

MEASURING SERVICE QUALITY IN MANAGEMENT EDUCATION IN INDIA: A CONCEPTUAL MODEL

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Abstract Service industries are contributing potentially in building a strong economy for the nation. Thus, it is utmost important to measure service quality in different industries. Various studies have been conducted on service quality in different service industries; however, studies on service quality issues in the management education sector are relatively new as compared to other service industries particularly in the Indian context. Management education plays a very crucial role in developing an individual and society as a whole. It has been considered as one of the most popular and important professional education in India. Therefore, it is indispensable to discuss management education specifically in the Indian context. The purpose of this paper is to discuss and provide a conceptual framework regarding measuring the service quality in management education. Based on the earlier studies, the study attempts to develop a conceptual model of service quality in Management education. The paper also briefly describes the issues and challenges of service quality in management education and presents important implications.

Keywords: Higher Education, Service Quality, Management Education, Conceptual Model, Issues & Challenges, B-schools

INTRODUCTION

Management education plays a vital role in the overall Indian higher education system. Role of management education has become even more important because of the increasing challenges in the field of management; whether it is a multi-national organization or a small enterprise, skills of management are required everywhere. Good managerial skills are also required to deal with the diversified workforce under one roof. The foundations of good management lie in the management education provided by the various professional institutes and universities. Hence, it is important to measure the service quality prevailing in management education. Service Industries are playing an exceptionally important role in developing the overall economy of India. According to Press Information Bureau (PIB, 2018) the Economic Survey for 2017-2018 stated that the service sector contributed 55.2% in India's Gross Value Added (GVA) and the service sector is continued to be the key driver of India's economic growth contributing almost 72.5% of India's Gross Value Added (GVA) growth in 2017-18. The expected growth of the service sector in 2017-18 is more than agriculture and industry sector. As per the economic survey 2017-18, agriculture and industry

are expected to grow at the rate of 2.1 percent, 4.4 percent respectively, while the growth of Service Sector as a whole is expected to be at 8.3% in 2017-18 PIB (2018). In such a vibrant scenario, it is increasingly important that the quality of the services should be measured properly and improved as per the needs of the service seeker for the sustainable development of an organization or a country as a whole. Management education in India is undergoing changes in the light of global developments. The focus is on improving the quality of management education and creating world-class professionals. The present study is an attempt to develop a conceptual framework and a model to explain dimensions of service quality in management education. Further, it also attempts to discuss the current issues & challenges prevailing in the management education in terms of service quality.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The traces of measuring service quality are found way back in the early 1980s. Gronroos (1984) measured the service quality and came out with certain key factors associated with service quality such as Reputational quality, Institution image, Student Expectations, Perceived quality of non-human resources etc. Many service quality instruments

are developed by different scholars in the past. Among all the service quality measuring scales developed yet, SERVQUAL scale developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) is very popular. The SERVQUAL scale is based on the gap theory, given by Parasuraman et al. (1985). The theory suggests that the difference between consumers' expectations about the performance of a general class of service providers and their assessment of the actual performance of a specific firm within that class drives the perception of service quality (reviewed by Cronin & Taylor, 1992). According to Parasuraman et al. (1985); Consumers usually use the same criteria to assess quality irrespective of the types of services. Service quality is a general opinion of the client forms regarding its delivery, which is constituted by a series of successful or unsuccessful experiences. Parasuraman et al. (1985) argued that, with minor modification, SERVQUAL can be adapted to any service organization. SERVQUAL is the 22 items' instrument categorized into five major dimensions: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. These dimensions are briefly explained as under

- **Reliability:** Delivering the promised services at the desired level. Reliability reflects the consistency of any organization in providing services to their customers. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988); indicated that reliability normally is the most important attribute consumers seek in the area of quality service.
- **Tangibility:** It reflects the physical appearance of the facilities provided by any organization. It includes employees, types of equipment and methods of communication. **Responsibility:** It indicates the prompt services to customers on their demand as and when required. It also reflects the employees' devotion in serving their customers in the best possible ways.
- **Security:** This dimension helps to build up the trust between the employees and customers. Customers should be well-informed about the services which they are going to receive in the future.
- **Empathy:** It reflects the willingness of an employee to provide personalized attention to the customer.

SERVQUAL measures service quality by comparing the expectation and perception of service quality as measured in the service dimensions.

Another service quality measuring instrument developed by Cronin and Taylor (1992) known as SERVPERF is also very popular. SERVPERF uses an absolute measurement of service quality, instead of measuring the quality based on the gap between expectation and perception in the SERVQUAL model. SERVPERF suggests that service quality should be measured as an attitude. The performance-based scale (SERVPERF) developed by Cronin and Taylor (1992) is efficient in comparison with the SERVQUAL scale; it

reduces by 50% the number of items that must be measured (44 items to 22 items).

Efforts have also been made to adapt and develop service quality scales in the education sector. Abdullah (2005) proposed a new and more comprehensive performance-based measurement scale namely, HEdPERF (Higher Education PERFORMANCE-only), that attempts to capture the authentic determinants of service quality within the higher education sector. HEdPERF is a 41-item instrument which is empirically tested for unidimensionality, reliability, and validity using both exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis. HEdPERF scale is empirically tested as the more comprehensive and industry-specific scale, which was exclusively designed for higher education. In developing the scale, factor analysis was used to determine a new dimensional structure of service quality by merging HEdPERF and SERVPERF items. Specifically, this technique allowed the reduction of a large number of overlapping variables to a much smaller set of factors (Abdullah, 2005).

Senthilkumar and Arulraj (2011) proposed another service quality measurement model in higher education in India namely, SQM-HEI. The proposed model is a 30-item instrument which has been empirically tested for unidimensionality, reliability, and validity using both exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Such a valid and reliable measuring scale would be a tool that higher educational institutions could use to improve service performance in the light of increased competition with the development of global education markets. The model developed by authors in their study reveals that the quality of education is based on the best faculty, the excellent physical resources, a wide range of disciplines. Further, the model proves that the placement is the mediated factor for various dimensions of quality education. In an another study, Sahney, Banwet, and Karunes (2010), revealed the various factors which are associated with the quality framework in education sector such as Customer focus/need-based, Channels of communication, Instructional competence, Specific policies and procedures, Evaluation and control system, Curriculum design, Effective leadership, Periodic review, Resource allocation and Operational planning. Jain, Sinha, and Sahney (2011) stated two important dimensions that determine students' perceptions of service quality in higher education, they were: program quality and quality of life. The study conducted by Stimac and Simic (2012) stated three factors for measuring service quality, namely Organization and teaching staff, Non-teaching staff and acquired knowledge. In education services, students are viewed as customers, education service quality should logically be measured from the perspective of students (Min & Khoon, 2013).

OBJECTIVES

The present study was aimed at achieving the following objectives:

- To develop a conceptual model of service quality in Management education.
- To discuss the current issues & challenges in management education.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present research is based on the systematic review of literature which was done through electronic as well as library search. The online databases like EBSCOhost research databases were used to study the articles and research papers in various journals and periodicals. The search approach was concentrated on the service sector, particularly the higher education sector. As a result of the searches, authors recognized various research papers and articles which are directly relevant to service quality in higher education, more specifically in management education.

THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL

The present study proposes a conceptual model; see Fig. 1 of measuring the service quality in management education. The proposed model is based on the previous studies conducted on higher education including management education. A systematic review process is done and an effort is made to analyze the various relationships among the factors which are the base of our conceptual model. Based on the literature review conducted for the present study, six factors have been identified for measuring the service quality in management education in India. These six factors which composed distinct components of perceived service quality have been taken into consideration for determining the quality of management education namely, Organization & teaching staff, Wide range of disciplines, Program quality, Physical resources, Acquired knowledge and Placements. The present conceptual model of service quality in management education is an attempt to identify the gap between the perceived quality of services and the actual quality received by the management students.

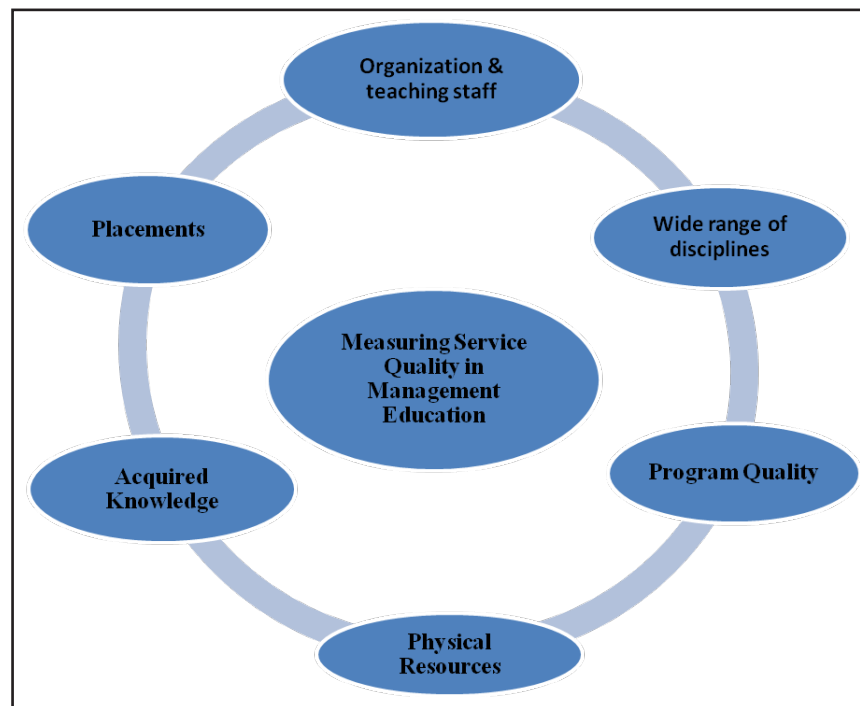


Fig. 1: Conceptual Model of Service Quality in Management Education

The first factor identified for our proposed conceptual model is *Organization and teaching staff*. Previous studies revealed that the brand image of an organization or an institution plays an imperative role for the students and their parents in selecting the best institution for pursuing management degree. The brand image of any teaching institute is developed by their teaching staff. The study conducted

by Stimac and Simic (2012) found that organization and teaching staff is one of the important factors in measuring service quality.

The second factor named, *Wide range of disciplines* is also an important factor in deciding the best institution at the time of admission. The institution which is offering a large number of courses with different specialization, perceived to

be more reliable as compared to the other institution which are providing limited disciplines. A wide range of disciplines provides more options to the students for selecting their career in a particular discipline.

The third factor identified is *Program quality*. It is one of the important factors among all other factors. Nowadays lots of educational institutions are providing the BBA and MBA program under management education. It is the quality of the program, offered by the institutions which make all the difference. An institute can provide quality programs by differentiating themselves by adopting innovating teaching pedagogy, practical exposure and providing experienced teaching staff. Jain et al. (2011) also stated program quality as one of the important dimensions that determine students' perceptions of service quality in higher education.

The fourth factor of our conceptual model is *Physical resources*. It is the first and foremost factor which is considered by the majority of the students who comes from different states or cities while taking admission in a particular educational institute of any city. Physical resources include the infrastructure, Library resources, computer lab, sports complex, hostels, playground etc. The previous study conducted (e.g., Senthilkumar & Arulraj, 2011) reveals that excellent physical resources are one of the bases of the quality of education.

The fifth factor taken for our conceptual model is *Acquired knowledge*. The quality of education can be measured by the knowledge acquired by the students through that education. In the current era of intense competition, knowledge-driven organizations can achieve sustainable development for a longer time. Therefore, every organization wants to keep the knowledgeable and a skillful employee with them, thus the acquired knowledge is an important factor for measuring the quality education. Stimac and Simic (2012) stated acquired knowledge is an important factor for measuring service quality.

The sixth factor identified for the proposed conceptual model is *Placement*. From the past few decades till the present time, a lot of educational institutes considering average placement salary as one of the most important indicators of success. In the Indian context, placement is considered as the key success factor of good education from the students' perspective also. Senthilkumar and Arulraj (2011) developed the model named SQM-HEI which also proved that the placement is the mediated factor for various dimensions of quality education.

CURRENT ISSUES & CHALLENGES IN MANAGEMENT EDUCATION IN INDIA

At present we have witnessed various studies that have been conducted on service quality issues in management

education in India. Still, very little progress has been done related to the improvement in quality issues. Except for a few top-ranking B-schools, all the management institutions and universities are still struggling with service quality issues. Various committees have suggested different ways of improvement in management education, but still, the condition of management education in India is not healthy. The present study attempts to analyze some major issues and challenges prevailing in the management education in terms of service quality. Some of the major issues are listed below:

- Propagation of B-Schools
- A dearth of Quality Faculty.
- Faculty Development Programs.
- Institute- Industry Interface.
- Lack of proper emphasis on research.
- Need for creating a global mindset.

Propagation of B-Schools

The traces of management education in India found in the early 1950s. It started with the noble purpose of creating professional managers who can manage and create businesses. Initially, the growth of B-Schools was very slow but as soon as the demand of managers increases, people started looking it as a business opportunity and in the result, B-schools were mushrooming in every part of the country. Management education nowadays is not merely education but it is a profit making business for its promoters. Various corporate houses invest their money in promoting B-schools for profit without giving proper emphasis on the quality of educational services. Management institutes are mushrooming in all parts of India for making a profit and for beating the competition prevailing in the education industry which has deteriorated the noble purpose of Management education in India. A good management institute required good quality faculty and adequate infrastructure for productive learning but in the race of beating the competition, most of the B-Schools are ignoring this fact.

Dearth of Quality Faculty

Quality faculty is one of the major concerns in present Indian management education. There is a serious dearth of quality faculty in management education. One of the major reasons for this is the low salary of faculty members in management institutions especially in the private institutions; because of this the high qualified faculties are not willingly work in various B-schools due to the lack of reasonable salary. On the other hand, fresher are joining as faculty members, who do not have experience or have a very little experience in the field of management education, due to this they are unable to provide the practical exposure to the students regarding the

required managerial skills. Moreover, if these faculties get a better job in terms of high salary they switch over to other institutes, which results in regular higher attrition rate in management institutes. Institutes are engaged in appointing new faculty member on low salaries and with heavy teaching load which further deteriorate their quality, thus the college cannot get highly qualified and experienced faculty (Chaudhary, 2011). Newly joined faculty members adopt only lecture methods & impart theoretical or conceptual knowledge to the students rather than brainstorming or its application (Shukla, 2013).

As per the guidelines are given by UGC, the essential qualification for the selection process at college or University level is either Ph.D. or NET/SET. But due to lack of faculty in the field of management and due to management's reluctant attitude towards providing high salary to the faculties, many management institutes consider only a master's degree to become a faculty. Furthermore, industry experience is also neglected in the selection process of faculties which should be an important part of the selection process.

Faculty Development Programs

For enhancing the quality education in the field of management, Institutes should organize faculty development programs regularly, so that the inexperienced faculty can also improve themselves in terms of teaching methodology. But the quality of these FDPs is again questionable. Shukla (2013) argued that the FDP programs which are implemented at the institutional level they are also not adequate and rich in their Quality. As a part of the formality and conditions of the AICTE, this activity is being implemented. Therefore, it is utmost important that FDPs should be conducted at the selected centers recognized by UGC or in a university of repute. Apart from it, Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) are also engaged in conducting good quality faculty development programs.

Institute-Industry Interface

A good management institute should have a sound Institute-Industry interface. Institute should conduct minor or major industry training for students on a regular basis. It helps in filling the gap between theoretical concepts and its practical applications which helps the students to get the real practical exposure of working of various industries. Regular Guest lecture from industry experts can help the students in a big way wherein students can understand the challenges and issues which the professionals are facing and in light of those issues they can mold their study patterns. Students should be engaged in problem-solving and case study preparation on the various real-life situations prevailing in the industry so

that when they work in any company or engaged in self-employed activities, they are able to handle the various problems in a more pragmatic way.

Lack of Emphasis on Quality Research

Due to the stiff competition among the B-schools for attracting more and more admissions, most of the B-schools are engaged in making money rather than providing a quality education. Quality of education in management can be improved by promoting a quality research culture in institutes. Research helps in enhancing individual knowledge in the concerned subjects. Furthermore, it is an important tool for developing new concepts and methods of innovative teaching. Quality Research culture in management institutes can be promoted by providing assistance to faculty and students to conduct research activities. A good library support system can also help in developing a sound research environment. For promoting the research environment in management institutes, UGC has also started to give emphasis on good quality research and publications as one of the important criteria for providing quality certification.

Need for Creating a Global Mindset

For a successful and productive management education in India, it is highly imperative that management institutes inculcate the global mindset in the students through the quality of education. Globalization acts as a boon for trade, commerce, and service industry, on the other hand, it also results in lots of challenges that have to be tackled carefully to survive in a highly competitive market (Sharma, Patel, & Sabharwal, 2014). Sultan and Wong (2012) stated that higher education is a pure service that requires a greater amount of interpersonal contact. Therefore, Indian higher education institutions are kept on improving their quality of education to meet global needs. At present various industries are looking for executives who have the world-class talent to handle the various decisional situations in the global context. Thus, it is highly important that the syllabus and curriculum of Indian management education should be designed not only as per the Indian standards but also keeping in the mind the global standards.

CONCLUSION & IMPLICATIONS

Quality of management education is the most important issue of concern for business schools to attract students and create an image in the industry. The present research has provided a conceptual framework for measuring the service quality in management education in India and identified the important factors affecting the same. The nature of the relationship between students' perception and service quality appears

to be an area in immense need for additional exploration. Future research should develop measures of service quality in various other criteria apart from the factors discussed in the present study. The present study is an attempt to develop a conceptual model based on previous researches. By analyzing the proposed model and the relative importance associated with each factor, the management institutes can assess the quality of their services. It can help them to improve their services to address the needs of the students in a better way. The model is also helpful for the students to understand the components of higher importance to lower importance which can eventually help them in selecting the better management institute for pursuing their management degree. The present study also highlights the major issues and challenges in management education in India. It can help the education providers to overcome these challenges by making a genuine effort for rectifying their weaknesses and can get a competitive advantage.

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