Assessing Service Quality Gap of Private University in Bangladesh

Tanzila Rahman Lubna

Abstract:

This research investigated the service gap between student's expectations and perception regarding private university services in Bangladesh with a particular focus on the SERVQUAL model along with the five dimensions: Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy. I investigated the dimensions of quality of university service and its impact on student's satisfaction. A self-administered and structured questionnaire use to collect data from 200 respondents of university students. The SPSS software was used here for analyzing data. Different statistical tools were used which are compatible with my research, such as factor analysis, reliability analysis, and descriptive analysis. I surveyed twenty private universities by using the random sampling method. As for students' perception, the services gap (Expected service - Perceived service), in the dimensions of tangibility, assurance, and empathy, is significant because expected service is below perceived service in the private universities of Bangladesh. But in the dimension of reliability and responsiveness, the services gap is insignificant because expectations are near to perceived service in the same university. The administration and the government both will get benefit from the findings of the study, particularly in the university perspective of Bangladesh. The study base on relatively small sample size (200) from private university in Bangladesh, which may not reflect the whole scenario of Bangladesh.

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1. Introduction

'Education is one of the basic needs among all for the development of human and get-away from poverty' (Sivakumar & Sarvalingam, 2010). Education is essential for national development and building a prosperous society. The Quality of higher education can define in multiple ways. Longanecker & Blanco (2003) showed in their study that public policy implications of changing student's attendance patterns. With the development of the higher education system, Society's concerned about the quality of program is increasing significantly. Much attention is given to public assessment and international rankings of institutions which are promised to serve higher education. Whatever these comparisons tend to over emphasizing research, using research performance as a yardstick of institutional value. If these processes fail to meet up with enhancing the quality of teaching, it is in part because assessing satisfactory teaching quality is challenging. This study reviewed 13 institutions of higher education both public and private universities in Bangladesh, collecting information and setting benchmarks on the satisfactory quality level of their overall services. A questionnaire gave to these participating universities for getting the scope to set out and observe their own practice. Higher education has tremendous future to promote prosperity in the developing nations. In our country (Bangladesh) there is a significant demand for graduate with higher cognitive, non-cognitive, all of the intellectual ability and job specific technical skills and this requires an improvement in the quality and relevant of tertiary education to ensure graduates have more skills regarding market demand. The University Grants Commission of Bangladesh (UGC) is the regulatory body of all public and private universities. There are 46 public and 104 private universities in Bangladesh (ugc-universities.gov.bd). The semester system was first introduced in private universities and for this reason students are capable of completing their degrees in right time. Currently people are so much perturbed about service quality provided by private universities in our country. According to Zeithaml & Bitner (2003) Quality of service is focused on evaluation that reflects the customer's perception of specific dimensions of both tangible and intangible service namely reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles. Although people belief that student who are not able to admit themselves in a public universities always go to private universities, the number of praiseworthy students seeking admission of private universities is raising gradually. The main purpose of this paper was to evaluate the service excellence gap of private universities in Bangladesh by using SERVQUAL model with five dimensions and try to launch any divergence between student expectation & perception.

Basically the current study focused on the following research questions (i) what are the factor/service(s) incorporated for the quality of higher education? (ii) what are the expectations of the students regarding those benefits/ factors (services) for the quality of higher education? (Expectation) (iii) what are the existing factor (benefits) are available in the selected University? (Perception) and (iv) what are the result of deviation between expectation and perception in terms of the benefits/services/ factors? The objectives of my study are (i) to identify the factor/service(s) incorporated for the quality of higher education, (ii) to know the expectations of the students regarding those benefits/ factors (services) for the quality of higher education (Expectation), (iii) To identify the existing factor (benefits) are available in the selected University? (Perception), and (iv) to calculates the deviation between expectation and perception in terms of the benefits/services/factors.

2. Literature Review

Providing education service is such types of service that directly impacted on by the provider. Providing quality services is important for both services oriented firms and tangible product oriented company. We can evaluate tangible product through standards but while measuring

service quality it is different according to different authors. Kotler & Keller (2006) defined the service as "activities or benefits which are offered for sale, or that are offered for being related with particular product". According to WalfriedLasser et al. (2000) service is a set of characteristics that fulfill customer's requirement as per expectation to build partnerships. Students Perceptions regarding education experience have become increasingly important than university attempt to become more student oriented.

The literature review has shown that most of the studies used the SERVQUAL model to measure service quality in higher education. In SERVQUAL model they can also use five service dimensions for measuring criteria: reliability, tangibility, responsibility, security and empathy (Badri et al. 2005). Boulding et al. (1993) used contained 36 items to study expectations and perceptions related with providing services in an educational setting. So, as Bearden and Netemeyer stated that the objective of crafting SERVQUAL has been to obtain an overall measure of quality, or excellence, based on customer actual expectations versus experience they achieve (Eastwood et al., 2005). The SERVQUAL scale (questionnaire) has two major sections: one to map customers/service receivers expectations in relation to a service segment and the other to map their perception in relation to a certain service-oriented company (Sagney et al, 2004). Legcevic (2009) studied to the students' expectations and perceptions quality of service in the faculty of law at Osijek University in Croatia and found that students' acquired expectations exceeded their perceptions. Afridi et al., (2016) attempted to identify excellence service of three private universities and institutions of Peshawar in Pakistan using SERVQUAL model with quantitative approach by distributing 205 instruments where showed students' expectations are more than their perception of service quality in higher education sector and authors got highest mean for responsiveness and lowest for assurance. Zeshan et al. (2010) assessed the service quality among eight business schools in Pakistan shows that the students obtained perception of low quality in all five dimensions of service quality (tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy) in all of these institution. Yousapronpaiboon (2014) attempted to examine the legitimacy and accuracy of SERVQUAL with five dimensions in estimating higher education in Thailand with the participation of 350 undergraduate students form a private university. They found that the higher education system are failed to meet up the students expectations and it stated that updated facilities needs to be ensured to develop their service standards. Abu Hasan et al. (2008) studied service quality in private owned higher education institutions and found in their study that five dimensions and overall service quality had a significant relationship. Khodayari et al. (2011) analyzed the perceptions and expectations of Islamic Azad University in Iran, their results stated that there was a significant gap between student's expectations and perceptions among all dimension of the service quality. Enayati et al. (2013) conducted a descriptive survey to assess the service quality of Islamic Azad University of mazandaradn using SERVQUAL where 373 students have taken as a sample of the study. Authors used paired t test and friedman's test to analysis the data and found that in all dimension students perception level is lower than their expectation. The highest split mean was seen in the aspect of tangibility and lowest was seen in empathy. The study attempts to identify some factors that affect the level of satisfaction and the excellence of service in selected private colleges in Vietnam where data were collected from 500 students through a well-designed questionnaire on a five point likert scale and interviewed system. Data were analyzed through KMO test and authors used KMO test attempts to investigate the perceptions of students about the service standards using result for multiple regression analysis and found that the students satisfaction level was influenced by five factors namely tangibility, guarantee, reliability, responses and empathy. To survive in today's competitive business environment, it is significant to evaluate the quality of service of private universities in Bangladesh what they

promised to deliver. Although very few researchers have been done on this topic. Kalam et al. (2017) conducted a study to correlate and contrast the standard of service regarding higher education in Bangladesh and used the same SERVQUAL model to assess the gap between students perception and expectation with five dimension namely tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. Author suggests and recommends some specific efforts that must be took to mitigate the gap and improve the quality of service provided by the universities in Bangladesh. Manzoor (2013) conducted a research on Measuring Student Satisfaction in public and private Universities in Pakistan. The main objective of that study was to find out the specific factors which affect the satisfaction of the students in universities in Pakistan. This specific study is aimed to find the specific factor which affects students satisfaction in universities in Pakistan and to find these factors' relationship either positive or negative with the satisfaction. During the study different statistical tools were used, which were compatible with our study such as reliability analysis, multiple regression analysis and ANOVA. In our questionnaire we have used "Likert Scale" to get the more accurate and specific results and views from the respondents. The results of this study shows that the facilities provided to the students regarding the sports facilities and the transportation facilities have significant effect on the expected satisfaction of the students in universities, while the accommodation and its related facilities don't have any significant effect on the satisfaction of the students.

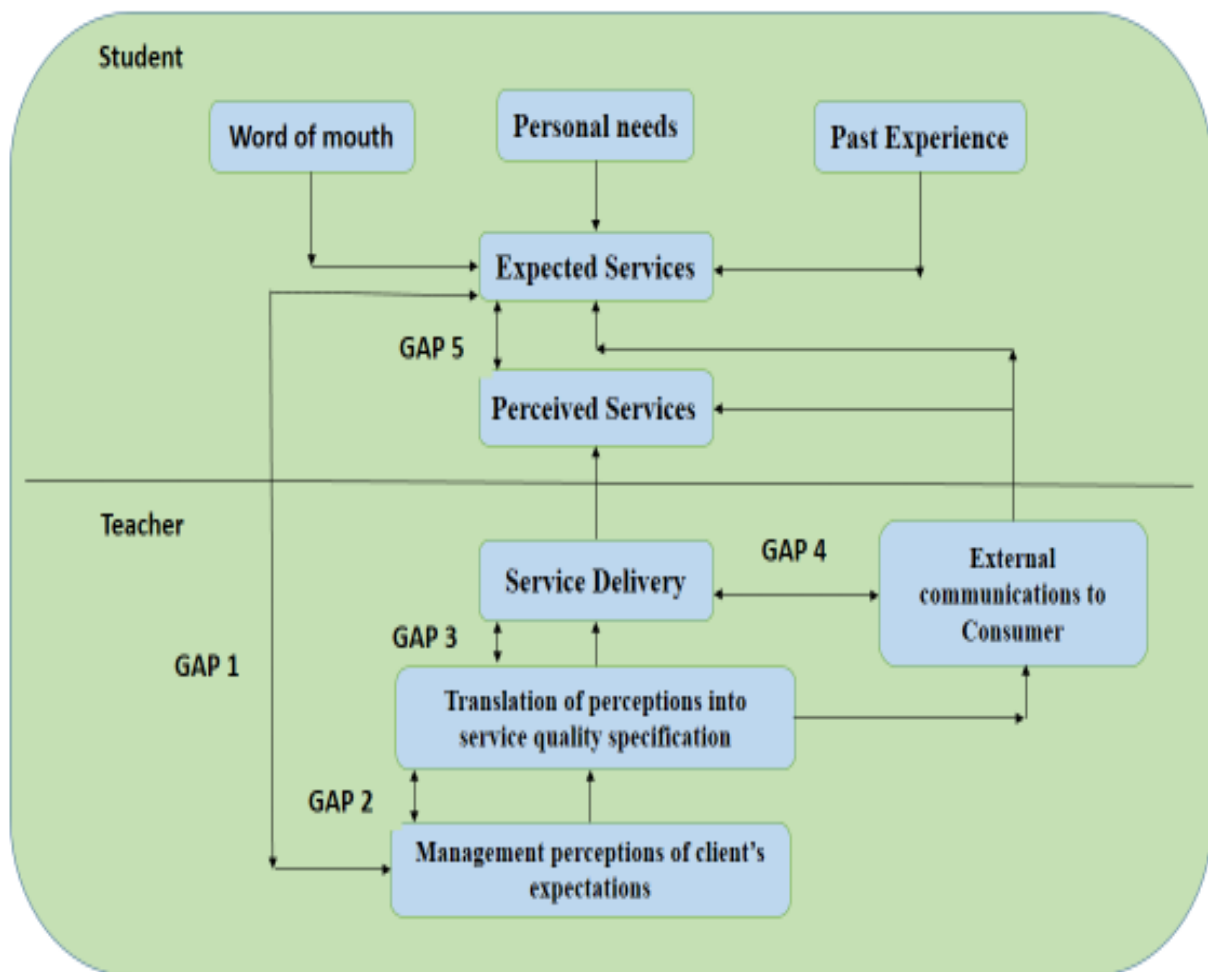## 3. Conceptual Framework of SERVQUAL Model

Figure-1: Conceptual Framework of service quality gaps

4. Research Design and Method:

I have used two types of data for conducting the research: primary data for statistical analysis and secondary data for the literature review. A Likert scale used in the questionnaire to ask the respondents on the five-point scale where, 5= Strongly agree, 4= Agree, 3= Neutral, 2= Disagree, and 1= Strongly disagree. For conducting the study, I have selected only 20 private university as the sample. Therefore, the students of those universities consider as respondents of the research. All the universities are from Bangladesh. 20 Private university namely: North South University, Brac University, Sylhet International University, University of Science & Technology, Chittagong, Pundra university of science & technology, Metropolitan University, Varendra University, Bangladesh islami University, Leading University, Chittagong independent university, Feni University, Sonargaon University, Fareast University, Cox's Bazar international university, Rabindra maitree University, Kushtia, University of global village, Bangladesh army University of science & technology, Saidpur, Green University of Bangladesh, Exim bank agricultural University, Dhaka international university. I communicated with the students by online survey shared with structured questionnaire of selected universities to collect data for the study. The sample size was very significant for getting an expected result of research work. From the mentioned area, 203 response taken from online survey of different universities for conducting the study. Thus, the total sample size was 200. I use judgmental as well as the convenience sampling method for the research. Stepwise regression used to test the hypothesis and find out the mean and standard deviation to know the relationship between independent variables and dependent variable and to assess the service quality gap. Ms. Excel used to carry out calculations in some cases. SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) software used for descriptive analysis and reliability statistics.

5. Analysis and Findings

5.1 Factors incorporated the service-quality of private universities in Bangladesh

This work indicates that the environment created by students' perceptions influence the quality of universities. Based on the pre-test result (presented in table-5.1), top 22 factors were selected for the current study.

5.2 Reliability Test

Table 5.2 showed the value for the different 22 variables I used in the current study. The data from the Likert Scale put in the SPSS to calculate the reliability of these scales in the form of Cronbach's alpha. Values of alpha are between "0" to "1". The higher the value of alpha, the higher the reliability is. Values of alpha that are more than "0.70" show more reliability. On the other hand, the values which less than "0.60" indicate less reliability. In my research the value are in the acceptable range, and the table 5.2 already shows that result. I have used 22 variables that calculated for all items is "0.914". The value calculated for all the variables I use above the acceptable range.

5.3 Service Gap of Private universities in Bangladesh

The relative position of service quality gap based on five dimensions of private universities in Bangladesh has been shown below in table 5.3. Table 5.3 indicated that grand mean scores of service expectation and perception on different service dimensions like tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance & empathy are 4.564, 4.588, 4.521, 4.517 & 4.520 and 3.326, 3.450, 3.309, 3.278 & 3.210 respectively private universities in Bangladesh. Here the service gaps are 1.238(tangibility), 1.138(reliability), 1.212(responsiveness), 1.239(assurance) & 1.310 (empathy). Moreover, it has clearly been evident that the service gaps (Expected

service - Perceived service) of all the dimensions are far below from perceived service. So there is a significant gap exist among all the dimensions under service quality model.

Table 5.1 Factors incorporated the service-quality on private universities in Bangladesh:

S.L	Factors	Actual Respondent	Response Respondent	Percentage
1.	Degree to which classrooms and study rooms are well furnished & well equipped	25	24	96%
2.	Layout of classrooms	25	19	76%
3.	Lighting in classrooms	25	20	80%
4.	The degree to which curriculum is up to date	25	25	100%
5.	Availability of textbooks and journals	25	23	92%
6.	Pleasant & appropriate environment for the students	25	24	96%
7.	Registration is timely and error-free	25	25	100%
8.	Transparency of marking system	25	25	100%
9.	Strong educational background of teachers	25	24	96%
10.	The university keeps its records accurately	25	19	76%
11.	Maintaining the students education records & files properly	25	25	100%
12.	Staff sincere interest in solving student's problem	25	20	80%
13.	Employees' competence & ability to solve students' problems	25	23	92%
14.	Instructors give adequate time for understanding the subject	25	25	100%
15.	Availability of lecturers to assist you	25	23	92%
16.	Lecturers capacity to solve problems when they arise	25	23	92%
17.	Channels for expressing student complaints are readily available	25	24	96%
18.	Staffs capacity to solve problems when they arise	25	19	76%
19.	Providing students prompt service with no delay	25	25	100%
20.	Feeling secured & relaxed when interacting with university administration	25	24	96%
21.	Queries are dealt with efficiently and promptly	25	20	80%
22.	Communication skills: courses are well taught by the lecturers in this university	25	25	100%
23.	The degree to which university involve with the community	25	20	80%
24.	Friendly and courteous university staffs	25	25	100%
25.	University's staffs knowledge on rules and procedures	25	19	76%
26.	Building confidence in students mind	25	24	96%
27.	Appropriate working hour facilities for students visit	25	25	100%
28.	Understanding specific needs of the students	25	24	96%
29.	The extent to which lecturers are sympathetic and supportive to the needs of students	25	20	80%
30.	Opening hour of computer rooms to the students	25	20	80%
31.	Staff are willing to give students individual attention	25	24	96%
32.	University are fair and unbiased in their treatment of individuals students	25	24	96%

Source: Survey data

Table-5.2 Reliability Test

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
All Factors	0.914	22

Source: SPSS Output

Table 5.3. Service Gap of Private Universities in Bangladesh

S.L	Dimensions	Expectation (Grand Mean Scores)	Perception (Grand Mean Scores)	Service Gap
1	Tangibility	4.564	3.326	1.238
2	Reliability	4.588	3.450	1.138
3	Responsiveness	4.521	3.309	1.212
4	Assurance	4.517	3.278	1.239
5	Empathy	4.520	3.210	1.310

Source: SPSS Output

Table 5.3 presented in the figure-5.3

Service Quality Gap of Private Universities

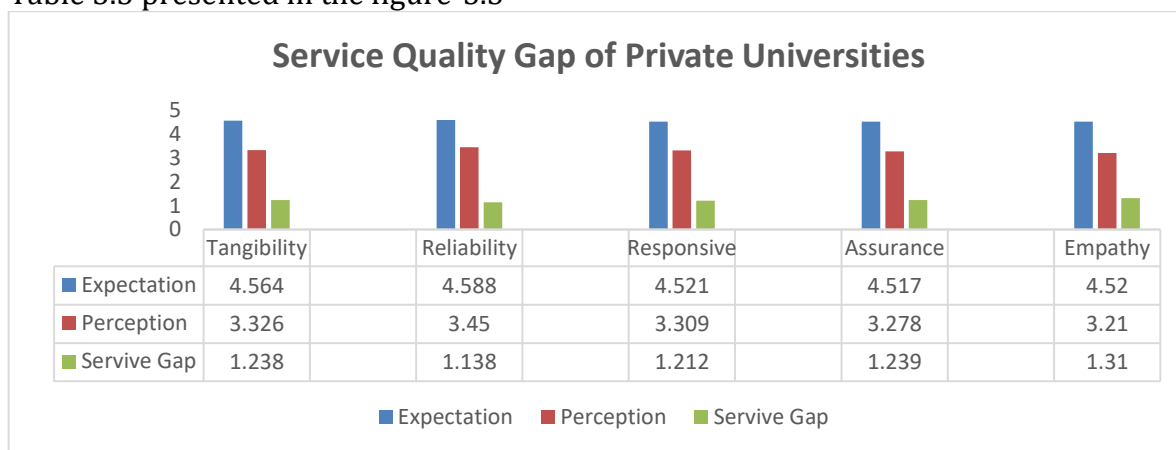|	Tangibility	Reliability	Responsive	Assurance	Empathy
Expectation	4.564	4.588	4.521	4.517	4.52
Perception	3.326	3.45	3.309	3.278	3.21
Servive Gap	1.238	1.138	1.212	1.239	1.31

Figure 5.3: Service Gap of Private Universities in Bangladesh

Figure 5.3 indicated that grand mean scores of service expectation and perception on different service dimensions like tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance & empathy are 4.564, 4.588, 4.521, 4.517, 4.520 and 3.326, 3.450, 3.309, 3.278, 3.210 respectively in private universities in Bangladesh. Here the service gaps are 1.238(tangibility), 1.138(reliability), 1.212(responsiveness), 1.239(assurance) & 1.310 (empathy). Moreover, it has been evident that the service gaps (Expected service - Perceived service) of all the dimensions are far below from perceived service. So there is a significant gap that exist among all the dimensions under the service quality model.

Conclusion

Although Bangladesh has seen a tremendous growth in the public education sector in the higher level studies, the quality of higher education services in this sector has been questioned by several researchers and government regulatory bodies. There are many service quality attributes/dimensions concern with quality services that are important to be studied and understood. The study explored the variables associated with student expectations and perceptions with their educational experiences at the Bangladeshi Universities. The questionnaire was reliable. To determine and assess the service gap with the service quality provided by higher educational institutions is not easy but not impossible. The results can be very helpful in minimizing the service gap for management of any educational institution to leverage or enhance the services provided. In this study, the results

mention that students have strong relationship with depending variable. The result declared also showed the areas of the university's service quality that attain the requirements and needs of students expectations and their perceptions have better potential to build strong relationship with the quality of higher education. This study also showed that generally the education level at higher learning institutions in Bangladesh are correlated with the service quality offered. The results also indicate that generally higher learning institutions students are satisfied with the service quality performed by the Bangladeshi learning institutions, i.e. tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. In other words, Bangladeshi learning institutions have successfully implemented their strategic improvement service quality. It is important information to build market positive perception on Bangladeshi learning higher education institutions in providing service its students. It will leverage student's intention and brand awareness of Bangladeshi learning institutions quality. It is one of the main objectives of Bangladeshi Higher Education Ministry's strategic platform, which is to attract as many targeted students as possible to continuing study in their universities. Therefore, it is important for Bangladeshi higher learning institutions to work continuously towards ensuring that the service provided can really meet or exceed the expectation of students. For those are able to do it, will have the advantage to be more competitive and resilient? It is not about big or small but effective. Higher educational institutions, which can make quick and better decision, have better potential to increase their market share i.e. number of students. All the findings are important criteria for segmenting the total area and then targeting the most attractive group(s) of students. Future studies in these can be done considering different sets of socio-cultural dimensions. Future studies can conduct similar associations and explain them from different perspective regarding this context.

Recommendations

We know that the service gap is the difference between the customer perception of service and customer expectation. The service gap is interact with the knowledge gap, the standard gap, the delivery gap, and the communication gap. As each of these gaps increases or decreases, the service gap responds similarly. To minimize the service gap, these recommendations can be follow for providing better service: as the highest gap exists in the empathy dimension of the SERVQUAL model, the universities should concentrate on all the items of this dimension to minimize the gap. Administration and teachers should give more emphasis to building confidence in students mind, appropriate working hour facilities for students visit, understanding specific needs of the students, staffs should willing to give students individual attention and university should fair and unbiased in their treatment of individuals students. The second gap exists in the assurance dimension of the SERVQUAL model; administration should provide students prompt service with no delay. The third gap exists in the tangibility dimension of the SERVQUAL model; educational institution should offer degree to which classrooms and study rooms are well furnished & well equipped, curriculum should up to date, textbooks and journals should be available. Further research is need to determine the students' zone of tolerance. Owing to resource restrictions, rules, regulations, as well as policies, in some instances, it is almost impossible for the private university to provide everything that student's want. A comprehensive study would help the department to review and beef-up its overall service quality in the educational institution.

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