The Role of Management in the Provision of Quality Service in a Tertiary Institution: The Case of University of Botswana

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Abstract

This article provides an analysis of the role of management in the provision of quality service in the University of Botswana (UB). Students are internal customers and their experiences are based on the overall assessment of service delivery as it is a critical component in tertiary institutions. Generally, the UB students' perceived experiences with service delivery are considerably lower than their expectations and desires of services provided by the institution. Particular areas of concern are, amongst others: problems with online registration; information enterprise resource planning (iERP) system failure; poor class attendance by lecturers; and lack of support from managerial staff to both lecturers and students. The researcher used secondary sources of data. In a nutshell, the findings indicate that in most cases, management is not up-to-date with student expectations in terms of quality service delivery; hence inadequacies in University service quality standards. The paper recommends that the UB's management should be trained on internal customer satisfaction so that they play a significant role in ensuring competitive advantage through providing quality services. In view of the fact that provision of quality service will help drive UB towards achieving its vision to be a leading centre of academic excellence in Africa and the world, UB should put measures in place in order to ensure full employee and management engagement on quality service delivery.

Keywords: University of Botswana, quality service delivery

Introduction

In today's globally competitive environment, it is becoming more of a challenge for universities to develop and maintain a competitive advantage in their respective target markets (McDonald, 2012). Management in tertiary institutions should intensively study the quality service factors which enable tertiary institutions to continuously attract and retain students, and also explore the various approaches available to ensure quality service delivery. It is vital for management to search for more creative ways to build and maintain solid relationships with students in order to ensure present as well as future competitive edge (Jansen 2002, p.133). Measuring and evaluating service quality in higher education is also crucial in attracting and retaining tuition based returns. Therefore, it is essential for tertiary institutions to actively and constantly monitor the quality of services provided in order to safeguard the interests of respective stakeholders through the fulfilment of their actual needs, desires and expectations (Dick, 2008). Many Universities have been enthused and influenced by delivery of quality service for both teaching and administrative support functions, since students are the primary customers of academic institutions. Without students to teach there is literally no business for tertiary institutions or a service to provide (Gerald & Uziak, 2008, 212).

In the context of education, satisfying existing students' expectations towards the services provided by the university will transfer positive publicity to the community and this will therefore make the university gain a competitive advantage over other tertiary institutions (Dick, 2008). Quality service delivery in universities is of immense importance due to the fact that competition between universities is continuously increasing (Naidoo, 2005, 97). Jansen (2002) argues that universities across the world are increasingly engaging in maintaining and measuring service quality in response to an increasingly competitive and dynamic educational environment and the numerous challenges faced by the education sector. As a result, universities are becoming more attentive to the importance of student satisfaction. A focus on student satisfaction does not only enable universities to re-engineer their institutions to adapt to student expectations and needs, but also allows them to develop a system for continuously measuring, monitoring and evaluating how effective they meet or exceed student expectations and needs, primarily to ensure quality service across board. As observed by Wilsons & Matthews (2009), for a university to be recognised both regionally and globally as an institution of learning providing high quality academic excellence, it needs to have an organisational culture and climate that embraces quality customer satisfaction at all levels within the organisational hierarchy. In order for both academic and support staff to deliver consistently satisfying service, excellent quality should be the building block in facilitating satisfying experiences to students. To ensure quality service delivery and enhance the overall learning experience within a tertiary institution, management and the rest of the university staff should make it a priority to understand

the students and address their diverse expectations for the services rendered accordingly (Naidoo, 2005, 99).

The role of Management

Wilsons & Matthews (2007) argue that management in tertiary institutions is expected to maintain harmony, autonomy, student consultation and adopt a culture of collegiality. Collegiality refers to equal and fair opportunities for university members to appreciate that they are a part of a mutually respected community of specialists who value each other's contributions to the university and are concerned about their colleagues' welfare and wellbeing. Austin & Mark, (2009,92) further observed that many deans and departmental heads consider themselves as academics and not as management/ leaders. They believe that they are not fully accountable for leadership and management of activities in their respective faculties and departments. This leads to difficulties in the coordination of overall university activities. Poor coordination of activities could result in poor service delivery.

Management is considered efficient and effective when their teams perform according to the set standards or even better (Bernett, 2012, 76). Naidoo (2005,120) further argues that qualities that define effective leadership potential are incorporated in a team or an individual. Group qualities include team collaboration, shared goals/ purpose, effective conflict resolution mechanisms, division of labour, specialisation and an environment that inspires learning. Individual qualities include self-discipline, authenticity/ integrity, motivation, empathy, commitment and competence. As pointed out by Jansen (2012), effective leadership in tertiary institutions is measured through quality service delivery to clients which then converts to exceptional customer satisfaction. As a result, stakeholders will then have confidence and satisfaction in university management. Many universities operate multiple campuses and programmes and there is often a challenge of coordination, control and management. The manifold duties and responsibilities of management could compromise quality service delivery in universities, thus reflecting badly on the university management (Bernett, 2012,77). Tabulawa (2009, 23) established that in many African universities, management is not recruited on the basis of their managerial and leadership potential, but for their academic and professional qualifications, research and publications output. Academic managers rarely receive training on customer satisfaction. However, in the higher education (Bernett, 2012,76) recommends a combination of both transactional and transformational leadership for many skills they possess including customer focus. Their vision and sense of mission, transactional leadership skills focusing on the exchange of labour for various types of rewards are just as critical. Historically, organisations are viewed as learning systems and their success was dependent on the ability of leaders to give direction to the institution's capacity for excellence through people (Naidoo, 2005,121). Transformational leaders have a tendency to learn across their respective specialist discipline. They tend to master their functional specialty and have limited

perspective to see the need for change and acknowledge the consequences of continuing with current organisational practices (Bernett, 2012,77).

In analyzing the role of management in the provision of quality service in the University of Botswana, the researcher used secondary sources of data, i.e. the 2013/ 2014 University of Botswana academic calendar, journals, books and the university website (internet). In summary, the findings indicate that, more often than not, management is not up to date with the diverse student expectations in terms of quality customer satisfaction; hence inadequacies in University service quality standards. Given the magnitude of the problem of a lack of customer satisfaction amongst lecturers and students, the researcher proposes that the University of Botswana's management should be trained in quality customer satisfaction so that they significantly contribute to the competitiveness strategy of the university.

Table 1: Students and Staff statistics, 2013/ 2014 data (UB website, n.d.)

Students	Staff Establishment
Overall total 18,717 Full-time 15,966 Part-time 2,171 Distance Learning 580	Total Staff - 2,794 Executive Management - 4 Support Staff - 1,488 Academic Staff - 890 Industrial Staff - 412
Male - 8,171 Female - 10,546 Undergraduate - 17,025 Post graduate - 1,692	Academic - 32% Support - 53% Industrial - 15%

University of Botswana (UB)

Background of the University of Botswana

The University of Botswana (UB) is an academic institution. It was established by the University of Botswana Act (Cap 57:01) of July 1982. In the 1960's, 70's and into the early 80's during the merger with Lesotho and Swaziland (UBLS), it was referred to as the Gaborone Campus, other campuses being those in Lesotho and Swaziland respectively. Currently, UB has other campuses at Francistown and Maun (Okavango Research Institute). It has a vision to be a leading centre of academic excellence in Africa and the world (UB undergraduate academic calendar, 2013/2014). The University plays an active role in economic and social development, hence national development. This is achieved through engaging effective and efficient human resources. These functions are accomplished through teaching programmes offered by the university and its affiliates, leading to the award of Certificates, Diplomas and Degrees; research and development,

consultancies and information services undertaken individually and/ or collectively by the staff of the university and its affiliated institutions. The day-to-day university functions are regulated by the set rules, processes and procedures (UB undergraduate academic calendar, 2013/2014).

UB Council

The UB Council as the university's governing body is accountable for ensuring achievement of university goals and objectives and is not directly involved in day-to-day university administrative duties. Council membership comprises of University senior management and representatives of the national and international community (UB undergraduate academic calendar, 2013/2014). It is responsible for making statutes and policies, approving programmes and plans, and establishing working procedures which are in alignment to the organisational vision, mission and value statements. The University Council consults the Senate on academic matters and whenever necessary, delegates other matters to relevant committees (UB undergraduate academic calendar, 2013/2014).

UB Senate

The principal academic authority of the University is the Senate, whose membership is made up of the Vice Chancellor (VC), the three Deputy Vice Chancellors (DVCs), Faculty Deans, Faculty representatives and Heads of academic support units as well as student representatives. Senate has a mandate to regulate and monitor University teaching and research activities, as well as examinations (UB undergraduate academic calendar, 2013/2014). Senate approves, and/ or amends academic regulations before they are put into practice and alternately published to inform the University community on the decisions. They include and are not limited to general and special academic regulations, student admissions and examination procedures, degree structures, programmes of study, syllabuses, library regulations. These regulations are to ensure that the University academic standards and quality of teaching and research are in alignment with the continent as well as world standards. Senate also delegates some duties to relevant committees and reviews the committee recommendations (UB undergraduate academic calendar, 2013/2014).

Faculties and Departments

Under the VC's Office is DVC academic affairs, DVC finance and administration and DVC student affairs. The academic division is made up of the Senate, Faculties, Schools, Departments and Institutes. Departments of similar and/ or related disciplines are grouped together to form a Faculty and various programmes of study. Currently there are eight established Faculties, namely: Education, Business, Humanities, Social Sciences, Sciences, Engineering and Technology, Health Sciences,

Medicine, and two schools; School of Graduate Studies and the Graduate School of Business. There is also the Centre for Continuing Education and Centre for Academic Development. Deans have a role to head, coordinate and act as faculty representatives at different fora. Departmental proposals are presented to Faculty Boards which then make a recommendation. Thereafter, the Board submits to Senate and, when necessary, to Council for final approval. Decisions and instructions are then communicated back to the Departments through the same channels of communication (UB undergraduate academic calendar, 2013/2014).

The University of Botswana (the then University of Botswana Lesotho and Swaziland) opened doors in the 1960's. It was the only university in the country at the time. As decades went by, other private tertiary institutions (i.e. Ba Isago, Boitekanelo College, ABM, IDM, BAC, BCA, Limkokwing University, Botho University College) began operation. However, these private institutions were not in any way a threat to the University of Botswana - it was business as usual for UB. In terms of employment packages and service delivery, UB was top of the list. According to a 2014 Ministry of Education and Skills Development Survey for 67 000 applicants, 78% had UB as their first choice because it offered better services: those who did not meet the entry requirements or were not admitted for enrolment would then opt for private tertiary institutions as plan B. University of Botswana only felt the pressure in 2014 when a significant number of UB lecturers left UB to join BIUST. Even though UB management might have anticipated this competition, they were not pro-active in dealing with the possible outcomes. They probably thought BIUST would not be a threat, like other private tertiary institutions that had never been a threat. To their surprise, there was a high academic staff turnover especially in the Faculty of Engineering & Technology and the Faculty of Science as BIUST offered a more lucrative employment package. As a result, UB class sizes increased in some academic disciplines as there were more students and fewer lecturers. In reaction, the UB management spearheaded a job profiling exercise in order to benchmark its salary structure with universities within the SADC region. In anticipation that the exercise would take a very long period of time to complete, car and housing allowances were introduced in April 2015 in order to try and curb these undesirable effects of competition from BIUST. To date, the job profiling exercise is still pending. The number of students enrolled at the University of Botswana has also dropped drastically. The minimum entry requirement has since been reduced, but to no avail. In order to address this problem, management should play a significant role in the provision of quality service. The university is incurring the expenses of filling the vacant positions. There has never been any measurement, monitoring or evaluation on service delivery.

Problem Statement

The numerous advantages that the delivery of quality service presents to organisations cannot be escaped by universities. The notion that administration and management of academic institutions is totally different from that of other organisations is past dead and buried. The purpose of all organisations be it profit or non-profit starts and ends with the customer: in tertiary institutions the customers are students (Jones & Gordon, 2009). Of importance is the magnitude of competition of services between universities and other comparable institutions. Most nations are practically moving away from state control, thus making monopolistic tertiary education a thing of the past and allowing more private tertiary institutions. As the number of private tertiary institutions keeps increasing, it has shown that students are not as passive as they used to be. Any unsatisfied/ unfulfilled service they receive will ultimately affect their behaviours as well as the beliefs and perceptions of prospective students (Cole, 2005, 109). The scramble for enrolling students by tertiary institutions gives credence to the need for management of tertiary institutions to invest in appreciating and addressing their students' needs for quality service delivery: understanding the diverse needs and ensuring customer satisfaction through provision of quality service. Neither are students sensitive to tuition costs nor just looking for any place to pursue their tertiary studies, but they are looking for a place where they will get the best academic experience (Tabulawa 2009,44).

Research Methodology

Data collection was not based on any pre-determined variables linked to a stated research hypothesis. Instead, emphasis was on the generation of insight and understanding of the subject matter through description. Therefore, this paper adopts a case study approach. The researcher used secondary sources of data: i.e. academic journals, books, University of Botswana academic calendar and the internet. This type of data collection came in handy as there were issues of time constraints. Therefore, less time was needed to collect data as it was readily available. Secondary data collection is also economical as there are no costs attached.

Research Objectives

The main objectives of this study were to examine:
- The determinants of quality service delivery
- The role of management in ensuring quality service delivery
- Suggest measures that woud enhance quality service delivery in University of Botswana.

Literature Review

The issue of quality service in an institute of higher learning like the University

of Botswana cannot be overemphasised. Both nationally and internationally, institutions compete for the same top students each academic year. With over 12 institutions of higher learning in Botswana, the University of Botswana has a mammoth task to stay relevant and in competition with these institutions. In order for a university to have a competitive advantage over its competitors, the university needs to 'set itself apart' from all the others through exceptional service delivery. This section will provide a theoretical perspective on quality service delivery in a university environment, and the different role players and challenges associated with such roles and functions.

The determinants of quality service delivery

Universities nationally and internationally compete for the same top students each academic year. In order for a university to have a competitive advantage over its competitors, the university needs to 'set itself apart' from all the others through exceptional service delivery. University quality service delivery is multidimensional: i.e. it can be achieved through various ways; for eample, by the university being a leading centre of academic excellence; an internationally ranked institution of learning; having well-established faculties and centres, being well recognised and a preferred choice within the country and the community within which it resides; providing degrees, diplomas and research output that are market related and in tune with the labour force requirement within the economy; and providing adequate funding and scholarships to students (Dick, 2008,163). Universities should also capitalise on ensuring that they have well recognised and highly skilled academics in all academic disciplines and efficient administration staff and management that have the students' best interests at heart and should be able to provide an enabling learning environment with well-equipped lecture theatres and laboratories. All these are some of the distinguishing characteristics of high quality service that can grant a university a competitive edge over competitors. Quality service should permeate throughout the whole student experience. When assessing quality within a university, Cole (2005,159) argues that quality can be viewed as (i) exceptional, (ii) perfection, (iii) consistency, (iv) fitness for purpose, (v) value for money, and (vi) transformative.
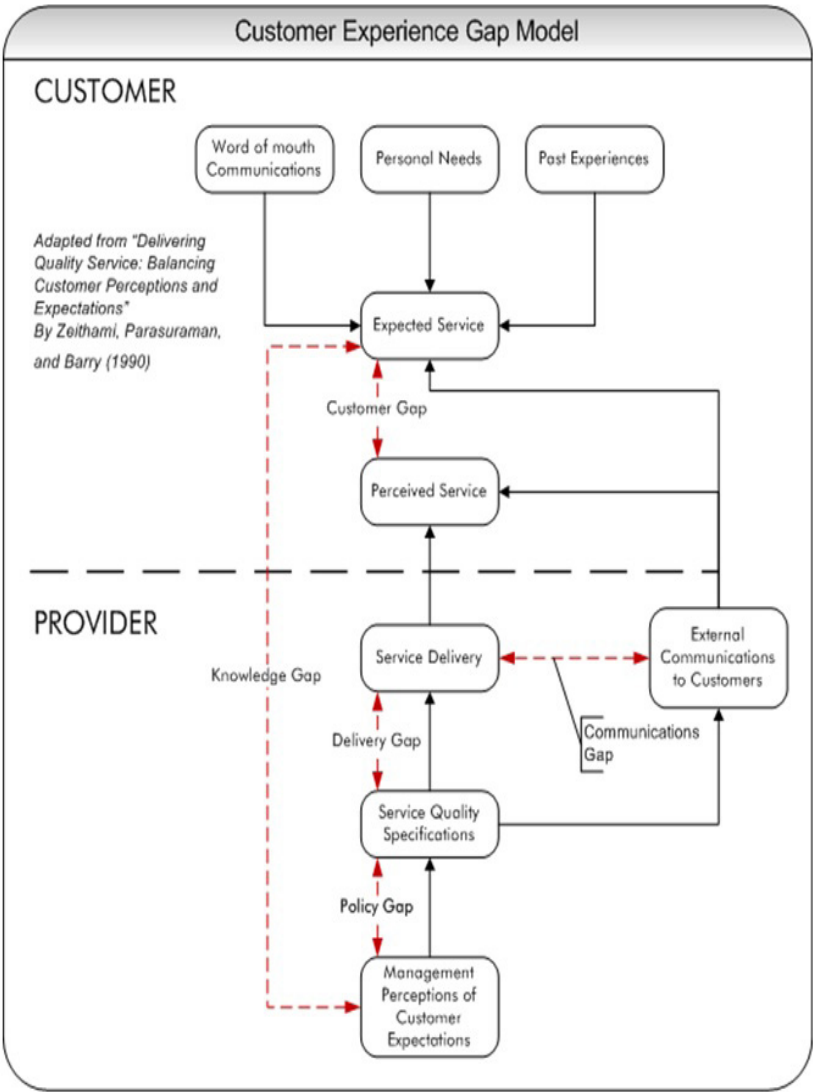
Jones & Gordon, (2009,11) define quality service as a focused evaluation that reflects the customer's perception and experience of specific dimensions of services provided. According to Meier & O'Toole Jr (2012,54), quality service is defined by consumer attitude reflecting the perceived overall superiority and excellence in service delivery. The above two definitions looked at two different aspects in terms of defining quality service: the first definition reflects on the customer perception on various dimensions of quality service; the second definition focuses on the importance of customer attitude of how perceived overall quality service is superior and on excellence in terms of service delivery. Petersen (1996) defines satisfaction as a customer's feeling of pleasure that result from comparing the perceived outcome of a service to its desires and expectations, whereas Luther (2010, 211) defines satisfaction as a state felt by a

customer who has experienced a service that fulfils his/her expectation. In an increasingly competitive environment, the distinguishing factor between tertiary institutions is the service they provide for students. In this context, service in itself is not a product, but rather it is an experience. For a tertiary institution to build and deliver a superior academic service and experience than competing institutions, then understanding and appreciating students' expectations is essential. Students evaluate their perceptions with expectations when making a decision on which tertiary institution to enrol (Jones & Gordon, 2009,111). Hence, perceptions and expectations are essential in service delivery. Students form various expectations about an institution's service before they actually experience it, and they use these expectations as a benchmark to know whether they are satisfied or not. They will be satisfied only when their expectations are met. These expectations are derived from interactions with colleagues and relatives, other service providers, advertisements which offer certain standards of service delivery. Students' general satisfaction with services rendered can be defined by comparing their perceptions of service delivery with expectations of service desired. Tertiary institutions should be aware that there are basic things that are universal and fundamental to quality service delivery. These conditions are necessary to ensure quality service delivery. Customer perceptions and expectations on service delivery are determined by the following organisational factors: reliability, responsibility, competence, accessibility, courtesy, communication, credibility, security and understanding the customer (Luther, 2010, 211).

The Role of management in promoting quality service

Every organisation, whether profit or non-profit, has mission and vision statements. In the process of meeting the respective goals and objectives that emanate from an organisation's mission statements, organisational strategy becomes a constant and significant factor. It is common practice in every organisation that to achieve the set goals and objectives, management should drive the attainment of those goals and objectives (Jones & Gordon, 2009, 80). Most organisations view profit maximisation as top of the list of their various goals and objectives. Maximisation of these objectives requires that respective stakeholders be satisfied. In this context, stakeholders include the shareholders/ owners, customers, creditors, and investors. Even though all stakeholders are important, the customers are more essential. They are the major revenue drivers; management should therefore ensure customer satisfaction as it is a fundamental element in the universal set of stakeholders' satisfaction (Jansen 2002, 89).

Figure 2: Customer Service Gap Model

Customer Experience Gap Model

CUSTOMER

- Word of mouth Communications
- Personal Needs
- Past Experiences

Adapted from "Delivering Quality Service: Balancing Customer Perceptions and Expectations"
By Zeithami, Parasuraman, and Barry (1990)

Expected Service

Customer Gap

Perceived Service

PROVIDER

Knowledge Gap

Service Delivery

External Communications to Customers

Delivery Gap

Communications Gap

Service Quality Specifications

Policy Gap

Management Perceptions of Customer Expectations

Customer Service Gap Model (Sara 2009, 67)

Visionary, pro-active and innovative management are critical for the transformation of higher education. Tabulawa (2007,14) notes that a restructuring exercise on the leadership, governance and management systems of tertiary institutions should be a priority. He recommends that administrative and management structures of tertiary institutions should be evaluated and streamlined to create responsive, effective and efficient structures in order to avoid wastage of resources, overlapping mandates, duplicated duties and responsibilities. Customer engagement and participation should be the trademarks of good governance within an academic institution primarily for a continuous customer satisfaction. Management should delegate some of the decision making power to operational units (faculties, units, institutes and departments). These operational units should then be empowered in order to enable them to carry out their functions effectively to ensure the desired customer satisfaction (Jansen 2002,102).

Students' interest emanate from the quality of products and services rendered. It is management's role to ensure student satisfaction in order to guarantee continuity of an academic institution and its future income. Therefore, for a university to survive competition, the quality of products/ services is a fundamental success factor that should not be negotiated or compromised (Tabulawa 2009). It is upon management to ensure a movement from the current level of quality service delivery to a higher one. Thus, quality service delivery is necessary and is a sufficient factor for the survival of a university. The need for quality teaching and learning services in higher education is universal (Meier &Toole 2012,13). According to Tabulawa (2009,67), higher education is facing rapid change and as such, these changes highlight the dominant role of management and leadership in maintaining and sustaining morale, enhancing quality service delivery and productivity, guiding and supporting staff at all levels in order for them to cope with this rapid change. It is essential for individuals in higher education management and leadership positions to understand shifting demographics, keep up to date with new technologies, appreciate the commercialisation of tertiary institutions, be aware of the changing relationships between tertiary institutions and governments and the move from a monopolistic tertiary education system to a competitive one. Current management must undergo training on leadership, and new management identified and prepared through succession planning (Jansen 2002, 107).

Strategies for enhancing quality service delivery

With regard to ensuring that a university provides students with an enabling and conducive academic and social environment Jones & Gordon (2008), noted that the key issue was to facilitate building capacities of students and making it a priority that they succeed as intellectuals, researchers, leaders, professionals and a creative human resource. More often than not, university students have time and express their

displeasure with university management/ leadership in numerous ways including mass demonstrations and riots; often vandalising university property and causing bodily harm to colleagues, staff and members of the public. Tabulawa (2007,197) further argues that the rules and regulations governing students' conduct and discipline should be fairly enforced and that students' disciplinary regulations need to be monitored, evaluated and reviewed to indicate, among others, the minimum period for resolving disputes/ cases, reporting channels and appeals procedure. The implementation of Quality Management System (QMS) has therefore been considered by some researchers as a strategic decision by tertiary institutions to ensure quality service delivery. This may take the form of ISO certification, structured specific training and development series for top management, deans, heads of department and customer care or a combination of the two approaches. Austin & Mark (2009,111) noted that the international standard specifications for quality management system include:

- The need to demonstrate the knowledge, skills and ability to consistently provide a product/ service that meets customer and applicable legal and other regulatory requirements;

- Building customer satisfaction through effective application of quality management system, including monitoring and evaluation for continual improvement and sustainability of the system and the assurance of conformity to customer and relevant regulatory requirements;

- The recruitment and selection of vice chancellors, deputy vice chancellors, deans, directors, deputy directors, heads of departments, administrators and managers for the operational units should be done competitively at all levels and remuneration be pegged to competence and individual performance.

Figure1: Five Functions of Management
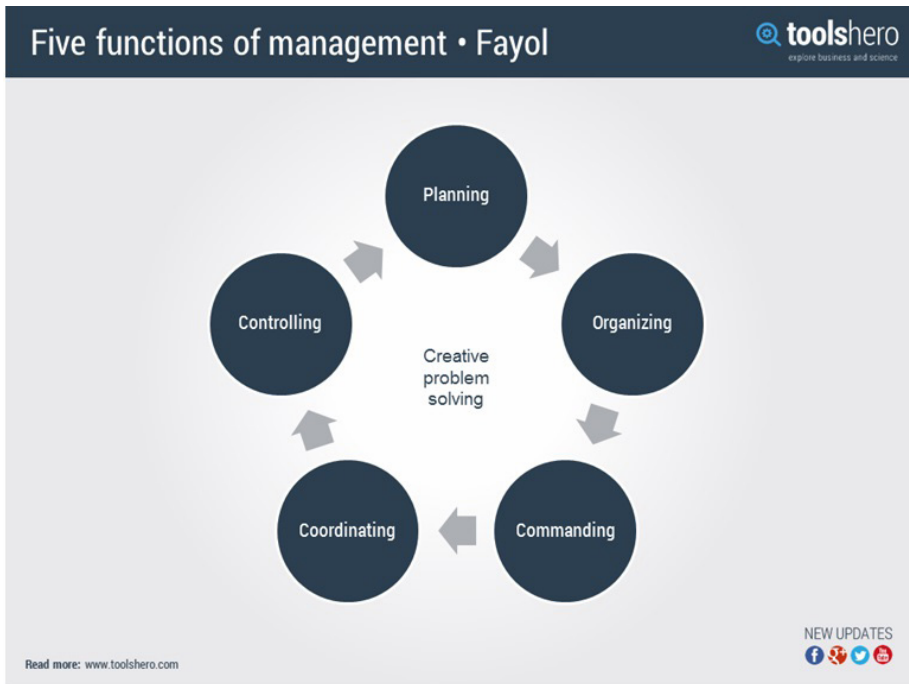
Henry Fayol as cited by van Viet (2014)

The literature on quality service delivery highlights the importance, for the tertiary education sector, to inspect the services provided by their institutions in order to motivate universities and other tertiary institutions to commit themselves to constant improvements and innovations in terms of service delivery. In the higher education context, according to Tabulawa (2009,156), service delivery involves the education experiences of the students as they are considered to be the primary customers. The traditional methods of assessing service delivery levels in tertiary institutions (e.g. measuring input levels such as total expenditure per student and number of library volumes) are out-dated due to their deficiency. Service delivery in the twenty first century is as well driven by outcomes assessment, which requires measuring the desired results of respective universities' efforts that are more strongly directed to lifelong learning (Bernett, 2012,312). Other service delivery outcomes include, but are not limited to the assessment/ evaluation of quality in teaching and learning and measuring the quality of the overall student experience. These approaches are based

on subjective student expectations, perceptions and experiences which are mandatory for quality service delivery and institutional promotion. These student satisfaction assessments results may be used as a tool for closing the gap between the conventional views on how to advance tertiary education and more market-oriented approaches. Market related strategies are appropriate for current higher education institutions where there is recognition of academic methods, processes and procedures as a long-term investment in students' lives and wellbeing. These viewpoints call attention to the need of understanding service delivery as an outcome. Thus, student expectations, perceptions, views and experiences are very important in addressing service delivery in a tertiary institution (Bernett, 2012, 312).

Findings

The following findings were reached after a critical analysis of the literature review aimed at addressing the problem statement and the objectives of the study. These findings include amongst others, the following: Management not focused on quality customer satisfaction; inadequate service quality standards; service performance inconsistencies; promise not matching service delivery, and the unpredictability of the level of student tolerance

Management not informed of customers' needs

The University of Botswana management does not take into consideration the diverse and shifting needs of students in providing programmes of study that are relevant in subject matter and appropriate teaching approaches.

Inadequate service quality standards:

It is sometimes a challenge for the University to meet or even exceed customer expectations and demands. For example, a shortage of lecturers in some disciplines and the need for optimal student enrolments has resulted in an increase in class sizes, and as a result stretching the lecturer: student ratio. This has implications on the level of individual attention given to students by their lecturers. Further, lecturers are expected to undertake multiple roles including curriculum writing, lecturing, mentoring, thesis supervision, project supervision and any other administrative responsibilities. In the above scenario, the level of service quality within the university may become less standardised and less desirable over time.

Service performance inconsistencies:

The challenge for University of Botswana management is to ensure that university service specifications such as the course content, service delivery and application meet the expectations of students consistently. This is a concern as

performance associated with the above mentioned specifications is highly context driven and is based on a variety of factors, often beyond the control of actors involved. University learning experience and orientation in general cannot entirely be evaluated by student grades alone; university service performance should always go beyond tangible forms. In addition, learning objectives must not necessarily lead to quantifiable outcomes. As some would argue, the relevance of any programme of study can only be measured and evaluated years later after knowledge and skills acquired by respective students have subsequently been applied in professional contexts.

When promises do not match service delivery

Discrepancies between promises made and service delivery is mainly the result of inaccurate communication of the University from exhibitions/ tertiary education fairs, advertisements and pamphlets. UB management tends to overpraise their services, leading to impressive promises. This misrepresents their actual potential and general academic readiness. For instance, the University boasts about its advanced technology used in various laboratories, computer systems and other learning facilities. In actual fact, students are always experiencing difficulties with online registration due to computer systems (iERP) failure or inability to use the system as they are never taken through 'user- training'. As a result, students are then forced to undergo late registration and or some students registering for the wrong subjects.

Students' tolerance

The level of student tolerance is unpredictable to the university of Botswana management. Judgment on whether a service was of good or bad quality is largely dependent on how students perceive the actual service performance based on their desires and expectations. The level of tolerance in university service standards differs from one area to the other; for instance, the more important an area is perceived to be, the smaller the boundary of tolerance. Students' willingness to adjust their expectations on service standards can be achieved through the availability of a wide range of choices. These should diversify the student expectation levels in a way that the shortcomings of one service delivery can be offset by the strengths of another. From the holistic education perspective, support services and facilities should play an equally important role in contributing to the overall quality of service in higher education.

Like any other organisation, the tertiary education sector relies largely on quality service delivery and quality management in order to remain competitive. The main concerns for tertiary institutions across the world are to keep up with yearly enrolment rates and create vast opportunities for cross- boundary learning, lifelong learning and collaboration. Quality service delivery in higher education goes beyond the lecture theatre; it encompasses students' experiences derived from their tertiary

academic journey that resides both within and outside the lecture theatre (Cole, 2005, p.78). As such, service quality in tertiary education is not only concerned with tangibles like course materials, computers; it relies on the institution to produce quality services. To a greater extent, being student- oriented is a key component of achieving quality service in higher education with an emphasis on student empowerment/ development as seen having an equally important relationship with lecturers' professional growth (Jansen, 2002, p.178).

Discussion

Even though the learning process should be academically rigorous, it should allow for a certain degree of flexibility in areas concerning course selection, monitoring and assessment. With modern technology, university of Botswana course design and delivery should be progressive, where innovation and construction of knowledge ought to be the by-product of learning. The University of Botswana management should take into consideration the diverse and shifting needs of students in providing programmes of study and teaching approaches. The shortage of lecturers was a result of high turnover rates. Therefore, the University of Botswana management should invest in retaining, engaging and developing employees because human resource development leads to higher employee motivation and productivity, hence competitive advantage. Both monetary and non-monetary forms of motivation should be explored and implemented. Employee motivation is positively correlated with performance and loyalty; therefore it is a key tool for quality service delivery. Unmotivated employees are a liability to the university, costing it large amounts of money in lost productivity and high turn-over rates, attracting recruitment and selection costs. In order for management to ensure that university service specifications such as the course content, service delivery and application meet the expectations of students consistently, surveys should be administered on a regular basis. Management should therefore upgrade university IT systems to be able to handle the massive data input. Another option is to extend the registration period to 2 weeks, where half of the faculties would register during week 1 and the other half during week 2: User- training should be on the agenda for student orientation. This will enable students to be able to register online with ease. Students' willingness to adjust their expectations on service standards is achieved through the availability of a wide range of choices.

Management should look into increasing university programmes of study. This would diversify the student expectation levels because shortcomings of one service delivery can be offset by the strengths of another. Support services and facilities play an equally important role in contributing to the overall quality service in higher education, so management should not only focus on academics and turn a blind eye to support services and facilities. A high performing, committed, passionate and innovative workforce is

essential for organisational growth and survival, therefore employee motivation should be a priority in order to ensure quality service delivery and competitive advantage. The competitive advantage will help drive UB employees towards achieving its vision to be a leading centre of academic excellence in Africa and the world, therefore University of Botswana should put measures in place in order to ensure full employee engagement.

Recommendations

Like any other university, the University of Botswana is accountable to its stakeholders. In order to justify its continued existence, UB management needs to guarantee the general public that the academic institution they lead offers quality teaching, research, academic leadership, professional service and community service. To improve service delivery and student satisfaction in UB, the researcher recommends that management implement the following:

- Management must invest in improving academic staff services because lecturers play a major role in determining student satisfaction and fulfilling student needs.

- On-going mechanisms and unbiased measures of student satisfaction, which constitute essential elements of quality service delivery, should be established.

- A continuous assessment of student challenges, problems, complaints and expectations, and identify effective possible solutions within a reasonable time frame.

- Management should undergo training to acquire skills on converting the results of information analysis (from various service delivery assessments) into projects and activities that will ultimately increase student satisfaction. Intensive research must also be conducted in order to identify the most significant factors that shall contribute to successful implementation of quality standards in the University of Botswana.

Conclusion

In today's highly competitive academic era where students have several options available to them, factors that enable universities to attract and retain students should be comprehensively studied. Tertiary institutions aiming to gain a competitive edge in future need to explore effective and creative ways to attract, retain, build and sustain stronger relationships with students (Wilsons & Matthews, 2009, 41). As a result of the marketisation of tertiary institutions, students are increasingly regarded as customers. Therefore, the satisfaction of their educational experience is fundamental to the institution's popularity/ publicity and competitive edge over other tertiary institutions. However, not all instructors treat their students as customers, in fact, in this context, it does not make sense to make assumptions that 'customers are always right' and customer expectations serve the best interest of the university. It is necessary for tertiary institutions to operationalize the concept of 'customers' as seen functioning in the internationalisation and marketization process of academic institutions. Here, the assumption will be that scholars are the direct accomplices of knowledge co-construction where there is full participation in meaning-making and signifying is the cornerstone of knowledge acquisition and experiential learning (Austin & Mark, 2009,116).

Students are the mouthpiece of academic institutions as they feature in institutions' promotional materials to represent experiential visibility and institutional solidarity. In this instance, students serve as customers endorsing service quality offered by institutions they represent (Dick, 2008, 7). The challenge in evaluating service quality is that services are generally short-lived as they last according to the duration of the activity/ process. Hence, service processes are perishable, not tangible and cannot be stored in the way tangible products can. Further, services are consumed as they are produced, without any evident transfer of ownership. As such, customers play an essential part in the transaction of most services. Also, each customer's expectation of service quality is unique and this has led to a lack of standardisation as service quality may vary from customer to customer and from situation to situation (Cole, 2005,98).

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