

Service Quality impact in Higher Education Institutions of Aizawl

Lucy Lalrintluangi Fanai¹

Dr Lalneihluangi Fanai²

1 Research Scholar, Department of Commerce, Mizoram University

2 Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce, Mizoram University

Abstract:

In the modern world, education plays an important role in the aspects of human life as well as society. The growth and development of mankind are being brought about by education. For this, educational institutions are the most important tools which provide formal education. Since quality can be considered the heart of education, providing quality education is an important factor in transforming and developing society as well as human beings. The main objective of this study is to determine the impact of service quality in Higher Education Institutes in Aizawl. Two Government colleges with the highest enrollment were selected for the study. The SERVQUAL model comprising five dimensions such as tangible, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy was used to frame the questionnaire to obtain the gaps between perception and expectation.

Keywords: *Service Quality, SERVQUAL, quality education.*

Introduction:

The satisfaction of students is an important factor that determines the service quality provided. Therefore, educational institutions must provide services to meet student satisfaction. As education plays an important role in the aspects of human life as well as society. The growth and development of mankind are being brought about by education. For this, educational institutions are the most important tools which provide formal education. Since quality can be considered the heart of education, providing quality education is an important factor in transforming and developing society as well as human beings.

For assessing and analyzing the impact of service quality provided in higher educational institutions in Aizawl, the SERVQUAL service quality model which was developed by a

group of American authors, Parasuraman, Valarie A, Zeithaml, and Len Berry in 1988 was used. It highlights the main components of a high-quality service. The SERVQUAL authors originally identified 10 elements of service quality, but in later work, these were collapsed into five factors – reliability, assurance, tangibility, empathy, and responsiveness- creating the acronym RATER. The scale came out with 22 items with five dimensions as mentioned above. Businesses using SERVQUAL to measure and manage service quality deploy a questionnaire that measures both the customers' expectations of service quality before a service encounter in terms of these five dimensions and customers' perceptions of the actual service they received or delivered. They referred to this model as the gap model because the gap identified between customer expectations and perceptions needs to be closed to offer excellent quality.

Service Quality Gap = Expectations (E) – Perceptions (P)

The five generic dimensions are stated as follows:

1. **Tangibility:** Appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials.
2. **Reliability:** Ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.
3. **Responsiveness:** Willingness to help customers and provide prompt service
4. **Assurance:** Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence.
5. **Empathy:** Caring, individualized attention the firm provides to its customers.

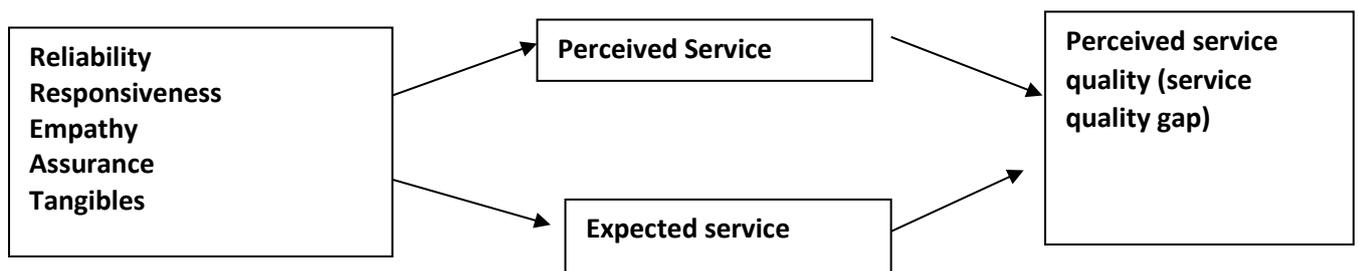


Figure 1: SERVQUAL MODEL

(Source: Brady and Cronin 2001)

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies have assessed service quality provided by various institutions from the viewpoint of customers apart from educational institutions in India and outside India. But a limited study has been found regarding service quality in education in the context of Aizawl. Thus, creating a gap for this study to fill.

Twum and Peprah (2020) mentioned in their study that service quality is very important for higher education institutes for their growth and development as well as for their competitive nature. Service quality is vital for determining the quality of higher educational institutions, thus, confirming that satisfaction can be 100% accounted for by the service quality provided.

Ali H.Y et.al., (2019) find the existence of a gap between the expectation and perception of students for higher education public institutions. Students expected the institutions to provide better facilities, provide campus placement, etc. Keeping themselves updated in their respective fields for teachers is one of the most important points expected by the students.

Nadiri et.al., (2009) also diagnosed the practicability and applicability of the service quality measurement scale to students. Student satisfaction is affected by various factors which include well-trained employees, modern-looking equipment as well as appealing materials such as brochures, pamphlets, etc.

Parasuraman A et.al., (1988) developed a 22-item instrument known as SERVQUAL for the measurement and assessment of customers' perceptions of service quality in service and retailing organizations. The SERVQUAL instrument is then used for comparing their performance with others as well as for finding out their strengths and weaknesses.

Parasuraman A et.al., (1985) attempt in rectifying the concern of attaining quality in products and services by developing a model of service quality. They developed 10 dimensions for the use of customers in forming expectations and perceptions of services.

Kedar B (2015) in his study mentioned that service quality research in higher education is new at least compared to the commercial sector. SERVQUAL instrument was used and found to have validity and reliability. The dimensions are found to significantly impact student

satisfaction, affecting their loyalty. Thus, concluding that service quality is having prime importance for the satisfaction of students.

Voss R et.al., (2007) aims at developing a deeper understanding of the teaching qualities of effective lectures which students desire, and also uncover the underlying desire expectations by students. The study reveals that students want teachers to be knowledgeable, approachable, enthusiastic, and friendly. They also want to encounter valuable teaching experiences for success in the future.

Methodology:

The research employs an exploratory study on randomly selected respondents. The data collection from Government Hrangbana College and Government Aizawl College. The sample size comprises 214 undergraduate students studying at Government Hrangbana college and 204 undergraduate students studying at Government Aizawl College. Both

Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items
0.956	22

colleges were selected as they were the only state government college with

the greatest student enrollment. Out of 9 departments, 7 departments/subjects which were offered in common in both colleges were selected. A questionnaire was framed using the SERVQUAL Model which highlights the main components of a high-quality service. The SERVQUAL service quality model was developed by a group of American authors, Parasuraman, Valarie A, Zeithaml, and Len Berry in 1988. They referred to this model as the gap model because the gap identified between customer expectations and perceptions needs to be closed to offer excellent quality. Service quality gap = Perceptions (P) – Expectations (E). statistical tools such as paired t-tests and independent t-tests were used for analysis.

Reliability test:

A reliability test was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha for the 22 items under 5 dimensions. The result showed a value of 0.956 which is greater than 0.70 ($0.956 > 0.70$), thus, showing the reliability and consistency of the items under each dimension.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To determine the impact of service quality provided in higher education institutions in Aizawl.
2. To determine the service quality gap among students of selected colleges.

To achieve the objectives, the following null hypotheses have been formulated:

H1: there is no significant difference between student's expectations and perception of service quality for the tangible dimension

H2: there is no significant difference between student's expectations and perception of service quality for the reliability dimension

H3: there is no significant difference between student's expectations and perception of service quality for the responsiveness dimension

H4: there is no significant difference between student's expectations and perception of service quality of the assurance dimension

H5: there is no significant difference between student's expectations and perception of service quality of the empathy dimension

Results and discussions:

Department	Average gap score for tangible dimension	Average gap score for reliability dimension	Average gap score for responsiveness dimension	Average gap score for assurance dimension	Average gap score for empathy dimension
Commerce	0.027	-0.02	-0.1025	-0.1475	0.162
Economics	-0.519	0.114	-0.1675	-0.1875	0.19
Political science	-0.3273	0	0.01	-0.135	0.092
English	0.13	-0.024	0.12	-0.1	-0.256
Mizo	3.46	0.318	0.1925	0.1775	0.298

History	0.102	-0.068	-0.022	-0.1425	-0.198
Education	0.0973	-0.008	0	-0.1475	-0.142
Total	2.97	-0.342	0.0305	-0.6825	0.146

Table 1: Government Hrangbana College

(Source: primary data)

Table 2: Government Aizawl College

(Source: primary data)

The above tables no 1 and 2 show the average gap scores of each dimension of service quality for the seven departments of Government Hrangbana College and Government Aizawl College. To find out the average service quality gap, the total mean scores for each dimension of factors influencing service quality for both expectation and perception were obtained by taking the average of the actual scores obtained by each respondent for each statement. The gap scores for each item under the different dimensions were computed by subtracting the average expectation score from the average perception score (P-E).

We can see that students' perceptions of most departments are relatively lower than expected, confirming that a gap exists in all the dimensions. For Government Hrangbana College, the highest gap score of -2.1155 is obtained by the assurance dimension whereas the lowest gap score of -1.262 is obtained by the empathy dimension. For Government Aizawl College, the highest gap score of 2.97 is obtained by the tangible dimension while the lowest score of

Department	Average gap score for tangible dimension	Average gap score for reliability dimension	Average gap score for responsiveness dimension	Average gap score for assurance dimension	Average gap score for empathy dimension
Commerce	-0.23785	-0.282	-0.4125	-0.363	-0.272
Economics	-0.41555	-0.228	-0.15	-0.43	-0.218
Political science	-0.28885	-0.246	-0.125	-0.3675	-0.272
English	0.1677	-0.094	-0.345	-0.0375	-0.478
Mizo	-0.235	0.022	0.165	-0.1575	0.336
History	-0.252825	-0.224	-0.0725	-0.2125	-0.07
Education	-0.390925	-0.51	-0.51	-0.585	-0.288
Total	-1.6543	-1.562	-1.45	-2.1155	-1.262

assurance dimension.

For both colleges, the assurance dimension observed the highest gap which shows that the knowledge and skills of the teachers are below expectation. The politeness, kindness, and

friendliness of the staff are also below expectations. For Government Hrangbana College, the lowest gap score is obtained by the empathy dimension which shows that perception is higher than expected. Staff and teachers can understand the student's feelings and be sensitive toward their problems. For Government Aizawl College, the lowest gap score is obtained by the tangible dimension which shows that the physical facilities and appearances are higher than expected.

Testing of hypotheses:

For testing the hypotheses (H1 to H5), paired sample t-test was used since the response for both expectation and perception of service quality was taken from the same respondent 1 year apart.

Table 3: Paired sample t-test table for Government Hrangbana College and Government Aizawl College

Dimensions	Paired	Sig (2-tailed)		Sig (2-tailed)	
		HBC		GAC	
Tangible dimension	Pair 1	0.100	Accepted	0.127	Accepted
	Pair 2	0.009	Rejected	0.407	Accepted
	Pair 3	0.117	Accepted	0.580	Accepted
	Pair 4	0.859	Accepted	0.404	Accepted
Reliability dimension	Pair 5	0.009	Rejected	0.625	Accepted
	Pair 6	0.057	Accepted	0.239	Accepted
	Pair 7	0.010	Rejected	0.833	Accepted
	Pair 8	0.747	Accepted	0.133	Accepted
	Pair 9	0.030	Rejected	0.469	Accepted
Responsiveness dimension	Pair 10	0.423	Accepted	0.019	Rejected
	Pair 11	0.153	Accepted	0.972	Accepted
	Pair 12	0.063	Accepted	0.911	Accepted
	Pair 13	0.025	Rejected	0.838	Accepted
Assurance dimension	Pair 14	0.003	Rejected	0.304	Accepted
	Pair 15	0.001	Rejected	0.104	Accepted
	Pair 16	0.26	Accepted	1.000	Accepted
	Pair 17	0.111	Accepted	0.263	Accepted
Empathy dimension	Pair 18	0.039	Rejected	0.357	Accepted
	Pair 19	0.029	Rejected	0.312	Accepted
	Pair 20	0.447	Accepted	0.219	Accepted
	Pair 21	0.313	Accepted	0.838	Accepted
	Pair 22	0.346	Accepted	0.226	Accepted

(source: primary data)

The above table shows that for Government Hrangbana College a difference between expectation and perception exists for 9 pairs which relate to all the dimensions. From the five dimensions, for every nine pairs, the P value is less than 0.05, therefore rejecting the null hypothesis and concluding that there is a significant difference between students' expectations and perceptions of service quality provided by the institution. For the remaining pairs, the P value is greater than 0.05, therefore accepting the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between students' expectations and perceptions of service quality.

For Government Aizawl College, a difference between expectation and perception exists for 1 pair which relates to the responsiveness dimension. The P value is less than 0.05, therefore stating that there is a significant difference between students' expectations and perceptions. For all the other pairs which relate to tangible, reliability, assurance, and empathy dimensions, the P value is greater than 0.05 which concludes that there is no significant difference between students' expectations and perceptions of service quality.

This shows that the expectations of the students of Government Hrangbana College are much higher as compared to students of Government Aizawl College. Even though the null hypotheses are accepted, as we can see from Tables 1 and 2 that there still exists a gap between expectation and perception for Government Aizawl College but the gap score are lower compared to Government Aizawl College.

Conclusion:

The study aims to determine the impact of service quality in higher education institutes in Aizawl. The result showed that there exists a service quality gap in all the dimensions of both colleges which defines that the students perceived negatively the service quality expected. A negative perception of the service quality provided may influence the satisfaction of students. Further development and focus are required to improve the various dimensions. Since students' satisfaction is an important factor in the performance of higher education, the study recommends improvement in staff performance, conducting themselves in students' best interest, and providing help to students in resolving their problems. Treating students equally with respect, staff availability for consultations, and understanding the student's needs are

important dimensions to be focused on for the improvement of service quality provided by educational institutions.

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