ASSESSING THE PROVISION OF QUALITY STUDENTS’ SERVICE AND SATISFACTION IN TERTIARY INSTITUTION IN GHANA; Using Cape Coast Polytechnic as Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Quality students’ service of higher education, however, has been largely overlooked when the issue of quality service has been considered. This is not surprising. Because normally higher education, primarily, remain focused on teaching and research, with the administration tasks existing as a supporting role. Again, most of research works on quality services have ignored the education sector. Ironically even academicians who will be the immediate beneficiaries even focuses their research works on other sectors of the economy. This is partly so, because academicians in tertiary institutions focus on that area that concerns them the most and where they can easily get fund to finance their work. This has meant, however, that the role of quality student service in tertiary organizational culture has been somehow ignored. But focus on teaching and research alone cannot be the only pre-requisites for success in academia. Quality student service is the focus of the moment in higher education sector everywhere in the world and Ghana cannot be exception, ensuring that institutions maintain a high level of attention to quality issues will not only attract more students but also increase their internally generated fund. The research assesses the provision of quality student service and satisfaction in tertiary institution in Ghana; using Cape Coast Polytechnic as a case study.

Keywords: Student (customer) service, quality, tertiary, education, institution, satisfaction

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade the Ghanaian tertiary education market has experienced unprecedented expansion. A market that few years ago was somehow seen as an oligopoly market, with four state universities namely University of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, University of Cape Coast and University of Education Winneba and few regional polytechnics; can now boast of one hundred thirty four tertiary (134) institutions (National Accreditation Board(NAB) 2007). The rapid surge in the development of tertiary institutions in Ghana has been made possible largely due to the collaborative efforts of the government and the involvement of the private sector in the development of tertiary education in the country (Dei Ofori Atta 2007). The growth in e-commerce is also a contributing factor in the ease of accessing tertiary education in Ghana. Many Ghanaians are pursing programs with internationally acclaimed universities and colleges at the comfort of their homes, a situation which was impossible at first. The market will continue to offer many opportunities for private players and foreign institutions to
enter; with the internet playing a leading role in this area. The resultant effect of this enormous expansion is students’ demand for quality service, of which management of these institutions cannot consider as subsidiary. Reduction in cost of travelling as well as improvements in communications such as television networks and the internet have also contributed to a convergence of preferences in a number of courses and how they are delivered. The revolution and expansion in the sector makes traditional teaching and learning techniques and conditions to no longer follow a fixed model or necessarily graduating students a pattern; as a result, innovation and customer service management reform had superseded not only training of students but all other culture of our education and has taken more significant roles in our tertiary educational sector. Thus, student service management has become the foundation and core of the new education economy of the 21st Century. It is driven by students ever changing demands and expectations have been pivoted around to today’s competition strategies of educational managers.

In times of tough tertiary education competition where many institutions offer similar products in terms of fees, content of modules, and quality; student service differential can provide organization with distinct competitive advantage. Since severe competition results in little variation of facilities, quality of students’ service has been regarded as one of the main factors, whether or not the school operates successfully. The irony is that many more tertiary institutions are not taking this icon of business seriously even though they are the same players who teach their students the concept of customer service. Also for those that had already established student service and business development department are also reluctant to properly invest into it, leaving just the structure and printed “business and service department” on walls to win business and attract more students for them ironically (Zaltman 2005).

However student centricity has been, and will continue to be, a growth driver for every school. By aligning students and employees more closely, institutions are being rewarded with new ideas, every day-idea that in the past would not have made their way to heads of institutions and would be collated and implemented at a cheaper cost. Therefore sympathizing with students, listening to them with open ears and doing their wants upgrade the customer service efficiency and capacity of the various departments, faculties or schools of an institution, and through the resolution of problems that are experienced will reduce cost of attracting new students (Reichheld 2006).

Besides striving for promotion of good student service strategy and facilities in order to strengthen competitive advantage of a school and be it different than others, advancing service quality of the institution and students having positive impression must be the key points for every management.

1.1 Statement of the problem

The numerous advantages that delivery of quality students’ service presents to virtually all businesses can therefore not be escaped by tertiary institutions from doing business without focusing on this concept. The notion that running of schools are different from companies and corporation is past dead and buried. As Peter Drucker often said, the purpose of all entities, be it profit or nonprofit, begins and ends with the customer and in school the end is the students. Of importance is the magnitude of competition of services of identical tertiary institutions and almost with equal face prices to the extent that students deciding on which school to enroll is at its lowest cost. Then again with the nation practically moving away from more socialist state to capitalist leading to breaking down of monopolistic tertiary education, allowing over thirty nine private tertiary institutions and as the number keeps on counting, students are not passive as they used to be, any unsatisfied service received by them will eventually affect their behaviors and prospective students (National Accreditation Board 2007; Storbacka 1994). Further the struggle and scramble for students by tertiary institution is breaking down traditional way of doing business which includes internal functions, customers, and supply chain partners in a way it has never been possible before (Katri 2003). As a result neither is most students’ sensitive to fee
paying nor just looking for places that they can pursue degree and diploma programs but are looking for places where they will be accepted and treated as pearls.

This gives credence to the need for management of tertiary institutions to take another critical look at their students. Understanding students and the service that they provide to them (Drucker 2005; Lee & Turban, 2001)

1.2 Research Question

This paper explores the students’ service and students’ satisfaction and aim at answering this question:

How does provision of quality students’ service and students’ satisfaction by institutions affect students’ intention?

1.3 Significance of the study

Many literatures and studies have been done on customer service and its impact with focus entirely on profit making organizations. This makes the paper imperative and unique from others because of its hub which is tertiary institutions. The findings of the study are projected to assist leadership of these institutions to properly understand the importance of the concept of customer/student service to their activities. Specifically the upshot of the study will help management to know their deficiency in student service delivery, hopeful rectify these shortfalls and add value to their delivery. As management of tertiary institutions is able to add value to student it has positive correlation of adding value to an entity.

1.4 Objectives of the study.

1. To find out the relationship between students satisfaction in institution and its implication on students' decision making and loyalty to the organization.
2. To identify students perception on customer service delivery
3. To evaluate what kind of services students would like to receive
4. To find out whether students are prepared to pay for quality service

2. RELEVANT LITERATURES

2.1 The Concept of Student Service

In an increasingly competitive world, the distinguishing factor between organizations is the service they provide for their customers or clients. What then is a service? Service in itself is not a product it is an experience. It is not tangible that can be possessed by the customer however it can only be experienced. In their book Six SIGMA Parveen Goel et al (2005) said a Consultant delivers a report, but the bound paper and ink are not the service. The service component is in the skills and knowledge that is provided by the consultants and how well they are able to solve the need presented by the receiver. When it comes to definition of quality student service there is no standardized definition. A history on quality shows that it has roots in the manufacturing sector. However, the concept of quality is associated less with product and more with a student. Even though it has not been easy in the definition of quality of a service, the parameters used to define it have always been established by customers (students) but not the service provider. Anytime institutions try to define and establish benchmarks for quality service from their perspectives, students are frustrated. The quality level of a service is a function of the gap between a student’s expectations and the perceived service. Delivery of services in tertiary educations can be categorized into three major components-process component, environmental component, and personal component.
Table 1 Example of Process, Environmental, and Personal Components in a Tertiary Education Sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process Component</th>
<th>Environmental Component</th>
<th>Personal Component</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buying of admission forms.</td>
<td>Display and layout of campuses.</td>
<td>Orientation on admission.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submission of forms.</td>
<td>Feelings while learning.</td>
<td>Responsiveness of staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registration of courses.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Courtesy of staff.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In short student service is the provision of service to students before they are enrolled, when they are in and after completion of their programs. This may be employed to generate such competitive advantage as a particular service proposition can be harder to copy by competitors (Spector et al 2005). Is therefore not surprising that increase in competition (be it profit or nonprofit organization) is forcing businesses to pay much more attention to satisfying customers, including providing strong customer service. Students service is not about complaints handling management, smiling and giving gifts to students, it is about proactively engaging with students. Quality students service is an organization’s ability to supply their students’ wants and needs beyond their expectation and different from what competing players are offering in the market.

2.2 Students Satisfaction

Due to hyper competition in the tertiary education sector and complex student behaviour, students’ satisfaction has been one of the most talked about areas. Process environment and personal components of level of service, and student expectation and have been used as factors in explaining students’ satisfaction in this area, (Spreng et al., 1996). This has given rise to many definitions on the subject. Nevertheless it is generally acknowledged that students’ satisfaction is an emotive and/or cognitive response, pertaining to a particular focus such as expectations on service which occurs after a visit to an establishment and experience has occurred (Giese and Cote, 2000). Zeithaml et al., (1993) however said student satisfaction is fundamentally understood within the expectancy model, and satisfaction/dissatisfaction is said to be as a result of the comparison between pre-enrollment/visit expectations and perceived employees performance of a school. Student satisfaction involves the comparison of standards by receivers whether they are in the form of expectations, desires, and wants, ideal or equitable performances. Balasubramanian et al. (2003) however describe student satisfaction as the relative perceptual distance between student expectations and evaluations of service experiences and service quality using a multi-item scale satisfaction model.

2.3 Students’ Expectations

If an institution wants to build and deliver a superior service than competing players then understanding students’ expectations is a must. Since students evaluate their perceptions with expectations when deciding on which schools to select, enroll and study. Expectations are pivotal in service delivery. Students form various expectations about a school’s service before they experience it, and these expectations are used as benchmark to know whether they are satisfied or not. Students who experience services are satisfied only when their expectations are met and these expectations are derived from colleagues, relatives and service providers, and advertisements which offer specific levels of service. Students’ satisfaction with services can be defined by comparing perceptions of service he/she received with expectations of service desired. When it is expressed mathematically it is calculated as:

\[
\text{Student Satisfaction} = \frac{\text{Institution Performance}}{\text{Student Expectations}}
\]
This equation therefore implies that there are two ways that management can use to improve students satisfaction. Firstly management can increase satisfaction by improving the student’s perception of performance and finally by decreasing their expectations. When the level of expectations is low, it will be easier to satisfy the students. However these ways are not done deals, as students’ expectations can pose a major challenge. Because expectations of students are dynamic; and are always influenced by a complex interplay of factors. Again an expectation of service varies depending on the value placed on a particular service. Different students can place a different value on the same service due to such things as cultural backgrounds and personality. Nevertheless, this calculation serves as a reminder that students’ level of satisfaction can be affected by changes in either their expectations or performance. That means management has to pay attention to both (Karten Associates 2006).

2.4 Sources of Students’ Satisfaction

There are several causes that can either have positive or negative blue print in the memory of students. But notable ones as stated by Mary Jo Bitney el at in 1990 are recovery, adaptability, spontaneity and coping. They went on to say that when it comes to recovery it is an institution’s ability to respond favourable in some way to the students’ frustration, disappointment, or complaint that matters. This is achieved by simply acknowledging problems, explaining causes, apologizing, taking responsibility and if possible compensating/upgrading the service for the student.

The adaptability cause refers to the institution’s ability to tailor service according to a student’s special needs or request. As resources are limited, they put a lot of constraints on institutions to always adjust to real or perceived needs. If institutions can recognize the seriousness of a need especially those with physical challenge needs, acknowledge it and attempt to accommodate it/ adjust the system, upgrade the outmoded course contents and introduce new programs that are relevant to the current market then students will be delighted. When there is constraint on adaptability, school administrators ought to explain rules/ polices and take responsibility.

An unprompted or unsolicited action by service workers refers to as spontaneous cause. Their assertion on this is that authorities be teaching and non teaching staff must anticipate needs, be attentive and show empathy to their students. Finally coping relates to how service staffs interact and relate with frustrated or a problem student. These four themes are seen as major drives to make students happy or not and it is therefore important that tertiary schools train their workers to deal with them properly (Davies and Heineken 2003).

Zeithaml et al. (1993), also in an attempt to examine the drives towards student satisfaction, proposed a comprehensive model of expectations and their potential antecedents and the pivot of their model is “notion of the zone of tolerance”, which they clarify as “the level to which students recognize and are willing to accept heterogeneity”. It is also inferred that a student’s zone of tolerance is the difference between what his/her desire and what he/she considers adequate, in terms of experience one has with an institution, and this zone can expand and go down across situations and individuals. That is why some students are consistently easy to please, and others are extremely difficult to please. Those that are easy to satisfy have high zone of tolerance level than hard to please ones. Student satisfaction is therefore linked to individual different thresholds or tolerance level (Mittal and Kamakura 2001).

Balasubramanian et al. (2003) also proposed five dimensions which are drives towards satisfaction; tangibles (institution facilities and the appearance of office/), reliability (schools ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately), responsiveness (willingness to help students’ and provide prompt services), assurance (an institution’s reputation systems which induces student trust and confidence), and empathy (caring) to students by an institution.
2.5 Campus and Office Design

Campus design is an important aspect of successful institution because it helps students and visitors to find services they want efficiently (Palmer, 2002). Failure to develop a proper layout with enough information turns to be an obstacle in students’ decision-making (Liu and Arnett, 2000; Lohse and Spiller, 1998). Big institutions are less effective than small ones at converting visitors into customers, because students have difficulty finding the products/services they seek. It is argued that since a primary role of frontline employees is to provide information and product information to help reduce students’ search costs, more extensive and higher-quality information should be available that will lead to better decisions and higher levels of students’ satisfaction (Lightner and Eastman 2002). Direction-finding and convenience is allied to students’ rate of recurrence to a place. Campus and office layout, institution features, as well as ease of use of the place are considered to be part of this proposition. Consequently, the success of quality student service is well determined by the ability of a school to tailor its information and office layout to meet the students’ needs (Lose and Spiller, 1998).

In sum campuses and office places should be attractive to draw prospective students to make an initial visit. Again must provide information in which students will value such information about services of the institution. Because good design place and enjoyable visit experience are the most important determinants of student service effectiveness (Lightner and Eastman, 2002)

2.6 Organizational Culture

Culture of an organization is the organizational viewpoint; values and assumptions which correlate to people in the organization. Ravisi and Schultz (2006) stated that organizational culture is a set of shared mental assumptions that guide interpretations and actions in organizations by defining appropriate behaviour for various situations.

In 1948 when the first tertiary institution was established it was given the mandate to train civil and public services manpower to fill the vacancies created by the departure of the colonial officers. This mission created the mindset for the management and that is to train people for public sectors without looking at the needs of students. In short it was just giving licenses to students to get jobs. This made authorities to have the orientation that offering services to students’ is a favour but not a duty treated with care. And also the belief that it is a privilege to be in a tertiary institution. Unfortunately this shared mental assumption and beliefs have permeated through all subsequent developed tertiary institutions in Ghana especially the public ones.

This described beliefs and ideas of the first tertiary institution has established standards of behaviours which management of most of tertiary institution have adopted and use to achieve their stated goals. Services that an institution provides to students are however affected by the culture of the establishment.

Beside mission of an entity which affects its structure and operations those organizations that do treat their employees with respect get excellent service attitudes from them. Staffs purse excellent student service when they themselves are treated well by employers and management. Why? Because what employees take in from the organization determines what comes out from them. This demonstrates the importance of organizational culture toward service attitudes (Schlesinger and Heskett 1991). In the cycle of success, an investment in employees’ ability to provide superior service can be seen as a virtuous circle. Effort spent in selecting and training employees and creating a corporate culture in which they are empowered can lead to increased employee satisfaction and employee competence. This will likely result in superior service delivery and students satisfaction.
2.7 Service Chain Management

The upward development in technology has created opportunities for organizations to create competitive advantages by leveraging diverse knowledge management strategies around customer. This system is referred to as service supply chain management. It is a total system approach that focuses on delivering a value service to the end student. This helps in improving quality of service delivery at the same time cutting down costs of operating. The essence of a service chain management according to Porter in 1985 is to break down strategically relevant activities in order to understand the behaviour of costs and the sources of differentiation as alternative approaches to securing competitive advantage. Innovations in technology have aided in institutions ability to instantaneous inclusion of student requirements and preferences into database strategy of service entities (Mark and Heineke 2003). A firm that understands this will succeed. Because service chain management enables organizations that provide intangible products such as schools to improve students’ satisfaction and reduce functioning costs through intelligent and optimized forecasting, planning and scheduling of the service chain. And its associated resources such as people, networks and other assets. Interestingly the value chain in a corporation can vary from industry to industry. Depending on a particular value chain, the proportion of the service component may vary based on a business model. A typical value chain in the tertiary education institution:

![Diagram of a typical value chain in a tertiary institution]

Figure 1

Figure 1 A typical value chain in a tertiary institution

A service component in each link of the value chain and performance within each link of the value chain will impact the overall service to the student. Why? Because every link in the value chain has risks associated with it that could dissatisfy the student. It is therefore necessary to optimize the entire value chain to provide the best service to students and gain their benefit after school or loyalty (Parveen Goel et al 2005)

2.8 Student Loyalty and Retention

One of the most reliable indicators of the success of educational establishment is whether students are proud and loyal to it. It is often said that it cost between five to fifteen times as much to acquire a new customer as it does to keep current one. Many researchers have found that satisfaction influences decision as well as post-service attitude. Student loyalty is looked at from two angles. First it is an attitude. Different way of thinking creates an individuals’ overall consistent attachment to an object, person, service or an organization. This cognitive level of a person defines the degree of loyalty. Then the second view is behavioural. This is the consistency with which students come to the school again for further training from the same player or recommend the school to prospective students (Storbacka et al, 1994). Student loyalty is the degree to which students patronize institution products and speak highly of it because the institution has developed or created an emotional bond with them. For an institution to get a positive benefit from students and more especially after school, then its need to look at their satisfaction. Increase students retention and loyalty makes the employees’ jobs easier and more satisfying. In turn, happy employees feed back into higher students’ satisfaction in a virtuous circle. Students’ loyalty is always linked to satisfaction, expectation and trust; the main element that creates more loyalty is the people who deliver the service. Loyalty is predominantly achieved through
excellent students’ service. This means organizations need to hire and train polite employees, because human interaction is very important for a good impression.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Description of methodology

The purpose of this research was to assess students’ perception on customer service and satisfaction delivery in tertiary institutions in Ghana. Looking at the research question, conversely, the researcher used phenomenological approach conclusively to answer the research question. The approach helps to describe the life experience of persons as free as possible from theoretical or social constructs (Rudestam and Newton 2001). In terms of research, it enables feeling, interactions and experiences of subjects in the world to be known in research (Kerlinger and Lee 1999). The researcher combines quantitative and qualitative methodologies to function effectively.

Questionnaire (self-administered survey) and observation Instrument were employed ahead of other instruments by the researchers to measures variables specified in research questions. Since the research work was dealing with behaviour; these instruments were used to gather information and to provide better understanding. Again data gathered through them were considered to be more direct, effective, and robust to prove respondents view (Wisker 2001). A draft questionnaire was pretested for reliability on a quota sample of twenty respondents selected from target population; and what was learnt during the pretest was incorporated into the final draft.

4. DISCUSSION OF DATA

Table 4.1 Educational levels of Student

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HND 300</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HND 200</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HND 100</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DBS (1 &amp; 2)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Field survey 2012)

On the educational level of the respondents, the table reveals the following: final year students of Higher National Diploma (HND) programs recorded 29.5%, 2nd year HND student were the majority of the students who took part in the survey. And their frequency is 33% and the least level been Diploma of Business students (DBS) students that recorded 12.5%

Table 4.2 Whether the Institution welcomes students suggestions on service delivery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whether it does</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes it does</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No it does not</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not Know</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Field survey 2012)
49% of the respondents were indifferent about whether the institution welcomes students’ suggestion and use them. Sparingly 13.5% were those that felt suggestions are welcomed

Table 4.3 Administrative Staff relationship with students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship Type</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transactional</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>33.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Field survey 2012

In an attempt to find out the type of relationship that exists between students and administrative staff an item was put in the questionnaire. It was revealed that there is a less personal and interactive staff relationship with students. As the official relationship recorded 42% juxtapose to it is transactional or casual which is 33.5% of the total responses

Perceptions of Students as Customers

An item was designed to find how they perceive themselves as customers. When asked about their perceptions as customers, all the responses were positive. Despite their reservations about the word, all students recognized that they are customers of the institution. Furthermore, 75% of the responses saw that the customer-service provider relationship was in some way special and unlike one that would exist in a retail environment. With 25% respondents who felt there was no difference between a student as customer and a customer in the private, retail sense.

Figure 4.1 how students got to know about the institution and its programs

An item was designed to know how respondents got information about the institution and its programs. From the diagram above 48 respondents representing 24% of the sample size got their information from relatives, 60 respondents representing 30% of the sample size got their information from friends, 84 respondents representing 42% had their information from print media advertisement, 4 respondents representing 2% had the information from the officials of the institution and 4 respondents representing 2% got the information from other sources.
Many factors are considered by prospective students when choosing programs and institution to enroll. In the study it was realized that students give high premium to admission requirements and career opportunities when selecting institution. The when combined received 69.5% of total responses.

**Recommendations of the institution to prospective students**

Having experienced services at the institutions students were asked whether they will ever recommend the institution to prospective students. 56% of the responses were negative, 26% say they will and 18% were not decided. When probed further to know why they will or will not recommend. Those who indicated “Yes” gave these reasons: quality teaching, variety of programs to choose from, affordability, career enhancement programs, established religious groups, less stressful life on campus and the town in general. Those who said “No” cited the following:

- Long lead time between completing and graduating; selective grading system by some lecturers; imposition of pamphlets on them to buy by some lecturers; difficulty in getting relevant documents from the institution while in and after school; lack of respect by staff; lack of lecture halls and uncomfortable nature of seating in the halls; manual handling of virtually every process on campus

**Figure 4.2** Coming back again for further studies

An item was designed to find out if students ever get the opportunity to pursue a program in the institution will they accept the offer.

The survey revealed that 124 respondents representing 62% answered “No” implying that they would not come back to the school and respondents representing 38% answered no which implies that they would come back to the school based on the relationship they had with the school.
Customer services Objectives at the central administration and Dean of students’ office

It was observed that quality service provision was open-ended and not based on any form of management by objectives. The concept of quality service for these people was passive, that is, a level of acceptable service was not pre-determined; rather the staff endeavored to provide quality service wherever possible. Interestingly, most chose not to define any boundaries, or limitations of this service.

Again there was no provision for client services unit or assurance centre at institution that looks into students’ problems and allegations.

Perceptions of Satisfaction and Quality Service Provision

It was noticed from most of the administrative and teaching staff observed that customer satisfaction was not bedrock to customer service. Except few whom actions proved that student satisfaction was pre-requisite to quality service. It is a worthy to know in the institution that all staffs invariably encounter a situation where the policies which they administer cause customer dissatisfaction. Insignificant number of those observed, felt the need to explain dissatisfied customer the reasons for a particular decision. Majority failed to explain reasons for particular decisions and sometimes treat those who try to ask “why” with contempt.

Are they prepared to pay for quality service?

When asked whether respondents (students) are prepared to pay for quality service, 63% responses were negative to the question. With the reminder of the responses which is 37% willing to pay for quality service. On the kind of service expected from the institution by students the most pronounced among them was quick and swift delivery of documentations. Immediately followed by electronic teaching and learning system, electronic registration of modules and application of documents; provision of quality assurance and career counseling centers.

5. CONCLUSION

In general there seem to be a great dissatisfaction among the students populace concerning the kind of service they receive and experience from the institution. This is seen from several responses from the respondents and the findings are presented below.

It was necessary to find out how students defined themselves in their relationship and experience with the school. The research found out that students perceived and defined them as customers of the institution as such makes them the chief recipients of quality customer. Even though it was widely acknowledged that the kind of relationship that exists between customers at profit making and other business units is different from educational establishments. Nevertheless customers at both settings expect the same quality service from their “sellers”. This should give management of tertiary institutions a new orientation on how they perceive their students; this should inform them on how to treat their students.

Undoubtedly the institution relies heavily on print media as vehicle to inform their prospective students about their programs as print media recorded the highest percentage of 42% in the survey. Management must take advantage of new ways of communicating with the target market so as to complement the conventional way of informing mass audience. Social network places such facebook and tweeter must be exploited as the youth spend more time there and can reach a wider audience at a reduced cost.

Before enrolling into institutions majority of the students look at admission requirements and career opportunities as factors that influence their choice of institution. However this decision making variables change when they experience services of the institution and they
are asked to come back. The findings suggest that most students then based their decisions on fair and swift delivery of quality service as a benchmark in their decisions.

The institution highly focuses on teaching as if it is the only pre-requisite for success in academia. As the research revealed that it was not possible to define quality service in terms of policies, targets or even on how suggestions of students are used. This is not to say that quality service is neglected throughout the operations of the institution, rather that management, teaching and administrative staff deliver quality service where they can, but without specific direction and monitoring. Again this is not surprising, because tertiary education institutions, naturally, remain focused on teaching and research, with the administration tasks existing to facilitate these aims.

Another finding from this research is that any attempt to ask the students to pay for quality or improved service must be approached with a degree of caution in respect to the findings. As greater number of the students feel that management can improve service with the resources that they have not necessarily asking them to pay. Attempting to incorporate new management techniques, with the aim of improving service provision, could potentially increase students’ satisfaction. Any attempts, within the polytechnic administration, to improve the level of service being provided to internal and external customers must take into account electronic operations of their activities. Since this is the bedrock of the service students are demanding from institutions and can drastically cut down the lead time of requesting and processing documentations.

A major finding of the study was consistent with earlier assertion that satisfaction influences decision as well as post-service attitude and it is viewed as behavioral (Storbacka et al, 1994). In general there seem to be a great dissatisfaction among the students populace concerning the kind of service they receive and experience from the institution. Again findings also show that loyalty is seen as attitude and behavioral. Firstly, as majority of the students do not have a consistent positive feelings or attachment towards the school and would therefore decline to come back. This was clearly seen in the study that 62% of the students will not accept to come back to the institution to pursue further program if the opportunity presents itself. Secondly the students seem not to be proud of their institution and will not recommend it to prospective students or relatives as 53% of their responses attest to that.

But we will be quick to add that since customer-service provider relationship is in some way special and unlike one that exist in a retail environment you matter whatever action the institution will take, some students will feel dissatisfied because of its policies. A classical example is examination and grading polices. A student who gets "F" or fail will definitely be dissatisfied as rules cannot be modified to accommodate such student. Nevertheless the dissatisfaction that comes as result of policies and rules can be ameliorated if policies are open, consistent and fair to all students.

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