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Measuring University Students' Satisfaction Level on their Courses Experiences

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to determine how satisfied students are with the course experiences provided by the learning facilities in Pakistani universities. This study looks into the factors of what they think is important for their learning environment, because students are the key stakeholders of the learning and education system. On the other hand, the missionary objectives of any university is to provide quality education and produce better alumni, because students' achievements not only contribute to their scholastic development, but also build the reputation of an institution. Therefore, to measure the students' satisfaction level of their course experiences, a self-structured survey questionnaire was used to collect the required data from students of different departments. A number of 141 master's level students were identified from a local university. The data illustrated that the students' satisfaction level in the provision of courses was low on given choices, like motivational characteristics, ICT application, and life-long learning skills; moderately satisfied for development of analytical and reflective thinking skills; and high level of satisfaction on all these elements except choices that have been reported of low importance.

Keywords: course experiences, teaching and learning environment, university learning facilities

INTRODUCTION

The drive of this survey was to assess students' satisfaction with the courses offered at Pakistani universities. Course content provides a roadmap and direction for learning around which all the activities rotate in order to achieve the target successfully. Students need skills and specialized knowledge in their specific field at the university level for applying it to the community development activities. As a result, particular facilities are required to generate abilities and professionalism in a given field of study. These services are not confined to course materials and academics, but extend well beyond that, or it can be said to initiate with admission and end with awarding a grade (Haung & Fisher, 2011). The availability of facilities is critical because they act as a catalyst in the teaching-learning procedure. However, different courses require distinct facilities for teaching and learning motives. For instance, in chemistry, a laboratory is an unavoidable component, whereas in life sciences, field work is important. Language classes, as we can see, necessitate a variety of learning resources. This means that the required facilities differ greatly from subject to subject that a single study cannot emphasis on and fulfill all forms of learning facilities (Sarwar & Bhamani, 2018). Hence, this study is limited to selected subjects in social sciences field. Furthermore, this research will concentrate solely on the offerings of university-level courses.

Background of the Study

Students are motivated to learn as a result of their satisfaction; however, everything relies on the availability of academic materials in universities, which includes more than syllabus and teachers. Due to worldwide competition in university education, there is a powerful challenge to compete in quality and students' happiness, which has resulted in increased education marketing. It encourages institutions to create their own teaching and learning resources, as well as build their own teaching techniques and delivery methods (Gatfield, 2000). These differ depending on the discipline and locale. Without a doubt, the quality of educational services, particularly

course and instruction offering, is a foremost focus of students' satisfaction (Mavondo, et al., 2000). Nevertheless, university education is influenced by a number of additional factors that can contribute to educational facilities. Courses, libraries, services, self-development and social life opportunities, ICT, instructors, institution environment in terms of harmony, career growth services, learning, counseling, travelling amenities, accommodation, health care services, and others are all considered important. Totalities of students' experiences in a university might be argued to be important viewpoints to embrace in students' satisfaction with the institutions (El Ansari & Mosley, 2011; Marzo-Navarro, et al., 2005). These standards and amenities have a significant impact on students' learning.

All instructional strategies concentrate around the learning content, which is formulated on the basis of course content and curriculum. It is a document that describes what is going on and what has to be done in a certain amount of time. A teacher in higher education picks content from a vast array of subject-specific expertise and arranges it into a highly traditional structure. The ability to construct curricula at the advanced study level drives the market for expertise in research. Universities nowadays perform a multifunctional role at regional, national, and international levels thus, entangling them in various orientations. It is also thought that a teacher's command of courses is unavoidable, and the essential job of a teacher is to teach at the university level to meet a certain standard. Course development is without a question, a difficult procedure.

Studying at the tertiary level entails putting what you have learned into practice in the real-world situation. Education leads to change, which might take the shape of increased self-assurance or the skill to convey what someone is thinking. Knowledge is transformed into skills for understandings that pass over from an individual learning setting to the next, or to put it in other words, learning for an uncertain future. As a result, learners are more motivated to study when learning resources connect abstractly to real application, or in other terms, to real-world situations. Graduates are equipped to utilize their obtained knowledge in both their practical and professional lives, due to higher education. In today's changing world, every career requires new abilities, particularly with regards to using technology, consequently studying to apply what has been learned is now a fundamental requirement of knowledge. Learners develop skill competency as a result of research, which allows them to address challenges at work in a variety of scenarios (Meek, et al., 2009). Courses should be focused on the students' academic achievements and to promote and expedite advance knowledge in order to deal with a variety of situations.

Students at the university level are capable of understanding that learning is beneficial to them. It is also fair to say that university students join with some goals in mind. As a result, in order to attract and please students in their courses, a teacher must consider their needs. Course choices, accessibility and clarification of content, contextual relevance of course contents to the outcomes, and the ability to develop necessary skills as part of technology adoption are the components according to studies and literature that play a significant role in accomplishing students at the tertiary institutions. Students at the university level require specialized talents to put into effect throughout their practical lives in order to work for the development of the society. Students are dissatisfied with the university curriculum since it fails to create the essential skills among them. In a research conducted by Ullah, et al., (2005), they propose that the curriculum should be revised on regular basis to provide them with more information.

Statement of Problem

Because students are the most important stakeholders in academic institutions, all activities in the universities are primarily geared toward educating them. As a result, the system might be considered successful if students are contended with the conditions. The purpose of this study was to determine how exultant students are with the learning facilities provided by the institutions and what they think is important for learning purposes with reference to the provided courses.

Research Questions

1. What is the extent of students' satisfaction with course materials at the higher education?
2. What is the level of students' satisfaction with course content to generate abilities at the higher education?

LITERATURE REVIEW

What makes societies progress is knowledge and its application in practical life; therefore, it becomes the responsibility of the society to educate its people so that it may progress. Societies create institutions for this drive and among these are universities, which provide higher education to the general public. Universities are primarily responsible for research, teaching and community facilities (Escrigas & Lobera, 2009). However, since 1960s and 1970s, the globe has changed tremendously as a result of industrialization, which necessitated to produce skilled workforce (Escrigas & Lobera, 2009). As a result, the number of students enrolled in higher education institutions increased that has created lack of financial resources to fulfill the facilities needed for teaching learning purposes. The university has established a competitive climate among participants in universities and teaching has become a valued venture (Malik, et al., 2010).

Need of Student Satisfaction

Student satisfaction is critical in attracting them and achieving the anticipated goals of all stakeholders. Students' happiness motivates them to learn and their opinion of the learning setting is a predictor of improved learning results. The rank and position of the university depends to a great extent on student successes (Huang & Fisher, 2011; Malik, et al., 2010). Without a doubt, the quality of educational services, particularly course and instruction offerings, is the primary concern of students' satisfaction (Tennant, et al., 2010; Mavondo, et al., 2000). Higher education is reliant on educational services, for instance, courses, library, teachers and social life, ICT services and opportunities for self-development probabilities, university environment in terms of career development, peace, and health services, as well as counseling, transportation, and medical services (Mavondo, et al., 2000). These expectations/facilities are thought to be met and to have a significant impact on students' learning results (El Ansari & Mosley, 2011). It has become the obligation and requirement of universities in this age of competitiveness, to assure a globally recognized and certified degree by gratifying their students, in order to improve the institution's repute and position.

Courses and Course Contents

Since all teaching-learning activities in any institution revolve around the courses, it can be said that courses are the backbone in setting the performance of an institution. At the university level, students are mature enough to plan their future direction and what is needed to achieve their goal. Along with a learner's curiosity, the content quality is also significant, because the key goal of the courses is not only to convey knowledge to the students and support them to achieve a grade, but also to yield skills, which could be applied in the work place to help them perform their roles more effectively (Marzo-Navarro, et al., 2005). As a result, courses should be customized to the students' needs. A teacher's ability to create a dependable and purposeful course is also unavoidable. He/she should be well-versed in the learning process and strategies because university learning entails the application of knowledge in a natural way (Gregory & Chapman, 2012).

Motivation

Important motivational elements available at the university level are its availability, and relevancy with the objects. Motivation is useful in generating settings that encourage learners to participate in their studies. If current knowledge stimulates, the learners will be empowered resulting in more learning. At the university level, students are mature enough to decide what to learn, how to learn and from where to learn (McInnis-Bowers, et al., 2010). Assuming that the courses are objective based, they would satisfy the students and compel them to learn more.

Information and Communication Technology

Educational technology is currently highly regarded for its potential to support one of the most important intellectual improvements among learners, namely the students' developing capacity to understand abstractly. As a result, education should provide the conditions necessary to maximize learning and facilitate the exchange of skills and knowledge through ICT. The most frequent application of ICT instruments for learning purposes at higher education level in Pakistan is computer and internet. However, the efficacy of ICT in education is determined by how and for what reasons it is used. As with any other instructional tool or style of delivery, ICT does not perform for everyone and in all situations (McInnis-Bowers, et al., 2010). It is therefore, adamant that ICT should be part of the courses. Because ICT-assisted learning encourages students, teachers, and professionals to engage and collaborate regardless of their location, advanced countries have made online learning, teleconferencing, and live events common. Instead of simply listening and remembering, ICT helps students to explore and discover knowledge. The usage of ICT in teaching is advantageous in the following ways:

1. Provides advanced learners with additional learning materials or activities
2. Provides slow learners with remediation learning materials or tasks
3. Provides a variety of activities

Skills Required In Higher Education

University graduates are anticipated to have higher order rational thinking skills to work in their academics and workplace, which include, reflective thinking skills, analytical skills, critical thinking, problem solving skills, and lifelong learning skills. These skills fall under the ambiance of 21st Century skills.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative survey methodology was deployed by developing a three-point Likert scale questionnaire. A survey questionnaire is an effective tool for gauging student satisfaction (El Ansari and Mosley, 2011; Kember, Leung, 2009).

Tool for Data Collection

The required information was collected using a self-developed three-point Likert-scale questionnaire. This survey consisted of two options: one was related to the level of satisfaction (what is), while the other was concerned with the level of importance (what should be). The questionnaire emerged from profound review of the relevant literature and consideration of research questions of the study. These elements of course were considered important: (a) the quantity of courses available; (b) the course options; (c) the accessibility of materials; (d) clarity; (e) content structure; (f) relevance of course content to the goals; (g) reflective thinking skills; (h) critical thinking; (i) motivational factors; (j) self-directed learner; and (k) ICT applicability.

Before finalizing the instrument for data collection, the research instrument was pilot tested to make it valid and reliable. In the light of the feedback given during piloting, few changes were incorporated and the Cronbach alpha value ensured the instrument's dependability (internal consistency method). The overall reliability of part-1 on satisfaction level was found to be 0.852 and part-2 on the importance level was 0.872. Both parts of the questionnaire were found reliable because if Cronbach alpha value is ≥ 0.70 the tool is reliable.

Data Collection

The researchers collected the data by personally visiting the universities. Before starting the data collection process, they contacted the concerned departments to get permission and further appointments were made according to their convenience. Before administrating the tool, the process and the tool were explained to the participants in detail.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using SPSS-17, and mean and standard deviation were obtained, which were calculated by using the average of students' reported response scores.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

In the tables given below, the calculated findings are presented as mean and standard deviation values. The mean values represent the degree to which students are satisfied, and the standard deviation indicates the regularity of the answers, and the important values indicate the participants' expectations of the facilities. As a

result, the disparity between computed satisfaction and importance findings indicate that such facilities are not available.

Table 1
Responses Characteristics

Response	Assigned Value	Range
Not at all satisfied	1	1 – 1.66
Moderately satisfied	2	1.67 – 2.32
Extremely satisfied	3	2.33 – 3.00
Not at all important	1	1 – 1.66
Somewhat important	2	1.67 – 2.32
Extremely important	3	2.33 – 3.00

Hursen, et al., (2011) grade the levels of satisfaction and importance by assigning a range to the mean values, as presented in the Table 1. To sum up the research questions, the received responses were calculated in the manner mentioned in the Table 1.

Table 2
Characteristics of Course Contents

	Choices		Motivation		ICT	
	M	*S.D*	*M*	*S.D*	*M*	*S.D*
Satisfaction	2.04	0.54	2.15	0.42	2.17	0.77
Importance	2.22	0.51	2.85	0.47	2.49	0.69

One of the goals of this study was to assess students' satisfaction with the availability of courses for learning purposes at a selected Pakistani university. The elements that were considered necessary to measure the students' satisfaction level in the courses were choices, motivational elements such as provision of course contents at the beginning of the session, availability of courses, and understandability and application of ICT for learning purposes.

Table 2 shows the computed mean value of student satisfaction with the supplied course options, which is 2.04 and the standard deviation is 0.54. The standard value of the relevance level of the selection is 0.51, whereas the mean value is 2.22. The results suggest that students are dissatisfied with the course options and do not place a high value on this component of the course. The calculated mean value of satisfaction is higher than the predicted mean value of prominence, indicating that pupils expect more course options. The calculated mean value of motivating components in the courses is 2.15, with a standard value of 0.42, and an importance of 2.85, with a standard value of 0.47. After analyzing the data, it shows that students are dissatisfied with the motivational nature of the courses, despite having placed a high value on them. The estimated mean value of importance is higher than the calculated mean value of satisfaction, indicating that pupils anticipate the courses they are offered to be more stimulating.

The computed mean value for the nature of ICT application in courses is 2.17, with a standard deviation of 0.77, whereas the calculated mean value for significance is 2.49, with a standard deviation of 0.69. The responses indicate that pupils were dissatisfied with the use of ICT in the classroom, despite placing a high value on it. The mean difference of satisfaction and importance indicate that there should be more elements about ICT application in the courses for learning purpose. The results of in-depth data analysis show that students are moderately contented with the course options and expectations of the respondents is at a moderate level. The respondents are moderately satisfied on motivational character of the courses due to not having clarity in the materials that cause difficulty to understand, while the results show that this element has high level of importance for learning purposes. The students are satisfied at moderate level about the share given to use ICT in the classroom for educational purposes and it has high level of importance for learning purposes.

Table 3

Skills Producing Components in Course Contents

	Reflective		**Analytical**		**Critical**		**Problem**		**Life-long learning**	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Satisfaction	2.41	0.42	2.51	0.53	2.31	0.59	2.21	0.69	2.34	0.54
Importance	2.86	0.45	2.88	0.50	2.44	0.58	2.47	0.67	2.50	0.57

The study's second objective was to determine how satisfied students are with skill-building elements in their courses. Analytical thinking, reflective thinking, problem solving skills, and critical thinking are considered necessary skills creating positive ripple effect in the courses. Table 3 provides the computed findings based on data collected from respondents regarding the skill-producing components in the courses. According to the statistics, the average level of student satisfaction with reflective skills is 2.41, with a standard deviation of 0.42, and the average level of importance is 2.86, with a standard deviation of 0.45. The mean value of reflective skills producing elements about satisfaction level of students' importance is greater than satisfaction, which shows that the difference in value is high. Students opine that there should be more reflective skills components in the courses.

The computed mean values of students' satisfaction with analytical competence, generating the elements in the courses is 2.51, standard deviation is 0.51, mean value of importance is 2.88, and standard deviation is 0.55. The fact that the importance mean is higher than the satisfaction mean value suggests that the analytical skill-producing parts in the courses do not meet the students' expectations. Students' happiness with critical thinking skills aspects in the courses is 2.31, with a standard deviation of 0.59, while their satisfaction with importance is calculated to be 2.44, with a standard variation of 0.58. Students' lack of contentment with critical thinking skills aspects in the courses is reflected by the gap between computed mean values of satisfaction and importance about critical thinking skills generating components in the courses.

The computed mean values established on statistics received from respondents on their satisfaction with the elements of problem-solving competence in the courses were 2.21, 0.69, and 0.67, respectively. The mean values reveal that the students are dissatisfied with skill-producing components in the courses, but they place a high value on their relevance. The disparity between the computed mean values of satisfaction and importance indicate that students expect a greater emphasis in the courses on reflective skills production. Conferring to the calculations, the mean value of pleasure on lifelong learning skills creating elements is 2.34, with a standard

deviation of 0.54, and the mean value of importance is 2.50, with a standard deviation of 0.57. The disparity between calculated mean satisfaction and importance of lifelong learning skills-generating components in the courses reveal that students' expectations are higher than what they receive.

The students' satisfaction with the aspects on reflective thinking skills and life-long learning skills provided in the courses was found to be high. These features in the courses for learning purposes were valued highly by the participants. The aspects of analytical skills and problem-solving skills provided in the courses, on the other hand, were relatively satisfactory, and high level of importance for learning purposes at the higher education were regarded high by the respondents.

CONCLUSION

The higher education plays a leading role in societal development. The quality of education is based on students' satisfaction that can be produced on provision of learning facilities. Among learning facilities, curriculum and courses play a central role in providing a road map for teaching learning activities. Students' satisfaction level on the given choices of courses in this study was low as they recognized its moderate level of importance in the courses. The reason is that when the students enter higher education, they are not much aware of their future dimensions due to lack of guidance, either from their parents or in their institution. This supports the findings of Yousaf (2005), that school teachers do not prepare students for university education and carrier goals. It also seems that the students have lack of awareness about the application of learned knowledge from the opted courses in their practical daily life and especially at their workplace. No doubt courses should be need-based, but the question is that are the students aware of their needs?

Moreover, students showed their moderate satisfaction level on the motivational aspect of the courses even the use of ICT in the courses was low despite the fact that application of ICT is a motivating agent that students have given much importance. Curriculum and courses connect learning theories to instruction with the help of the application of ICT that motivates students to learn (Seel & Dijkstra, 2004). Students at the university level require specialized information and skills in their subject field in order to relate it to community development activities (Escrigas & Lobera, 2009). Reflective thinking, analytical, critical, problem-solving, and life-long learning skills were identified as essential skill-producing features in higher education courses, which students valued highly. Similarly, students were satisfied with these skill-building elements in the courses to a certain degree. In today's fast-paced world, skills and knowledge are developed to cope with the changes and to complete the tasks or solve problems. In order to arrive at a rational decision making, skillful insights of problems and application of the information in a logical way is needed, that university graduates are expected to have been prepared for.

Recommendations

1. Students' suggestions should be considered while preparing the courses.
2. Teachers should be given training specially to use ICT in schools and universities.
3. Course evaluation should be conducted by the students on annual basis to make amendments according to the students' needs.

4. Courses should be revised annually keeping the needs of the students in mind.

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