Indonesia**

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**Abstract:** *The aim of this research was to know the relationship between marketing mix, service quality and reputation on student satisfaction. This study will benefit the Universities in Indonesia because it shows the relationship between marketing mix dimensions, service quality and university reputation on student satisfaction. This information can be used as input for future decisions on service design and marketing strategies based on what students have indicated are the most important dimensions of service quality and marketing mix in this model. The research adopted a descriptive research design. Service quality is a matter of concern especially in the context where the efforts are not able to portray the fruits in society due to the many challenges that are in the society which specifically emanate from the youthful age of people such as corruption and other vices. University students' satisfaction with their institution has individual, institutional and social implications. From an institutional point of view, satisfied students are more likely to continue in their studies (retention) and are more likely to succeed academically and this is likely to enhance the financial position and the reputation of the institution.*

**Keywords:** *Service Quality, Marketing Mix, and University Reputation*

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Date of Submission: 10-09-2018

Date of acceptance: 27-09-2018

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### **I. Introduction**

The impact of globalization is the emergence of increasingly keen competition in various sectors of life. In the field of higher education, challenges and competition are increasingly heavily and complexly caused by the expansion of international markets in education on the one hand and internal dynamics of domestic education on the other (Effendi, 2007). This is reflected in the large number of college admissions campaigns abroad are very vigorous to all universities in Indonesia. The college offers various facilities for local students to get scholarships abroad by holding tests at public universities in Indonesia (Compass, 12 January 2007). This phenomenon shows that higher education has been placed as an international market commodity.

The phenomenon of higher education as a market commodity must be responded positively. The response is an effort to improve the quality of education so as not to lose competes with universities from abroad. In a perfect competition system, where many producers offer the same goods and services, the key to winning the competition is quality, especially the quality of service. Especially nowadays colleges, as one service organization, have increased demands from the community. The demands on universities today are not only limited to the ability to produce qualified graduates that are academically measured, but also through proving good accountability. In general, the demands given to the community include quality assurance, quality control, and quality improvement (National Accreditation Board of Higher Education, 1998).

In today's competitive academic environment where students have many options available to them, factors that enable educational institutions to attract and retain students should be seriously studied. Higher education institutions, which want to gain competitive edge in the future, may need to begin searching for effective and creative ways to attract, retain and foster stronger relationships with students which is not enough to rely on academic quality itself, but also must be accompanied by the process of providing quality services to students

In an educational institution, students are the main customer of the organization (Sik Sumaedi et al, 2011). Thus, in a university, its main customer is the college student. Students' satisfaction should always be considered by the university due to intensive competition between universities, internationalization spirit,

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higher expectation of customer to higher educational institution, an increase in the tuition fee, and the classification of education as a marketable service (Kwek et al., 2010).

Furthermore, student satisfaction is important to be discussed, considering that there is a good effect if the students are satisfied, and vice versa. Letcher and Neves (2010) reported that “psychologists have found that student satisfaction helps to build self-confidence, and that self-confidence helps students develop useful skills, acquire knowledge”. On the other hand, student dissatisfaction can lead to negative student activities, such as a bad grade, an unpleasant relationship between the student and the staff, faculty, and friends (Letcher and Neves, 2010; Athiyaman, 1997).

An expectation that cannot be fulfilled on the institutions is the key factors for students' withdrawal (Aldridge and Rowley, 2001). Most institutions either public or private do give a great deal of importance to meeting customers' expectations which is similar to business organization, but they still lack customer awareness among the staff, and it has become a common drawback for many institutions.

### **Problem Statement**

Universities need to know how students perceive the services they offer so that they can improve on them. Marthin N (2013) suggests that service quality is one of the factors that affect customer satisfaction. Universities have therefore to satisfy their students in order to compete. Service quality leads to customer satisfaction and loyalty (Marthin N, 2013).

One way to attract students to enter a college is to provide services that can satisfy the students. Services aimed at achieving student satisfaction is not an easy thing to do, there are often problems in service management and unsuccessfulness to satisfy most customers.

The dimensions of service quality in higher education context vary from one institution to another, from one country to another and even from culture to culture, posing a contextual debate. In Indonesia, the rapid expansion of university education led to impecunious conditions and deteriorated quality of university education in terms of quality of teaching and research, library facilities, overcrowding in halls of residence, student riots and staff dissolution (Mutula, 2002). Mwaka et al. (2011) adds that the high enrolment levels have led to the quantity vis a vis quality debate and ultimately a phenomenon described as non-education. Under this circumstance, the sustainability of service quality and customer satisfaction in universities in Indonesia became questionable.

There is some research that has been done in Europe and Asia on service quality and customer satisfaction (Abdullah 2006: Sulieman 2013: Wilkins & Balakrishnan, 2013). The original study by Abdullah (2006) was about finding a tool for measuring service quality in higher education. The study concluded that the current tools for measuring service quality in higher education were not appropriate and therefore a new tool known as HEDPERF was introduced. So far, it does not appear as if this type of research has been carried out in Indonesia and therefore this study fills this gap.

## **II. Literature Review**

### **Service Quality**

The concept of quality is difficult to define because quality means different things to different people. The way one customer will experience a product or service is not the same way another will experience it. Quality can be categorized in terms of various perspectives like Judgement, product, user, value or manufacturing perspective (Evans, 2011). With the judgment perspective, the quality of a product cannot be defined but one can recognize it one he sees it. The user perspective is about how the needs of a customer are met.

A product/service that does not address these needs is said to be of lower quality. The value perspective views quality in terms of product/service features and price. If two products have identical features but one has a lower price it will have a higher value and therefore higher quality. The product perspective associates quality with features. Products with more features are assumed to be of higher quality compared to those with less. Under the manufacturing perspective, meeting product specifications is the main determinant of quality. The American Society for Quality (ASQ) (as cited by Evans, 2011) defines quality as “totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy given needs.” A shorter definition that is generally accepted is that quality is the ability to meet or exceed customer expectations. These two definitions are derived from the product and user perspectives described earlier.

Service quality is an attitude formed overlong term evaluation of performance (Bateson & Hoffman, 1999). Service quality can also be viewed in terms of measurements. Palmer (2005) categorises these measurements as disconfirmation approaches, performance-only measures, and importance performance analysis. The disconfirmation model refers to the difference between expected and perceived quality. Quality gap is expressed as  $Q=E-P$  where Q is quality, E is expectation and P is the perception.

Performance-only measures exclude the expectation (E) from the equation and only measure performance or perception (P). According to Palmer (2005) the SERVPERF Model was developed because of the difficulties of conceptualizing expectations. Both SERVQUAL and SERVPERF are based on the five dimensions of service quality, which are reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy, and responsiveness. However, although all these dimensions are important there are some those are more important than others from the customer's perspective. Higher Education performance (HEDPERF) is a performance-based model that is similar to SERVPERF because it measures perception only and not the gap between expectation and perception, as is the case with SERVQUAL. It is used to measure service quality in higher education. The importance-performance approach classifies elements of service in terms of performance and importance. The elements that are more important are given more attention in evaluation. Apart from expectations and perceptions that define the measurement of the service quality gap customers also use the corporate image of the organization to evaluate service quality (Gronroos, 2007). This image can be split into physical and functional service quality. The physical part is what can be measured objectively like the length of a waiting line while functional quality is that part of the service that cannot be measured objectively. An example is the attitude of service provider's staff.

In general, the main drivers of service quality are staff and the right technology (Evans, 2011). The author suggests that having well-trained and motivated staff and the right technology have an effect on service quality with information technology having the largest impact. Apart from the customer the level of service quality is also determined by other factors like the competitors, the technology used, efficient use of resources, cost and also the owners of the business who have to decide whether to use quality as a competitive advantage or just provide the basic quality (Wright & Race, 2004).

### **Marketing Mix**

Kotler (2003), extends the concept of service marketing mix consisting of 4 P; Product, Price, Place/distribution channels), and Promotion. Within marketing target, service marketing mix concept is applicable to all industries both goods and services, including educational services. While in a service business, Booms and Bitner (1996) suggest three additional P in service marketing; People, Physical Evidence, and Process. Educational service is a process included in a system. According to Lovelock (1999), service is a process and a system. Meaning of service as a process, is produced from three input process; people (consumer), material and information. As a system, servicing business is a combination of Service Operating System and Service Delivery System. Service marketing emphasizes on service delivery system; how a company delivers services to consumers. The accuracy of service marketing strategy of a company is determined by perceived service quality and measured by the quality of customer perceived service (service performance / perceived service) as well as the expected service (customer expectation). Overall service quality is the totality of each element of service mix.

Service marketing mix and service quality including educational services can be improved through service quality elements / determinants. According to Lovelock & Wright (2002), five elements determine the service quality; tangible, empathy, reliability, responsiveness, and assurance or certainty. Tangibles, reflects the physical facilities such as lecture hall, offices, lecture rooms, clothes and appearance of employees, the location of campus, lecture facilities and offices. Empathy, includes the ease of communication and understanding of student needs such as attitude, reasonableness of fees being offered, the willingness to help students, responding to every request of students, courtesy of employees, individual attention to students, understanding employees to students, attention to the interests of students, attention to student needs and attention to personal student needs. Reliability includes the trust on institutions, the accuracy of student records, student confidence on employees and lecturers. Responsiveness includes speed of service and institutions support in faculty and staff. Assurance includes an institution promise on students, determining timing of service provision, lectures security, determining operational timing and certainty of rendered services.

### **University Reputation**

The various definitions of corporate reputation have considered at least four elements. Albert et al (2000) emphasizes that corporate reputation represents the net affective or emotional reaction and involves the overall estimation in which a company is held by its constituents. A second aspect considers the object specific components on which this overall evaluation is based that may include the extent to which the firm is well known; good or bad, reliable, trust-worthy, reputable and believable (Brown, 1995; Levitt, 1965). Weigelt and Camerer (1988) group these attributes under the two headings of economic and non-economic variables while emphasizing a third aspect in that reputation is the result of past actions. For these authors corporate reputation is defined as a set of economic and non-economic attributes ascribed to a firm, and inferred from the firm's past behavior. A fourth aspect of corporate reputation emphasizes information cues that result from direct and indirect experiences and information received emphasizes the management aspect and asserts that it is the

outcome of a competitive process in which firms signal their key characteristics to constituents to maximize social status.

Firms interact with a multitude of publics, each of which often gives different consideration to a common set of reputation attributes. Therefore, the firm often has not just one but an array of images that together shape its reputation. For example, in looking at corporate reputation, managers and stockbrokers are likely to place strong emphasis on financial performance. This is so because Western firms, in particular, are under considerable pressure to show positive short-term profit performance (Webster, 1988). On the other hand, consumers are likely to attribute greater importance to consistently high quality (Yoon, Guffrey and Kijewski, 1993). For consumers, the firm's financial performance may be of less import in assigning a reputation to the firm. The images of the firm held by the different publics cannot be of equal concern to management, and often it is the firm reputation with its customers that is most salient. A positive corporate reputation has been related to a number of beneficial outputs or consequences for the firm. It has been linked empirically to the intention to purchase a service to the attitude of buyers to salespersons and products in a purchase situation (Brown, 1995); to attracting investors, lowering the cost of capital, and enhancing the competitive ability of the firm (Fombrun and Shanley, 1990).

### **Student satisfaction**

Kotler and Keller (2006) view customer satisfaction as a person's feelings of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing product's perceived performance (or outcome) in relation to his or her expectation. Kasper et al. (2006) suggest that satisfaction can be either specific for a part of a process or overall for the whole organization. Satisfaction can be expressed through compliments or loyalty to the service provider (Kasper et al., 2006). In the extreme customers will express dissatisfaction by switching to the competitors. The major reasons why a customer would want to switch are the failure of the core service provided or behavioural issues like uncaring staff (Kasper et al., 2006).

A research done by Martin N (2013) said, "Student satisfaction is generally accepted as a short-term attitude resulting from an evaluation of a student's educational experience. Student satisfaction results when actual performance meets or exceeds the student's expectations." The two definitions between customer satisfaction in general and student satisfaction are very similar because they refer to short-term nature of specific transaction events. Other researchers in this area have not attempted to separate the two. (Wilkins & Balakrishnan, 2013; Oldfield & Baron, 2000; Alves & Raposo, (n.d.):Barnes, 2007). For this reason customer satisfaction and student satisfaction are assumed to have the same meaning in the context of this study.

Customer satisfaction is important because it has an effect on financial performance of a firm as evidenced by some studies of financial services in the US that indicated that there was a positive correlation between the proportion or percentage of business done with a customer and that customer's satisfaction (Kasper et al., 2006). Most experts agree that there is a relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction but they do not agree on the direction of the relationship as some suggest that service quality comes before satisfaction while others say it is the other way (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry 1985; Cronin Jr & Taylor, 1992; Bitner, 1990).

Service quality is among the factors that determine customer satisfaction and customer satisfaction can lead to customer loyalty (Kasper et al., 2006). Customer loyalty has a positive impact on the financial performance of a firm (Gronroos, 2007). This can happen because of referrals, cost savings, and increased business from existing customers. Evans (2011) cites an example of one US University where the implementation of quality programs lead to increased student satisfaction. As a result, 90% of the undergraduate students and alumni said that if they could do it all over again they would enroll in the same university.

### **Findings**

#### **Service Quality in Education Sector**

As opposed to other sectors, education sector is primarily not for purposes of profit making. However, due to ineptitudes in service provision especially by the government institutions, a business niche was noticed by private investors and consequently attracted to this sector as a form of business venture or investment. Nevertheless, despite these evident opportunities, the obvious truth is that the beneficiaries or the main customers end up in the same job market, irrespective of whether one is trained in private or public institutions, for competition of jobs and other business opportunities. As a result therefore, there emerged a need to establish that private universities and public universities should be committed towards ensuring that their services are within the set standards and government framework in a country, and more importantly in conformance to global standards (Raphael, 2014).

Nevertheless, service quality is a matter of concern especially in the context where the efforts are not able to portray the fruits in society due to the many challenges that are in the society which specifically emanate from the youthful age of people such as corruption and other vices. Education quality is an issue that should be

given more weight and concern since it is best suited to handle many of the society problems by ensuring early molding of individuals before they are integrated to the entire society set-up. Practically for the context of Kenya, indicators of measuring service quality should be applied across the board, both to the private and public institutions of higher learning where leaders and great business men are basically made (Rodrigues, 2013).

In this vision, the service demands an autonomous framework for measuring and explaining quality. Service quality model developed by (Parasuraman et. al., 1985, 1988) is the most popular model and is widely practiced to measure the quality of service in service sectors. In addition, wide research has taken place on service quality and customer satisfaction. Conversely, there are no recent researches on higher institutions of learning in Kenya setting to look into the impact of the performance of service features on customer (students) satisfaction in complete model and specifically on assurance dimension. In this regard, Quality assurance means developing operational controls to ensure that the results match the desired outcomes. Customer service operations are designed to keep customers satisfied while protecting the organization. To make sure customer service achieves these goals in higher education institutions, the person responsible for quality assurance must define the quality functions as they apply to how to serve customers. Once such definitions are in place, it will be easy to define the resources required to fulfill the defined mandate and make sure the customers (students in this case) experience quality service (Rodrigues, 2013).

### **The Traditional Elements of the Higher Education Marketing Mix**

”The concept of Marketing Mix was debated by McCarthy in 1960” (El-Ansary, 1974, p. 553) who introduced the 4Ps: product, price, placement and promotion. **The academic product** – the first element of the marketing mix in a higher education institution, whose main component are the **study programs**, is an extremely complex notion, representing what is subject to consumption, an ensemble of benefits destined to satisfying the knowledge needs existent in society.

The most important decision universities have to make is that referring to the development of these so as to satisfy the needs of the higher education consumers. (Soedijati, Pratminingsih, 2011, p. 2125) Worldwide universities have developed extremely different study programs, concerning all fields of activity and areas of interest. In what follows, we shall exemplify the study programs developed by some universities classified by ARWU (The Academic Ranking of World Universities) as having the highest performance rates in 2012 based on data availability.

The second element of the marketing mix is the **price**. In higher education, this refers to the amount of money which individuals pay for benefiting from academic activities and thus both students and their parents take into account the financial implications of higher education. (Soedijati, Pratminingsih, 2011, p. 2125) Tuition fees represent an income for the university, but at the same time, they indicate students' perception regarding quality. (Ivy, J., 2008, p. 289).

For transmitting academic activity-related information, higher education institutions use **promotion** strategies which help them in publicizing themselves among the public and in attracting potential students by means of promoting the education offer, public relations, efforts to attract students and doors open day. (Ivy, J., 2008, p. 290) The student as a higher education consumer cannot address to an unknown institution. In fact, the promotion policy provides *introductive* information, which helps in making a first impression of a certain university and its advantages and that is why the youth must be encouraged to try. As regards *reminding*, this is necessary for determining students to act according to the institution's interest, especially when the offer is time-limited - for instance applying for a university's admission exam. (*Adaptation after* - Cetină I., Brandabur R., Constantinescu M., 2006, p. 206).

In higher education, **placement** refers to the way in which the academic offer must be distributed so as to exceed consumers' expectations, as well as to the virtual access to didactic materials, to the possibility of distance learning (Ivy, J., 2008, p. 290) and to the availability degree of study programs which must satisfy students.

Therefore, the 4Ps of the traditional marketing mix exert a powerful impact on the performance of the academic environment and that is why the potential consumers of education services pay a great deal of attention to these elements when making the decision of enrolling on the courses of a university. In what follows we shall present the 3Ps specific to the area of services.

The similarity of the academic activities to those in the field of services makes possible the consideration of another 3 elements specific to the marketing mix, such as: personnel processes and physical facilities. In their activity, higher education institutions need a well prepared **personnel**, i.e. academic staff and related-academic staff, capable of doing their work at high quality standards. The academic success is associated with the personnel because consumers are constantly evaluating employees' quality based on the interaction with them. (Soedijati, Pratminingsih, 2011, p. 2126) At the same time, the academic success depends mostly on the personnel's quality and especially on its research performance, mirrored by the relevance of the

published articles, books and different specialty studies, as well as by the participation in scientific conferences with the purpose of disseminating information.

The higher education process represents another element specific to the marketing mix in higher education services which enables the student to benefit from the chosen activities, contributing thus to the formation of his/her experience regarding what he/she is being offered. In these processes there is a direct, i.e. face to face, provider-beneficiary relationship. For education processes, especially for the teaching ones, to be at high quality standards, the university needs certain **physical facilities**, which in a higher education institution refer to the totality of tangible elements that contribute to the good development of the academic activities. (Soedijati, Pratminingsih, 2011, p. 2126) These are responsible for creating a first impression among students regarding the university when they enter for the first time the premises of the academic campus. In this context, the relevant elements are: the modern aspect of the building, modern equipment, various lecture and seminar rooms, a well-equipped library, different specialty laboratories, recreation areas, a gym and a cafeteria.

### **Student Satisfaction and University Reputation**

Currently the competition among Higher Education Institution (HEI) in Indonesia is very competitive (Santoso, 2011). It has started since the enactment of the Decree of the Director General of Higher Education No. 08/DIKTI/Kep/2002, on the Technical Guidelines of National Education Decree No.184/U/2001 on Guidelines for Controlling, Monitoring and Development of Diploma Program, Bachelor and Master's degree in Higher Education Institution (HEI). One of the important things in that decree is that any program of study in HEI has the authority to implement the learning process independently. This government policy has implication on the similarity of the operational status of the implementation of public and private universities. Since then, as de facto there is no difference in the operational status of the implementation for public and private universities. All rules and regulations refer to and are based on the Higher Education (Directorate General of Higher Education) under the Minister of National Education of Indonesia (Ministry of Education), including the operating license issuance for study program/operational. National Education Act no. 12 in 2012 also established the autonomy in the administration of higher education in every university, so that HEI can open a wide variety of study programs with a variety of program study (Suharyadi, 2011).

Every university management wants all their students listed as active students in every semester. It indicated that the student has the intention to continue and finishing their study in the same university (loyal student's). Active student is a student who must be actively registered at the Academic Administration at the beginning of each semester of the current academic year. To be listed as an active student, then at the beginning of each semester of the course, students are required to re-register by completing the KRS (Card Study Plan) and complete the financial administration. Students are the most important part in the management of HEI. Revenue of HEI, private ones in particular, mostly still comes from students, so their presence on campus will determine the survival of these private institutes.

Although the university and the company are two different kind of businesses, some researches are trying to develop a commercial business model to be applied in the context of HEI (Sultan & Wong, 2010). Competition in higher education market which is very competitive today forced higher education institutions to adopt a strategy of competitive advantage in winning the competition (Thomas, 2011).

Loyalty of customers is a key of competitive advantage, survive, and grow (Reichheld, 1996). Students who are loyal are the source of competitive advantage for HEI (Thomas, 2011). Student loyalty, both in the short and long term, will have a direct impact on the HEI. Student loyalty will be a source of WOM (Word of Mouth) that is effective because students voluntarily would recommend the HEI where they got the study to others. In addition, after becoming the alumni, if they want to continue and deepen their education, then the students are likely to be loyal to continue in the same HEI (Marzo - Navarro et al., 2005).

Students as consumers will be loyal to the institution if they are satisfied (Andreassen & Lindestad, 1998). In addition, customer satisfaction is the impact of corporate reputation (Andreassen & Lindestad, 1998). Satisfaction is an overall feeling of someone after buying services/products (Solomon, 1994). The level of satisfaction is determined by the difference between the performance of the services received with what consumers expect (Parasuraman et al., 1986). By adopting customer satisfaction for goods and services, Elliot & Healy (2001). Introduced the concept of student satisfaction that is short-term behavior resulting from the evaluation of the educational services they receive from the experience.

A research conducted by Thomas (2011) on University Reputation concluded that there are two dimensions of Perception of student reputation, namely; the overall perception of university reputation/Perception of general reputation of the university and perception of study program reputation. In this study the author will put both these dimensions into latent variables and coupled with other latent variables, namely Perception of university image.

In this study, student satisfaction and university played role as intervening variables that mediated to increase WOM intention that combined previous studies' results. University reputation is the representative of

students' perception and commonly rare concepts to be implemented in higher education sector (Sung and Yang, 2008). Nicolescu (2009) also stated that the concept of university image should be considered rather than differentiation. Thus, image could be defined as a set of attitudes or beliefs that a person or audience holds about an institution Sevier , 1994). It means that university image refers to a set of attitudes or beliefs towards a university. Furthermore, the second concept to be determined is Student satisfaction which is closely related to customer satisfaction. according to Naik et.al. (2010), it is mediated effect from service quality to behavioral intention. Hence, in this study, the researchers want to see the impact once again in higher education sectors. Satisfaction concept is vast explanation which is stated that the comparison between expectation and what is gained by the customers (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2010).

Reputation is a summary of the impression or Perception of external stakeholders of the company (Bromley, 1993; Davies & Miles, 1998). Another opinion states for consumers that the company's reputation is company centric which focuses on credibility, respect and legitimacy that the company is as good as their name (Ettenson & Knowles, 2008). Strong brand reputation makes the company more attractive and desirable to consumers. Company with a strong brand reputation is accountable, has integrity, responsible and concerned with quality. These things will result in greater market share, reflect the actual value of the company, increase loyalty and be a key determinant in the selection of similar brands (Ahearne et al., 2010; de Chernatony, 1999; Ettenson & Knowles, 2008; Gounaris & Stathakopoulos, 2004; Nandan, 2004). Research in the fields of marketing, management and corporate strategy clearly indicates that the company's reputation is an important factor to gain success (Barney, 2002; Chun, 2005; Kay, 1993; Selnes, 1993). In management strategy studies, corporate reputation is considered as intangible assets that contribute to the company's level of competitive advantage (Barney, 2002; Dowling, 1994). Reputation based on estimation in general is something that benefits society, where the reputation gives a positive influence of public on the behavior and actions of organizations. This is a useful starting point for discussing and comparing the application of the concept of school reputation with corporate reputation (Skallerud, 2011). The concept of company's reputation has also been anticipated and adjusted in the field of management education, which is if a school/college has a good reputation then it will have a positive effect (Safo'n, 2009; Vidaver - Cohen, 2007).

### **University Student Satisfaction**

Many studies aimed at determining university customers' perceptions of SQ and satisfaction have shown that a correlation exists between the two constructs. For example, Naidoo (2015) who explored the relationship between the five dimensions of SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al., 1988), from the staff and students' standpoints, found that they were dissatisfied with the overall service provided to them at the particular university. Furthermore, statistically significant differences existed in the responsiveness and empathy gap scores, between staff and students. "Students" had higher expectations of the university. Students being more responsive and empathetic than staff" (Naidoo, 2015. p. 14). Combrinck's (2006) study on students' perceptions of SQ at the Management Department of a university in South Africa revealed that there was uncertainty among undergraduates in their attitude to SQ in the department, while postgraduate students' ratings of SQ were more negative. Wang and Shieh (2006) who looked at the importance of CS and SQ and service performance of a library in Taiwan found that overall, SQ has a significantly positive effect on the overall satisfaction, with Tangibles, Reliability, Assurance and Empathy, and a statistically significant effect on overall satisfaction.

Truong et al. (2016) used regression analysis to determine the most influential SQ factors that affected students' satisfaction in private colleges in Vietnam. The study found that all the SERVQUAL measures impacted on students perceptions of SQ in turn effecting on satisfaction. Hasan and Ilias (2008) argued that Empathy and Assurance were critical factors that contribute most to students' satisfaction. In the aforementioned study on perceived SQ among 200 undergraduate students at two private HEIs, age, tangibility, responsiveness and reliability were less significant, compared to empathy and assurance which had a greater influence on the rest. In a study in Malaysian private HEIs, it was determined that four SERVQUAL attributes had a significant relationship with students' satisfaction, and highly correlated with one another (Chui et al., 2016). Similarly, Ali et al. (2016) study among 241 international students using HEI performance (HEdPERF) scale (Firdaus, 2006) found that the six SQ dimensions of HE quality influenced student satisfaction, and in turn, influenced image and student loyalty.

Research by Annamdevula and Bellamkonda (2016) on the relationships between SQ, student satisfaction and student loyalty in HE sector in India using structural equation modelling on 918 responses, established that SQ is a critical input to student satisfaction. Prugsamatz et al. (2006) conducted a study among Chinese students in Australia' to determine their expectations of overseas universities in terms of explicit and implicit service promises. These researchers' findings revealed that influential sources of information on students' expectations of universities were inter alia, past experiences, advertising, and word of mouth. It was therefore suggested that the more a consumer is exposed to explicit and implicit service promises, the higher the desired and predicted expectations of the university's SQ.

Education is a key driver of economic growth, particularly the higher education sector. With the higher education sector becoming an increasingly competitive market, university student satisfaction has become an important component of quality assurance. Thomas and Galambos (2004) argue that students are regarded as consumers of higher education. University students' satisfaction is important to institutional success in that effective institutions have satisfied 'customers' because this satisfaction supports the enrolment of additional students or 'customers'. Ratings of student satisfaction are becoming more transparent and readily available. For example, see <https://www.qilt.edu.au>. As a result, most universities around the world are constantly looking at how to improve the satisfaction of students at their institution.

University students' satisfaction with their institution has individual, institutional and social implications. From an institutional point of view, satisfied students are more likely to continue in their studies (retention) and are more likely to succeed academically and this is likely to enhance the financial position and reputation of the institution. Satisfied students also make effective public relations agents. High student satisfaction helps in attracting and retaining high achievers who in turn increase the reputation and standing of the university.

Maintaining and improving students' satisfaction has been considered an important goal of education and universities (Orpen, 1990), with the assumption that student satisfaction is indicative of institutional effectiveness (Barton, 1978). A key factor of student satisfaction is the quality of the teaching staff. As a result, the use of student rating scales as an evaluative component of their teaching system has increased. The majority, if not all, teaching staff at most universities have been required or expected to administer some type of teaching evaluation form to their students during each course offering for some time (Seldin, 1993).

Assessing student satisfaction provides a way that universities can focus directly on issues of quality development in order to ensure that educational standards are high (Wiers-Jenssen, Stensaker, & Groggaard, 2002). Measures of student satisfaction can also assist in identifying and implementing areas for development. Universities initially set up satisfaction surveys to serve two purposes: to help administrators monitor teaching quality and to help teaching staff improve on their teaching. University student satisfaction surveys are being used today in more ways than ever before (Kulik, 2001). For example, to evaluate the quality and availability of the library resources, to assess whether there is sufficient IT assistance and support for students and to consider student opinions on the social aspects of university life to name a few.

Many teachers approve of the increased use of satisfaction surveys in universities. Teaching staff view these surveys as reliable and valid measures that bring methodical precision to the evaluation of teaching. However, not all teachers share this view. Some teachers view students' satisfaction surveys as meaningless quantification. Teaching staff fear that students too often abuse this anonymous power to get even or get back at teaching staff and warn that satisfaction surveys may turn the evaluation of effective teaching into a personality contest (Kulik, 2001).

A study by Wiers-Jenssen et al. (2002) found quality of teaching (academic and pedagogic) to be a crucial determinant of student satisfaction (Wiers-Jenssen et al.). The study also emphasized that the social climate, aesthetic aspects of the physical infrastructure and the quality of services from the administrative staff, quality of supervision and feedback from academic staff, composition, content and relevance of curriculum, quality of, and access to leisure activities should not be overlooked when considering factors of student satisfaction (Wiers-Jenssen et al., 2002).

### **III. Conclusion**

Service quality is a matter of concern especially in the context where the efforts are not able to portray the fruits in society due to the many challenges that are in the society which specifically emanate from the youthful age of people such as corruption and other vices. To make sure customer service achieves these goals in higher education institutions, the person responsible for quality assurance must define the quality functions as they apply to how to serve customers.

University students' satisfaction with their institution has individual, institutional and social implications. From an institutional point of view, satisfied students are more likely to continue in their studies (retention) and are more likely to succeed academically and this is likely to enhance the financial position and reputation of the institution. Satisfied students also make effective public relations agents. High student satisfaction helps in attracting and retaining high achievers who in turn increase the reputation and standing of the university

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