A study on student satisfaction towards CIAST's current services

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Abstract

Students' satisfaction is vital in determining whether educational institutions provide adequate services to their customers. This study measures students' level of satisfaction with the current services provided by CIAST. In order to carry out this study, a convenience sampling of 40 students from three different courses and skills was administered for a survey. In accordance with the study, three variables were examined namely, teaching, administrative support and facilities. Upon collection of the data, a descriptive analysis of the data was conducted. As a result, findings showed that the students were generally satisfied with the current services offered and highlighted a few areas for improvement. The study gave a valuable insight of the students' perception regarding the services offered and the level of their satisfaction with these offerings.

Keywords: Satisfaction, educational institution, surveys

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to determine the level of students' satisfaction towards the current services provided by CIAST. Students' satisfaction with the services can be regarded as one of the important factors that can improve their productivity and eventually produce a successful person (Hill & Epps, 2010). Students' perceptions and experiences while studying in an institution are aspects that can contribute to students' satisfaction level (Carey, K., Cambiano, R. L., & Vore, J. B. De., 2002). According to Keaveney and Clifford (1997), the staffs' performances and the condition of the classroom facilities may increase students' experience, hence, can be considered as key components to evaluate students' satisfaction. In the context of higher education, teaching effectiveness influences students' satisfaction (Pounder, 2007).

In Malaysia, CIAST is known as the main training center for training skills to instructors. It offers various instructors training courses. The courses can be divided into long-term courses (from 1 to 2.5 years) and short-term courses. The long-term courses offered are Malaysian Skills Certificate Level 3 (SKM 3) and Malaysian Skills Advanced Diploma (DLKM). Both of these courses collaborates with the Vocational Training Operation (VTO) course in ensuring that students are well equipped with both advanced skill and TVET instructor's competency. On the other hand, the short-term courses offered are the various advance technical competency courses, Vocational Training Operation (VTO), modular courses and customized courses.

This is a descriptive study conducted as part of a module under the International Internship Programme (IIP) whereby CIAST collaborated with a Thailand university for this program. The IIP research module ran for two weeks, and three IIP interns were involved in this study.

Literature review

Customer's satisfaction is the key to a successful business. Thus, interest in the factors affecting customer's satisfaction motivates the business sector to cover a whole range of industries including the educational industry. Satisfaction is related to the quality of services provided by the organization and is regarded as one of the success factors to remain competitive in the higher education industry (Arokiasamy & Abdullah, 2012). Satisfaction across industries depict a common theme presenting a positive feeling that culminates from an evaluation of its characteristics (Tessema, Ready, & Yu, 2012). In the context of the educational institution, students or trainees are the main customers that receive the institution's services and facilities. This is to ensure that students are satisfied by the institution of their choice.

Satisfaction, in general, can be defined as "a person's feeling of pleasure or disappointment that results from comparing a product's perceived performance (or outcome) to expectations" (Kotler & Keller, 2012 p. 128). It is an important factor that influences students' level of motivation (Donohue & Wong, 1997) and a good predictor of retention (Astin, 1993). Students' satisfaction draws from their learning experience and the learning environment (Sweeney & Ingram, 2001). Thus, satisfaction covers both students' perception and experiences during their course of study (Carey, Cambiano, & Vore, 2002) and are not limited only to their classroom.

Several researchers had examined the factors that influence students' satisfaction. There are various opinions from the researchers that were adopted by this study. Among the factors associated with students' satisfaction are the teaching, administrative support and social life on campus, i.e. facilities (Astin, 1993; Bean & Bradley, 1986). It is common knowledge that teaching and learning activities are the core business of an educational institution. Thus, students' opinions regarding these aspects are commonly sought after. Furthermore, the teaching effectiveness of the academic staff was ranked the highest factor affecting the enhancement of students' satisfaction (Douglas, Douglas, & Barnes, 2006). In addition, Douglas et al. (2006) discovered that the quality of feedback by the staffs to the students and the professional relationships between the lecturers and the students are among the most important factors of students' satisfaction in the UK. Therefore, students' evaluation of teaching performances is the most widely used instrument to address students' satisfaction (Pounder, 2007). However, the students' satisfaction should not involve only the teaching aspect but it also should consider the administrative support and the campus' facilities.

In addition, to deliver to the total outcome of the students' satisfaction, the supportive faculty members play an important role whether in the front-line or in the administration. Peterson, M., Wagner, J. A., and Charles, W. L. (2001) discovered that a positive relationship with the staffs and an effective academic guidance improves students' satisfaction and perception towards the institution. In contrast to this, Petruzzellis et al. (2006) argued that administrative services together with the campus facilities provided such as library, teaching equipment, lecture halls and laboratories 'must be' a classification factor to the test students' satisfaction level.

In addition, students' experiences outside their learning and teaching environment such as with their campus life also contribute to their satisfaction (Aldridge & Rowley, J., 1998). Billups (2008) suggested that the campus facilities and campus-life programs are to be prioritized in an educational institution's strategic and planning program in order to improve students' satisfaction. This was supported by other researchers; students' experiences with the campus' non-academic infrastructure and facilities provided by the institution contributed to their satisfaction (Devinder & Datta, 2003; Peng & Samah, 2006). Among the higher education campus facilities that have a significant effect on the students' satisfaction were the social areas, auditoriums and libraries (Hanssen & Solvoll, 2015). Consequently, Ibrahim, Rahman, & Yasin (2014) discovered that campus environment, campus management and support services were the major influencing factors of the students' satisfaction in the skills training institutions. In conclusion, in this study, the students' satisfaction was examined by looking into three factors which were the teaching, administrative support and facilities.

Methodology

As stated above, this study aims to measure students' satisfaction in CIAST. Measuring students' satisfaction is one of the steps taken in order to identify areas for improvement in CIAST. The data of this study is obtained based on a preliminary survey carried out on CIAST students and conducted by three interns during their internship program in CIAST.

A questionnaire survey form was developed and the survey was administered to the respondents. The questionnaire consisted of 22 questions and were subdivided into three categories namely teaching, administrative support and facilities (Abbasi, Malik, Chaudhry, & Imdadullah, 2011). These categories were the variables in this study. Under the teaching category, eight items were used to measure satisfaction. In addition to teaching, administrative support was measured using three items. These variables were necessary to facilitate the learning process. Finally, eight items for the facilities were measured to gather students' satisfaction.

The questionnaire had two sections. The first section covered questions on students demographic such as the age, gender, marital status, highest qualification, course and the duration of their study in CIAST. This section is followed by Section Two, whereby the questions are constructed to measure the level of satisfaction.

All the variables were measured using a 5-point Likert Scale of 1 to 5; 1 was very unsatisfactory, 2 was unsatisfactory, 3 was neither satisfactory nor unsatisfactory, 4 was satisfactory and 5 was very satisfactory. This was a common type of scale to measure students' satisfaction in the educational institution (Douglas et al., 2006).

Participation in the survey was voluntary and anonymous. In order to gain a high number of feedbacks, a request for permission was obtained from each course. There are five advanced skills training unit in CIAST namely welding, mechatronic, computer, production and automotive and the questionnaires were distributed to three different skill courses namely welding, mechatronic and automotive.

A sample of 40 students from a total number of 55 students in the skills training unit was selected as respondents. First, the selected students were briefed on the purpose of the survey and questions. Next, they were requested to answer the questionnaires. On average, the session took about 20 - 30 minutes for each course. The questionnaire was analyzed to obtain a simple and descriptive statistics.

Result and Findings

The questionnaire was administered to the students on 15 March 2017. A total of 40 questionnaires were collected from the students from the welding (13), automotive (18) and mechatronic (9) courses. Out of the 40 students, only one student was female (2.4%) while the rest were males (97.6%). 12 (30%) students were from the Malaysian Skills Certificate Level 3 plus Vocational Training Operation while 28 (70%) were from the Malaysian Skills Advanced Diploma (DLKM) plus Vocational Training Operation course.

The first variable analyzed was the 'teaching' category; 8 items were used to measure the teaching. These items are named as items in Table 1. It was observed that the overall mean values of the variable reflect the students' satisfaction with the teaching methods. The mean score for this variable is 4.07. This reflects the students' satisfaction regarding the instructor's teaching ability and teaching methods used. Next, the results indicate that students are satisfied with the instructor's attitude and the show of respect towards them. Both of these items score the highest in the teaching category's variable. It is also observed that the satisfactory level for this category is the highest with the automotive course respondents compared to other courses. However, the lowest satisfactory level recorded is for the advising item which scores just below the satisfactory level at 3.9.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Teaching

Item	Mean			Mean
	Auto	Welding	Mech.	
Communication of instructors is understandable	4.3	3.8	4.1	4.0
Delivery of lectures in class	4.2	4.1	4.0	4.1
Delivery of teaching materials to students	4.2	4.1	4.2	4.1
The assessment is appropriate for the course	4.3	3.7	3.9	4.0
The marks for examination is graded appropriately	4.2	3.8	3.8	4.0
The instructors can advise students well regarding the lesson	4.1	3.8	3.9	3.9
Instructors' attitude towards class	4.1	4.2	4.4	4.2
Instructors' respect towards student	4.1	4.3	4.4	4.3

The second variable analyzed in this study was the 'administrative support'. Three items were used for this variable. Similar to the teaching category, the mean score value is 4.1 which clearly reflects the students' satisfaction towards the administrative support services in CIAST. The three items analyzed in this study are the behavior of the coordinator of the course, the behavior of the clerical staffs and the availability of extra-curricular activities.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Administrative Support

Item	Mean			Mean
	Auto	Welding	Mech.	
The behavior of the coordinator of the course	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.1
The behavior of the clerical staff	4.3	4.2	3.7	4.1
The availability of extracurricular activities	4.1	4.1	4.0	4.1

Next variable is the 'facilities' category. For this variable, students' satisfaction was collected from eleven items. The items measured are the availability of library service, library books, computers, Wi-Fi, hostel environment, hostel rooms, cafeteria prices, Internet service, sports facilities, classroom environment and workshop equipment. According to the findings, the facilities category scores the lowest at 3.85 in terms of the overall satisfaction. However, this mean score still implies that the students are satisfied with the facilities provided. The lowest item for this variable is the availability of textbooks in the library (mean value of 3.5) and the availability of library services (mean value of 3.6). Students from the mechatronic and welding score the lowest for both of these items. In addition, the internet speed and Wi-Fi services also score the lowest with students from the automotive and welding courses who are least satisfied with its performances. However, the students are most satisfied with the workshop equipment and the environment of the classroom. In conclusion, the overall satisfaction mean value is 3.95 which reflects that students are satisfied with the services offered by CIAST.

The results of the mean analysis point out several areas which need to be considered for improvement. While the students are satisfied with all the three variables in this study, some of the items that scored below 3.5 can be further looked into.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Facilities

Item	Mean			Mean
	Auto	Welding	Mech.	
The availability of library service	4.2	3.4	3.2	3.6
Availability of text books in the library	4.0	3.3	3.1	3.5
Availability of computers in the computer labs	3.8	3.3	4.4	3.8
Internet speed	3.4	3.5	4.2	3.7
Wi-Fi service	3.3	3.7	4.1	3.7
Workshop equipment	4.2	4.4	4.4	4.3
Students' hostel environment	3.7	4.2	3.9	3.9
Conditions of rooms	3.8	4.4	4.1	4.1
Cafeteria prices are reasonable	3.8	3.6	3.5	3.6
Sports facilities are sufficient	3.9	4.2	3.5	3.9
Environment of the classroom	4.2	4.4	4.2	4.3

With reference to Table 3, students from the automotive course, for instance, a least satisfied with the Wi-Fi services and the Internet speed while students from the mechatronic course are more satisfied with the services. This could indicate that since all the three courses are located in different buildings, a localized issue of its placement in the automotive building might affect the Wi-Fi and Internet services. Another area to be looked into in this study is the library services. A large number of students rate that the library service and books are at the 'neutral' level. While the students are not thoroughly dissatisfied with the library services offered, they score the lowest among all the three variables. Perhaps the library's limited operating hours, i.e. only during working hours, make it difficult for the students to gain access the service outside of the working hours. It is also possible that the number of books for welding and the mechatronic course are limited compared with those of the automotive course. This can indicate the fairly high result that shows the satisfaction level of the automotive students' responses regarding the library facilities. However, it is worth noting that students from the skill courses are trained by focusing more on their skills competency via hands-on training which constitutes 70% of their overall course compared to only 30% on their knowledge or theory. This could also be the reason why the students spend more time in the workshop practising their skills competency compared to their rare visits to the library. It might explain their limited information about it.

Finally, the availability of computers in the computer labs is rated as the lowest satisfaction level by the students from the welding course. This is in contrast to the two other courses which scored a mean value of 3.8 (automotive) and 4.4 (mechatronic) for this item. One possible reason could be that the students from the welding course might have used a different computer lab from the other courses.

Limitations

One of the limitations of the study is the limited number of variables that were investigated. This paper only investigates three factors while other factors namely faculty reputation, students' loyalty, logistics facilities were excluded. This is due to time constraint since this study was conducted as a module for an internship program. The samplings of this study were confined to CIAST's long-term skills course students. Thus the generalization of the findings cannot be made based on the findings of this study's alone. In future, researchers could include other variables and a larger sampling from other courses for a more comprehensive result. Another limitation is the briefing and questionnaire survey step. This step was conducted in English. Thus, language issues may have affected the accuracy of the answers. However, the fact that the teaching staffs and research module coordinators were around during the data collection process to answer any questions from the respondents have helped overcome this issue.

Conclusion

Overall, the results reveal that the CIAST students are satisfied with the services of the teaching staff, administrative support and facilities offered to them by CIAST. The measurement of the students' satisfaction is important because it can affect the students' motivation as well as students' success rate.

On the other hand, there are rooms for improvement in several areas specifically those related to facilities such as the library, Wi-Fi and internet access and availability of computer labs for certain courses. These findings can be used to identify areas that are performing well and improve on less efficient areas to increase students' satisfaction.

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