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Research paper

The Importance of Facilities Services to Enhance Service Quality in Higher Education Institution

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Abstract

Service quality in Higher Education Institution (HEI) faces challenging phase in accordance with economic competition around the globe. Educational facilities services are one of prerequisites factor as HEI to perform academic activities which mainly measured in service quality. However, the discourse of educational facilities significance to underpinning HEI activities is still lacking. Service quality required profound dimensions in enhancing the service excellence provided by HEI. Therefore, this paper seeks to uncover facilities significant toward service quality in HEI. Preliminary study was taken to obtain the views and perception of academicians in Indonesian Public Higher Education Institution toward the importance of facilities services to enhance service quality. The data were collected through survey distribution. The findings revealed that academician considered that facilities services enhance service quality in HEI.

Keywords: *service quality, facilities services, HEI*

1. Introduction

Higher Education Institution (HEI) becomes the hub of the development strategy around the globe. HEI has been the key determinant to lead one country in achieving wealth of nation. Therefore, HEI sector is enriched with numerous strategies advantage to gain success and remain competitive all over the world. Nowadays, the development of global market in education is bounding towards commercial competition with respect to economic accentuation (Joseph et al 2005). Quality is admitted to become strategic advantage for the HEI to achieve success and remain competitive in the market by delivering service excellence that achieve more than what customers are required and expected. Within this context, service quality recognized as the important to all organization as it is regarded as a driver of corporate marketing and financial performance (Buttle, 1996). It is turn into crucial approach of many HEI worldwide and grows into crucial to the accomplishment of HEI (Sohail and Rahman, 2003). Thus, in the effort to response world of global competition, accomplishment service quality lead to be a key factor for the success of HEI.

2. Literature Review

The research on service quality in Higher Education Institution has become popular in the literature. It emerged two main approaches to measure service quality: SERVQUAL (Parasumaran et al., 1988) and SERVPERF (Cronin and Taylor, 1992). SERVQUAL vested its theoretical basis in the gaps model and determine services quality in terms of the difference between customer expectations and performance perceptions through 22 items. While SERVPERF emphasized on the overall the measurement of service quality (Cronin and Taylor, 1994).

Parasuraman et al. (1988) designed a multiple-item scale to measure service quality which encompasses five dimensions:

1. *Reliability*. Perform the promised service accurately and dependably.
2. *Responsiveness*. Providing prompt service and willingly to assist customer.
3. *Assurance*. Able to convey trust and confidence and owning the knowledge and courtesy of service provider.
4. *Empathy*. To have individualized attention and care to its clients
5. *Tangibles*. Providing physical facilities, equioment, personnel, and communication materials.

While Firdaus (2006) introduced HEdPERF as an instrument applied in service quality in HEI which accentuated on not only the academic elements, but including the entire service environment which involving students experience. It defines five dimensions of the service quality concept which cover:

1. *Non-academic aspects*. Items that feature essential part to facilitate students in accomplishing their study obligations, and relate to duties accomplished by non-academic staff.
2. *Academic aspects*. Responsibilities of academics.
3. *Reputation*. Importance of higher learning institutions to draw attention to a professional image.

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4. *Access*. Involved issues as approachability, ease of contact, availability and convenience.
5. *Programme issues*. Importance of offering wide flexible structures and health services.

In the competitive advantage context, HEI has aggressively challenge in improving value in its activities, thus, the subject of service quality performance growing to be highly attention (Kay and Sei, 2004). Besides, facilities have the important role to ensure the quality of teaching and learning with respect to achieve quality of education (Amilia, et.al, 2011). In HEI, like any other organization, in order to provide the service excellence, HEI need to provide substantial infrastructure, this often covered an extensive estate, building and facilities services provided by HEI (Finch et al, 2009). In terms of facilities services, Sirvanci (2004) classifies HEIs' services into two categories, namely academic program and facilities. Its model describes student's flow in higher education, from admission to graduation. In this context, it shows that, those services will give an impact on student's teaching and learning experience.

A considerable amount of literature discussed on the role of facilities in educational sector. Most research investigated the relationship between facilities and academic outcome (Uline and Tschannen-Moran, 2008; Earthman,2002, Berner, 1993). In HEI context, McLaughin and Faulkner (2012) bring out that university students require flexible learning spaces that enable in accommodating individual and work in group and address social learning and advanced technology ahead.

With respect to university context, the facilities services recognized to support core business in HEI to achieve academic and research goal (Sami Kärnä, 2015). It equipped with inclusive learning environment with supporting various facilities services for students. Recently research on facilities in HEI introduces the facilities measurement factors in university which cover: workspace facilities, laboratory facilities, teaching facilities, general purpose facilities, facility maintenance, campus accessibility and movement, and outdoor areas (Sami Kärnä, 2015). This research highlights the importance of facilities towards staff and student satisfaction in HEI. Nevertheless, this approach is not yet to be applied with respect to service quality in HEI.

3. Framework of the Study

From the review of previous research, this study attempted in deploying facilities services element introduced by Sami Karna (2015) to examine the relationship between facilities services toward service quality in HEI. Figure 1 depict about the relationship between facilities services attributes and service quality in HEI.

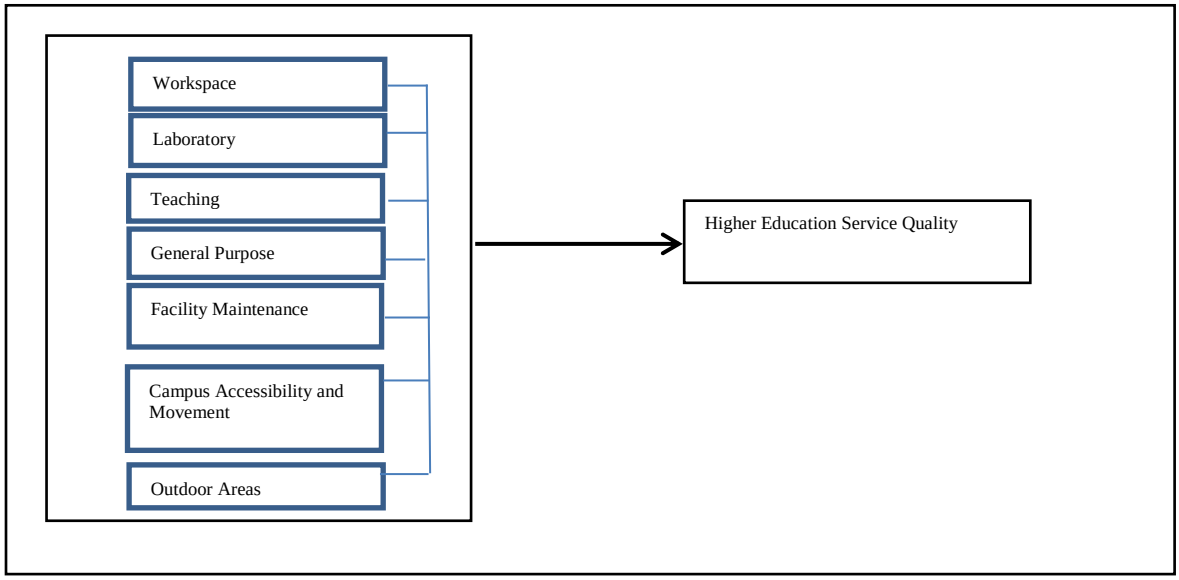


Fig 1: Research Framework

4. Methodology

Quantitative approach was implemented in this study. This preliminary study was conducted in public universities in Indonesia. It was designed to obtain an initial research to what extend facilities services is considered to support service quality among the academicians. Staff and Lecturer were involved in the survey fulfillment. A five point liker- scale is adopted to assess the degree of the perception of academicians about the importance of facilities services towards service quality in HEI. About 300 questionnaires distributed to the respondent throughout Public HEI in Indonesia. The data is analyzed by using SPSS to find out the distribution mean about the perception on facilities services toward service quality among academician in Indonesian Public HEI.

5. Finding and Discussion

Overall, the average level of facilities services is shown in Table 1. It shows the distribution of mean about perception among academicians on facilities services toward service quality. It ranges from 3.2390 to 3.960 based on a five likert scale ranging from 1 for "Strongly disagree" to 5 for "Strongly Agree". It implies the attributes of facilities services considered as the elements enable to enhance service quality in HEI, particularly in Indonesian Public HEI.

The highest mean score of 3.9782 was observed for the teaching elements. The second highest mean was recorded for the workspace elements in facilities services which mean score of 3.9782 followed by laboratory on mean score 3.8590. The following elements en-

compassed facility maintenance, campus accessibility and movement element, outdoor areas and general purpose were observed as the low mean score 3.5647, 3.5254, 3.2390 and 3.2360 respectively.

It is assumed that the average score for facilities services to enhance service quality is quite high despite it is less than 4. The elements of general purpose and outdoor area are on the lower score. It might indicate that the academicians perceived that these elements not much more important than others to enhance service quality in HEI.

On the whole, mean distribution as showed in Table 1 could be stated that among academicians in HEI perceived that facilities services enable to raise HEI service quality. These findings reveal that teaching element; laboratory and workspace are potentially has significant relations towards service quality in HEI. This result confirms the previous research which states that facilities services elements in HEI become one of quality dimensions in HEI (Sami Kärnä, 2015).

Table 1: Mean Distribution of Facilities Services according to respondent.

Facilities Services Elements	Mean
Work space	3.9620
Laboratory	3.8590
Teaching	3.9782
General Purpose	3.2360
Facility Maintenance	3.5647
Campus accessibility and Movement	3.5254
Outdoor areas	3.2390

On the whole, mean distribution as showed in Table 1 could be stated that among academicians in HEI perceived that facilities services enable to raise HEI service quality. These findings reveal that teaching element; laboratory and workspace are potentially has significant relations towards service quality in HEI. This result reflects the findings of Karna (2015). It's found that inclusive facilities affect the educational quality as one of the contribution to the educational achievement in HEI.

Despite this research was initiated as the preliminary study, this finding indicated that facilities services provided by HEI can be considered as the elements of service quality dimensions. This result also support the previous study which emphasizes on tangible factors in service quality in HEI such as; Firdaus (2006), Sirvanci (2004) Uline and Tschannen-Moran(2008), Earthman (2002) Berner (1993).

6. Conclusion

This study focused on the importance of facilities services to enhance service quality in HEI. It explored the perception of academicians in HEI to discover whether facilities services elements introduced by Karna (2015) enable to enhance the service quality in Indonesian Public HEI. The literature review indicated that HEI has embraced various practices due to the importance of quality excellence in HEI. HEI required multifaceted and precise measurement to decide then improvement of HEI efficiently particularly on the facilities services provided for the students. This framework of the study might assist HEI especially Indonesian Public HEI to identify and put priority on which aspect of facilities services to be developed.

Furthermore, the findings of the study introduced that the elements of facilities services in HEI might be adopted for HEI to enhance service quality. It's also provides some sort of input to the development of service quality in HEI particularly in Indonesian Public HEI.

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