

THE INFLUENCE OF EDUCATION SERVICE QUALITY LEVEL ON STUDENT SATISFACTION

- THE RESEARCH ON THE UNIVERSITY OF LAW & ECONOMICS HCMC CASE

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Abstract

This research was conducted through two steps. First step, the author discussed with 12 students under the department / agency, different courses studying at University of Economics and Law in the HCM City, to identify the determinants of University Education Service Quality Level which influence the Undergraduate Satisfaction in their courses of studies. Second step, the author studied with a sample size of 557 students were selected in the judgment, the data collection was conducted through direct interviews with the questionnaire. Data analysis bases on Cronbach's α , exploring factor analysis (EFA), correlation, linear regression, t-test, ANOVA-test, ... In the order of importance, our research results have revealed the following 6 factors determining how satisfied the undergraduates are towards the University Education Programme: (1) Access, (2) Academic, (3) Support Services, (4) Non-Academic, (5) Infrastructure and (6) Program Issues. In addition, three other factors identified to be the control variables were also revealed in this research: (1) Place of Residence (2) Academic Year and (3) Specialisation in the university.

Key words: service quality, student satisfaction, higher education, higher learning

JEL codes: I21, M19, M31

Introduction

With the increasingly intense competition among the universities in the Higher Education Industry, universities find it more difficult to attract students into their programmes, let alone retaining them throughout their courses of studies with the schools. To date, customers, in general, and students, in specific, have higher demand for products & services quality standard, which requires the University Management Teams to gain more in-depth understanding of the students' needs. Such understanding will direct the universities in devising the strategies to improve Student Satisfaction Level, thereby improving the attracting and retaining rate of students.

Apart from the issues concerning the Education Service Quality alone, how Education Service Quality influences Student Satisfaction is also the current heated issue which has caught the attention of many researchers nowadays, some of whom include Abdullah (2004), A. Ijaz & ctg (2011), Amin Y. Noaman & ctg (2013), Hasnizam Shaari (2014). The emphasis of this research is on the concepts of Education Service Quality Level and Student Satisfaction towards the universities programme

1 The Theoretical Frameworks of Tertiary Education Service Quality and Student Satisfaction

1.1 University Education Service Quality:

According to Firdaus Abdullah (2004, 2005), the Education Service Quality level consists of six elements, namely Non-Academic, Academic, Reputation, Access, Programme Issues, Understanding. According to A.Ijaz &ctg (2011), Education Service Quality is determined by the following five factors Tangibles, Reputation, Cooperation & Support, Reliability, Responsiveness. According to Amin Y.Noaman & ctg (2013), Education Standard comprises the following eight elements such as Curriculumm, Staff, Career Prospects, Infrastructure, E-services, Library, Administrative Services, Location.

According to A.Ijaz &ctg (2011), Education Service Quality is determined by the following 5 factors (1) *Tangibles*, (2) *Reputation*, (3) *Cooperation & Support*, (4) *Reliability*, (5) *Responsiveness*. *Tangibles* are assessed via appearance, service staff uniform, service infrastructure; *Cooperation & Support* are seen via the schools' and universities' care towards individual student, as well as the efforts to create conducive learning environment to enhance learning experience for students; *Reliability* is manifested via the ability to deliver the service appropriately and timely from the very beginning; *Responsiveness* can be assessed via the willingness and readiness of the staff in meeting the students' needs.

According to Amin Y.Noaman & ctg (2013), Education Standard comprises the following 8 elements (1) *Curriculum*- seen via the suitable modules that match the educational needs, the skillsets each module equips students with, module's flexibility and the wide selection of modules for students to choose from; (2) *Staff*- assessed via expertise, working attitude, communication skills; (3) *Career Prospects*- demonstrated via vocational skillsets, network with corporates, career opportunities via Career Fairs, chances to participate in post-graduate programmes, Overseas Learning Program and global work opportunities; (4) *Infrastructure*- manifested via class size, experiment labs, communications offices, healthcare

offices, canteens, sports area; (5) *E-services*- manifested via website that provides timely, accurate, updated & accessible information which is also available on other medium on the Internet or SMS; (6) *Library*- seen via the number of books/ magazines, rich & accessible databank, sufficient library space for students, and convenient opening hours; (7) *Administrative Services*- assessed via quick problem solving, clear guidance, availability of e-administrative service platform, convenient opening hours and, (8) *Location*- safe accessible location with parking lots in the campus.[32,pg.740]

Therefore, education service quality is a multifaceted concept which revolves around the following elements (1)Non-academic (i.e. concerning the responsibilities of the non-teaching staff), (2) Academic (i.e. concerning the responsibilities of the teaching staff to assist students in their studies and research), (3) Access (i.e. the accessibility, readiness and convenience), (4) Program Issues (i.e. the variety of modules, flexible educational system, enriching curriculum content), (5) Understanding (i.e. the consultation services, healthcare services, etc.), (6) Infrastructure (i.e. teaching aids, recreation area, location etc.) and (7) Other Support Activities (i.e. Library, Labs, Canteens etc.)

1.2. Student Satisfaction:

According to Oliver (1999), Customer Satisfaction is the overall reflection on their feelings towards the service providers or the service provided based on the perceived difference between what the customers receive and what they expect prior to using the service [60,pg 34]. According to Valarie A.Zeithaml (2000), Satisfaction is the result of service quality, product quality, perceived prices which are influenced by personal & situational factors [66]. Philip Kotler (2003) mentioned that Customer Satisfaction is customers' feelings originated from the comparison of the actual experience and the prior expectation of the products/ services. Customer satisfaction has 3 levels (1) feeling unsatisfied when customer actual experience < customer expectation, (2) feeling satisfied when the actual experience = customer expectation and (3) feeling delightful when the actual experience > customer expectation [55 pg.128].

Elliot & Healy (2001) found out that students' satisfaction is usually the experience-based temporary attitude towards Study Evaluation. Students are satisfied when the actual results match or exceed their own expectations. According to Gold (2001), students are the main customers of the education institutions/ universities. They always have certain expectations towards the education institutions/ universities. When those expectations are met, they will be satisfied and become more loyal towards the education institutions/ universities (Juillerat & Schereiner 1996)

Therefore, students' satisfaction towards education service quality is students' feelings towards the education services provided by the university and they are influenced by personal (e.g. gender, academic year, specialization, etc.) and situational factors.

1.3. The relationship between education service quality level & Student Satisfaction:

Parasuraman & ctg (1994), Valarie A. Zeithaml (2000), service quality influences customer satisfaction. According to Spreng & ctg (1996), Oh (1999), service quality is the premise for customer satisfaction. European Customer Satisfaction Indicators (ECSI) (1998) states that the influencing factors on customer satisfaction are (1) Company image, (2) Customer expectation, (3) Experience quality, and (4) Perceived value ("perceived prices")

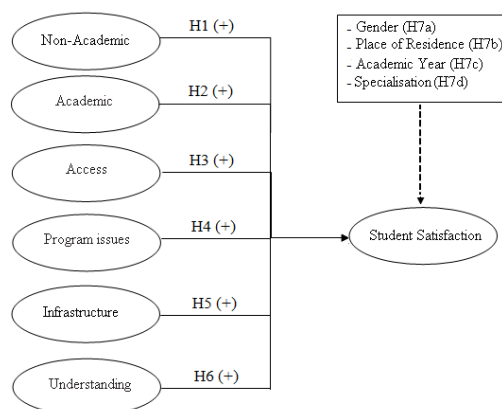
According to Juillerat & Schreiner (1996), Elliot & Healy (2001), Gold (2001), Helgesen & Nettet (2007), there is a position correlation between service quality provided and students' satisfaction.

Therefore, service quality has an influence on customer satisfaction in general and education service quality has an influence on student satisfaction in specific. Thus, when the University Management Teams improve the education service standard, it results in student satisfaction.

1.4. The Hypotheses and the Suggested Research Framework:

After reviewing various research and their qualitative research results, we find Firdaus Abdullah's model (2004) an appropriate theoretical model for this research project. The main reason is because Firdaus Abdullah's research was conducted in the universities, with target sample size consisted of both the undergraduates and the alumni.

In this research, since it was only conducted with students under National Official Programme, the factor Reputation will not play a significant role in students' satisfaction towards the education service level. Instead, the factor "Infrastructure" will be considered together with the following suggested hypothesis: *H1- Non-academic has a positive correlation with Student Satisfaction, H2- Academic has a positive correlation with Student Satisfaction, H3- Access has a positive correlation with Student Satisfaction, H4- Program Issues has positive correlation with Student Satisfaction, H5- Infrastructure has a positive correlation with Student Satisfaction, H6: Understanding has a positive correlation with Student Satisfaction, H7a: Gender has an influence on Student Satisfaction, H7b: Place of Residence has an influence on Student Satisfaction, H7c: Academic Year has an influence on Student Satisfaction, H7d: Specialisation has an influence on Student Satisfaction.*



Picture 1: Suggested Theoretical Framework

2. Research Methodology

The research was conducted by using both qualitative and quantitative research techniques. Qualitative techniques were used to explore and identify the determinants of service level & adjust the measurements of the influence of education service level on Student Satisfaction. In-depth interviews were conducted on 12 undergraduates of different specialisations & academic years. The qualitative research results confirmed that the suggested concepts in the research model were all appropriate and 37 observed variables were utilized to measure the concepts examined in this research.

Quantitative research techniques were used to validate the model and the hypothesis. We used Judgment Sampling, with the sample audience being students of University of Law & Economic. The sampling size was determined to be 10 times more than the number of observed variables, which is consistent with Hair & ctg (2010) principles. Since 37 observed variables were used in this research, our sampling size was calculated to be $37 \times 10 = 370$ observations. Data collection process was carried out via direct responses on the 5-point Likert-Scale Survey (Rensis Likert 1932) (1= Totally disagree to 5 = Totally agree)

3. Quantitative research results

3.1. Sample:

650 questionnaires were directly distributed to some of the classes belong to 4 different Academic Years, and 8 different Specialisations. We re-collected back 610 questionnaires (estimated 93.8%), and we were left with 557 questionnaires after filtering out those with unqualified answers. The sample sizes of students/ specialization were all above 50, 65% of which were Year 3 & 4 students while 35% of which were Year 1 & 2 students.

Sample gender ratio for female/ male was 7/3 and Place of Residence ratio for Rural/ Urban was 6/4/

3.2. Measurement scales and the basis for measurement scale for the researched aspects:

The measurements in this research were built upon Firdaus Abdullah’s measurements (2004), adjusted and supplemented to make it well suited to the reality. There are 7 aspects being examined in this research, namely (1) Access, (3) Academic, (3) Supporting services, (4) Non-academic, (5) Infrastructure, (6) Program Issues and (7) Student Satisfaction

3.3. Quantitative Research result:

3.3.1. Evaluation results of the Measurement:

The afore-mentioned aspects were examined via: Cronbach’s α coefficient for reliability and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). The results revealed that the Cronbach’s α of all the observed variables were all within [0.6; 0.811] and all the corrected Item-Total Correlation are bigger than 0.3.

Tab. 1: The variables & the Reliability of the Measurement

No	Measurement	Cronbach α of the measurement
1	NON ACADEMIC (NA)	0.785
2	ACADEMIC (AC)	0.794
3	ACCESS (AS)	0.811
4	PROGRAM ISSUES (PI)	0.749
5	INFRASTRUCTURE (I)	0.791
6	UNDERSTANDING (U)	0.639
7	SATISFACTION (S)	0.806

EFA initially had KMO = 0.932 within the range [0.5; 1], and Barlett’s test of sphericity has p (Sig.) < 0.05 (significance level). This implied that the observed variables were correlated and were entirely suitable to exploratory factor analysis, and Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings is 57.149% > 50%, all variables had factor loading to be bigger than 0.3. However, in the meaning and the scatter have 2 observing variables to be rejected. Subsequent to, other variables (35 variables) will be input SPSS software to analysis exploratory factor second time. The result of exploratory factor analysis in second time has Cronbach's Alpha to belong to the range [0.695;0.835], Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of

Sampling Adequacy = 0.927 to be belong to [0.5; 1], and sig of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy is lower than 0.05, it means that observing variables have correlation each other and entirely to be suitable to exploratory factor analysis, Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings is 54.801% to be bigger than 50%.

Tab. 2: The result of exploratory factor analysis in scale of observing variables

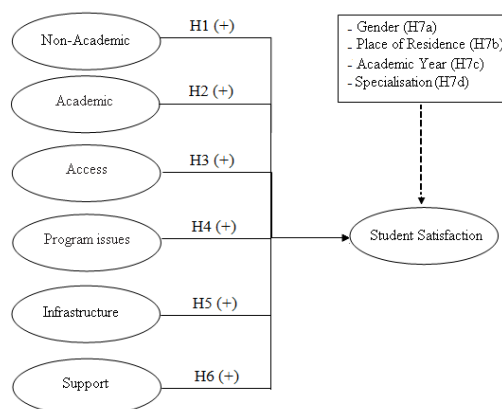
Observed variables	Elements						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Office staff deliver what they have promised students (NA4)	0.667						
Office staff has good knowledge of their specialized task (NA3)	0.666						
Office staff are dedicated in assisting students to resolve problems (NA1)	0.665						
Office has convenient opening hours for students (NA2)	0.64						
Office staff has proper storage of documentations, and can retrieve whenever students need (NA5)	0.635						
The university has uncomplicated administrative process (A6)	0.545						
Students can easily contact the office staff via phone calls or emails (A4)	0.531						
Teaching staff are dedicated in helping students resolve problems (A1)		0.761					
Teaching staff are caring and polite towards students (A2)		0.735					
Teaching staff are knowledgeable enough to resolve students' queries (A3)		0.691					
Teaching staff has appropriate etching methodology to students (i.e. the approach, evaluation method) (A4)		0.673					
Teaching staff can provide timely feedback to students in their course of studies (A5)		0.619					
Teaching staff always make time to resolve students' queries (A6)		0.5					
The University has sufficient recreational space & equipment's for students (e.g. studios, sports etc.) (I1)			0.637				

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The University has sufficient accommodation space for students (i.e. hostels, napping areas, stairs etc.) (I2)			0.633				
Classes has good teacher-student ratio for good in-class interactions (I3)			0.583				
The University is well-equipped with teaching and learning aids (projector, microphones, amplifier, Internet & Wi-Fi connection) (I4)			0.503				
The University is located at a convenient area for students (i.e. near bus stops, safe area etc.) (I5)			0.417				
Students are respected by the school (i.e. privacy of information, proper reasons provided for any change) (AS2)				0.731			
The university encourages the activities organized by the Student Unions & Communities (AS5)				0.626			
The university organizes well consultation sessions & Career Fair for students (U1)				0.605			
Students are having the rights to choose certain things (i.e. attire, study areas etc.) (AS1)				0.491			
The university constantly updates their databank and information (i.e. information, bulletin board etc.) (AS7)				0.462			
You will recommend the university to your relatives or friends (S1)					0.76		
You will pursue you post-graduate courses in this university in the future (S3)					0.685		
You feel proud being the student of this university (S4)					0.634		
You feel satisfied about the university's education service quality (S2)					0.606		
The university has sufficient rooms/ centers for practical sessions/ experiments for the students (I6)						0.66	
The university has good parking lot						0.609	

areas and services that meet the students' needs (I7)							
The university has good cafeteria that meet the student needs well (I8)						0.589	
The university has a good library that meets the students' need for book borrowing well (I9)						0.574	
The university has good healthcare services for the students (I2)						0.376	
The modules are constantly updates to suit the student needs (PI3)							0.823
The universities offer wide choice of specialisations for students (PI1)							0.739
The university provides flexible curriculums and program structures (i.e. time & duration, modules, lecturers etc.) that suit student needs (PI2)							0.649
Eigenvalue	10.157	2.284	1.532	1.439	1.362	1.319	1.087
% of Extraction variance	3.590	3.081	2.689	2.679	2.612	2.495	2.033
% of Cumulative Extraction variance	10.257	19.061	26.745	34.4	41.862	48.991	54.801
Cronbach's alpha	0.835	0.794	0.734	0.752	0.806	0.695	0.749

The matrix result of rotation factor scores is described in the table 2. In the table 2, factor scores of variables are bigger than 0.31; in the meaning and the scatter, generally speaking the measure scales are valuable. Therefore, after analyzing exploratory factor all variables to be changed in particular: the Non-academic consists of NA4, NA3, NA1, NA2, NA5, AS6, AS4. The Academic consists of AC1, AC2, AC3, AC4, AC5, AC6. The variable of material facilities consists of I1, I2, I3, I4, I5. Besides, the Access consists of AS2, AS5, U1, AS1, AS7. the Support consists of I6, I7, I8, I9, U2. The Program Issues consists of PI3, PI1, PI2.



Picture 2: Modified Framework

The hypothesis are modified such as, *H1- Non-academic has a positive correlation with Student Satisfaction, H2- Academic has a positive correlation with Student Satisfaction, H3- Access has a positive correlation with Student Satisfaction, H4- Program Issues has positive correlation with Student Satisfaction, H5- Infrastructure has a positive correlation with Student Satisfaction, H6: Support has a positive correlation with Student Satisfaction, H7a: Gender has an influence on Student Satisfaction, H7b: Place of Residence has an influence on Student Satisfaction, H7c: Academic Year has an influence on Student Satisfaction, H7d: Specialisation has an influence on Student Satisfaction.*

3.3.2. The result of multiple regression model analysis

Tab. 3: The result of multiple regression analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	-0.083	0.178		-0.464	0.643		
Non-Academic	0.151	0.049	0.135	3.079	0.002	0.526	1.902
Academic	0.219	0.050	0.156	4.353	0.000	0.783	1.278
Access	0.261	0.050	0.231	5.209	0.000	0.511	1.956
Program Issues	0.112	0.037	0.113	3.025	0.003	0.716	1.397
<i>Infrastructure</i>	0.131	0.046	0.125	2.845	0.005	0.521	1.921
Support	0.161	0.049	0.138	3.312	0.001	0.583	1.715

Dependent Variable: satisfaction

t test to the coefficient in the multiple regression model has $p(\text{Sig.}) < 0.05$ ($i = \overline{1,6}$), in particular $p(\text{Sig.}) (\text{constant}) > 0.05$ it means that constant = 0. There use Adjusted R Square to evaluate exactly and closely the explanation level of model.

Tab. 4: Model Summary

R	R²	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
0.669 ^a	0.447	0.441	0.51666	1.645

By table 4, there show that Adjusted R Square (R^2) = 0.441, it means that 44.1% of satisfaction cause of students toward training service quality can be explained by six of factors in the multiple regression model. However, there need to make ANOVA analysis to evaluate the suitable level of multiple regression model and use F test to evaluate (see table 5).

Tab. 5: Variance analysis

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	(Sig.)
Regression	118.724	6	19.787	74.126	0.000 ^a
Residuals	146.818	550	0.267		
Total	265.542	556			

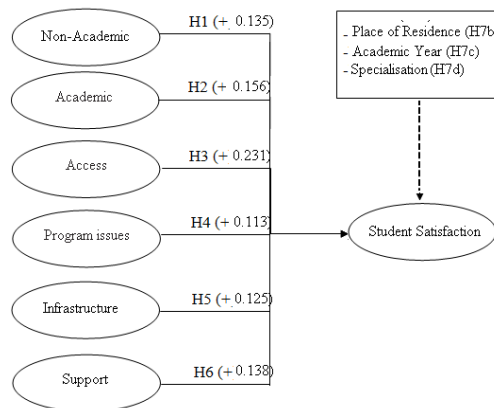
F Value = 74.126, $p(\text{Sig.}) < 0.05$, it means that multiple regression model was built to be suitable to realistic data. VIF value belong to the range [1.281; 2.076], because VIF value < 2 , it means that multiple regression model not to happen the multicollinearity. Durbin-Watson (d) = 1.645, và $1 < d < 3$, there conclude that multiple regression model to be ensure the independence of error (see table 3). P-P plot frequency diagram has expected value to create diagonal line, the point of realistic view focus on the close of diagonal line; therefore the data has normal distribution. Finally, Scatterplot diagram showed that scatter of every – point created an area to be round the line to go through the origin of coordinates (0; 0), and there didn't create any special shape, it means that the variance of error don't change. Therefore, there accepted all hypothesis $H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, H6$.

3.3.3. The result of Mean Square test

To test the difference on student satisfaction to be based on gender, there used t test, had $p(\text{sig.}) (F) = 0.577 > 0.05$, there accepted the variance of two samples to be equivalent and $p(\text{sig.}) (t) = 0.795 > 0.05$, it means that there was not difference on student satisfaction to

training service quality of university, therefore there rejected the *H7a* hypothesis. Similar to t test of student satisfaction to be based on Place of Residence, there accepted *H7b* hypothesis.

To test the difference on student satisfaction to be based on academic year, there make one way ANOVA test, had p (Sig.) (Levene) = 0.082 > 0.05, it means that the variance of samples to be equivalent and p (Sig.) (ANOVA) < 0.05, it means that there was difference on student satisfaction to training service quality of school to be based on academic year and first and second - year student had satisfaction to be higher than the third and fourth year students or there accepted *H7c* hypothesis. Similar to difference test on student satisfaction to be based on Specialisation in the university, there accepted *H7d* hypothesis.



Picture 3: Relative importance of the six dimensions in measuring service quality level on Student Satisfaction

4. Conclusion

The results revealed that education service level is a multifaceted concept that includes, (1) Access, (2) Academic, (3) Support Services, (4) Non-academic, (5) Infrastructure and (6) Program issues. This research results are consistent with Abdullah's research results (2005) regarding the areas Non-Academic, Academic, Access, Program Issues and Understanding. Aspects like Infrastructure, Support Services are consistent with A.Ijaz & ctg's research (2011). Reputation factor isn't proven to influence Student Satisfaction towards the Education Service Level, which is also consistent to the European Customer Satisfaction Indicator. It also shows that students are relying more on their personal experience and judgement in evaluation of service rather than relying on other communication media.

In order to persuade students on the University Education Service Level in Vietnam universities:

The University offices need to simplify the administrative processes, increase opening hours, and provide students with the contact information of the staff in charge in order to ensure swift problem solving process for students. Apart from building evaluation criteria for the teaching staff as the basis for rewards & salaries, the university offices need to have the respectful & friendly attitude towards the students, treat students as young colleagues and understand that each of them is a valuable asset to the university employees. Building good work culture in the university offices play an important role in Staff Satisfaction which will have positive influence on staff attitude in serving the student needs.

Apart from focusing on their areas of expertise, teaching staff needs to be proactive in improving their teaching methodology, providing timely feedback to the students, releasing grades on time as well as answering student queries faster.

The university needs to frequently update their modules to better meet the needs of the society. Online class registration system needs to be accurate and the modules should be flexible to meet student needs regarding choices of modules and lecturers. Class schedule should be arranged neatly within consecutive days to provide opportunities for students to join other clubs and activities, or to work part-time to earn extra income. Special terms and make-up classes should be organized often enough to ensure that students graduate on time. The university can also consider policies to allow students to graduate and receive their certificates when they accomplish their undergraduate courses earlier than the standard duration.

The library plays an important role in student learning and researching process, which makes it essential for the university to ensure sufficient resources, reference books, e-library services to be available. Ensuring conducive space and convenient operating hours for library are also important in enhancing student satisfaction. Labs require periodical check to ensure it meets students' needs. Healthcare services and washrooms need longer operating hours; language centers, canteens, photocopy services, parking lot services need reasonable pricing policies, good service attitude and convenient working duration.

The university needs to place an emphasis on the consultation services for students regarding areas of specialisations and careers, which are especially important to Year 1 and Year 2 Undergraduates. Various Career Fairs need to be organized, and the relationships with the Employers need to be maintained and expanded in order to provide students with more opportunities for good internships. The university websites need to be student-friendly, providing updated information about the schools and their courses in a timely manner. School clubs and student communities should organize helpful programs for the students, and the

programs timing should not clash with the timing of the courses. There is also a need to provide platforms for students to provide feedback and voice out their opinions regarding building and improving the quality of the university services.

5. Research limitations and next steps

This research was conducted only within one university ($R^2 = 44.1\%$). The collection of data from various other universities for comparison purposes will improve the accuracy of the overall conclusion.

The research only considered the Satisfaction of one type of students- the students in the National Official Programme. Other types of students who enroll in the Unofficial Programmes were not considered. Therefore, other types of students and their Satisfaction should be the focus of the future research.

The afore-mentioned limitations have revealed areas which need further research in the future.

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