



## Students' Perceptions on the Academic Management at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines Open University System

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### ABSTRACT :

The primary objective of Open University System is to bring the learning environment at the doorstep of the learner to make them become as independent as possible. This is a mission-oriented system that performs and value learner's diversity in terms of access, flexibility, mobility, context and need in its entire endeavor. Thus, understanding the learners profile established the nature and complexities of identifying and determining specific needs which build the level of importance of the dimensions of academic management in the open and distance education. Undeniably, the learning environment and learning process of the Open University System must bridge the gap between the learners' expectation and perception.

### 1. INTRODUCTION :

Openness' of education is measured in terms of its flexibility or lack of restriction in terms of the number of seats, attendance, class timing, subject combinations, etc. It is an innovation in the field of education, for it aims to seek and make use of the latest developments in the field of education, for it aims to seek and make use of the latest developments in the field communication technology to achieve this end. Student that avails this kind of delivery mode come from diverse level in terms of socio- economic status along with so many pressures in the workplace, and in their personal lives. The broad framework of the management system of autonomous distance education institution is comparative to conventional universities, though it may be different in the learning environment of the learners. Two Important influences on the learners are the quality and the frequency of student-faculty contacts, which is found very few in the distance education.

To this note, Academic Management should provide answers to this gap because it is the key areas of the sub-system of academic design and development of academic programs apart from providing them the necessary orientation and training on distant education system. The access and equity of the academic management, particularly the academic advising and information literacy, is critical in this end. Consequently, much emphasis has been placed on developing packages which enables learners to work on their own, with a minimum contract with the institution. However, not all learners can adapt readily in the anagogical system because of the lack of experiences (Rankin and Brindley 2006). The definition of academic advising and counseling are problematic because these two functions are seen differently by various institutions. Formal and informal, the amount of advising learners receive has been found to be positively related to students' academic performance.

It reinforces intellectual curiosity, interpersonal skills, and development of educational and career goals of adult learners. To this note, student support service in the open university system builds mutual trust, shared responsibility and realized learner's career and life goals. "...The role of student support service shifts as student populations and administrative conditions in universities change over time. Instilling students with a sense of values and commitment to their future plans and responsibility for their decisions is the cornerstone of the support service in distance education." (NACADA, 2008). It is indeed, an important indicator that helps assess the situation and the benchmarks to identify the measurability of changes and developments. Therefore, it calls for drawing greater attention to policy makers to be more learner-oriented and proactive in nature. Quality of the student support service is judged according to perceived satisfaction. According to Gronroos (2005, p.54), perceived quality is determined "by the gap between expected quality and experienced quality", that is, it is the difference between client perceptions and expectations. At this point, academic advising took on new attention and expand responsibilities - in their academic planning learners demand not less, but more personalized. This brought about a major examination of how advising was delivered in the Open University system. The institutions must work to obtain a standard of quality that exceeds client and/or student expectations and needs. According to Lovelock (2001), "...Education service is classified as a service with intangible actions, directed towards the minds of people, with continuous delivery, conducted through a partnership between the service organization and its client, and although it provides high personal contact, there is low customization." Parasuraman et al (1988) further agreed that services are performances or experiences and therefore intangible. Aiming to improve service quality management, parameters must be present to make every effort to meet the needs of the learners.

The personal qualities of service providers often lead to diverse variable levels of services. Academic advising tasks function takes off to a higher level of analysis and abstraction. The advent of technology has revolutionized advising, teaching and learning (Crookston, 2010). It requires a more visible and centralized location to use in place of, or in addition to their regular faculty advising system. He emphasize the rather depersonalize contact. Truly, this claims, has been found to maximize the potential of educational management, in the distance learning mode, where students have fewer contact sessions with their facilitators. Technology as it is now used encourages a more meaningful and frequent contact between learner and the system if it keeps the end in mind. All are constituted the series of successful and unsuccessful experiences of the learner studying in the university. Aimed at solving these problems, it is necessary to consider academic advising as the "front line" of the university in dealing with the factors that intervene within the process should be established. It is a critical position in the success or failure of the student's education and growth. It is a contractual relationship that exists between the student and the institution. Thus, the open and distance education providers should be conscious of the obligations which might be created by unequivocal statements regarding responsibilities of the academic advisers and staff who perform the functions in the operation of the educational process. Relevant and desirable outcome include: intellectual growth, effective communication, realistic self-appraisal, enhanced self-esteem, clarified values, career choices, leadership development, healthy behaviors, meaningful interpersonal relations, independence, collaboration, social responsibility, satisfying and productive lifestyles, appreciation of diversity, spiritual awareness. Open University must provide evidence of its impact on the achievement of student learning and development outcomes.

At present, the rise in student mobility increase emphasis on lifelong learning. In the advent of the internet and e-learning shows a greater demand where the size of the open and distance education institution increased over the years.

#### METHODOLOGY

The paradigm using the SERVQUAL methodology in the context of educational system attempts to illustrate the effort to bridge the five Gaps of the Service Quality Model by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry. It is a methodology that give focus on the comparison between several orders of service delivery implemented as follows: how the management perceived the needs of the between several orders of service delivery are implemented as follows: how the management perceived the needs of the students; how translation and specification of management policies and procedures are installed in the service delivery operation in the academic management; the external communication that used to facilitate student support service — abide by the specific policies, procedures, and values of the institution; the manner of the delivery of service, disseminated to answer student problem situation, and the last, is the expectation of the student of the service based on their needs and past experiences.

Several groups of learner from the different programs in the chosen Open University System provider were given the questionnaires to reduce the risk of bias and have an equal chance of selection. The study adapted the SERVQUAL methodology which uses five broad-based dimensions as judgment criteria: 1) tangibility, 2) reliability, 3) responsibility, 4) security, and, 5) empathy. The model seeks to help stakeholders to understand the needs of the learners and the continuing improvements needed to measure the quality of service delivery in DE. The Gap analysis establishes the following: expectations measures what is anticipated in an ideal service (on a 5-point scale).

Perceptions measures those aspects of the service as actually delivered or experienced. Simple formula to illustrate this: Satisfaction (S), as the gap between expectations and perceptions. So,  $S=E-P$ . The three common mismatches are: (a) student expectations; (b) actual service given vs. information about the service; (c) expected service vs. perceived service. The disconfirming paradigm indicates the size and direction of a person's initial expectations in relation to the experience received (Churchill and Surprenant 1982; cited by Parasuraman et al, 1985). Therefore, the size of the gap between prior expectation and the actual performance received provides directions as follows: positive, negative and zero disconfirmations. When there is a resulting satisfaction occurs a positive confirmation; and when a service is below the expectation a negative, disconfirmation occurs resulting in dissatisfaction. By building on the theory, Gronroos (1982) states that costumers' compare the service they expected with the perception or service they received when evaluating the service quality. While, Parasuraman et al (1985) state that the perceived service quality is the result of a comparison between what consumers consider by the service provider. In the methodology, perception is defined as costumers' beliefs concerning the service received and the expectation as desires or wants perceived. The SERVQUAL authors have also developed a measurement, and management model to accompany the conceptual model. The measurement model uses a 44-item questionnaire that measures costumers' expectation and perception of the rate variables. This enables to compute the relative importance of any gaps between expectation and perception. Management then can focus on strategies and tactics to close the gaps.

#### CONCLUSION

Administering distance education is very similar in administering traditional academic programs. These claimed was supported by the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA),

an association of professional advisors, councilors, administrators and students in higher education raising the visibility and promote the value of academic advising for the development and retention of students (Cunningham, 2006). Consequently, academic advising as part of the academic management is a teaching learning process that takes place overtime using conceptual, informational and relational skills to help student. In these regard, “the student support system process tracks and monitors student through the system. The process insures that a student does not fall through the cracks,” (comprehensive Student Support System Guide, 2009). In any form, may it be on line or actual, academic advising prepares student to become responsible members of the institution and good leaders in the community. Therefore, academic advising in the Open University System is more critical to be assessed as academic guidance and life decisions for the learners.

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